

**‘Life Lawlessly Poetic’: Italy, Anarchism and American Modernism**

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### **Abstract**

In a letter of 1908, William Carlos Williams accused Ezra Pound of preaching 'poetic anarchy'. Seeking clarification, Pound questioned whether by using this term Williams referred to a 'life lawlessly poetic and poetically lawless mirrored in the verse' or to 'a lawlessness in the *materia poetica* and *metrica*'. This project addresses both elements of the dualism to which Pound refers. It is intended as both a biographically-rooted intellectual history and a semiological analysis of 'poetic anarchy' as it pertains to American literary modernism. Unlike previous works on the subject of anarchist modernism, however, it is set in a transatlantic context, using Italy as an intellectual staging post for investigating the long evolution of classical European anarchism, across the fields of politics, philosophy and economics, into enclaves of American modernist production. Significantly expanding on current scholarship, this project investigates a little-known trio of immigrant Italian anarchists in America: Arturo Giovannitti, Francesca Vinciguerra and Emanuel Carnevali. Through an analysis of poetry, experimental theatre, essays, speeches, economic writings, manifestos, magazines and archival documents, their contributions to modernism are theorised as a twinned labour of social action and revolutionary literary craft. Yet, this concept also shares a reciprocal arrangement with the economic activism that Pound took up in support of Italian fascism. In the case of all four writers, the historical influence of anarchism manifests as a struggle of labour and literature coupled together, pressing advocacy into the centre of their modernist aesthetics, while protest itself becomes staged as an aesthetic practice. This modernism is assessed here as a field of artisan activism indebted to a spectrum of nineteenth century anarchist theories.



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## Introduction

In the spring of 1919, at a gathering of modernist luminaries in New York City, the radical Italian poet Emanuel Carnevali launched a coruscating attack on his intellectual contemporaries, raging against their response to modernity, while denouncing their work as weak, ineffectual and imitatory. To Carnevali, modern American culture was a battlefield of scared, subdued and defeated artists, who had left literature 'in danger of collapsing'. Undeterred by their presence at the event, he caricatured the 'heavy scented drunkening whirlwind' of William Carlos Williams, the 'sweet simplicity and the capering bitterness' of Alfred Kreyenborg, the 'voracious hunger' of Lola Ridge, and the 'evanescent precision' of Maxwell Bodenheim; each, he claimed, were 'flashlights' vainly scouring the arena of war during a 'foul night'. To this alleged defeat, Carnevali attributed their unwillingness to any longer speak in direct, unadorned utterances, to 'believe in plain statements', and to their obsession with the non-utilitarian. He condemned their preoccupation with technique, arguing that it had resulted in an insular world where artists operated as 'photographing machines'. It was a world that hosted the 'minute elusive squirming' of 'fakers... hiding behind a thick-woven curtain of images-words, stunts [and] tricks of verse'. Most catastrophic to Carnevali was their decision to consciously turn away from the public. Offering a light for the way forward, he cast himself as an 'enormous commonplace' who would roll over their 'delicate miniatures', who would blow an 'insurrecting trombone' and who would take art back to the 'ash-can-guarded streets of the mob'.<sup>1</sup>

Carnevali was a pugnacious innovator whose youth in Florence had exposed him to the combination of anarchist and pragmatist philosophies which was particular to the modernism of that city. Spearheaded by the militant journalist Giovanni Papini, it was characterised by a deep, often obstreperous anti-authoritarianism. On the one hand, this modernism sought to interrogate the legitimacy of existing customs and institutions. In the fashion of the avant-garde, it trampled over traditionalism and obliterated its power to arbitrate cultural standards. As an intellectual modernism, it was rebellious, revolutionary, anti-dogmatic and, in Papini's own terms, driven by the desire to destroy the world in order to recreate it through art. This reconstruction, on the other hand, placed a pragmatic emphasis on the practical and the concrete. It emphasised exploring localities of experience in order to extrapolate the particular from the universal. That is to say, experience itself was both the authority and the method for finding an aesthetic form that could inclusively represent the integrated structures

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<sup>1</sup> A transcript of Carnevali's speech was later printed in his autobiography, posthumously compiled by his friend and correspondent, the writer and political activist Kay Boyle. See 'My Speech at Lola's', *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), pp. 141-148.



of reality. Such a combination of shock, sedition and practicability was its fundamental formula for the reconstruction of culture and for revitalising the function of art. In aggregating anarchist and pragmatist philosophies, Papini sought a revolution in consciousness through utilising art to explore the interconnected nature of the quotidian self and the universal non-self. It was driven by an egoistic desire to cultivate a sense of divine potentiality. Papini's philosophical modernism provided the cultural background to Carnevali's Florentine adolescence, while its anarchistic precepts were encoded in the attack Carnevali made on the New York avant-garde during early 1919.

Yet as an Italian influencer, possessed of an anarchist background and who was agitating within American cultural circles, Carnevali was not alone. Italian anarchists arrived in America in great numbers during the 1890s, having been expelled by the ascendant Italian Socialist Party, settling first in areas such as Brooklyn and Paterson, New Jersey, and then across the country in independent anarchist and revolutionary communities. Among the volume of scholarship dedicated to American modernism, the most prominent of these Italians remain Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two immigrant anarchists who were convicted of armed robbery and murder during one of the great public trials of the 1920s. Upton Sinclair's *Boston* (1928), Katherine Anne Porter's memoir *The Never-Ending Wrong* (1977), Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem 'Justice Denied in Massachusetts' (1927) and John Dos Passos's *The Big Money* (1936) are among the works of American literature by writers who were contemporaneous to the trial. Yet, it is to this incident that American modernism remains by and large confined. Its notoriety perpetuates the notion of bomb-throwers and assassins associated with Italian anarchists in America, which belies, among other contributions, their leadership in the labour and anti-war movements of the 1910s. More significantly for this project, it obscures how in the field of art anarchistic Italians like Carnevali edited and contributed to modernist journals and expressed their positions through poetry, prose and experimental theatre. They did not share every assumption equally, operating as they did across a variety of intellectual disciplines. They were also divided in background between the individualist anarchists of northern Italy and the social anarchists of the south. Yet, these artists each contributed a commitment to finding unique, modern literary forms through which they could question the legitimacy of power and hierarchy.

This project is concerned with how anarchistic Italians such as Carnevali configured their intellectualism within the field of American modernism. It is therefore by no means intended to be a study preoccupied with nationally-rooted predispositions. Many valuable works of

scholarship have already detailed the history of Italian Americans and radical culture.<sup>2</sup> Neither is this study intended to contribute to the historiography of anarchism as a purely American cultural movement; indeed, work has already begun elsewhere that attempts to position anarchism as a formal, American modernist practice.<sup>3</sup> Instead, its purpose is to provide a biographically-focused history of an intellectual movement, concerned specifically with how certain of its exponents operated through modernist writings, and how they did so within a dynamic, transatlantic circuit of anarchist exchange and exposition. Never before has anarchism been analysed as a sphere of tendencies that challenged the norms of American modernism, which contested many of the expectations related to American modernist art, but as a sphere in which those tendencies were transnationally embedded. The poet, International Workers of the World activist and prominent labour organiser Arturo Giovannitti emigrated to America from Campobasso in the southern province of Molise. Greenwich Village radical Francesca Vinciguerra was the daughter of musicians from the town of Taormina, Sicily. Yet, before becoming contributors to modernist publishing, both emerged from a region of Italy radicalised by the Russian social anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. Carnevali was a disciple of Giovanni Papini's Florentine avant-garde, but Papini cultivated his anarchistic modernism during a decade-long intellectual exchange with William James. The current study aims to evaluate how the transatlantic development of anarchist theory became encoded by these emigrant artists in modernist practice.

Taking a dual-directional focus, this project is also concerned with the anarchistic contexts in which Ezra Pound operated across the course of his career, but in particular those that influenced his literary and political relationship with Italian fascism. It is widely acknowledged that Pound's association with *The Egoist* in the early 1910s provided an anarchist contact point in the individualist egoism of Max Stirner. However, the depth of Pound's ideological response to it is less appreciated; few critics note that during this time Pound described himself as a 'syndicalist, somewhat atrabilious' committed to 'disbelieve vigorously in any recognition of political institutions'.<sup>4</sup> Fewer still recognise that through his subsequent interest in Social Credit, Pound remained connected in context to a second anarchistic nexus. As John Finlay observes, the one consistent thread 'which appears in the earliest background' of the Social Credit movement 'is anarchism'.<sup>5</sup> Yet neither did Pound's affiliation

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Marcella Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States 1890-1940* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Suffragettes', *The Egoist* (Jul 1 1914), p. 254.

<sup>5</sup> John L. Finlay, *Social Credit: The English Origins* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 238.

with anarchistic movements end with Social Credit. In the early 1930s, Pound declared himself to be 'Proudhonian at heart' and attempted to form a consortium of Mussolini supporters sympathetic to the French anarchist economist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.<sup>6</sup> This project is interested in unravelling the paradoxical interdependence of Pound's interest in anarchistic economics and his dedication to Italian fascism, as well as in understanding what role this relationship had in the formation of his literary economy.

Admittedly, this is not the first study to argue that certain early modernisms were less antithetical to Italian fascism than had once been surmised. Roger Griffin analyses the aphoria and puzzlement arising from the shared contradictions existential to both movements. His study examines how the mythologising of the Renaissance past replaced a desire to purge it and construct a post-apocalyptic future. It investigates how the mythologising of the rural idyll replaced the desire for a future based on the synergism of innovative technologies. It also questions how in each case the ambition to flood with light the realities of modern culture was conceded to a dark and destructive political unreality. Griffin interrogates how these internal inconsistencies accommodated such intellectual treachery, asking why 'often prominent figures of Italian culture [were] able to betray what is often assumed to be the avant-garde's natural allegiance to the 'true' revolution of the left in order to promote the pseudo-revolution proposed by the right'.<sup>7</sup> Griffin ultimately attempts to synthesise the interdependence of left-wing modernism and right-wing fascism through the shared concepts of rebirth and renewal. Yet, this emphasis on the politics of left and right fails to account for the politics of individualism and collectivism. Griffin offers Giovanni Papini as one such 'prominent figure', yet Papini's early intellectualism is most consistently characterised by right-leaning individualist anarchism influenced by Max Stirner. Such misunderstandings regarding this particular aspect of the paradox, the basis on which early individualist and anarchistic modernists of both persuasions found it acceptable to synthesise their positions with Italian fascism's reaffirmation of the state, have left it unresolved.

This investigation therefore looks to expand upon Griffin's investigation and to use Pound as an example of what it might mean to address the antithetical anarchistic and individualistic impulses of early modernism in respect of their later syncretism with Italian fascism. Frank Kermode writes that the 'correlation between early modernist literature and authoritarianism

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<sup>6</sup> See Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 201.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave MacMillan), p. 19.

[...] is *more often noticed than explained*'. With regard to Pound, owing to the scant consideration granted to his early anti-statal interests, this correlation has rarely been noticed and consequently even less made intelligible. Taking Pound as a case in point, there remains no satisfactory answer to how if, as Griffin suggests, fascism 'can be seen as political variant of modernism' and if anarchism can be understood as another, what can explain the eventual synthesis of these two contradictory variants. There are a few possibilities to explore here that help us to situate Pound. Firstly, Griffin offers a helpful starting point with an allusion to fascism's 'iconoclastic spirit of creative destruction', which is one that resonates in particular within the motivations of the anarchist and fascist projects. However, this allusion is expandable which is, in fact, a necessity in order to take the particular ambitions of individualist anarchism into account. Secondly, I therefore propose, anarchism operated as a cultural change agent intended to purge modernity not simply of power, but more specifically of illegitimate power, a designation many artists with early anarchist tendencies were simply not willing to apply to the Italian state. This is arguably because, thirdly, early modernists dabbling in individualist or anarchistic intellectualism would, in certain cases, come to believe in Mussolini as an exemplar of sovereign individuality and power, Pound among them. This provides an important opportunity to reconsider the biographical trajectory that took Pound from *The Egoist* to his pro-fascist engagement, and in particular to account for previously overlooked intellectual consistencies between each of these moments. Yet while the analysis is grounded in biography, I am more concerned to demonstrate how all of the individuals under consideration here offered to modernism an intellectually coherent field of discursive practice based around strategies drawn from anarchist theory. In this respect, they share not simply a geographical trajectory but also an historical one. Much of their activity related to the concentration of anarchist energies present in the early 1910s; the same energies that George Santayana referred to when he proclaimed in 1913 that 'everywhere in art, literature, religion, and philosophy, anarchy had broken out'.<sup>8</sup> For certain artists, the 1910s was the decade during which they exerted their greatest cultural influence. For others it was the period in which anarchistic proclivities became latently embedded in their intellectualism, only to influence their work during the decades to follow. However, I wish to bring to light that the presence of anarchism in American modernism during the 1910s was not only preceded by nineteenth and early twentieth century anarchist theory, but that its practice extends onwards far further historically than has been previously recognised. These writers responded to unique, wide-ranging historical circumstances with inherently anarchistic strategies, through which its proclivities were expressed as a twinned, artisanal practice of life and labour.

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<sup>8</sup> Qtd in Michael Ogorzaly, *Waldo Frank: Prophet of Hispanic Regeneration* (London; New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1994), p. 37.

It is important to be clear, though, that although this project is concerned with the historical convergence of anarchism and modernism, it does not attempt to define the term anarchist modernism in relation to a discrete school of artistic-activists. For all that these writers shared in strategy, and in spite of all that was homologous in their ambition and intention, any attempt to do so is rendered by the very nature of anarchism itself to be extremely problematic. While the 1910s stand out as period of intense historical convergence between many strands of the anarchist movement, the horizon of their historical development differs markedly across various timelines. A philosophical and individualist European anarchism of the nineteenth century, associated with theoreticians such as Stirner and his egoist movement, found favour in the modernism of northern Italy and manifested in aspects of its artistic production. At a similar time, the social anarchism of Bakunin politicised the agrarian and artisanal classes of southern Italy with a political programme that was concerned with resolving the struggle between capital and labour. Meanwhile, Americans such as Josiah Warren and latterly William James developed an anarchistic pragmatism that combined individual experience and the practice of community living. Finally, the field of anarchist economics, and indeed the first modern determination of anarchism, evolved from the writings of Proudhon. Yet even these individual pathways of historical development were complex and imbricatory.

Moreover, the many historical anarchist tributaries that converged in the 1910s at no point represented a synchronous, unified movement. The culture war that Carnevali referred to in his attack on New York modernism was being fought by anarchists of the period independently and across multiple fronts, each a response to varying cultural, social and political concerns. Anarchists also rarely operated alone, and frequently chose to form splinter alliances with associated radical movements. The successors of social anarchism bedded in with various labour factions, including syndicalists, wobblies and other leftist revolutionary outfits in the struggle for industrial equality. The successors to the school of egoist anarchism assembled alongside Futurists, French symbolists and Dadaists in their battle against hierarchical, artistic institutionalism. Likewise, anarchistic economics was deeply embedded in the overlapping, radical monetary movements of the early twentieth century such as distributism, subsidiarity and Social Credit. While the anarchist programmes within each of these groupings were underpinned by the same fundamental concerns, they were individually preoccupied with a particular angle on the crisis of modernity, precipitating a multiplicity of artistic interpretations and responses. What is more, these tributaries also evolved and dissipated within their own timelines. Anarchist labour factions are largely

critiqued as having accepted the compromise of Bolshevism after 1917.<sup>9</sup> Anarchists in the artistic avant-garde are historicised as no longer contributing to those movements after 1920.<sup>10</sup> Yet as the later parts of this project demonstrate, through Social Credit and its associated initiatives, anarchistic ideals retained a presence in the economics of American modernism during the subsequent decades.

Amidst these programmatic variations, though, certain fundamentals emerge that offer a clear sense of collective vision. Each writer central to this study believed authority and legitimacy were determined at the level of the individual and not the institution, be that political, cultural or economic. They believed in their right to overturn not simply the traditionalist establishments that resisted the advance of modernity, but also to overturn the modernist firmaments that responded to it within elitist or hierarchical configurations. In their own fashion, they each foresaw the movement of power from centralised structures, whether of industry, patriarchy, art or government, towards the margins of their operational remit. They foundationally rejected, or came to reject, the modernism of detachment; yet neither did they fall back upon the processes of social realism, as might be assumed. Instead, these artists attempted to combine both the experimental, discursive nature of the modernist avant-garde with a fierce emphasis on the social role of art. Their work found forms to create simulacra from their experiences of oppression and coercion, to undermine both traditionalism and modernist elitism, to replicate inequities of power and in some cases to violently obliterate them. Elementally, to these writers modernity was understood as an opportunity for levelling illegitimate structures of authority and for reasserting the jurisdiction of the individual against them. They envisioned a society in which the technologies of labour, mass print and resource management could be used to end coercive social dynamics.

Recent critiques broadly agree that these ambitions were shared by all of the artists who participated in both anarchist and modernist movements. However, they disagree strongly as to whether the essence of anarchist modernism can be located in form, in context or in principle. David Weir takes a long term historical view regarding the influence of anarchism on modernist production, arguing that the tradition of classical anarchistic thinkers such as Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin lent European modernism an aesthetic formula that was taken up by Joyce, Ibsen, Hugh Ball and Luis Buñuel. For Weir, anarchism was a

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Paul Avrich notes how Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, the two most prominent anarchists in the United States, joined 'the chorus of praise not only for the overthrow of the tsarist order but also for the accession to power of the Bolsheviks'. See Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Edinburgh; Oakland; West Virginia: AK Press, 2005), p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Allan Antliff argues that in addition to Bolshevism, 'wartime repression, aided and abetted "patriotic" jingoism on a mass scale' and by and large lead to the 'shutting down' of 'the circuit of radical institutions, publications and activism that sustained anarchist modernism'. See Antliff, p. 215.

'form of individualist politics' well suited to modernism's 'individualist poetics'.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Allan Antliff argues that anarchist modernism was both a contextual and a predominantly American phenomenon. Antliff defines it as a spiritual, political force, centred around Greenwich Village, offering 'coherence and direction' to the American avant-garde art scene between 1908 and 1920.<sup>12</sup> A third critic, David Kadlec, asserts that neither form nor context were as significant as the principle of anti-foundationalism, a principle which in his account underpinned both anarchist philosophy and the modernist works which drew upon it. According to Kadlec, Pound, Joyce, William Carlos Williams and others co-opted anti-foundationalism in order to launch an assault against 'beginnings, origins and principles' and combined it with pragmatist philosophy so as to aestheticise the embodiment of experience.<sup>13</sup>

Analysing the range of writers central to this thesis validates a measure of truth in all of the previous readings, yet it can also corroborate the possibility that they are each individually incomplete. The work of these writers demonstrates that when anarchism and modernism intersected, its circumstances were American and transatlantic, contextual and formal, grounded by philosophical principle and driven by historical forces. What no critique alone has yet recognised is that such concerns represent but one stratum of anarchist resistance. For example, as recent social criticism illustrates, space and geography have been used historically by the anarchist movement as a fluid stage for opposition, and in a manner that transcends the interests of national radical programmes.<sup>14</sup> A remarkable range of supranational, political resistance spaces emerge from this current study including jails, battlefields and modernist periodicals, in addition to those which are specifically American such as the immigrant tenements and high rise apartments of Manhattan, or the textile heartlands of rural Massachusetts. Elsewhere, philosophy is a forum of intellectual resistance where pragmatic anarchists are driven by their opposition to metaphysical theology and to rationalist intellection. Opposition in the field of economics to the coercion of artists and labourers also arises. Cumulatively, each of these concerns represent part of the infrastructure of resistance within which my chosen writers responded using anti-foundationalist, modernist forms. In short, the breadth of this resistance structure has not yet been fully appreciated.

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<sup>11</sup> David Weir, *Anarchy & Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Antliff, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> David Kadlec, *Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Marcelo José Lopes Souza et. al (eds.), *Theories of Resistance: Anarchism, Geography, and the Spirit of Revolt* (London; New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

A new contention I wish to promote in this study is that within those three disciplines - politics, philosophy and economics - Italy and the United States hosted a circuit of mutually reinforcing, anarchistic resistance; within it, certain modernists operated as artist-activators of anarchist theory. Broadly speaking, such a reading has an even longer historical precedence than the three recent critiques previously cited. It has long been recognised that the Vorticist aesthetic functioned as an expression of epistemological individualism rooted in the egoist anarchism of Max Stirner. This is evidenced in many sources, not least of which is the anti-foundationalist manifesto to *Blast*, which states that 'the moment a man feels or reveals himself as an artist, he ceases to belong to any milieu or time'.<sup>15</sup> Such a position has become widely accepted, with scholarship leveraging the tangible connection between politics and poetics offered by egoism in studies of the period.<sup>16</sup> Others have cautioned against accepting this perspective as 'a finished modernist position' and against accepting the teleological dimension of the genealogy, a point of view with which this study concurs.<sup>17</sup> The precise congruency offered by the self-centred egoism of Stirner's individualist anarchism, on the one hand, and British periodicals culture of the early 1910s, on the other, still holds firm. However, it is possible to vastly extend anarchism's contribution in terms of geographical reach, historical range, and formal, interdisciplinary ambition.

For one, the resistance work of my chosen writers - as we will examine in Chapter 1 - redefines the geographical relationship between Italy and American modernism along anarchist terms. Until now, this association has been defined by what Peter Nicholls terms 'the lost object', referring to the vision of an unrealised, culturally superior, historical Italy in the visions of American modernist works such as Williams's *Rome* (1924), Eliot's 'La Figlia Che Piange' (1917) and Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (1948).<sup>18</sup> Ironically, this long-standing critical commonplace is undermined by how Williams, an artist credited with establishing such a vision, also helped to drive forward the dynamic of Italian anarchism within his own modernist periodicals. Moreover, Pound produced work embedded with anarchist strategies

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<sup>15</sup> Qtd in Erik Svarny, *The Men of 1914: T. S. Eliot and Early Modernism* (Milton Keynes; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988), p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> Peter McDonald writes that this reconnection offered a 'useful corrective, not least because it reattaches modernism - and Imagism in particular - to the concrete debates of a time that mixed politics and poetics in uncertain measure'. See Peter McDonald, 'Modernist Publishing: "Nomads and Mapmakers"', in David Bradshaw (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 239.

<sup>17</sup> Anne Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Nicholls, 'Lost Object(s): Ezra Pound and the Idea of Italy', Richard Taylor and Claus Melchior (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Europe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993).



long after the currently accepted interdependence of egoism and its related movements during the early 1910s, in fact deep into his alliance with Italian fascism and perhaps even beyond it. As Chapter 2 begins to demonstrate, the preponderance of this work was carried out by emigrant Italians in America. These writers, alongside Pound, defy a singular definition of anarchist modernism owing to the arsenal of practices which they purveyed across a range of modernist media. The previous focus on egoist anarchism, manifestos and periodicals can therefore be updated with important transatlantic modulations. Additionally, significant anarchistic modernist genealogies, such as social anarchism, can be newly recognised within the modernist landscape. Not simply did they exist but they stood united in their commitment to set modernism back against itself. They offered a firm line of resistance against the kind of social stratification inherent to the movements such as Vorticism, which have been previously associated with anarchistic modernism.

Their work was also therefore produced in new genealogies of intellectual succession. These genealogies had their antecedence in the anxieties that gave rise to nineteenth century anarchist theory. As Lisi Schoenbach recognises, while anarchistic modernism occurred in concentrated pockets of artistic activity, the route back to the anarchism of the 1800s takes a tenticular configuration. It took, she writes, 'many branches and forms', from the egoism of Stirner, to the mutualist anarchism of Proudhon, to the 'revolutionary anarchism of the Haymarket riots'.<sup>19</sup> At the root of each anarchism is a concern founded upon its own unique arrangement of cultural circumstances. Bakunin, who advocated the type of radical action executed at Haymarket, feared Marxism's potential to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. In opposition, he called for direct action towards the formation of industrial autonomy. The egoism of Stirner emanated from a fear that the world was in the grip of abstract thought. Meanwhile, Proudhon's anxiety centred around the economics of the radical socialist programme that followed the revolution of 1789, and that of the liberal capitalist-dominated parliament that followed the revolution of 1848. As I will demonstrate, these feeder anarchisms and their associated anxieties recurred in derivations of modernist intellection and form at least up until the end of the interwar period.

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In order to better understand how it coalesced with modernism, it is worth briefly surveying the genesis of anarchism as an intellectual notion. The etymology of the term alludes to the absence of 'archons' or ruling elements, signifying how its opposition is significantly more

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<sup>19</sup> Lisi Schoenbach, *Pragmatic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 80.

multidisciplinary than the anti-statal tendencies with which it is more commonly associated. Early usage in the seventeenth century often carried the pejorative concept of lawlessness and disorder which has been revived in modern parlance. Anarchism as a philosophical concept was self-evidently a product of Enlightenment thinking concerned with liberty and individuality, and it received its first unified exposition, if not yet a definition, with the publication of William Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793). From the 1840s began a period of self-defined classical anarchism; anarchism became not simply a concept but a set of activators with ambitions for altering the formation of culture, one that involved finding an acceptable alternative to both large scale socialism and liberal capitalism. This meant creating a new revolutionary project that emphasised self-governance, the decentralisation of power, and a rejection of all hierarchical and authoritarian social concepts. The concept of minimal governance allowed for the social anarchism associated with Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta, as well as for the individualist anarchism associated with Stirner, Thoreau and Benjamin Tucker. These points of origin have since spawned variegated intellectual and activist movements, but popular understanding is distorted by the infamy of its relations with political violence in the United States, from the Haymarket bombing of 1886, to the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, to the Weather Underground movement of the 1970s.

As a term, the evolution of anarchism during the modernist period is discernible from the way in which its writers and artists defined themselves in relation to it across the first half of the twentieth century. In 1908, William Carlos Williams wrote to Pound confessing to dislike the experimental and allegedly offensive metrics of Pound's most recent poem, 'A Lume Spento', and with a disapproving undertone Williams accused Pound of propagating 'poetic anarchy'. In his response, Pound was quick to distance himself from this designation and stressed that his verse set him apart from the formulaic chaos of such intellectualism, replying that 'as for preaching for poetic anarchy or anything else: heaven forbid. I record symptoms as I see 'em. I advise no remedy'.<sup>20</sup> There is a depth of irony in Pound's dissociative response because, firstly, the emergent structures of anarchism and modernism shared much with regard to the complementary methods of cultural interrogation practised by each movement. As Jesse Cohn observes, 'the primary theme linking modernism and anarchism... is the translation of an anarchist revolution against every form of domination into the Revolution of the Word'.<sup>21</sup> It is ironic, secondly, because Pound's exchange with

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<sup>20</sup> D. D. Paige (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Jesse Cohn, *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), p. 120.

Williams occurred only five years or so before the heyday of the *Egoist* and the Vorticist movement, which provided Pound not only with the contextual influence of Stirner but with a mode for expressing the concrete, individualist embodiment of experience; it therefore afforded him a means to record in verse the 'symptoms' and structures of reality as he encountered them. Pound exemplified how at this time modernists repositioned themselves in relation to anarchistic concepts in order to exploit its potential as a mode of aesthetic questioning.

By the mid-1910s, instead of distancing themselves from anarchism, certain modernists were engaged in fierce and often rancorous debate regarding which definition of the concept was best appropriated by the avant-garde. For while modernism has up to now been largely associated with individualist anarchism, the activity of the period demonstrates that this was far from an inevitable outcome. When Margaret Anderson and the *Little Review* began publishing in 1914, it was initially as supporters of the social anarchism espoused by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, and in doing so the journal allied itself with the revolutionary egalitarian politics of their movement; in an early editorial Anderson described Goldman in deific terms, arguing that she stood for 'the noblest traits in human nature'.<sup>22</sup> Yet the social anarchist movement in America was criticised and even mocked in other modernist circles as being weak, powerless and lacking in true revolutionary zeal, particularly by those associating themselves with anarchistic Futurism. This position was embodied in Filippo Marinetti's 1914 article 'War, the Only Hygiene of the World', an updated version of Milanese Futurism's original manifesto with an extended polemic against social anarchism, published by the *Little Review* in late 1914. Marinetti's derides the egalitarian anarchists for possessing a 'feminine sensibility', for being interested by 'interlocked embraces in the open field' and for the false idealism of the 'stupid paradise' they claimed to be pursuing.<sup>23</sup> Marinetti advocated that egoist supermen should define the future and Anderson came to concur, declaring by 1917 that she had 'long given up' her initial social anarchistic tendencies.<sup>24</sup> In doing so, a key gatekeeper of transatlantic modernism in America helped set the dial of anarchism towards the terms of its individualistic variant.

In the 1920s, anarchism was in a conceptual holding pattern; it had been significantly diminished as a visible, cultural force by the anti-radical politics of post-war America, but it had not yet completed the programmatic oscillation towards fascism identified by John Finlay and others. With the rise of authoritarianism, the hope of total collective or individual liberty

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<sup>22</sup> Margaret Anderson, 'The Challenge of Emma Goldman', *Little Review*, 1:3 (May 1914), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Filippo Marinetti, 'War, the Only Hygiene of the World', *Little Review*, 1:8 (Nov 1914), p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Anderson, 'What the Public Doesn't Want', *Little Review*, 4:4 (Aug 1917), p. 20.

seemed lost, forcing proponents of anarchistic modernism into making discomfiting alliances, a moment in time best apprehended by Laura Riding's critique *Anarchism is Not Enough* (1927). Riding cites 'Mr Eliot's anarchism' as an example of how the anarchistic tendencies of certain modernists were oscillating from authenticity to elitism, from 'anarchistic individuality' to that which was 'not authentically individualistic but snobbish'.<sup>25</sup> What Riding further recognised was that in positioning itself in opposition to social and political systems, anarchism had allowed itself to become codified within a potentially dangerous binary, whereby the stronger those systems became the less autonomy anarchism would retain. Moreover, Riding warned that anarchism was becoming increasingly defined not as a movement driven by anti-authoritarian principles but as a 'false order' generated by 'the most powerfully thinking individuals'.<sup>26</sup> This put anarchistic modernisms in a precipitous alliance with the expanding fascist superego. In practice, both American and Italian anarchist modernist strains allowed fascism to accommodate their belief in a third force alternative to socialism and capitalism, to embody their doctrine of action and, in the case of Futurism, to amplify its nexus of violence and brutality. Thus, where anarchism endured in the modernisms of the 1930s, it was conceptually encoded in economic programmes such as Social Credit, a movement with ideas rooted in anarchist theory, versified by Pound and yet with a wing dedicated to fascist militancy.

In recent decades, modernist criticism has largely examined anarchism in relation to the concepts of shock and violence. Arthur Redding was the first to offer an expanded postulate regarding this relationship, arguing that 'the bomb-throwing anarchist' was responded to through a dichotomy of dread and aspiration, and that this in turn drove an 'underlying dialectic' of modernism.<sup>27</sup> Other critics have alluded to an even more direct formal association between violence and modernist discursivity. Carol Vanderveer Hamilton suggests that 'when anarchism declined as a political movement, the bomb was appropriated by the avant-garde as an aesthetic strategy of shock'.<sup>28</sup> The preoccupation with shock has continued in the most recent analyses, exemplified by such titles as 'The Doctrine of Dynamite: Anarchist Literature and Terrorist Violence',<sup>29</sup> and by observations regarding

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<sup>25</sup> Laura Riding, *Anarchism is Not Enough* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Redding, 'The Dream Life of Political Violence: Georges Sorel, Emma Goldman, and the Modern Imagination', *Modernism/Modernity*, 2.2 (1995), p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Carol Vanderveer Hamilton, 'Anarchy as Modernist Aesthetic', Christian Berg, Frank Durieux and Geert Lernout (eds.), *The Turn of the Century: Modernism and Modernity in Literature and the Arts*, (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> Deaglan O'Donghaile, *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

the 'purely destructive character of anarchist modernism',<sup>30</sup> its 'primacy of chaos'<sup>31</sup> and on how its 'shocking tactics' suited 'the modernist preoccupation with the fragmentation of experience'.<sup>32</sup> Such discussion has demonstrated an extremely limited interest in the philosophical or economic bearings of anarchist theory. David Weir's previously cited critique on anti-foundationalist aesthetics has initiated a more representative discussion on the shared configurations of anarchist and modernist practice. However, the presiding conceptual narrative of shock and violence, while deserving consideration, remains an impediment to a realistic critical discourse that would extend beyond the chimera of the dynamite-throwing, anarchist assassin.

Initially, then, anarchism possessed pejorative connotations, before it evolved to encompass the anti-representational ambitions of multiple disciplines, movements and programmes. Yet in contemporary modernist criticism its range has regressed, coming to define only a very narrow segment of the conceptual territory with which it has historically been associated. This criticism says little yet about the way anarchists responded to the changing structures of reality, and to the political, sexual, intellectual and economic resistance points necessitated by modernity. It says nothing yet about how anarchism in its various fashions was understood to articulate the interests of individuals spanning classes, ethnicities, nationalities. Neither has it discussed how anarchism affirmed their self-determinative faculties; especially those needed in preserving the autonomous energy of artists and writers. Therefore, the breadth of its contextual reach has, up to now, become impoverished. Yet anarchistic modernists aestheticised their positions in a range of anti-systemic forms, in ways that undermined the hierarchical logic of both modern and previous writings. Anarchism is an intellectual movement of well-defined, counterhegemonic tendencies and ambitions, but poorly defined aesthetic principles. Only a study that conceptualises the full range of its capacities and practices can afford a corrective to the current critical picture. It requires an analysis that includes individualist anarchists as well as those artists whose work embodied strategies for social change.

This limited conceptual understanding of anarchist modernism can be explained by how discourse on the subject has been dominated by two interdependent narratives. The first is the internal narrative driven by pre-eminent modernists in which anarchism centred briefly around individualism and was then largely discarded. Subsequently, it has come to be accepted that where modernist artists were political those politics were prefigured by an

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<sup>30</sup> Cohn, p. 136.

<sup>31</sup> Carol Vanderveer Hamilton, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> O'Donghaile, p. 129.

individualism inclined to authoritarianism. The second is the external narrative of violence shaped retrospectively by a critical distrust of its political intentions. To complicate matters further, anarchists fluidly co-ordinated their activities within and between other social and intellectual movements. This has meant that few definitive, easily accessible points of opposition exist to contradict the prevailing account. Uncertainty here exists in both an historical and an ideological sense. Recent critiques have attempted to locate egoist anarchism on the political right, as a more extreme variant of individualist libertarianism.<sup>33</sup> Yet this analysis not only precludes the existence of an anarchist modernist left but, more importantly, fails to recognise that the open-ended, anti-foundationalist nature of anarchism make such a binary unsuitable for defining its ideological commitments. I acknowledge that the political interests of anarchistic modernism can appear changeable and fragmentary in relation to the conventional spectrum of positions. However, I argue that the present conceptual constrictions can only be overcome through analyses that attempt to accommodate and, where possible, to unify the political interchangeabilities driving its aesthetic practices.

In endeavouring to develop this more comprehensive understanding, I examine contemporary studies that recognise anarchistic dimensions in the artist-activism central to the current project. These efforts have so far tended to centre around isolated elements of attitude and form. Hestor Furey writes of Arturo Giovannitti's poems 'The Walker' and 'The Cage' (1913) as 'modernist long poems' which, unlike other verse in a modernist vein, aims not to condemn industrialism but to celebrate manufacturing of the federative kind.<sup>34</sup> Suzanne Churchill recognises that Emanuel Carnevali expressed in his verse a 'reckless disregard of technical rigor'<sup>35</sup> while Erin Templeton stresses that Carnevali was willing to stop at 'nothing short of revolution' against the forces of modern poetry.<sup>36</sup> Pound criticism has hinted at how the relational dynamics of his verse were 'rooted in Proudhonian concepts of an economic organism' without necessarily following this approach through to a formalistic conclusion.<sup>37</sup> These points of view are helpful for mapping the early conceptual territory, the oppositional bearings and the antipathetic individual stylings engaged with by their work. However, as single position studies they so far fail to offer any sense of conceptual

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<sup>33</sup> David Weir, for example, argues that modernist 'anarchism had settled into the highly libertarian but conservative mold that forms part of the right-wing individualist tradition in America to this date'. See *Anarchy & Culture*, p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Hestor Furey, 'The Reception of Arturo Giovannitti's Poetry and the Trial of a New Society', *Left History* (1993), p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Suzanne Churchill, *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Basingstoke: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Erin Templeton, 'For Having Slept Much the Dead Have Grown Strong': Emanuel Carnevali and William Carlos Williams', *William Carlos Williams Review*, 30:1-2 (Spring-Fall 2013), p. 139.

<sup>37</sup> Kadlec, p. 83.

unanimity across the disciplinary practices of such writers. There has been no attempt to unify those whose art embodied social or industrial remedies to inequity and those whose art pursued its intellectual, internal resolution.

I also examine a facet of anarchism that has been afforded little scrutiny in relation to modernism, and yet which might offer a scalable method for unifying its different forms of exposition, and that is its natural inclination towards transnationalism. While the transnational template has been applied to modernist cultures in numerous configurations since the turn of the century, few if any of modernism's associated movements can claim to be as deeply bound up by it in terms of discourse and practice than anarchism. After all, as Constance Bantman notes of their profound historical affinity, anarchism was 'the world's first and most widespread transnational movement organised from below'.<sup>38</sup> Unlike many other modernist groupings, whose work can be retrospectively historicised into combinations of domestic and migratory elementia, anarchism by its nature operated in strategic international networks of cultural transfer. On a programmatic level, of course, a goal of the anarchist movement was to interrogate the nation state with a view to implementing a stateless transnationalism. On an individual level, its exponents were frequently exiled, interstate operatives who appropriated the migratory process as an intrinsically subversive act. Moreover, a tension existed between transnational ideologies and the nation state in a way which held relevance for modernist production. Carl Levy argues that anarchism can 'highlight an alternative history of modernity in which the state form is not the end point of all narratives'.<sup>39</sup> In so far as how it offers complexities and ambiguities, access to unorthodox methodologies and a novel analytical framework, such a reading can also help to reinterpret anarchistic modernism as a field of unitary, transnational artistic practices.

The interdependence of anarchism and transnationalism is implicit throughout this study, for which reason it is worth introducing the way in which the key disciplines of politics, philosophy and economics were modulated by transnationalism into modernist practices. In a general sense, political anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin and Errico Malatesta attempted to construct transnational political communities. It was in part the structural reliance on this transnationalism that so diminished the progress of anarchism when it became overwhelmed by the rising nationalist sentiment of 1914-18. Nevertheless, up to this point the cross-national, network character of anarchist politics had been largely responsible for its successful interpenetration into American and indeed global activist communities. As Davide

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<sup>38</sup> Constance Bantman and Bert Altena (eds.), *Reassessing the Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Carl Levy, 'Anarchism and Cosmopolitanism', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 16:3 (2011), p. 269.

Turcato has pointed out with respect to the Italian anarchist diaspora, 'transnationalism was a built-in characteristic' of anarchist politics, and one 'that supported insurrectionary tactics by enhancing the opaqueness of their preparation'.<sup>40</sup> It is possible to offer many specific examples of this process in practice. One is recognisable in the dynamic, transnational militancy of the anarcho-syndicalist movement. Bakunin convened his anarchist networks at the Paris Commune of 1871, which inspired a rebirth of French anarchist activism in the 1880s. One of its most prominent figures was Emile Pouget. In the 1890s and after having been exiled in London, Pouget reformed his programme to incorporate the sabotage and direct action practices of British unionism. By way of journals, pamphlets and press exchanges, Pouget's syndicalist anarchism was taken up internationally, not least by American modernist periodicals such as Alexander Berkman's *The Blast* 1916-17. Arturo Giovannitti wrote an introduction to the 1914 English language edition of Pouget's *Sabotage* (1912) and was motivated by its methodology to find poetic forms that disrupted existing verse structures.

Another example of this modulation lies in the way that anarchist philosophy benefited from the early globalisation dynamics of the nineteenth century. The German intellectual Max Nettlau is credited with having chronicled the first comprehensive worldwide narrative of the movement in his publication *A Short History of Anarchism* (1943). Nettlau details how anarchist philosophies spread not only in Europe but as far afield as countries such as Argentina, Cuba and Brazil. More recent critiques have built on Nettlau's account of anarchist transnationalism to demonstrate how those ideas acquired a jagged configuration of inherited, local and regional characteristics, resulting in individual communities of discourse and that, in fact, this process of constant negotiation provided its sustainability and continuity in exile. Anarchist transnationalism is similarly apparent in the way the ideas of vocational philosophers such as Max Stirner were rubricated by modernist communities into new aesthetic forms. Yet while this was true of the London modernists associated with the *Egoist* it was also true elsewhere. Stirner's anarchism, for example, in combination with Nietzsche's unreason and Bergson's vitalism, is evident in Giovanni Papini's first Florentine journal *Leonardo* (1903-07), a philosophy which Papini took to its logical endpoint in ultimately declaring the death of reason and of thought.

As with anarchist philosophy, much anarchistic intellectualism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century contained elements of economic thought that later took on a transnational vector. Godwin advocated communities of cultivation that decentralised distribution and

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<sup>40</sup> Davide Turcato, 'Italian Anarchism and Transnational Movement, 1885-1915', *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), p. 407.



which dispensed surplus through free exchange, in accordance with need. Stirner wrote an internationally influential treatise on egoistic property, prescribing a 'might is right' approach to property ownership based on one's individual ability to take and defend it. Anarchist economic positions can frequently be found developing and recurring independently across national and cultural boundaries. Josiah Warren's theory that cost should be limited by price involved the distribution of work certificates redeemable for goods and services based on the number hours laboured, an idea that recurs intact via Pound's reading of Proudhon in the *ABC of Economics* (1934). While other anarchist intellectuals took up economic perspectives within their writings, it was Proudhon who developed the most exclusively economic field of propositions, which is evident in his writings on anarchist fiscal-industrial theory. Prefiguring a central axiom of modernist production, Proudhon stood against abstract monetarism, arguing that all non-essential property ownership from which interest was derived - interest, that is, without any relation to material or concrete value - was one such coercive abstraction of a productive economy. Anti-abstractive concepts based on Proudhon's thought have been recognised in the essays of Baudelaire,<sup>41</sup> in the 'absolutist ethic' of T. E. Hulme,<sup>42</sup> and as an economic model singled out for its 'well-marked... powerful endeavour' by Wyndham Lewis.<sup>43</sup> However, Proudhon's stand against economic abstraction also prefigured an anti-Semitism based against the alleged proponents of its coercive potentiality. Pound would later paraphrase Proudhon's *What is Property?* (1840) in his economic cantos at the same time that Proudhonian, anti-Semitic sentiments would increasingly reverberate in his political writings.

Generally speaking, my intention in this project is to analyse the alliance of anarchism and modernism by applying careful scrutiny to the practices that result from this set of transnational intellectual exchanges. Correspondingly, my intention in representing anarchistic modernism in this way is to emphasise the hybridity of political-aesthetic, philosophical-aesthetic and economic-aesthetic practices. For instance, when considering Arturo Giovannitti's disruptive modernist verse and drama, we will examine its association with formations of labour resistance, with practices of industrial sabotage and with the conception of resistance as a staged aesthetic. While in this study I have aligned each writer

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<sup>41</sup> James Rubin writes that when Baudelaire claimed 'art was inseparable from morality and utility' this idea was 'directly inspired by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon'. See James Rubin and Olivia Mattis (eds.), *Rival Sisters, Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism, 1815-1915* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), p. 119.

<sup>42</sup> Andrzej Gasiorek argues that 'of real significance' in Hulme's attempts to reconcile anarchism, syndicalism and classicism, was 'his reliance on an absolutist ethic' which was 'influenced by Proudhon'. See Andrzej Gasiorek and Edward P. Comentale (eds.), *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 159.

<sup>43</sup> Qtd. in Joel Nickels, *Poetry of the Possible: Spontaneity, Modernism, and the Multitude* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 100.

with a particular discipline, I do acknowledge that at times there is a degree of overlap with respect to the nature of their interests and practices, and that the predominant discipline of one modernist is frequently applicable to the work of another. Giovannitti's labour-leaning advocacy of anarchist syndicalism attends to issues also present in Pound's endorsement of the artist's economic autonomy. Pound's resistance to coercive practices enforced upon the artist is identifiable in Carnevali's focus on localised communities of creativity and experience. The anti-deterministic bent of each writer is structurally supportive to Francesca Vinciguerra's resistance towards the acceptance of gender violence and sexual dominion. I will look to recognise these disciplinary overlaps where they are highly relevant, but it is beyond the frontiers of the current project to fully demonstrate the relevance of each discipline in the case of every writer. For now, my foundational ambition is to articulate their anarchistic-aesthetic practices as a product of the resistance movement with which they most closely associated.

I wish to make one further determination regarding the methodology I have chosen to apply to the current project. Significant scholarship has been produced arguing that certain modernisms were a light breaking from anarchism's contextual cloud. Other critiques identify anarchists performing as modernists, or recover isolated, anti-foundationalist attitudes ahistorically from within the major works of high modernism. This study does not attempt to repudiate these attenuated approaches to the subject but, with particular regard to the notion of anarchists as modernists, it will seek to elucidate the misplaced emphasis of particular readings. The writers in this study rarely if ever identified as anarchists and in certain cases were only loosely aware of or interested in its origins. It needs to be remembered that, like modernism, anarchism was a movement that existed in a largely unquantified state of emergence during the years of its most heightened activity. Therefore, such an analysis relies on a retrospective reading of history, seeking to apply an unwarranted degree of discretion to individuals, creeds and their art, rather than allowing for the disordered historical configuration which more accurately reflects anarchism's sprawling, unsystematic intellectual presence in the interwar period. Instead, I believe it is more appropriate to approach anarchism as a field of action, one which is not affiliated to any individual or historical grouping, yet one with the potential to irrupt from movements or moments into the aesthetic circumstances of given modernisms.

Most importantly though, this approach allows for the exploration of anarchism as a movement that operated within the orbit of modernism far deeper into the interwar period than has previously been recognised. Contemporary scholars such as David Kadlec have spearheaded important new investigations, with works showcasing novel perspectives on

how anarchist isometrics became embodied in modernist syntax. Regrettably, however, these works remain within the confines of the the chronological framework set out in Michael Levenson's much quoted argument that modernism was 'inclined to anarchism before it was inclined to authoritarianism'.<sup>44</sup> Levenson treats this inclination as a short moment of unconstrained anti-liberalism. It is one based partly on a sense of failing collective, humanistic aspiration, and partly on the way in which the Vorticist movement was inspired by Stirner's attacks against the so-called Religion of Humanity.<sup>45</sup> Threats to commonly held values abounded and therefore, in this reading, young artists responded by decamping to the internalism of the egoist creed. To Levenson, anarchism was bound up in a literary sense with an intense but very much temporary commitment made by Pound, Hulme, Upward and Ford to individualism. Levenson's work identifies a 'dramatic change' in Pound's attitudes over 'several months' in 1913 that inclined him towards 'urbane egoism' and violent systemic criticism, but equally identifies it as a change that would peak quickly, with its fullest intensity washed out within a not much greater timespan.<sup>46</sup>

Yet defining anarchism in this way, as a momentary impulse and as a placeholder ideology that preceded a radical turn to authoritarianism, fails to account for the anarchistic impulses still evident much later. Pound's association with anarchism is generally considered to have dissipated in the wake of Vorticism. Yet what is not recognised is that during this time Pound forged an intellectual alliance with anarchist economics that was far more enduring than the presence of egoism in his work. Under the radar of his changing aesthetic principles, this alliance is apparent in his writings for the *New Age* in the late 1910s, throughout his economic intellectualism of the 1920s, in his transition from Social Credit to Proudhonian fiscal policies in the 1930s and, paradoxically, through and beyond his allegiance to Italian fascism. Pound's support for anarchist economics culminated in a late, desperate effort during 1948 to insist that Mussolini had all along stood for 'the encouragement of distribution... without government ownership'.<sup>47</sup> In light of this, we need to reconsider the trajectory of Levenson's oscillation, because it seems that not only did anarchism continue to inform Pound's art and ideology during his support for authoritarianism, those economic ideas may have helped him to accommodate it. Moreover, the anarchistic impulses that

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 79.

<sup>45</sup> Stirner rejected this idea, which was proposed by the positivist philosopher Auguste Comte, writing that 'the divine is God's concern, and the human, man's.' Qtd in Nicholas Churchich, *Marxism and Alienation* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), p. 137. This is an example of how Stirner's writings configured the type of anthropocentric individualism later acquired by the Vorticists.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Sieburth, (ed.), *Ezra Pound: New Selected Poems and Translations* (New York: New Directions, 2010), p. 203, l. 16-20.

continued to influence Pound into the 1930s might be seen as even more significant because although they induced artistic responses, as was the case during the Vorticist period, they also drove Pound to forge pro-fascist strategic alliances with real-world political consequences.

A further issue with accepting Levenson's genealogy is that such absolutism limits our access to exploring exactly what kinds of anarchistic modernisms might have been produced during the authoritarian, late interwar period. The Vorticists brought anarchism into modernist production by way of certain very distinctive egoist principles such as autonomy, critical aggression, cultural opposition and an anti-foundationalist response to history, language and tradition. Yet as Chapter 4 will demonstrate, later anarchistic modernisms also possessed distinctive forms and their own unique literary economy. We will examine how certain values such as artistic autonomy and cultural opposition remained, while others were acquired en route, particularly in relation to what kind of economic configuration those values operated within. These were an outgrowth from Pound's previous thought, combining new industrial ideals with a deepening, anti-usurious sentiment based in Proudhonian theory. In spite of archival criticism that reveals Pound to have declared himself 'Proudhonian at heart' during the early 1930s, no analysis has yet searched for Proudhon at the heart of his economics cantos in the same period.<sup>48</sup> In short, Levenson saw anarchism and authoritarianism in diametric opposition to one another but none have yet considered that they were perhaps two ends of a closed circle. That is to say, the anarchistic impulses present in Pound's later work cannot be separated from the egoism with which we are familiar, in which event the totality of Levenson's oscillation cannot be accepted. A broader chronology, encompassing the entirety of Pound's association with anarchism, in which anarchism remains part of his modernism instead of becoming latterly detached from it as he drifted into fascism, is now overdue.

I intend to take into this project a definition of anarchism both in keeping with conventional understandings of the term but at the same time one that offers additional nuance and complexities. Anarchism is, of course, fundamentally an intellectual resistance strategy consisting of multiple transnationally-cultivated variations. These variations are unified by a common ambition to identify illegitimate hierarchies and power configurations and to eradicate them. Congruent with much previous analysis, I take the term here to mean a resistance to coercive governance in all fields of life, including but not limited to church, state, economy, art and culture. However, unlike how prior readings tend to focus on either historical or artistic definitions of anarchist practice I wish to redefine the term – at least as it

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<sup>48</sup> See Rabaté, p. 201.

relates to the period in question – by offering a metanarrative of simultaneous political, economic and artistic-cultural resistance practices. In doing so, it may be possible to reconsider anarchist activity of the time as a much more fluid, interactive tendency than has up-to-now been understood. I wish to examine how possible it is to term anarchism as an active process of thought and action purveyed by individuals operating in multiple spheres at once. In particular, I hope to trace its coupling and uncoupling with allied systems across the whole field of social resistance practices. Those moments reveal multiple, unique anarchist configurations that might in turn accommodate a much better-modulated definition of how its processes and practices operated in the zones of activity that this project investigates.

Likewise, the definition of modernism I look to take forward here accommodates many of the most broadly agreed upon assumptions concerning the term. This is true with respect to both periodicity and to its most apparent aesthetic and political resonances. Yet where the writers analysed here operate as modernists they do so in a transitional space between political activism and modernism's more fundamentally aesthetic concerns, bringing the two fields of action closer to one another than is generally identifiable elsewhere. This modernism therefore can be defined by certain quite unique characteristics. Namely how it is at points able to combine the history and struggle of realist art with the experimental words and deeds of modernism's revolutionary elementia. Modernism here means simultaneously both a destructive subversion of existing forms and a creative embodiment of new, supra-political or artistic intellectualism. Modernism in the current study also refers to that aspect of the movement, as it more widely understood, focused on self-critique, creating a self-enforced willingness to avoid consolidating its own calculus. To be modern, from the perspective of these writers as much any in the field of modernist practice, means to be in a process of continual reinvention. Yet unlike many other modernists, the revolution of the word here postdates a much wider consideration of how the activities of modern culture should be reconstructed. What we understand as operating in a modernist fashion was, to them, a single-generational opportunity to redesign all the major fields of human activity, in art, economics and elsewhere.

My intellectual objective in producing this study is to document the historical development of anarchism, from its individuated cultural beginnings into a multifaceted discipline of American modernist practice. I want to demonstrate how the nineteenth-century anarchisms of Bakunin, Stirner, James and Proudhon left an intellectual legacy taken up as an aesthetic challenge by radical, anti-authoritarian writers whose work extends to both ends of the long interwar period. These writers shared the values of standing against coercion, interrogating the legitimacy of power and reconstructing illegitimate cultural arrangements from below.

They sought to co-opt the disorderly historical project of anarchism in order to bend the arc of modernity towards the disassemblment of oppressive and illiberal social hierarchies. I aim to frame their work within three indiscrete disciplines of activity and intellectualism: politics, philosophy and economics. I will analyse the formal configurations that they employed in poetry, prose, essays, speeches and experimental drama as a means to express their activist-aesthetic practices. Building on existing investigations into familiar modernist figures such as Pound, Williams, Max Eastman, Dora Marsden, A. R. Orage and Lola Ridge, I will look to introduce Arturo Giovannitti, Francesca Vinciguerra and Emanuel Carnevali as anarchistic modernist emigres. Their lives and works also afford us the opportunity to investigate this field of production as migratory and transnational, one borne from first-wave globalisation, and from outsiders and exiles. I hope to reconceptualise anarchism in relation to modernism, to break the monopoly of chaos, shock and violence, and to recast it as a mode of historical and aesthetic questioning opposed to hierarchies of capital and coercion.

Correspondingly, it is also my objective to redefine this area of modernist scholarship based on a new set attitudes and convictions, which gave rise to a previously unfamiliar set of discursive configurations. These writers challenged the hierarchical heterogeneity of autonomy and non-utilitarianism as a dominant mode of modernist practice. I will unify for the first time an understanding of anarchistic modernism that encompasses context, form and principle, extending the individualist variations previously historicised but newly introducing social anarchism to the modernist oeuvre. As a result, new modernist geographies will become accessible, from the jail cells of industrial Massachusetts to the down-at-heel lunch room counters of lower Manhattan. The radical modernist energies of the early 1910s can be threaded historically to the tentacular genealogy of nineteenth-century anarchism. Its trajectory can also be traced forwards to the end of the interwar period, to interrogate how comprehensively anarchistic modernism oscillated towards fascism. It is my intention to further complicate Pound's association with Mussolini based on his long-standing and long-enduring interest in anarchist economics, a reading that will also assist me in reshaping the relationship between Italy and American modernism along anarchist terms.

Thus, in Chapter 1 I offer anarchism as a context in which to resituate the existing critical relationship between Italy and American modernism. I will review the way in which American emigrant modernists frequently represented Italy as a psychotropic landscape of irreconcilable loss. Pound's interview with *Belvedere* magazine in 1931, Eliot's 'La Figlia Che Piange' (1917), William Carlos Williams's little-considered essay 'Rome' (1923), Sherwood Anderson's short story 'Certain Things Last' (1916) and Harold Loeb's Rome-based

periodical *Broom* demonstrate how each reimagined a never-present historical Italy to affirm a sense of its cultural supremacy over modern America. I argue, however, that the reciprocal intellectual context for Italian emigrant modernism in America has barely begun its development. Moreover, I offer the proposition that anarchism, both in its philosophy and in its practice, is a transatlantic intellectual context that imbricates this Italian emigrant writing with the production of such luminary modernists. By reviewing the critical history of anarchism in modernist scholarship I will challenge certain suppositions inherent to the current literature: that anarchist modernism was only an engagement between Europeans and Americans in Europe, not Americans or immigrants in America; that the politics of anarchism transfigured entirely into the aesthetics of modernism; and that there is no spectrum of practice between individualist and social anarchist modernism. Summatively, I propose that anarchism offers both a historical and a theoretical framework in which to relocate Italy within the American modernist context and, by extension, to ameliorate this imbalance in the field of transnational modernist studies.

In Chapter 2 I begin to more precisely focalise the engagement between Italian emigrant social anarchism and American modernism through the writings Arturo Giovannitti and Francesca Vinciguerra. I theorise how their poems constitute an anarchistic ‘techne’ or craft of action, whereby I use the term ‘techne’ to collectively indicate a technical skill, a performance methodology and a materialist, transformative political practice. In applying the concept of techne to an analysis of their work, I discuss how both writers aestheticise the practices of sabotage and direct action by simulating poetic form as a structure of domination to be undermined and dismantled. In the case of Giovannitti, his poetry and his activism share a mutual commitment to the abolition of government, legislature, judiciary and other allegedly coercive institutions. From the duality of protest and poetry, I deduce that Giovannitti’s anarchism involves itself with the activation of new social relations between art, politics and machinery; his techne unifies the technical action of the labourer, activist, poet and the industrial process. This unification is evident in Giovannitti’s poem ‘The Cage’ (1913), in which techne can be construed as not simply a craft or strategy for creating political art but as a practice of synchronising art, work and society to a single, self-governing, constructive purpose. Vinciguerra similarly applies the processes of sabotage to social and sexual equality to ‘Tankas’ (1920). She uses an experimental form of Japanese poetry to critique patriarchally-driven social power, and to prefigure a revolutionary sense of refusing sexual domination.

I begin Chapter 3 by exploring the philosophy behind Carnevali’s speech to the New York modernist coterie in 1919, with which this introduction began. I situate it in the long

transatlantic evolution of William James's pragmatic anarchism into the radicalism of Giovanni Papini. Papini was both a collaborator of James's between 1905 and 1910 and a long-time correspondent and ideological mentor of Carnevali's in the late 1910s. Jamesian thought is detectable in Carnevali's speech in its skepticism towards fixed points of origin, its discernible religious configuration and its presentation of a decentred universe. However, through his reading of Papini those moderate ideals became expanded into the field of revolutionary action. Carnevali took up the way Papini transformed pragmatism into an insurgency by the individual consciousness against the world of externalities. As such, in the second half of the chapter I describe how Carnevali found a way to embed in his long poetic sequence 'The Day of Summer' (1919) his own incarnation of the Man God - the Papinian Uomo-Dio - using him as a powerful subjective centre-point, yet one who delights in the commonplace, and whose divinity becomes devolved into the ordinary instants of time and place in city life. Carnevali looked to engage the intense, rebellious individuality of the Man God with the struggle and privation of modern living as he experienced it, reconciling these antitheses into a unique avant-garde of the everyday. The Uomo-Dio becomes Carnevali's demiurgic alter ego and the 'enormous commonplace' with which he threatened to punish the modernist agenda of turning away from the public.

In Chapter 4, I argue that Pound's allegiance to Mussolini has overshadowed his deep and long-standing interest in anti-statist economics. While Pound was not an anarchist, the movement unquestionably informed the matrix of economic intellections from which Pound drew. Fractions and fragments of its subject matter were unavoidably integrated into his thoughts on fascist economic reform. Pound's writings reflect both a personal interrelationship with ideologies of limited or anti-statist monetarism and an association with a wider sense of economic syncretism. Moreover, the concept of 'order without power' that Pound projected onto Mussolini reiterates Proudhon; Pound recognised that Proudhon's work formed a backdrop to all the radical economic theses which had taken his interest since the early 1920s, including distributism and C.H. Douglas's Social Credit proposals. A great many of the fiscal policies that Pound hoped to see Mussolini execute, from the setting of a just price, to community credit banks, to the formation of autonomous labour syndicates, can be unearthed from Proudhon's anarchistic economic positions. In this chapter, therefore, I attempt to extract the anarchistic economics from Pound's various fiduciary writings, before appraising how he attempted to organise such notions within *The Cantos*. I will look to assess how far the key loci of Pound's economics such as usury, distributism, mutualism, Social Credit and labour autonomy were underpinned by anarchistic, and especially Proudhonian, intellection. I also discuss the possibility that Pound's pursuit of a Proudhonian



economic solution in Europe contributed to keeping him injudiciously bound to the Italian fascist paradigm.

In a letter of 1908, William Carlos Williams accused Pound of preaching 'poetic anarchy'.<sup>49</sup> Seeking clarification, Pound questioned whether by using this term Williams referred to 'a life lawlessly poetic and poetically lawless mirrored in the verse' or to 'a lawlessness in the *materia poetica and metrica*'.<sup>50</sup> With this project, I attempt to address both elements of the dualism to which Pound refers. In short, it is intended as both a biographically-rooted intellectual history and a semiological analysis of 'poetic anarchy' as it pertains to American literary modernism. It proceeds on the basis of two interdependent timelines: one of theoretical history that begins in the early 1840s with Proudhon's *What is Property?* (1840) and ends with the Social Credit proposals of the 1920s; one of literary practice that begins with Arturo Giovannitti's jail poetry of 1913 and ends with Pound's Canto 74 of 1948, in which he offers a retrospective analysis of Mussolini's economics. My choice of writers is governed less by a level of consistent literary distinction than it is by their commitment, if I may appropriate a term adopted by Carnevali from Dante, to become *capovolgitori*, meaning the overthrowers of what they understood to be a corruptive modern culture. This study pertains to a disparate group of emigrant, anarchistic intellectuals who, in their own ways, in life as in labour, saw modernity as an opportunity to create a less coercive and less hierarchical civilisation.

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<sup>49</sup> Paige, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter One

### Recovering the 'Lost Object': Anarchism as a New Intellectual Context for Italy and American Modernism

Since the turn of the century, several major summative reviews of American modernism have been published, yet among these works the determinative contact points between Italy and American modernism remain the old standards. These include Hemingway driving ambulances on the Italian front in the Great War; Eliot's essays on Dante; Pound, fascism and *The Pisan Cantos* (1948), and other such familiar associations. Elsewhere, a pervasive critical narrative has become entrenched regarding the way in which American writers of the period represented the country. It argues that Pound, in particular, depicted Italy as a psychological landscape of both irreparable loss and prepotent cultural power. Such geographies of loss also exist in the literary imagination of Eliot, Pound, William Carlos Williams and Sherwood Anderson. This representation is predominant enough to have engaged several major critics of American modernism in Italy, including Peter Nicholls, Ronald Bush and Hugh Kenner. It is also present in more recent work concerned with American modernist expatriatism. The revival of periodicals studies early in the century ushered in a new area of modernist transatlanticism, including a renewed interest in periodicals managed or conceived of by Americans in Italy such as *Broom* (1921-24) and *Pagany* (1930-32). Yet the same sense of irreconcilability is also recognisable in the psychological relationship with Italy evident in writings by Harold Loeb, editor of *Broom* between 1921 and 1923.

Curiously, however, the reciprocal intellectual context for Italian modernism in America has still barely begun its development. The existence of Italian writers who practised with experimental aesthetics, and in the same circles and periodicals as Pound, Williams, Hemingway, Alfred Kreymborg, Marianne Moore, Lola Ridge, Max Eastman, Floyd Dell and H. L. Mencken, often with profound influence, is yet to register in modernist studies. These Italians include the labour organiser and poet Arturo Giovannitti, who was a contributing editor to political periodicals such as *The Masses* (1911-17) and *The Liberator* (1918-1924) during the 1910s. It includes the radical, Greenwich Village feminist Francesca Vinciguerra, and the poet and essayist Emanuel Carnevali, who was a close associate of both Harriet Monroe and William Carlos Williams. It might also include second generation, 1930s Italian-American writers such as John Fante and Pietro di Donato who both involved themselves with the late modernist periodicals of H. L. Mencken, such as *The American Mercury* (1924-81). A range of criticism has examined these writers individually in order to better understand

their association with modernism in America. In this respect, their artistic preoccupations have been found to include radical politics, gender dynamics, Catholicism, spirituality and the meditative literary tradition. However, there is currently no historical or theoretical framework in which the work of Italian modernists in America can be analysed collectively.

This lack of Italian contributions to American literary modernism might be considered surprising in light of how complex and far-reaching an examination of modernist transnationalism has been undertaken in recent years. In the last twenty years, more than thirty titles have been published which seek to demonstrate how both the practice and the critiquing of modernism exceed the scope of national literary paradigms. These works include Jessica Berman's *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (2012), Matthew Hart's *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (2010) and Anita Patterson's *Race, American Literature and Transnational Modernisms* (2008). Such scholarship frequently combines investigations of transnational circulations in modernist aesthetics with a transnational ethic of reading modernism from an enlivened position of political responsibility. However, its ambition to focus on global modernist transnationalism, and thereby to avoid the Euro-American pathway into modernist studies, has left behind certain uneven and unaddressed migratory biases from within European modernism. That is to say, a decreased critical interest in circulations between 'major' and 'minor' participants in the cultures of modernism between the two continents of Europe and America leaves, in certain cases, an unrectified imbalance. In the pursuit of recovering modernist practices from outlying traditions and practices, some of the more obvious biases towards high modernism from within its original geographies have been left unaddressed and Italy, I propose, is a case in point. It might therefore be possible to recover a more representative critical relationship within which Italy exists as part of the American modernist context and, by extension, to ameliorate this imbalance in the field of transnational modernist studies.

I will look to begin addressing this oversight by outlining here how the current intellectual context, focused so heavily on American high modernism in Italy, might be incorporated into the more equilibrating one proposed by this project. In this chapter, I will review Peter Nicholls's concept of the 'lost object', which he applies to a reading of Pound's *The Pisan Cantos* (1948). Nicholls argues that Pound associates Italy with a lost dream, and that the Italian cantos reveal a writer psychologically shattered by the hope that the great past civilisations of Italy might be revived, only for Rome to fall a second time. Yet as I will demonstrate, this association of irreparable psychological loss and Italy is present in an extensive number of other American modernist works. These include the Prologue to William

Carlos Williams's *Kora in Hell* (1920) and his little read manuscript 'Rome' (1924). In these two works Williams represents Italy as a temporally unstable landscape in which the idols of Italian civilisation, from Dante to the great Roman consulates, appear together. Each conveys Williams attempt to textually reprise its lost culture, and his attempt to demonstrate the superiority of that culture over modern America. The same associations occur again in the imaginings of Sherwood Anderson's wistful protagonist in the short story 'Certain Things Last' (1916), as they do in Harold Loeb's decision to relocate *Broom* to Rome; Loeb laboured under the belief that it would lend the magazine the 'tang' of Italian civilisation absent in modern American art.

I will subsequently attempt to reconcile that context with one that emerges from a reading of criticism concerning Italian modernists in America. An understanding of this second context requires an evaluation of the theories and methods with which Italian writers such as Giovannitti, Carnevali, Vinciguerra, Fante and di Donato have so far been examined in an American modernist context. My first aim is to compete the difficult task of seeking out critically accepted commonalities in the approach of these writers to culture and aesthetics. A number of propositions have been made in terms of how to understand their individual works. For example, with regard to his novel *Ask the Dust* (1934), John Fante has been critiqued as a writer of such competing categorisations as romantic and grotesque modernism. He has also been associated with a meditative, spiritual tradition of writing associated with both T. S. Eliot and writers of the Middle Ages. Fante's Catholicism allies him with di Donato, but di Donato was a fiercely political writer, which is a valence absent in Fante's work but yet apparent in that of Giovannitti and Vinciguerra. Commonalities in respect of these writers can therefore appear unwieldy and difficult to determine.

However, the work of all three emigrant Italian writers, Giovannitti, Carnevali and Vinciguerra, contains impulses and tendencies recognisable in the practice of anarchism. Giovannitti and Vinciguerra were deeply influenced by the politics of the movement, which in itself was a significant contextual influence on radical avant-garde art in America during the 1910s. Moreover, as I will demonstrate, Carnevali's work was influenced by the pragmatic, philosophical anarchism cultivated by William James and Giovanni Papini in the first years of the twentieth century. Therefore an opportunity exists to read these writers as emigrant, anarchistic modernists in exile and, I suggest, anarchism is the context to take forward in a critique of these three writers. What makes anarchism particularly useful as a contact point is its relevance to the American writers who represented the 'lost object' of Italy in their modernist works. In fact, the confluence of anarchist and modernist impulses has been recognised in a number of significant works of modernist scholarship. A long history of

modernist criticism, beginning with Michael Levenson's *The Genealogy of Modernism* (1984), has demonstrated an association between egoist anarchism and Pound's Imagist modernism. Egoism was a creed of individualist anarchism taken up by Dorothy Marsden's journal *The Egoist* (1914-19), and which helped shape Pound's perspective on detachment and aesthetic self-containment. Furthermore, David Kadlec argues that Williams purveyed a modernism that was based on the anarchistic tendency towards anti-foundationalism. In other words, his experimental aesthetic shared with, and perhaps even derived itself from, anarchism's inherent objection to origins and fixed principles. There is evidence that Sherwood Anderson wished to align himself with the avant-garde anarchists of the early 1910s, as there is that Harold Loeb was influenced in taking *Broom* to Rome by his anarchist associate Mary Mowbray-Clarke.

In the final stage of this chapter, I will review the history of major criticism concerned with anarchist modernism in order to establish parameters for this project as well to locate omissions and shortcomings in the current literature that I might utilise the present study to address. Recent criticism has tended to focus on anarchist modernism in relation to either historical context, anarchist culture or aesthetic principles. Allan Antliff's *Anarchism Modernism* (2001) positions anarchism as a heavily influential contextual force on the New York avant-garde art movement between 1908 and 1920, and as an educational movement associated with painters such as Edward Carpenter and Man Ray. In *Anarchy & Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (1997), David Weir argues that anarchist politics transitioned directly into the culture of modernism, thus while the two movements could not co-exist, Weir contends, the presence of anarchism is evident in an array of egoistic modernist works produced by writers such as James Joyce and Hugo Ball. Finally, David Kadlec's *Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (2000) makes the case that the foundation for much of modernism's innovative aesthetic tendencies can be found in the European anarchist movements of the late nineteenth century. Ultimately, my aim in this chapter is to propose a new context, incorporating culture, principle and form, in which anarchism is present in a dynamic, transnational modernism reconciling the works of both American writers in Italy and Italian emigrant artists in America.

### **Italy and Loss in American Modernism**

Perhaps the most persistent representation of Italy in American expatriate modernist writings is that of a psychological geography, one expressing a sense of irreparable dispossession. Peter Nicholls uses the concept of the 'lost object' to describe Pound's 'idea of Italy' in *The Pisan Cantos* (1948). That idea, he argues, is based on Pound's narcissistic self-

identification with the downfall of Mussolini's fascist regime. In *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound's idea of Italy is rhetorically constructed from layers of complex memory and these layers, Nicholls suggests, are 'all bound up with Pound's loss of the Italian 'dream', as he calls it.'<sup>51</sup> The dream of Italy is manifested in its reimagined cultural legacy, shattered by the failure of *mussolinismo*, and twisted into a fugue-like mnemonic construct. Nicholls cites an interview Pound gave to the magazine *Belvedere* in 1931 that offers insight into his ambition to later represent Italy in such a way. It suggests he invoked such figures as Dante as exemplars of a supreme but lost cultural heritage. In this reading, Pound uses them to assert the qualitative disparity between a virile, reimagined Italian culture and the relative weakness of its modern, Anglophone equivalent. In the interview, Pound compares the historical Italy of 'new virility and continual growth' with a "tired" France and the "stupidity" of England:

The thing that most interests me in the world . . . is civilization, the high peaks of culture. Italy has twice civilized Europe. . . . Each time a strong, live energy is unleashed in Italy, a new renaissance comes forth.<sup>52</sup>

This reading develops a perspective first discussed by Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* (1971). Kenner identifies Cantos 25 and 36 as moments in which Pound invoked the supreme historical Venice of Titian. Kenner suggests that the city was not only artistically superior to Pound but in economic terms it was also possessed of an 'Venetian rationale'.<sup>53</sup> With this observation, Kenner refers to how Venice possessed a legislative resistance to fiscal usury and speculation that Pound believed to be lost in modern Anglo-American economics. Nicholls's 'lost object' evidently encompasses multiple senses of irreconcilability present in the *The Pisan Cantos* and its preceding works where Italy was concerned.

While Nicholls applies his concept of the 'lost object' as an idea of Italy only in relation to Pound and *The Pisan Cantos*, his concept speaks to the representation of Italy in the work of several other expatriate and travelling American modernist writers, including T. S. Eliot. Italy is frequently drawn by Eliot in constructions of transcultural memory. These memories solicit an escape from the Anglo-American tradition and they affirm a sense of its inferiority in relation to Italy's achievements in ancient, medieval and Renaissance culture. As Daniel Katz observes, it was not the modern Italy but its 'cultural heritages [that] American

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Nicholls, 'Lost Object(s): Ezra Pound and the Idea of Italy', *Ezra Pound and Europe*, eds. Richard Taylor and Claus Melchior, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), p. 165.

<sup>52</sup> Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 394.

modernists so frequently invoked in order to displace English cultural authority'.<sup>54</sup> For example, in Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915), '*The Waste Land*' (1922) and 'La Figlia Che Piange' (1917) Italy is memorialised but at the same time derealised. It is represented epigraphically, as a landscape of symbolic and superior cultural wisdom. Dante is invoked in the first of these three poems because Eliot considers the Italian's philosophy, he writes in *The Sacred Wood* (1921), as 'something perceived' in its totality through his poetry.<sup>55</sup> It was an achievement Eliot considered to be beyond the 'comparatively restricted' vision of modern poets.<sup>56</sup>

Yet Eliot's representations also contains a recurring sense of temporal instability. He occasionally assumes the role of a time traveller in Italy in search of such 'lost objects'. 'La Figlia Che Piange', the last poem to appear in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, takes its name from a funerary monument that Eliot looked for (but never found) during his time in northern Italy during 1911. The poem itself describes a parting between two temporally displaced lovers and is relived through the speaker's unstable recollection of a time occurring after one lover has departed:

She turned away, but with the autumn weather  
Compelled my imagination many days,  
Many days and many hours.<sup>57</sup>

Here a displaced memory exists in a state of temporal suspension within the narrator's personal reimagining. Additionally, the poem's Virgillian epigraph 'o quam te memorem virgo' ('by what name should I address you maiden?') conveys a sense of wisdom reaching into the present, a time in which the virgin qualities of the reimagined Italy are unrecognised. The idea of Italy is rhetorically expressed within a patchwork of memory that is explored in order to invoke its superior cultural legacy.

Eliot's representation of Italy in 'La Figlia Che Piange' therefore corresponds to a sense of lost love. Ronald Bush also recognises the association between geography and loss in the 'La Figlia Che Piange', describing it as 'a dramatic lyric that invokes the romance of Italy and at the same time suggests that the romance is irrecoverable, untranslatable'.<sup>58</sup> However,

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<sup>54</sup> Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 171.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Broadview Press, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ronald Bush, *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), p. 11.

Eliot's representation further corresponds to how desirable the old idea of Italian order seemed when set against the chaos of Europe during the First World War. It relates to Eliot's concept of the 'European mind', which made Italy a consistent concern in his critical essays. The mind of Europe that Eliot desired was one based on a common order and a common idea, expressing an organic tradition. In this mind, Italy offers both its romantic imagination and its (proto-fascist) model for order. Eliot looked particularly to Virgil's Rome and the Italy of Dante's medieval Christian Europe as a schematic for succession. The concept recurs constantly in his writings, but perhaps most prominently in his last review for the *Criterion* in January 1939. Eliot there laments a second loss of order in Europe and accepts that he 'mistakenly thought' the common European mind exemplified by Virgil and Dante 'might be renewed and fortified'.<sup>59</sup> Both Eliot's conceptualising over the 'mind of Europe' and 'La Figlia Che Piange' associate the idea of Italy initially with the promise of redemption but ultimately with its irrecoverability.

In 'La Figlia Che Piange' Eliot also expresses what C. Wright Mills terms the 'sociological imagination', described as a method by which individuals 'compare their personal biographies to larger social structures within their specific historical era'.<sup>60</sup> In this imaginary space, Eliot's concerns over a failure to regenerate the European mind relate to his personal, biographical experiences of Italy. Together with his wife Vivienne, Eliot travelled to Italy in 1919 and subsequently wrote a series of letters to his mother summarising the trip. Of Perigord (now the Dordogne), he recalled 'you feel at once that you are in a different country, more exciting, very southern, more like Italy'.<sup>61</sup> In this reportage, Italy is both an exemplary destination for European travel and a psychogeographical archetype. The relationship between Eliot's psychological and geographical situation becomes still clearer in his later travel letters. In 1922, he wrote to patron of the arts Lady Ottoline Morrell from the Castle Hotel in Tunbridge Wells, Kent that he was looking forward to an upcoming Italian trip which, he hoped, would 'save' him from another breakdown.<sup>62</sup> Ellyn Sanna's biographical essay notes that Eliot escaped to Italy once again in 1925 after leaving Vivienne in a health institute at a time when he was 'wrestling with his religious and marital convictions'.<sup>63</sup> In this context of these letters, 'La Figlia Che Piange' offers itself to a reading of Eliot's sociological imagination. It expresses Italy geographically as a construct of real and imagined spaces,

<sup>59</sup> Jason Harding, *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), p. 57.

<sup>60</sup> Doug Richardson et al. (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology, Volume XIII, Spa-T* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), p. 5783

<sup>61</sup> James E. Miller, Jr., *T. S. Eliot: The Making of an American Poet, 1918-1922* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 2005), p. 333.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>63</sup> Ellyn Sanna, 'Biography of T.S. Eliot', *T. S. Eliot*, Harold Bloom (ed.), (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), p. 28.



and of experiences both conscious and unconscious, assimilating issues of irredeemable personal and cultural loss.

Up to now, it has been easy to assume that the psycho-symbolic Italian imaginary in the poetry of Eliot and Pound reflected their mutual attraction to Italian fascism; that their landscapes of loss conveyed a craving for authoritarian order absent in the contemporary European situation. However, such a reading risks an over-simplification of this association between American modernism, Italy and loss, because the two writers were not alone in this correlation of concepts. The same relationship is also apparent in the work of William Carlos Williams. On two occasions, Williams featured Italy (and specifically Rome) in a state of temporal uncertainty, and threatened by loss, in a manner bound with up with his lived experiences, firstly in the Prologue to *Kora in Hell* (1920) and, secondly, in the manuscript 'Rome' (1924). The Rome of the Prologue was inspired by Williams's visit to the city with his brother Edgar in 1910. The manuscript 'Rome' was written later, during an extended trip to Europe, in between sessions Williams spent working on *In The American Grain* (1925). 'Rome' was later rediscovered by Stephen Ross Loevy and published by the *Iowa Review* in 1978, but it has since received relatively little critical attention.

Italy is a self-consciously unstable psychological construct in both of Williams's representations. In the Prologue, Rome is dizzying and disorientating. It is a psychologically terraformed landscape in which he imagines his mother lost, confused by 'the strangeness of every new vista.'<sup>64</sup> Similarly, 'Rome' is temporally volatile, tracking by fragmented turns the ancient and the medieval history of the city. Both works, the Prologue and 'Rome', express a similar sense of spatial consciousness to those found in the work Williams's literary peers. In each, he employs a reimagined historical Italy to affirm a positive sense of its cultural supremacy over modern America. The strength with which Roman culture is depicted in Williams's imaginings expresses a sense of its overwhelming predominance against the weaker, contemporary American equivalent. Williams depicts the city in 'Rome' as one allowing for the expression of violent freedoms, where artists and peasant live as heroes. Comparatively, America is described as experiencing the 'dark age of today',<sup>65</sup> in which its citizens worship the 'electric altars' (18) of celluloid projection. American genius, Williams argues, is superficial, produced only by 'cracking the seed' (22) and reproducing fecundative copies of classical literature. Williams summarises Italian cultural superiority with the simple epithet 'Rome knew better' (44).

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<sup>64</sup> William Carlos Williams, *Kora In Hell: Improvisations* (Boston: Four Seas Company, 1920), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> William Carlos Williams, 'Rome', ed. Stephen Ross Loevy. Rpt. in *Iowa Review* 9:3 (1978), p. 23.

'Rome' also anticipates two of the methods with which Pound would later represent Italy in *The Pisan Cantos*. The first is in its generation of a mythos around the historical figures of Roman culture. In the city of Williams's manuscript, pacing the streets are Capitolinus the consular tribune, Marcus Aurelius, Nero, the statesman and general Marcus Vispanius Agrippa, and the emperors Caracalla and Heliogabalus. A sense of instability is deepened by the temporal conflation that allows the Florentines Michelangelo and Lorenzo di Medici to occupy the same streets as these figures of Ancient Rome. Williams's representation of such figures precedes Pound mythologising the spectres of Mussolini and Sigismondo Malatesta in *The Pisan Cantos*. In Williams's representation, the city itself is a further 'lost object', being constituted of 'separate marble, buried in sand' (12) like a hidden, ancient treasure.

The second method by which Williams predates Pound is one that paradoxically also defines the uniqueness of his own project. Like Pound, he associates the historical Italy with potency and virility. Yet, for Williams its equivalent is not a weak but a syphilitic modern culture. Williams is able to reach for medical metaphors - what Brian Bremen refers to in an extended fashion as Williams's 'cultural diagnostic' - to express his belief in the importance of rooted, local culture from which art should be derived.<sup>66</sup> For Williams, Rome 'retained, among the hyacinths, dark violets, anemones and dry chestnuts [its] dialect' (54). It degenerated, he argues, like the liver, with blood flowing 'from the periphery toward the center' (32). The 'impoverished blood' (32) remaining in the abandoned periphery leads to stagnation and death. Uniquely among his peers, Williams affirms Ancient Rome as being driven by the vitalism of its native cultural production, that is, until its non-local centres were abandoned and its centre was poisoned. 'Rome' is a rallying cry against American culture becoming a footnote to what he describes as 'the long rambling poem of Europe' (63). With this declaration, Williams merges the totalising conception of Italy as a 'lost object', shared by Eliot and Pound, with his own pursuit of a localist literary culture.

Another writer whose work represents Italy on similar terms is Sherwood Anderson. Like Williams, Anderson's time in Europe was relatively brief, consisting of short trips to Paris in 1921 and 1926-27. As a chronicler of small town American life, he was not by any definition an expatriate modernist in the sense that Eliot and Pound were. Yet, his representations of Italy offer a unique stay-at-home perspective. Like Williams, Anderson projects a local sense of cultural difference onto his literary representation of Italy. In the short story 'Certain Things Last' (1920), Anderson narrates the autobiographical tale of a would-be Chicagoan trying to express in his work the unsettling sensation of modernity. It is a sense he describes as

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<sup>66</sup> See Brian A. Bremen, *Williams Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

'creeping more and more into my feeling about everyday life'.<sup>67</sup> Anderson sets the story against the backdrop of his 'dreary' (767) boyhood hometown in western Nebraska. However, 'Certain Things Last' rapidly transforms into a dream of Italy. It is a dream that allows the narrator to relieve the frustration of trying to capture unsettling provincial sensations:

My fancy went out of my body in a way of speaking, I suppose, and I began thinking of myself as being at that moment in a city in Italy. Americans like myself who have not traveled are always doing that. I suppose the people of another nation would not understand how doing it is almost necessity in our lives, but any American will understand. The American, particularly a middle-American, sits as I was doing at that moment, dreaming you understand, and suddenly he is in Italy. (770)

Italy is represented here as a lost dream for ordinary working mid-Westerners that provides an imaginary cultural escape from the narrator's attempts to understand the odd sensation of modern living. Yet, Italy is also explicitly associated here with a sense of understanding. To Anderson, Italy means clarity and in particular recovering the clarity of sensation. In the story, the narrator woos a woman and recognises how 'the perfume of Italian nights was in her hair' (771). This sensory mode of experience connects the narrator's dream of Europe that has come from 'across the seas' to an America which, he argues, exists in the absence of 'old stories and dreams of our own' (770). Italy is associated with irredeemable absence by, in Anderson, a largely non-travelling Middle American. In the context of American modernist writings, 'Certain Things Last' extends the association of Italy with loss, longing and irreconcilability as far and as deep as the dreams of small-town Nebraskans.

The commensurate relationship between Italy and 'lost objects' is also affirmed and enlarged upon by the journal *Broom*, which was one of the most significant periodicals connecting American and Italian centres of modernist literary culture. Its masthead declared it to be 'An International Magazine of the Arts Published by Americans in Italy'. The magazine was conceived of by the Guggenheim heir Harold Loeb in New York and first published in Rome in 1921. Loeb's editorial intention was to give American culture access to avant-garde Italian and other European art and literature, or in Loeb's words to give America 'the tang of Europe'.<sup>68</sup> However, as Michael North notes, to American modernists 'going to Europe was

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<sup>67</sup> Sherwood Anderson, 'Certain Things Last' *Collected Stories* (New York: The Library of America, 2012), p. 766.

<sup>68</sup> Harold Loeb, 'Broom: Beginning and Revival', *Connecticut Review*, 9 (1970), p. 5.

much the same as going back in time, away from the ugliness and sterility of modern life'.<sup>69</sup> Evidently, it was not modern European culture that Loeb intended to offer Americans, but a reimagined, historical and socially supreme Europe.

Loeb defined his vision for the magazine in a May 1922 editorial entitled 'Foreign Exchange'. As its editor, Loeb saw *Broom* as a vehicle for the 'new pilgrims of America', alongside the artists of modern Italy and wider Europe, to create a 'fusion and interaction of contrary ideals' that would result in a civilisation 'too marvellous to be hateful'.<sup>70</sup> Loeb begins 'Foreign Exchange' by suggesting that 'literature, as well as finance, is sensible to the trade balance', betraying his overvaluation of both the economic and the inter-cultural literary benefits of his relocation to Rome.<sup>71</sup> One facet of Loeb's misperception, and a principal reason for his relocation to Italy, was that the costs of producing such a magazine were thought to be lower than in the United States. His fellow publisher Alfred Kreymborg considered Italy to be 'famous for its paper and typography and for the much greater inexpensiveness of production in general', a statement affirming their belief in relocating not only geographically but also to an earlier moment of historical progress.<sup>72</sup> Loeb was surprised to discover the total cost of producing *Broom* was as high as it would have been anywhere else, and was further surprised that modern Europeans were often more interested in American jazz, cinema and skyscrapers than they were in their own cultural history. Therefore what Loeb also discovered, paradoxically, was that his vision of Italy was lost in an unfamiliar present.

Consequently, despite being first published in Rome, the magazine ultimately came to have remarkably little to do with modern Italy. French and German artists became the main influence on the ideology of *Broom*. Though it featured contributions from the Futurist Enrico Prampolini and the dramatist Luigi Pirandello, the impact of these writers through the magazine on an American audience was negligible. Michael North observes that the most significant work to appear in the magazine was American - six serialised chapters of Williams's *In the American Grain* were published between January 1923 and January 1924. By its final issue, the magazine had largely become a new locus for American writers like Williams to re-evaluate the needs of the modern American literary situation. The impetus to create an authentic Italian-American cultural contact point was what had ultimately been lost in Loeb's enterprise.

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<sup>69</sup> Michael North, 'Transatlantic Transfer: Little Magazines in Euro-American Modernism', The Modernist Atlantic Conference, De Montfort University, July 2007. Copy at [modmags.dmu.ac.uk/file/north\\_transatlantic\\_transfer.pdf](http://modmags.dmu.ac.uk/file/north_transatlantic_transfer.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Harold Loeb, 'Foreign Exchange', *Broom* 2 (1922), p. 176.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Alfred Kreymborg, *Troubadour: An Autobiography* (New York: Liveright, 1925), p. 363.

In the collective imaginary cultivated by Eliot, Pound, Williams and Anderson the representation of Italy as a culturally affirmative space that could redeem the failures and absences of the present consistently recurs. This remains true whether their work is concerned with the universal, the arcane and classical, the local and the provincial, the expatriate or stay-at-home, the elitist and authoritarian, or the socially representational. The 'lost object' is a pervasive, plurivocal vision of Italy in American modernist writing which has drawn the attention of major scholarship on expatriate modernism. It has been observed in the literary ambitions of travelling and non-travelling high modernists and in that of *Broom* editor Harold Loeb. Their idealised Italy was a model contrived to affirm its cultural superiority over their individual concerns about modern America and contemporary Anglophone art and literature. In these representations, Italian culture is used as a conceptual counternarrative offering the cultural optimist, disillusioned by modern American art, a sense of succession. The supremacy of a reimagined historical Italy was looked for in order to impose order on the fragmentation of modern life, to break its ennui with romanticism, and to affirm in the face of a weak modern culture that there had indeed been a pre-eminent artistic society. In other words, that the 'lost object' could be invoked and revived.

### **Anarchism as a New Context for Italy and American Modernism**

Distance and irreconcilability have characterised Italy in criticism of American expatriate modernist writing; but what, then, are the transnational methods and preoccupations of Italian avant-garde writers moving in the opposite direction? Several critics have attempted to interpret the individual work of first and second generation Italian writers in America such as John Fante, Pietro di Donato, Francesca Vinciguerra, Arturo Giovannitti and Emanuel Carnevali. Yet this task is no simple one because they are writers of quite different historical and biographical bearings. Giovannitti was born in Molise, in the south of Italy, and wrote politically-charged poetry related to his experiences as a labour organiser in Massachusetts. Vinciguerra was Sicilian but lived and worked in the bohemian artistic circles of Greenwich Village. Writing in the 1930s, John Fante and Pietro di Donato produced novels concerning the working-class communities into which they born in New Jersey and Colorado. Owing to their very different experiences as ethnic migrant artists, little would appear to organise their artistic practices under a single set of cultural or conceptual terms. Collectively, they were concerned with industrialisation, sexual politics, the American literary idiom, the city, Symbolism and Dada which, along with their individual experimental literary modes. The difficulty lies in finding an adherent context for their individual practices, suggesting perhaps

one reason why their work has never been collectively codified in the field of American modernist or transnational avant-garde studies.

A number of efforts have been made to relate these writers to literary modernism on an individual basis. As the most popularly-read, John Fante has received the largest share of scholarly attention even though, as a writer of 1930s Los Angeles he is, in some respects, the least affiliated to the modernist movements of America. In his 'John Fante: The Burden of Modernism and the Life of His Mind' (1997), Jay Martin argues that modernism operated as a leitmotif in Fante's novels. In other words, he argues that Fante wrote against a modernist backdrop that he was burdened by inheriting. In this reading, modernism appeared as a recurring refrain in his writings, rather than it being a movement Fante was actively working from within. This is a contestable assertion because Fante was heavily influenced by working with H. L. Mencken for *The American Mercury* during the early 1930s. Therefore, I suggest it is more accurate to place Fante's work within the late modernism cultivated by Mencken and Pound in the *Smart Set* between 1914 and 1923. Martin further argues that Fante was never convinced 'that he should abandon experimental modernism, as others were doing, to compose a literature of radical politics [or] proletarian protest'.<sup>73</sup> If this assertion is true, it suggests that Fante had little awareness of the previous generation of Italians such as Arturo Giovannitti whose work combined radical politics with experimental poetics, and as such it positions Fante at an even greater literary distance from the other artists identified in this project.

According to Martin's reading, Fante was able to 'develop and fuse in his work' two undeveloped streams of modernism.<sup>74</sup> The first of these was the autobiographical romance. The second was a form of novel writing which centres around the foolish and grotesque, and which offers a critique of 'modern mental and social life'.<sup>75</sup> Martin also makes the claim that Fante's modernist work exists within a tradition of Catholic meditative writing. His essay contends that the 16th century Catholic theologian St Ignatius of Loyola, author of *Spiritual Exercises* (1522-24), was an antecedent to modernism through Donne, Herbert and Crashaw's influence on Yeats, Eliot and, additionally, on Fante. Martin builds a convincing argument that Fante's Catholic education and knowledge of St Ignatius equipped him with the tools for writing in the form of a devotional meditative practice.

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<sup>73</sup> Jay Martin, 'John Fante: The Burden of Modernism and the Life of His Mind', *John Fante: A Critical Gathering*, Stephen Cooper and David Fine (eds.), (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

However, evidence of Fante writing within a specifically meditative tradition that constituted any element of his modernist aesthetic is much weaker. Martin argues that 'Fante's mind moves into a meditative process', but this is not enough in itself to suggest his work operated in the same framework of meditative subjectivity that Eliot defined in 'The Three Voices of Poetry' (1954) and executed in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'La Figlia Che Piange'.<sup>76</sup> There is little in Fante's work to substantiate the claim that he was influenced by Eliot's revival of meditative literature, or by the acute self-consciousness and the unification of sensibility exhibited in such poems. While Eliot and Fante both produced poetry that was structurally related to their experiences of Catholic devotional and artistic practices, as modernist-meditative literature their work bears little relation. Fante was more interested in returning directly to St Loyola and in creating characters whose subjectivity engulfed them in Catholic devotion as a precursor to reuniting them with the divine. This is true of his semi-autobiographical character 'John Fante' in the novel *Full of Life* (1952) whose consciousness is described as lost 'in the deep drift, like waves returning to the shore.'<sup>77</sup> It is also true of his novella *Ask the Dust* (1939), in which its protagonist Arturo Bandini possesses a subjective eye that embodies the consciousness of the universe during an earthquake. However, Martin is able to provide little evidence affirming his conviction that Fante went back through modernism to the meditative tradition of devotional literature. His writing-as-practice appears to stem from a more pragmatic and ethnically-rooted Catholic inheritance. On that basis, his ethnic inheritance positions Fante's novels as an outlier of this element of Anglo-American modernism.

Another Fante critic, George Guida, offers an alternative cultural pathway along which his work can be traced back through modernism to a tradition of medieval literary practice. Guida argues that modernists inherited a mode of representing the deification of women from Provençal troubadours such as Guido Cavalcanti. Furthermore, he suggests that modernists expressed this tradition by representing the chaos of modernity in counterbalance with a sense of order centred around a male protagonist objectifying an unobtainable female figure of desire. According to Guida, Eliot's Prufrock persona and his speaker in 'La Figlia Che Piange', Hemingway's Jake Barnes, Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby and Fante's Arturo Bandini all centre meaning around the 'apocalyptic fulfilment' of unrequited desire.<sup>78</sup> In *Ask the Dust*, Bandini is a struggling writer who lives in a hotel in Los Angeles when his desire becomes focused on the emotionally mercurial, Mexican-American waitress

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>77</sup> John Fante, *Full of Life* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1988), p. 158.

<sup>78</sup> George Guida, 'In Imagination of the Past: John Fante's *Ask the Dust* as Italian-American Modernism', *John Fante: A Critical Gathering*, eds. Stephen Cooper and David Fine (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 133.

Camilla Lopez. The dark subjectivity of Bandini's unfulfilled pursuit of Camilla ensues, only to be ended by her disappearing mysteriously into the Mojave desert late in the novel. In each case, the essay argues, women in these works function comparatively with one another as a stabilising force that counteracts the subjective chaos of male physical and psychological impotence.

Yet, Guida's suggestion that 'Fante commingles the modernist deification of women with Italian and Italian American Madonna worship' creates more uncertainty than it resolves.<sup>79</sup> Once again, Fante's modernism and his ethnicity sit uneasily together. The contextualisation of his work with Eliot, Hemingway and Fitzgerald is far more associative than it is recognisable in a specific, literary sense. For example, Guida cites Eliot's hyacinth girl of 'La Figlia Che Piange' who 'offers only "the smell of hyacinths across the garden / Recalling the things that other people have desired"'.<sup>80</sup> As a comparison, he suggests that Camilla Lopez, Bandini's object of desire, provides him only 'fleeting beauty like the love of some dead girl'.<sup>81</sup> A definition of Fante's modernism is implied through such impalpable associations. No attempt is subsequently made to entrench these concepts more securely or to explore equivalent Italian emigrant writing in order to establish a sense of ethnic continuity. Guida offers the following summation of the aesthetic tradition within which his essay attempts to categorise Fante's work alongside that of Eliot, Hemingway and Fitzgerald:

It is not difficult to see how *Ask the Dust*, Fante's sad tale of alienation and rejection, stands at the confluence of modernist and Italian-American literary currents, marking their junction in a tragic theme: union with woman as a means of moral and spiritual fulfilment for the culturally bifurcated ethnic in modern American, as well as for the war-ravaged expatriate, the amoral tycoon, or the alienated poetic speaker.<sup>82</sup>

Contrary to Guida's claim, however, it is unclear whether the author is examining a cross-current within modernism or whether he believes that these writers share an unrelated but common inheritance. Further difficulties arise in discerning exactly what the critic believes to be specifically modernist about the form of unrequited love and spiritual fulfilment he identifies in this essay. The contextual differences between these four protagonists and their creators, and even more so between the writers and their Provencal forebears, are

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 142.



significant, making it difficult to delineate a tradition that Fante either belongs within or has embraced in his writing.

Nevertheless, one can identify certain advanceable characteristics from Martin and Guida's analyses, which remain the only two essays to extensively analyse Fante's writings in a modernist context. Associations with autobiographical romance and the grotesque, the grounding of the male protagonist's subjectivity in unrequited desire, his ethnically-situated Catholicism and his method of writing as devotional meditative practice suggest a unique constellation of determinants. That is to say, they are collectively unique to their particular work, even if those determinants are not individually unique to the work of other avant-garde Italian writers in America.

For example, Paul Giles situates Pietro di Donato as one of three major Catholic modernist novelists alongside Theodore Dreiser and James T. Farrell. Both di Donato and Fante were second-generation immigrants whose parents emigrated from the Abruzzo region of southern Italy and whose fathers were labourers in the construction industry. Perhaps, then, we might expect the literary expression of their Catholicism to bear traces of their similar material, cultural environments. Giles describes a tragedy that befalls the workers of di Donato's novel *Christ in Concrete* (1939) when, due to negligent executive management a building collapses upon them, as one that 'allows for Catholic patterns of martyrdom to reinvent themselves'.<sup>83</sup> Conceptually, this description bears comparison with Arturo Bandini's earthquake-shaken Catholic universe in Fante's *Ask the Dust*. Yet, beyond this point, Fante and di Donato's respective expressions of Catholicism are categorically different forms of religious modernism. Giles recognises that di Donato reinvents his patterns of martyrdom very directly and very deliberately 'in a socioeconomic context'.<sup>84</sup> In other words, di Donato's text carries a political valence that Fante's does not.

What separates the two writers still further is that the political charge Giles identifies in *Christ in Concrete*, and what differentiates it from Fante's work, comes as more than a matter of social context. After all, Arturo Bandini is a reluctant cannery worker in an industry of oppressed, exploited migrants. The difference is conveyed much more acutely in their aesthetic models. Whereas Fante employs his meditative form to connect Bandini's subjectivity to the Catholic universe, di Donato's manipulates, breaks up and compresses his

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<sup>83</sup> Paul Giles, *American Catholic Arts and Fictions: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 167.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

aesthetic in a deliberate act of political resistance. Giles describes this act in the following terms:

Di Donato's narrative proceeds in a lumbering, mechanical prose style that is in fact mimetic of the world it describes, in this case the world of Italian Americans working in the New York construction industry. Di Donato is building blocks of prose, as it were, to recapitulate formally the crushing of human individuality by the brutal economic and industrial forces of America.<sup>85</sup>

The focus here on mechanical mimesis is useful in allowing di Donato's aesthetic to be structurally categorised. Yet, the suggestion that only the industrial, capitalist and economic forces of America that are conveyed as responsible for crushing humans in the novel contains an omission. Later in life, di Donato would say of his work that it was his 'revenge on society' and his 'answer to all the nonsense of authority and of Church'.<sup>86</sup> When the construction labourers of *Christ in Concrete* are diabolically crushed there are multiple forces functioning metonymically in the crushing process, not simply economic ones. While Geremio's body is strangled by concrete, his mind is asphyxiated by fragmented, parataxic thoughts about salvation:

blessed Father -- salvation, most kind Father -- Saviour -- Saviour of his Children, help me -- adored Saviour -- I kiss your feet eternally -- you are my Lord -- there is but one God -- you are my God of infinite mercy -- Hail Mary divine Virgin -- Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy -- name -- our Father -- my Father.<sup>87</sup>

Di Donato also considered the Church to hold a monopoly over truth and individuality. It is the church here which is positioned as the executioner in Geremio's psychological and spiritual strangulation, while the building site physically encases him.

Evidently, di Donato's asphyxiatory Catholicism sits uneasily and unsatisfactorily alongside Fante's universalist spiritualism, which obstructs the search for their shared methods and preoccupations. Attempts to unify them within other critical categorisations tend to fall down for similar reasons. Joseph Entin considers *Christ in Concrete* to fall within a strain of

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>86</sup> Dorothea Von Huene-Greenburg, 'A MELUS Interview: Pietro di Donato', *MELUS*, 14.3-4 (1987), p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> Pietro Di Donato, *Christ in Concrete* (Indianapolis; New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939), p. 29.

modernism that he terms 'the aesthetic of astonishment'.<sup>88</sup> Entin also includes William Carlos Williams, Tillie Olsen and Richard Wright in a group of writers who, he argues, deliberately portray startling, graphic images of pain, injury, and prejudice. For its part, *Christ in Concrete* employs 'sensational images of wounded, disfigured proletarian bodies'.<sup>89</sup> There is some correlation here with Fante's *Ask the Dust*, wherein a Jewish housekeeper, and Bandini's sometime lover, Vera Rivkin suffers grievous disfigurements to her lower body which are graphically and shockingly described, especially so as they occur within scenes of great intimacy. Again, though, if Bandini experiences Vera's deformations as he did the earthquake - that is, as a moral levelling of his universe and with a sense of his own, punishable internal corruption - this representation is quite different from those in *Christ in Concrete*. In di Donato's novel, according to Entin, its 'compressions, fractures and deformations', both aesthetic and corporeal, serve as 'highly charged figures of political protest'.<sup>90</sup> Like Giles, Entin recognises a political valence in *Christ in Concrete* which is absent in *Ask the Dust*. It would appear that despite their shared socioeconomic ethnicity, as modernists Fante and di Donato are incompatibly variable.

In fact, Entin's analysis indirectly associates di Donato's aesthetic much more closely with another writer, Arturo Giovannitti, despite their respective major works, *Christ in Concrete* (1939) and *Arrows in the Gale* (1914) being published more than twenty five years apart. Entin writes the following concerning di Donato's employment of literary devices for political ends:

Mixing a naturalist approach emphasising oppressive social forces with avant-garde techniques of rhetorical innovation and estrangement [he] creates monstrous incarnations of modernisms in which experimental formal devices are deployed to narrate the material contradictions of history that high modernism typically seeks to transcend or suppress.<sup>91</sup>

In the following example of this approach in *Christ in Concrete*, Snoutnose, Ashes-ass and Lean, all members of the Italian labouring crew, experience the effect of the crushing:

The men were transformed into single, silent beasts. Snoutnose steamed

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<sup>88</sup> Joseph Entin, *Sensational Modernism: Experimental Fiction and Photography in Thirties America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press) p. 262.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

through ragged mustache whip-lashing sand into mixer Ashes-ass dragged  
under four-by-twelve beam Lean clawed wall knots jumping in jaws masonry  
crumbled dust billowed thundered choked.<sup>92</sup>

Di Donato mimetically reflects their suppression by using his voice to embody the material oppression wrought by the concrete. This passage contains no more than a series of adjacent words of equal, pyrrhic power in which the value of words has been reduced to the consistency of a machine. The second sentence bears resemblance to the following stanza, which begins Giovannitti's radical industrial poem 'O Labor of America: Heartbeat of Mankind' (1918):

Come then, come now, sweat, sooty red-eyed, flame-scorched vestals of the  
eternal fire of steel and coal and steam and wood, and stone and tools that  
make bread and surcease from want and woe.<sup>93</sup>

What distinguishes them though is that Di Donato manipulates the significance of linguistic and aural values in order to literalise the mimesis of 'human machines' in his aesthetic model.

Furthermore, the differing politics of early and late modernism tend to be additionally divisive in the works of di Donato and Giovannitti. Each shared an ambition to encode the struggle against oppressive modern social systems into verse or prose. However, as Entin argues, di Donato sets out 'to critique traditional modes of representing the poor and to fashion alternative aesthetic forms that convey the force of social violence without objectifying or romanticizing the working class.'<sup>94</sup> In contrast, Benoît Tadié writes in his contribution to the *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of the Modernist Magazines* (2012) that Giovannitti had a tendency to indulge in a 'revolutionary Romanticism' after the Bolshevik uprising of October 1917.<sup>95</sup> Their attempts to aesthetically mimic situations of suppressed freedom are divided in the critical literature by the era of which their work is characteristic. Hestor Furey writes of Giovannitti as an imagistic poet who used single images 'to reinterpret those larger technologies of power which dispute truth and and are supposed to offer freedom'.<sup>96</sup> In

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<sup>92</sup> Di Donato, p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> Arturo Giovannitti, *Arrows in the Gale & Other Poems* (Niantic, CT: Quale Press, 2004), p. 57.

<sup>94</sup> Entin, p. 143.

<sup>95</sup> Benoît Tadié, 'The Masses Speak', *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of the Modernist Magazines: Volume II, North America 1894-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 843.

<sup>96</sup> Hestor Furey, 'The Reception of Arturo Giovannitti's Poetry and the Trial of a New Society', *Left History* (1993), p. 35.

contrast, Loredana Polezzi's interpretation of di Donato's language use reflects its place in a post-Eisensteinian era of montage and hybridity:

Pietro di Donato constructs the language of his tale and that of his characters by mixing registers and styles, so that Biblical tones, modernist experimentalism and the everyday language of New York builders sit side by side.<sup>97</sup>

Polezzi also cites transliteration as a significant aspect of his modernist form, noting that di Donato often rendered 'into English the rhythms and the expressions of the migrants' plural, strongly regional and dialectal Italian'.<sup>98</sup> Di Donato himself corroborates Polezzi's position on the importance of transliteration, writing 'by virtue of not having had an education, I can be direct and literal and translate literally.... without any thought of grammar ... that's why it looks so different and so original.'<sup>99</sup> Giovannitti, by contrast, had a privileged education and his poetry, like that of other early modernist writers, often self-consciously reinterpreted the rhythms of European and American literary movements from antiquity through to Futurism. In these terms, history is a factor that sets the modernist methodologies of Di Donato and Giovannitti apart at an irrecoverable variance.

If one objective of this chapter is to establish a context or contact point to unify the work Italian modernists in America, the works of these three writers seem particularly unyielding with respect to this ambition. Evidently, the modernisms of Fante and di Donato are neither compatible with one another in a political sense, and nor with earlier modernisms due to an insurmountable historical divide. It is left then to establish whether the writings of emigrant Italians Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali might offer critical commonalities. Giovannitti's poetry contains a number of affirmative qualities that might be set comparatively against that of his peers. Attributes unique to Giovannitti have been recognised in readings of his work, such as Hestor Furey's essay 'The Reception of Arturo Giovannitti's Poetry and the Trial of a New Society' (1994). Furey positions Giovannitti as a poet of the judicial system. She argues that 'The Cage' (1913) and 'The Walker' (1914) are exemplars of the modernist long poem that each criticise the power of rationalism, society and language. Furey also contends that certain aspects of Giovannitti's interest in radical politics are identifiable from how his poems

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<sup>97</sup> Loredana Polezzi, 'Of Migrants and Working Men: How Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete* Travelled Between the US and Italy Through Translation', Memory: Migrations and Translations Conference, University of Warwick, November 2014. Copy at [www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/ehrc/events/memory/polezzifinalpietrodidonato.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/ehrc/events/memory/polezzifinalpietrodidonato.pdf)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Von Huene-Greenburg, p. 35.

celebrate industrialism while attacking 'the old logic of law and order' to which capitalism is bound.<sup>100</sup>

Both Furey and Joseph Harrington conclude that reinterpretations of Giovannitti's poetry have been overdetermined by his public image as a labour organiser and a freedom fighter. According to Harrington, this is a key reason why Giovannitti has 'suffered critical neglect after the codification of the modernist canon'.<sup>101</sup> Harrington argues, however, that doubts regarding Giovannitti's association with modernism are merely questions of taste that can be easily overcome. He cites claims that Giovannitti's early poetry was too oratorical, too confused by a mixture of poetry and rhetoric and too caught in the liminality of ideality and ideology. Yet he counters these claims by making two comparisons between Giovannitti's poetry and that of Wallace Stevens. He argues, firstly, that Giovannitti's 'view of man's inhumanity to man is not much less abstract (or pessimistic) than Stevens' treatment', and secondly that, 'not unlike Stevens' Giovannitti 'idealises the political and turns "private" poetry into public utterance'.<sup>102</sup> Harrington attributes the second factor to Giovannitti's work temporally bridging Edwardian and modernist art, allowing him to also bridge the private and public or social roles of verse writing. Turning specifically to his aesthetic model, Harrington puts forward the idea that Giovannitti's early poetry anticipates the modernist use of 'rough speech' and other seditious literary methods in order to sabotage the received canons of taste, making it an exemplar of the 'new and unstable meanings poetry took in the United States' in that period.<sup>103</sup> Harrington is supported in this argument by Cary Nelson who also situates Giovannitti's verse as a modernism operating in the field of American modernist protest poetry.<sup>104</sup> Significantly, therefore, all three Giovannitti critics cited here, Furey, Harrington and Nelson all agree that politics and protest are central to understanding his modernism, even if they are not in precise accord regarding how comprehensively it should define his work.

One caveat that should be noted, though, is that Giovannitti's politics appeared to change significantly after the Russian Revolution, and the criticism of his post-1917 work reflects that. Benoit Tadié associates Giovannitti with the ideologically 'fragile and paradoxical

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<sup>100</sup> Furey, p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Joseph Harrington, *Poetry and the Public: The Social Form of Modern U.S. Poetics* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), p. 106.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>104</sup> Cary Nelson, *Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory 1910-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

foundations of the *Masses*'.<sup>105</sup> What Tadié essentially refers to is how the different purveyors of radical leftist politics that came together under the banner of that periodical, including Giovannitti, were willing to abandon their various leftist principles after the Bolshevik revolution and declare the struggle for freedom won. The post-revolutionary Giovannitti is cited by Adam McKible as a creator of utopian literary-political spaces. In this respect, McKible is particularly concerned with the poem 'May Day in Moscow' (1921), in which Giovannitti depicts a scene of 'sunlight and silence' containing a bare-headed populace waiting to 'welcome the Red Army home'.<sup>106</sup> To analyse either the early or the later verse of Giovannitti in isolation is to overlook two very different career stages that each reflect a very different poetics, yet it is sufficient for now to acknowledge that in both periods he was deeply concerned with revolutionary politics.

While Giovannitti's political poetry remained on the periphery of modernist production throughout his literary career, the work of Carnevali takes us into the cultural heart of American literary modernism. Melba Cuddy-Keane notes that Carnevali's 1918 poem 'As He Sees It' was the first to include each of the words modern, modernism and modernity.<sup>107</sup> It is little acknowledged that Carnevali was a hidden hand in shaping certain modernist practices in America, particularly those associated with William Carlos Williams and the little magazine *Others* in the late 1910s. Erin Templeton's work helps to develop our understanding of how this took place. In fact, Templeton was the first to make Carnevali the central subject of a modernist critique instead of an interesting diversion in the life of Williams or Carl Sandburg, as previous readings had done. Prior to Templeton's review, Carnevali's work had received little sustained attention. Gregory Baptista's essay 'Between Worlds' cites Carnevali as a major contributor to the Paris-based expatriate periodical *This Quarter* in the late 1920s.<sup>108</sup> Ironically, however, Carnevali had already made more than more than forty contributions to stay-at-home American journals such as *Poetry* and *Others*. Elsewhere, critics of Italian American literature Dennis Barone and Mario Dominichelli briefly describe Carnevali's engagement with modernism as 'conflictual'<sup>109</sup> and as a 'a violent shake'<sup>110</sup> respectively.

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<sup>105</sup> Tadié, p. 50.

<sup>106</sup> Adam McKible, *The Space and Place of Modernism: The Little Magazine in New York* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 35

<sup>107</sup> Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Modernism: Keywords* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p. 127.

<sup>108</sup> Gregory Baptista, 'Between Worlds', *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of the Modernist Magazines: Volume II, North America 1894-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 690.

<sup>109</sup> Emanuel Carnevali, *Furnished Rooms*, ed. by Dennis Barone (New York, NY: Bordighera Press, 2006), p. 91.

<sup>110</sup> Mario Dominichelli, 'Emanuel Carnevali's 'great goodbye'', *Beyond the Margins: Readings in Italian Americana* (New York: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 1998), p. 83.

However, Templeton's essay was the first to recognise that this sense of conflict was a deliberate contrivance on Carnevali's part. His poetry and essays put him in conversation with Williams and Pound but, as Templeton observes, Carnevali set himself up as a direct counterpoint to those writers. He operated within the inner circles of avant-garde cultural production in New York and Chicago, but once inside he utilised his outsider status in order to establish his literary credentials. Conflict and contradictions define Templeton's reading of Carnevali's modernism, as it does the readings of other critics. On the one hand, she writes, his work 'gives us a unique point of view from which to examine the urban experience in post-war New York and Chicago: the immigrant perspective'.<sup>111</sup> On the other, Templeton extols Carnevali's virtues as a poet of nature, observing that his autobiography 'has several rapturous descriptions of natural beauty, from the hills of Indiana to the shores of Lake Michigan'.<sup>112</sup> Carnevali's interest in deriving an American literary idiom from the native landscape allied Carnevali with William Carlos Williams but, as Eric White argues, Carnevali 'symbolised the recrudescence failure of Williams and *Others* to launch a truly American avant-garde'.<sup>113</sup> Carnevali was no more sparing nor less contradictory in his attacks on Futurism. He decried the 'cheap' and 'bourgeois bombast' of the movement while, Templeton notes, praising its function as a 'harbinger of modernity and modern consciousness'.<sup>114</sup>

For Templeton, such countervailing issues are apparent at the most fundamental level of content and form in Carnevali's verse. Her reading takes account of his metaphysical poetic ambitions, arguing that Carnevali intended to 'figure out a way to represent the entirety of twentieth century experience: Heaven, Hell, and purgatorial points in between'.<sup>115</sup> At the same time, Templeton posits that Carnevali's illness forced him to confront his own finite material destiny, bringing to the fore a sense of corporeality and 'the perspective of one whose body had begun to fail'.<sup>116</sup> Suzanne Churchill also recognises both contradiction and corporeality in Carnevali's work, summarising his aesthetic as a 'vivid, torpid prose, characterised by an aestheticization of suffering and a glorification of dissipation', and as representative of his waning spiritual-physical condition.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Erin E. Templeton, "'For Having Slept Much the Dead Have Grown Strong": Emanuel Carnevali and William Carlos Williams.' *William Carlos Williams Review*. 30 (2013), p. 152.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>113</sup> Eric White, *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 89.

<sup>114</sup> Templeton, p. 145.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>117</sup> Suzanne W. Churchill, *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 127.



Undoubtedly, Carnevali found several points of conflict with his modernist peers. Perhaps Carnevali's fiercest assaults were reserved for what he considered the obsession, as he saw it, with poetic technique. In other attacks, Carnevali took a Rimbaudian position and accused Pound and Williams of forfeiting the openness and the power of youth in favour of age and seclusion. This continuing conflict supports Templeton's perspective on Carnevali's modernism, but it also supports that of Stephen Burt who reads his verse exclusively as a 'poetry of adolescence'. Burt describes youth as Carnevali's 'principle of literary interpretation'.<sup>118</sup> However, such a reading contravenes the deteriorating sense of Carnevali's corporeality in his later verse. As Churchill observes, Carnevali was not only a counterpoint to Williams's poetic ideologies, but also a wiser and more dynamic 'specter of his younger self'.<sup>119</sup> This circuit of contradiction is perhaps one explanation for the lack of extended critical attention Carnevali has received, and for the failure of any critic to so far make a truly representative reading of Carnevali's modernism.

These contradictory characteristics of Carnevali - youth and death, insider and outsider, conflict and co-operation, poet of the urban and the natural, lyricist of the metaphysical and the corporeal, supporter and derider of futurism - also make it difficult to conceptualise him alongside the other Italian emigrant writers with which this project is concerned. Carnevali was a ghetto poet like Giovannitti, who also suffered extreme privation during his early years in New York, but Carnevali was rarely interested in direct political action outside the capacity of a writer to supercede politics with art. His literary devices also never served direct political ends, putting his verse at odds in that sense with the sexual politics inherent to the poetry of Francesca Vinciguerra. To a limited extent, Carnevali and Giovannitti shared an inheritance of European literary tradition in their work. However, on the basis of these characteristics alone it appears doubtful that any single theory, philosophy, practice or historical movement could bring any of these modernists together in conversation.

Nevertheless, a concept that embodies all four of these terms, and with which I propose to attempt to do precisely that, is anarchism. Anarchism played a role in shaping many of the twentieth century movements later termed modernist. Indeed, at some point it engaged both of the American writers and the emigrant Italian writers discussed in this chapter. Obvious waypoints include the early syndicalist verse that Arturo Giovannitti wrote before his turn to Bolshevism in 1917. They include Francesca Vinciguerra's anarchist feminist 'tanka' poetry,

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<sup>118</sup> Stephen Burt, *The Forms of Youth: Twentieth-century Poetry and Adolescence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 26.

<sup>119</sup> Churchill, p. 127.

published by the *Liberator* in 1920, which was influenced by her acquaintance with other Greenwich Village immigrant anarchists such as Lola Ridge and Sadakichi Hartmann. I argue that Emanuel Carnevali's poetry is principally founded on a combination of Italian anarchist and pragmatist principles. In his posthumously published autobiography, Carnevali wrote of his school days in northern Italy: 'I was believed to be either an anarchist or a futurist, the two things being strange linked.'<sup>120</sup> Yet the American modernists I have referenced could no more escape anarchism's influence either at home or abroad. Sherwood Anderson affiliated himself with anarchism in an early issue of the *Little Review*, a periodical founded by the anarchist (at the time of its founding at least) Margaret Anderson. In an essay entitled 'The New Note' (1914), Anderson aligns himself philosophically with young contributors to the magazine who he describes as 'the soldiers of the new', and as 'ardent young cubists and futurists, anarchists, socialists and feminists.'<sup>121</sup> At the same time in London, the individualist anarchism of the German philosopher Max Stirner was being channeled through Dora Marsden's periodical *The Egoist* and into Imagism. Even Harold Loeb's decision to relocate to Italy was influenced by the anarchist Mary Mowbray-Clarke. Her insistence, in Loeb's recollection, that 'profit had an evil connotation' forced him to sell his shares in the struggling New York bookshop The Sunwise Turn in 1921, which catalysed his departure to Europe in search of more cost-effective publishing opportunities.<sup>122</sup>

Evidently, therefore, the intersection of anarchism and modernism is not without critical precedent. Yet neither anarchism as a singular concept, nor any particular strain of it - social, mutualist or individualist - has had a particularly comfortable critical relationship with modernism. One of the first scholars to draw attention to the intersection between anarchism and modernism was Michael Levenson, who writes in *A Genealogy of Modernism* (1984) of his ambition 'to point out that modernism was individualist before it was anti-individualist, inclined to anarchism before it was inclined to authoritarianism'.<sup>123</sup> Levenson's argument was not followed up on until a special edition of *Modernism/modernity* on anarchism was published in April 1995. In that issue, Arthur Redding analyses the effect of the anarchist on the 'dream life' of modernist fiction from Thomas Hardy onwards. Redding argues that the 'spectral figure of the anarchist was to continue to haunt the modernist imagination' and that the 'bomb-throwing anarchist functions as the unspeakable object of dread in early

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<sup>120</sup> Emanuel Carnevali, *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali*, ed. Kay Boyle (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>121</sup> Sherwood Anderson, 'The New Note', *Little Review*, 1 (1914), p. 23.

<sup>122</sup> Qtd in Huw Osborne (ed.), *The Rise of the Modernist Bookshop: Books and the Commerce of Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 51.

<sup>123</sup> Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 79.

modernist and premodernist fiction'.<sup>124</sup> Elsewhere in the same issue, Patricia Leighton recognises an inherent confluence of art and anarchism in the Paris salons frequented by Picasso, Kupka and Kees van Dogen. Meanwhile, Robert Von Hallberg identifies 'derivatives of anarchist and syndicalist thought' in the intellectual context in which Imagism was initially written and interpreted.<sup>125</sup> However, despite this important work there remained no identified, practically anarchistic literary modernism.

Since the publication of that special edition, three major works have attempted to further interrogate the relationship between anarchism and modernism. The first of these to be published was David Weir's *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism*. Weir is skeptical concerning how anarchism and modernism could co-exist in a formalistic sense, arguing that there is a fundamental fissure in modernist culture between revolutionary art and revolutionary politics, between activists who were 'engaged in the destruction of the old social order' and writers who were 'involved in the creative work of capturing life anew' in poetry and prose.<sup>126</sup> According to this argument, the two groups operated in a circuit of mutually reinforcing activity but rarely operated in the same circles. Weir summarises his thesis as follows:

Anarchist ideology and modernist culture have something in common that keeps them apart. Despite such common values as heterogeneity and autonomy, the anarchist realization of these values in social form is one thing, their modernist expression in aesthetic form another. Because of this important distinction, radical politics and radical art usually proceed along different lines in the modernist period, a certain shared sensibility notwithstanding.<sup>127</sup>

In this reading, the relationship between anarchism and modernism is essentially a dialectical one. It suggests that the two movements only co-existed at all during the moment in which anarchistic philosophy developed historically into a modernist aesthetic, and from then on they remained locked in a divided interdependence.

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<sup>124</sup> Arthur Redding, 'The Dream Life of Political Violence: Georges Sorel, Emma Goldman, and the Modern Imagination', *Modernism/modernity*, 2.2 (1995), p. 2.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Von Hallberg, 'Libertarian Imagism', *Modernism/modernity*, 2.2 (1995), p. 63.

<sup>126</sup> David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Weir, p. 8.

Despite his belief in the strong distinction between radical anarchism and radical modernism, Weir identifies some key works that he argues capture transitional moments between each. He posits the triangulum of Dora Marsden, her journal *The Egoist* and Ezra Pound as being receptive to the contextual cultural influence of anarchism. Weir argues that Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro' (1914) captures precisely the 'principle of self-containment' in Max Stirner's egoist anarchism as, he argues, does Marsden's epithet 'the world should be moulded to my desire and I should mould it'.<sup>128</sup> Weir's idea that Imagism was not an autonomous movement but one that Marsden allowed to become the literary branch of her anarcho-individualist project is an interesting shift in perspective and an interesting reconsideration of the Imagist movement. His work also finds affinities between anarchism, surrealism and Dada. Nevertheless, despite these interminglings Weir maintains that modernism remained largely remote from anarchism as a historical, conceptual force. This is because, Weir argues, modernists spent much more time writing against the anarchistic aspects of modern culture than they did appropriating them. Weir loosely associates Eliot with the solipsistic elements of anarcho-individualism. He cites the appearance of Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1921) in the last two editions of *The Egoist* as evidence of this connection. However, Weir is more concerned that for Eliot 'the dialogue with anarchy lead to a totalising idea'.<sup>129</sup> He suggests that modernism, in fact, wrote against anarchism as it moved towards authoritarianism and the search for order.

Weir's reading is a landmark in its interrogation of the intersection between anarchist and modernist cultures. However, it contains omissions and limitations that this project has the potential to respond to in a useful way. For example, Weir focuses predominantly on the individualist anarchism of the Stirner school. He describes how Dora Marsden's essay 'The Illusion of Anarchism' (1914) advocates pure egoism; how Marsden alienates the collectivist or socialist anarchist 'whose other name is "Humanitarian"'. However, Weir is perhaps too quick to follow suit in dismissing these alternative modes of anarchism. Furthermore, Weir incorrectly suggests anarchists favoured social realism as a mimetic form over experimental, fragmented or non-linear narrative forms. As I hope to demonstrate in this project, this was infrequently the case. Weir is mistaken in asserting that in all cases the politics of anarchism transfigured entirely into the aesthetics of modernism. He also errs in implying that modernism and anarchism were each only an engagement between Europeans and Americans in Europe, not Americans or migrants in America.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

Usefully, however, Allan Antliff's *Anarchist Modernism* has already set the ground for analysing how the two movements engaged on American soil. Antliff argues that 'anarchism was *the* formative force lending coherence and direction in the United States between 1908 and 1920'.<sup>130</sup> He further proposes that 'in the key years of 1908 to 1912, anarchist modernism grew into a full-fledged movement with a radical agenda for the arts'.<sup>131</sup> It took place, for example, in the Modern Schools, of which the Ferrer Centre in Manhattan was a de facto headquarters; schools which were founded on anarchist principles and which educated artists such as Edward Carpenter, Man Ray, Max Weber and Robert Henri. The Modern Schools were expressly for the training of art students, but the Ferrer Centre was also a hub for a much broader range of artistic activities and associates. Hart Crane and Wallace Stevens were both associates of the Modern School in New York, as was Arturo Giovannitti. Students at the Ferrer Centre were deeply influenced by the anarchist art critic John Weichsel. Weichsel was responsible for importing the aesthetic theory of cosmism - one in which artists embodied the influence of cosmic or universal principles - from the German art historian Wilhelm Worriger. Evidence of cosmism's influence can be seen in Man Ray's work of the period. Other examples of anarchist art produced by Ferrer Centre students cited by Antliff include Max Weber's 'Rush Hour, New York' (1915) and 'Interior of the Fourth Dimension' (1913). Antliff describes these works as an 'anarchist manifesto in painterly form'.<sup>132</sup> The agitational magazines *Revolutionary Almanac* and *Revolt*, founded by the Czech anarchist Hippolyte Havel, were also major forums for such promoting such works.

Perhaps the most significant development in Antliff's reading is that it demonstrates how anarchism was not simply an anti-authoritarian political movement, but part of a wider cultural rebellion encompassing art and literature. In this respect, Antliff challenges Weir on the division between art and politics in anarchist and modernist cultures. Antliff is able to demonstrate quite clearly that this division was not perceived contemporaneously. For instance, in an 1912 issue of *Current Literature* an article entitled 'The Challenge of Futurist Art' proclaimed that Futurism was 'the anarchism of the arts'.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, anarchism was evidently moving in a transatlantic circuit between Italy and the United States. For example, Carlo Carra's Futurist painting 'Funeral of the Anarchist Galli' (1911) appeared in Havel's *Revolutionary Almanac* under the heading 'Anarchy in Art'.

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<sup>130</sup> Alan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>133</sup> 'The Challenge of Futurist Art', *Current Literature*, 52 (1912), p. 106.

There are certain perspectives within Antliff's approach to anarchist modernism that I intend to extend in this project. Antliff's stated mission is to 'recover the creative agency of artists who invented, shaped and implemented modernism towards radical ends' yet 'have been so treated uncritically as to become incomprehensible'.<sup>134</sup> In trying to rescue artists such as Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali from the uncertainty as to how to categorise them as Italian modernists in America, this study shares the same dilemma and its associated challenges. Secondly, Antliff expands beyond Weir's exclusive focus on individualist anarchist art by introducing a range of anarchistic milieus in the context of American art which, again, I intend to do here, particularly in light of how Giovannitti and Vinciguerra offer a social anarchism not yet considered in modernist criticism. Thirdly, Antliff's work undermines the idea that Anglo-American modernism was only a post-1910 phenomenon by positioning anarchism as a precursor to other incarnations of modernism, including the movements that preceded the infamous Armory Show of 1913. I hope to demonstrate here a much longer precedence for anarchist modernism, going back deep into the nineteenth century. Finally, Antliff's work makes helpful connections between pragmatist and anarchist philosophies, which I will demonstrate also occurs extensively in Emanuel Carnevali essays such as the 'Book of Job Junior' (1922) and 'My Speech at Lola's' (1925).

What Antliff's work lacks is an adequate response to complex, cross-fertilising anarchist milieus. For instance, Antliff considers Oscar Wilde to be an individualist anarchist and quotes his famous political aphorism that 'the form of government that is most suitable to the artists is no government at all'. Yet, Wilde's 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' (1897) was an important influence on Arturo Giovannitti's social anarchist jail poem 'The Walker' (1914). Therefore, as they relate to the relationship between Italian anarchists and American modernism these multifocal relationships need to be examined more closely. *Anarchist Modernism* also risks oversimplifying the relations between art and anarchism in other ways. Antliff describes the 'anarchist aesthetics of formalist primitivism' displayed at the Armory Show of 1913.<sup>135</sup> However, formalist primitivism was not an exclusively anarchist aesthetic, nor is the anarchist aesthetic exclusively primitivist. Similarly, not all revolutionary individualist art was related to anarchist politics. The Armory Show represented a general trend of insurrectionary art of which anarchism was but one strain. Admittedly, there were certainly deep associations between the anarchist movement and the exhibition. However, while there is much to be recovered about the relationship between anarchism, modernist art and the Armory Show, it must be accepted that anarchism was not the dominant criterion of the age, but one of many exhibitionist radical strains vying for publicity.

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<sup>134</sup> Antliff, p. 3.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

There are also shortcomings in the scope of *Anarchist Modernism*, which this investigation looks to address. Firstly, it is essentially a study of modernist art and not literature, therefore I will look to produce here a corresponding response focused on the literary aspect of modernist production. Secondly, because of the focus on art, its chronology ends in 1917 which is shorter than would be appropriate for a literary study. I hope to expand this timeframe significantly beyond Antliff's final date of 1920 and into the late interwar period. Finally, Weir's work concentrates much more heavily on the cultural context of anarchist modernism than on the formalistic results of its practice. Antliff argues convincingly that 'anarchism generated changes in the form of alternative exhibition spaces, politicised art criticism and the fusion of art with social revolution.'<sup>136</sup> He makes less headway in establishing exactly how and why certain forms of practice should be considered anarchist modernist art. Antliff's critique neatly draws together the cultural relationship between anarchism, primitivism, Man Ray, Max Weber and their works, but makes no claim to identify the constituent elements of an anarchistic aesthetic.

This limitation is addressed to an extent by David Kadlec's *Mosaic Modernism*, in which anarchist modernism is theorised formally for the first time. Kadlec approaches the question of how to define its formal practice from a variety of linguistic, cultural and political angles. Etymologically, the root of anarchism relates to the Greek word *arache* meaning an origin or source of action. Anarchism is by definition an opposition to beginnings. This opposition is an attitude that bridges anarchism's resistance to the formation of ideology with modernism's resistance to what Kadlec terms 'the stasis of representation'.<sup>137</sup> In other words, the extraliterary concerns of anarchism become directly adopted into modernist praxis through modernism's anti-foundationalist attitude towards language. The result is what Kadlec terms a 'literature of embodiment'.<sup>138</sup> In this literature, language becomes a medium for displacing representation with embodiment, just as an anarchist activism historically sought to replace political representation with the attitude embodied in direct action. Kadlec offers many examples of anarchist embodiment in modernist practice. For Pound, it is recognisable in Imagism's championing of the particular over the principle. In Williams's work, it is the belief that the word was a component of nature, not a symbol of it. In fact, Kadlec argues that Williams's vision was for a domesticated, American version of anarchism's attack on foundations and first principles. According to this argument, domesticated anarchism was

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>137</sup> David Kadlec, *Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

also fostered by William James during his intellectual involvement with anarchism. For both James and Williams, Kadlec argues, anarchism is the extreme end of a liberal, pluralist, pragmatist philosophy. To Kadlec, this is exemplified in Williams's work by the 'isometric economy of relations in literary praxis' or, in other words, by his anarchistic decentralisation of linguistic and visual syntax.<sup>139</sup>

However, there are areas in which this project can perhaps improve on certain aspects of Kadlec's reading. The first is in avoiding the overly discrete separation of anarchist tendencies. There is no recognition in his work of a spectrum of practice between the individualist and social anarchist modernism. Furthermore, Kadlec argues that 'anarchism was a revolutionary political temper with its roots in nineteenth century French and German writings'.<sup>140</sup> While this is true, the nineteenth century writings of the Russians Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin are also seminally important. Bakunin especially so in light of his time in Italy and the historical influence of his anarchism on the region in which Giovannitti spent his youth. Finally, Kadlec's representation of anarchist modernism offers a useful sense of connection between theories and writers. However, there is no insight proposed into transnational networks or migratory transmission. In effect, *Mosaic Modernism* is an important theoretical and formalistic counterweight to Alan Antliff's contextual study of anarchist modernism in America, but neither work is able to successfully combine both elements.

Nonetheless, the work of Weir, Antliff and Kadlec sets out important and useful parameters for further study of the relationship between anarchism and modernism. It points to geographical theatres of activity in New York, the Modern Schools and in Pound's London, as well historical moments like the Armory Show of 1913. It also names major anarchist purveyors such as Dora Marsden and Hippolyte Havel and their periodicals such as *The Egoist*, *Revolt* and the *Revolutionary Almanac*. There is some helpful delineation in this scholarship between the categories of anarchist literary practice and an embryonic understanding of how Williams, Pound, William James and others relate to those categories. Collectively, this work suggests pathways to understanding how anarchist modernism might co-exist with other movements like futurism, cosmism, primitivism and pragmatism. Moreover, Kadlec offers the first terms with which anarchistic modernism might be theorised in his conceptualisation of the 'literature of embodiment'. However, this work also contains clear omissions that need to be addressed in the current study. For example, the existence of cross-fertilising, transnational anarchist milieus needs to be acknowledged and explained,

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. 89.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 10.



and its chronology and coverage of literature needs extending in order to be considered truly representative.

## Conclusion

From the earliest modernist criticism to the present day, Italy has been understood as a psychological amphitheatre in the minds of American modernists, one in which they were forced to draw into themselves in order to render its historical culture as both desirable and irretrievable. They believed that it was necessary to venture into its past as a means of exposing the comparatively superficial nature of modern American, capitalist society. Their work confronts the conscious failures and inadequacies of contemporary culture, but in a way that allows the unconscious to roam into the imaginary past so as to embrace the lost glory of historical Italian civilisations. Certain American modernists portrayed Italy as a psychological escape from the troubling events of their personal experiences. Whether or not they recognised it, Italy therefore functioned as both a counternarrative to the artistic failures of modern America and as a psychological counternarrative to the fear that the order lost in Europe during the First World War might never be recovered. It offered them an alluring alternative to the imitatory, celluloid-rapt American cultural scene and an opportunity to venture into an earlier, grander and seemingly more authentic civic society. Yet they would later mourn the mistaken faith they had held in the idea of Italy, in the belief that Italian fascism could return order to Europe, and in the belief that its iconic culture could be revived. This ranged from Loeb's disappointment regarding the cost of journal publication in Rome, to Eliot's disillusion at its failure to prevent a second war, to Pound's shattered psyche in *The Pisan Cantos*.

Yet the work of Italian modernists in America between 1910 and 1940 offers up an entirely new field of positions which previous criticism has detailed clearly, and in a way that allows their individual contributions to be accurately assessed. In critiquing Fante and di Donato, it has provided a model of political and spiritual engagement made by these writers, ranging from the metaphysical, meditative literary tradition to works in which such sensibilities are abandoned in favour of radical protest aesthetics. For the writers of the late interwar period, their art was derived from working class, construction labour cultures. It has been considered avant-garde in its parataxic depictions of the fates encountered by its characters and in its willingness to convey grotesque imagery within dark, romantic narratives. Ultimately though, it would appear that this work differs too sharply in its convictions to be understood as a cohesive modernism, being divided in its ambitions by Catholic spirituality in one case and anti-religious political insurrection in another. Indeed, a similarly insurmountable divide

separates the filmic Italian modernism of the 1930s from its imagistic writings of the 1910s, despite how compatible their political convictions might seem. From a reading of Italian emigrant modernism of the 1910s, however, anarchism emerges as a central contact point for the literary-political grouping of Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali, whose poetry was focused on revolutionary aesthetics and on the causes of syndicalism, feminism and pragmatism.

Anarchist modernism has already been critiqued as its own field of positions, both in relation to the nineteenth century philosophies from which modernism emerged and in relation to various coteries of modernist production in Europe and America. Up to now, critics have chosen to focus on the association between anarchist and modernist cultures, stressing instead the way in which the political failures of anarchism belied its success in influencing the European avant-garde movements of the 1910s. Others have considered the practice of anarchistic modernism to be a 'literature of embodiment' influenced by the anti-foundationalist ideology of attacking origins, beginnings and principles, citing Williams as an exemplar of a writer aesthetically dedicated to this cause. Further work positions anarchist modernism as an influence on the American art scene contextual the First World War, offering it coherence, direction and an educational vocation. Yet the preoccupations of my chosen anarchistic writers make clear that none of these perspectives are entirely representational of this field of activity. Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali represent a significant development in the nature and characteristics of the writers working in this sphere of modernist production. The former two introduce social anarchism to this modernist milieu, while Carnevali embodies a pragmatic anarchism little previously considered. These writers allow for the possibility of examining the political and cultural configurations from which they emerged in Italy and thus extending anarchist modernism into new territories and new artistic genealogies. Through their individual activities and interests it also provides an opportunity to extend the range of movements anarchism and modernism considered to have interacted with during the 1910s.

Ultimately, I wish to offer anarchistic modernism as a new context that can represent as comprehensively as possible the positions offered by both American modernists in Italy and Italian modernists in America. There is already a precedence for this: many of the American writers referenced here were connected to anarchism, sometimes deeply, as in the case of Pound's Imagism. Yet my decision to focus on Pound is not based solely upon this connection, which has already been extensively investigated. Instead, I seek to reassess his later relationship with Italy alongside his much longer association with anarchist ideas, and therefore to read certain cantos of the 1930s and 1940s, as I will the work of Giovannitti,

Vinciguerra and Carnevali, as an anarchistic emigrant modernism. Collectively, their work is perfectly illustrative of how Italy, anarchism and American modernism operate in a triangulum of transnational activity. Its dual-directionality allows me to move beyond the 'lost object' and to rectify the current omissions and shortcomings in the relationship between Italy and American modernism. Instead, the possibility presents itself that an alternative exists which is complex, extensive and significantly more nuanced than the one which has for so long fixated only on considerations of national interest. It also satisfies my desire to address all aspects of anarchistic modernism, relating to both form and context, simultaneously. Their various aesthetic preoccupations encompass a broad range of systems and styles, some of them new and some of them that can be reconsidered newly. The historical context is also potentially vast, extending as far forward as Pound's late Italian cantos, with which Chapter 4 is concerned, and extending as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, which is where the following chapter begins.

## Chapter Two

### Sabotage: Arturo Giovannitti, Francesca Vinciguerra and the Aesthetics of Direct Action

The aim of this first chapter is to focus an intellectual history of the engagement between social anarchism and American modernism through the work of two Italian writers, the labour organiser Arturo Giovannitti and the radical feminist, poet-novelist Francesca Vinciguerra.<sup>141</sup> By 1914, two anarchistic Italian avant-gardes had cultivated contact points with the American cultural scene. The intellectual currents of European anarchist philosophy had contributed to the formation of Futurism in the north of Italy, a movement which between 1909 and 1915 propelled itself into American avant-garde art circles, showcasing its works in exhibitions and little magazines. However, it is little recognised or understood that a second transmission point had its roots in southern Italy which, from the mid-1860s onwards, was one of Europe's most intense sites of anarchist activity. Giovannitti was born near the southern province of Campobasso in 1884 and emigrated to Canada via Naples in 1900, before arriving in New York in 1906. Over the following ten years he became a revolutionary labour activist whose anarchist methodologies became manifest in poetic form; few writers bestrode the dual trajectory of modernism and modernity as fully as Giovannitti. In the periodicals *Poetry* and the *Little Review* he was celebrated for writing seditious, anti-establishment poems such as 'The Walker' (1914) and 'The Cage' (1913). Vinciguerra emigrated to America in 1907 and broke new aesthetic and cultural territory with her anarchist feminist contributions to the radical periodical *The Liberator* (1918-1924). Both figures aestheticised the activities and practices of social anarchism in their work.

I intend to theorise in this chapter that the writings of Giovannitti and Vinciguerra constitute an anarchistic techne or craft of action that represents the first social anarchist, modernist poetry written in America. Strains of anarchistic thought have previously been recognised within modernist production in, for example, Dora Marsden's *The Egoist* and subsequently in Ezra Pound's Imagism.<sup>142</sup> Anarchist modernism has also been helpfully theorised by David

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<sup>141</sup> On the advice of her publisher, Vinciguerra anglicised her name to Frances Winwar in 1927, from which time she referred herself by that name in all of her documentation. However, as each of the materials referred to in this chapter predate that year, with one exception, I will refer to the writer using her given Italian name throughout.

<sup>142</sup> Allan Antliff writes that 'like Marsden, Pound and Lewis were partisans of this anarchist-individualist credo, and in *The Egoist* they linked Vorticism to Stirner by arguing the urge to abstract was part and parcel of the artist's self-affirmation in the face of an uncomprehending society dominated by the outworn values of aesthetic mimesis.' See: *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 77.

Kadlec as a 'literature of embodiment'.<sup>143</sup> Kadlec argues that such form is recoverable, as one example, from William Carlos Williams's isometric 'economy of relations' in literary praxis.<sup>144</sup> This reading is extremely significant because it opens up the possibility that the arrangement of elements in modernist discourse can embody a poet's desire for the socioeconomic order of society to be rearranged based on anarchistic principles, an ambition evident in both Giovannitti and Vinciguerra's verse. However, there remains no recognised aesthetic practice for poetic modernism of and by social anarchists in America, and much less one generated by emigrant Italians. Giovannitti and Vinciguerra's work, I argue, offers this through poetry that forms an embodiment of anarchistic practice. It is evident in their life and art that poetry and politics were a singular vehicle of deliberately synthesised activities. The work of both poets aestheticises the practices of sabotage and direct action by simulating poetic form as a structure of domination to be undermined and dismantled. Giovannitti applies this process to versifying revolutionary labour activity in poems such as 'The Sermon on the Common' and 'Out of the Mouth of Babes' (1914), while Vinciguerra applies it to social and sexual equality in 'Tankas' (1920).

In negotiating problems of the political and the aesthetic, social anarchism shares certain procedural affinities with Futurism. Yet it would be a mistake to assume from the visibility of Futurism that it was the only Italian avant-garde to have affected American art between 1910 and 1920.<sup>145</sup> Arguably, it was only the speed of its transatlantic transmission that served to obviate the need for alternative factions. Only weeks after the first Futurist manifesto appeared in *Le Figaro* in February 1909 American critics were following its activities with interest. The *New York Sun* printed excerpts of the manifesto in April of 1909. The *New York Herald* produced an extended pictorial review about the so-called 'Cult of Futurism', via an article of the same name in 1911. The first exhibition of Futurist works in America occurred at the Pan-Pacific Exhibition in San Francisco in 1915. Lisa Panzera draws attention to how, in the intervening years, the response to Futurism in America often fell somewhere between misunderstanding and derision, in part because the term had become a catch-all for any

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<sup>143</sup> David Kadlec, *Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> That is to say, it functions as the artistic embodiment of Williams's pluralist pragmatism, which as a philosophy is closely related to John Dewey's libertarian socialist practice, itself a politically moderate relation of social anarchism. After all, Dewey famously argued that 'workers should be the masters of their own industrial fate'. See: Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 176.

<sup>145</sup> As examples of methodological affinities, both movements offered anti-epistemic denunciations of the past and used art as an attack on the present social order. They also both declared themselves to be the messengers of a future society. In a speech of 1912, Giovannitti declared 'we are now the heralds of a new civilisation. We have come to proclaim a new truth'. See: Arturo Giovannitti, *Giovannitti's Address To The Jury* (Boston: Boston School of Social Science, 1913), p. 8.

form of difficult-to-understand, radical avant-garde art.<sup>146</sup> Futurism had become a generic differentiator between 'old' and 'modern' forms of European artistic production, serving to underline its dominance over how Italian avant-gardism in America was understood during these years, to the preclusion of anarchism; certainly, the current intellectual understanding of the period acquiesces to this version of history.<sup>147</sup>

What makes this oversight all the more remarkable is that anarchist and Futurist movements did more than simply co-exist in America during the 1910s, in fact they engaged each other frequently, at first in resistance. The Futurists attempted to assert the supremacy of their movement over anarchism in the pages of Margaret Anderson's *Little Review*. Filippo Marinetti had been profoundly influenced by the anarchist artists of the Abbaye de Creteil in Paris between 1906 and 1908, yet by 1914 his attitude towards the movement was one of hostility and rancour. In an article published in the November 1914 edition of the *Little Review*, Marinetti mocked what he considered to be the feminine sensibility of anarchism. He defined its proponents as sick and weak and their revolutionary aspirations as 'impure gangrene'.<sup>148</sup> Yet, despite such territorial antagonism, the co-proximity of Futurism and anarchism in America made artistic engagement unavoidable. Contemporaneous references to anarchist-futurists and futurist-anarchists can be found in exhibition ephemera and publications such as Hippolyte Havel's *Revolutionary Almanac* (1914). The confluence signified by futurist-anarchism in the American arts was unravelled by the real-life affiliation of each movement with political extremes. By most accounts, the last exhibition of Futurist works in America occurred at the Stieglitz gallery in 1917. This event took place a year before the connection between Futurist art and the American avant-garde was effectively ended by the formation of the Futurist political party in 1918.<sup>149</sup> Similarly, anarchism in America is broadly ascribed as collecting under the banner of Bolshevism after 1917.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Panzera writes that 'Futurism was generally received by the American press in a hostile or sarcastic manner' and that 'Americans confused Futurism with Cubism, and with European modernism in general'. See 'Italian Futurism and Avante-Garde Painting in the United States', *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2000), p. 225.

<sup>147</sup> In addition to Panzera's essay, this is evidenced by the existence of several works that discuss Futurism's impact in America, including John O. Hand, 'Futurism in America, 1909-1914', *Art Journal*, 41:4 (Winter 1981), pp. 337-342; Margaret Burke, *Futurism in America, 1910-1917* (Ph.D diss., University of Delaware in 1986); Dominic Ricciotti, 'The Revolution in Urban Transport, Max Weber and Italian Futurism', *The American Art Journal*, 16:1 (Winter 1984); and Yiyi Lopez Gandara, 'Sex Machines: Futurism and Modernity in American Expressionist Theatre', *New Readings: The Transforming Power of American Drama*, eds. Miriam López-Rodríguez, Inmaculada Pineda-Hernández, Alfonso Ceballos Muñoz (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp. 85-100. In contrast, up to now no equivalent intellectual histories of Italian anarchism as a codifiable movement of artists that engaged with American modernism have been produced.

<sup>148</sup> F. T. Marinetti, 'War, the Only Hygiene of the World', *Little Review*, 1:8 (Nov 1914), p. 30.

<sup>149</sup> Lisa Panzera argues that the party's formation 'complicated' the reception of the Futurism in America. She suggests that while the initial response to fascism in America was not altogether

In accordance with the largely unchallenged intellectual position that anarchism was no longer a productive artistic force in America after 1917, it has been suggested that Arturo Giovannitti became a supporter of the communist cause at this time. Critics offer as evidence his poetic contributions to *The Liberator*, with which he aided the magazine in creating reverential depictions of Lenin following the October Revolution.<sup>151</sup> Giovannitti is also accused of indulging in a 'revolutionary Romanticism' towards Bolshevism exemplifying the lack of ideological commitment, it is suggested, that reflects the character of *The Liberator* as a modernist magazine.<sup>152</sup> Undeniably, Giovannitti was a supporter of the revolution. This is made manifestly clear by the triumphal attitude displayed in poems of the late 1910s such as 'May Day in Moscow' and 'On Lenin's Birthday', his pro-Moscow political essays, as well as by his leadership of organisational resistance to fascism throughout the 1920s.

However, these two intellectual positions - that anarchism was not a generative movement after 1917 and that Giovannitti became fully committed to Bolshevism - are both highly contestable. Archival evidence demonstrates that Giovannitti continued to negotiate the boundaries of anarchism and art in the experimental, radical theatre group *Teatro del Popolo* in and beyond 1918. His play 'The Alpha and the Omega' stages an encounter between a fictionalised John D. Rockefeller and a burglar in the financier's home, and for several reasons it is a distinctly anarchistic and not Marxist or Bolshevik work. Firstly, its political targets are the anarchist adversaries of church, state and capital. Secondly, it does not follow the authoritarian model of political art that would attempt to impose a fixed, didactic schema on its audience. Instead thirdly, and consistent with anarchist tendencies, it seeks to question the nature and legitimacy of power both formally and thematically; Giovannitti rearranges the conventional elements of dramatic discourse, including the relationship

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negative, Futurism's engagement with fascism ended its recognition as a viable art movement, even though a small interest in the movement was retained until the 1930s. See: 'Italian Futurism and Avante-Garde Painting', p. 225.

<sup>150</sup> Several studies explicitly end their coverage of particular aspects of anarchism in America in 1917, for example Terence. S. Kissack, *Free Comrades: Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States 1895-1917* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2008). Moreover, when anarchism is referred to in reviews of the period scholarship commonly proceeds on this assumption. For example, James Ciment argues that 'the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 established communism as a more compelling political alternative for many American radicals', see: *Encyclopedia of the Jazz Age: From the End of World War I to the Great Crash, Volumes 1-2* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 59.

<sup>151</sup> Adam McKible reads Giovannitti's poem 'On Lenin's Birthday' from this perspective in *The Space and Place of Modernism: the Russian Revolution, Little Magazines, and New York* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 32.

<sup>152</sup> Benoît Tadié, 'The Masses Speak', *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of the Modernist Magazines: Volume II, North America 1894-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 843.

between audience, director, theatre technicians and characters in order to reconstruct them in a way that embodies an emancipatory, anarchistic social ethic. Vinciguerra's anarchist feminist tanka poems of 1920 further destabilise such a chronology. The poems reflect the way that anarchism of the 1910s increasingly made patriarchy and anti-feminism enemies analogous to the governing elements of state. Vinciguerra's tankas use a traditional form of Japanese poetry experimentally in order to critique patriarchally-driven social power, and to prefigure a revolutionary sense of refusing sexual domination. Her work extends the engagement between Italian and American avant-gardism and anarchism up to at least 1920.

I present here a perspective on social anarchism's engagement with American political modernity and artistic modernism. Analysing it through the work of Giovannitti and Vinciguerra offers several important critical opportunities. The first is to incorporate the south of Italy as a new geography of origin for modernisms operating within America and as a powerful alternative to the urban, northern dominance of Futurism. It is a geography from which the political life practices of its inhabitants become embedded in the form of their anarchistic poetic and dramatic praxis. The second is to allow for the animation of an opening theoretical discourse on this little-known work, which I will look to codify as an anarchistic *techne*, with its dominant characteristics being the aesthetic of direct action and the formal embodiment of socioeconomic reorganisation. Finally, it offers an opportunity to examine how the bifurcated history and politics of Italian anarchism evolved into two competing cultural-political agendas, Futurism and social anarchism, in American modernism during the 1910s.

### **The Politics and Poetics of Italian Social Anarchism**

Arturo Giovannitti was born in the town of Ripabottoni in 1884, which in its recent history had been one of the most active sites of anarchism in Europe. One notorious regional anarchist group was known as the 'Banda del Matese', in reference to their chosen territory in the Matese mountain range running centrally down through the regions of Molise and Campania. In that area, small villages populated valleys that bisected the mountain's uninhabitable peaks and the radical 'Banda' anarchist agitators patrolled between these valleys. The choice of area was purposeful; such a challenging, infrequently-peopled terrain made anarchism an autonomous practice of living. It also created a perfect environment for rabble-rousing. As such, the 'Banda' could easily recruit new members into their expanding anarchist network by targeting the region's villages, or commit acts of sabotage before hiding from authorities in safe houses and laying low in hidden mountain passes. This was the



strategy followed by its leader Errico Malatesta, who was the son of landowners from the province of Caserta, near Naples.<sup>153</sup> Like many Italian anarchists, including Giovannitti, Malatesta had chosen to break off from the propertied, bourgeois existence into which he was born in order to advocate anarchism and social justice.

Giovannitti's anarchist activism can be traced back in an intellectual lineage to both Malatesta and to Malatesta's mentor, the Russian Mikhail Bakunin. Bakunin was principally the founder of collectivist anarchism. In works such as *God and the State* (1882), he rejected outright all forms of hierarchy or privilege, including those of sovereignty, legislature and theocracy. Bakunin argued that in their elemental state human beings are social, equal and free and that the most efficient way to achieve this state was by allowing individuals to operate in self-determining federations of workers and communal societies. He entered Italy in 1864 with a mission to use the south of Italy as a base for creating a Europe-wide network of social anarchist revolutionaries and missionaries. Malatesta and Bakunin met for the first time in 1872 and Malatesta subsequently took on the mantle of operating under his own vision of Bakunin's key principles. Crucially for understanding the way Giovannitti later intersected his poet-activist practice, both Bakunin and Malatesta prioritised action over philosophising. Although Bakunin is recognised most widely as one of the philosophical founders of classical anarchism in the nineteenth century, his life was dedicated to militant activism, with few writings being published during his lifetime. Likewise, Malatesta did not commit his anarchist thinking to writing until 1891, twenty years after meeting Bakunin and fourteen years after his first attempt at a major uprising with the 'Banda' in the region of Campagnia in 1877. Like Giovannitti later, both held a greater commitment to the field of practice than to the field of knowledge.

The opposition between knowledge and practice is represented by the Greek terms *episteme* and *techne*. In respect of anarchism I intend to suggest specifically that *techne* indicates technical skill, a performance methodology and a materialist, transformative political practice, which functions in opposition to abstract or non-material theory, which was disregarded by Bakunin. In Heidegger's terms, the former is to "know" and the latter is to "know-how". The signifier *techne* is especially important and useful here because in its original etymology it refers to a sense of manufacturing applicable both to labour and to the arts. It therefore offers a critical route for bridging the conceptual territory that defines Bakunin and Malatesta's efforts to construct a political movement, on the one hand, and

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<sup>153</sup> Malatesta's activities during this period are chronicled in detail in Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Giovannitti's later attempts to represent his labour activism inseparably from his poetic discourse, on the other.

Such a sense of indivisibility defined the practice of poetry and politics in Giovannitti's early life and career. He grew up in the highly reactive region of Molise in 1884, yet received a privileged education that included the study of classical Italian poetry. Giovannitti arrived in New York in 1906 and, over the following ten years, he became both a renowned anarcho-syndicalist labour activist and a contributing editor to radical periodicals such as *The Masses* and *The Liberator*, as well as to less renowned magazines including *The Flame: A Journal of the New Age* (1916) and his own publications *Il Fuoco* (1915) and *Vita* (1916). Giovannitti was in the very truest sense an activist poet, combining his literary work with helping to organise some of the biggest industrial strikes in American history. After the Lawrence textile strike of 1912 he was falsely imprisoned for charges that related to the shooting of a fellow striker.<sup>154</sup> It was in prison that Giovannitti is first known to have written English language poetry, with which he attempted to mobilise his anarchist politics as an active anarchist poetics. Giovannitti was a flamboyant and charismatic political orator, and orality became a consistent characteristic of his poetry. His political activity and his verse functioned as a co-determinative activity; its aim was to subvert entrenched forms and dominant structures in both spheres. Resultantly, Giovannitti's anarchism came to overlay several of these intersecting poetic-political practices.

Fundamentally, there is a mutual commitment between Giovannitti's poetry and his activism to the same political ambitions. In the tradition of classical anarchism both of his practices were dedicated, firstly, to the abolition of government, legislature, judiciary and other allegedly coercive institutions. They were also dedicated, secondly, to the social and economic self-determination of all human communities that would arise subsequent to the dissolution of those illegitimate power structures. Each of these political ambitions are prominent in early poems such as 'Proem' and 'The Cage'. 'Proem', meaning prologue, is the first work of Giovannitti's first published collection *Arrows in the Gale* (1914). It is a rich

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<sup>154</sup> The so-called 'Bread and Roses' strike by Lawrence's multiethnic community of immigrant textile workers was prompted by a law reducing the working week from 56 to 54 hours for women and children, which took effect on January 1st, 1912. Mill owners took advantage of the opportunity to employ faster and more efficient production technologies to apply this reduced employment to all adult male textile workers. In response to cut wages and their poor working conditions, more than twenty thousand strikers across fifty nationalities (mostly Italians and Slavs) stood in daily protest. Local labour unions created the first moving picket line in the history of the United States. In response, women were attacked with night-sticks, water hoses were turned on strikers, and workers were arrested without evidence on suspicion of planting dynamite. The city became a battleground of strikers and immigrant communities pitted against police and the military, who also had the support of the Catholic church.

and rare source of analysis because it provides explicit insight into how Giovannitti sought to define his activist poetics, and how his verse evolved as a poetic-political anarchistic craft. Formally, the poem is conservative and not yet recognisable as the avant-garde anarchist verse he would later compose. Indeed, 'Proem' is carried awkwardly through stiff, often irregular, metrical phrasing. It begins:

These are but songs --- they're not a creed  
They are not meant to lift or save,  
They won't appeal or intercede  
For any fool or any knave;<sup>155</sup>

Despite the formal conservatism apparent in these lines, Giovannitti's poetry is already aggressively anarchistic in attitude if not yet in structure. Like his forebears Bakunin and Malatesta, Giovannitti is pugnaciously anti-theistic and anti-judicial. He proclaims shortly after this opening stanza to 'want no Jesus Christ to think / That he could ever die for me' (15-16) before offering a threat to the constraining elements of state to 'fling my shaft and my disgust / Against your gospel and your law' (23-24). 'Proem' goes on to envision a war, depicting 'humanity's last stand' (35) against the opponents of freedom, set to the revolutionary sounds of 'tocsin tolls' and 'drum taps' (52). Giovannitti describes his own voice as a 'raucous buccina' (38), a Roman battle horn that he offers as an accompaniment to the sound of revolutionary soldiers 'cleaning up their guns / Around the cheery bivouac fire' (55-56). Their struggle embodies the political and poetic ambitions of Giovannitti's anarchistic revolutionism.

'Proem' also displays the fundamental characteristic of anti-foundationalism that separates anarchist thought from the doctrine-focus of other radical movements. It begins by declaring the poems of *Arrows in the Gale* to be 'but songs' and 'not a creed' and continues:

They hold no covenant or pledge  
For him who dares no foe assail:  
They are the blows of my own sledge  
Against the walls of my own jail. (4-7)

Etymologically, the root of anarchy is arche-, meaning the source, beginning, foundation, first principle or element. Monarchy, of course, means the government of one and oligarchy the

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<sup>155</sup> Arturo Giovannitti, 'Proem', *Arrows in the Gale & Other Poems* (Niantic, CT: Quale Press, 2004), p. 3, ll. 1-4

government of the few. Anarchism is by extension a resistance to the first principles of governance, language or power. In contrast, one might reasonably expect a political poet of a socialist or communist persuasion to desire a clear political creed in their verse. This expectation has led some critics to consider 'Proem' a representation of 'class war'.<sup>156</sup> Yet, Bakunin resisted the idea of class struggle because he believed that replacing a bourgeois dictatorship with a proletarian one would simply prolong the existence of unfreedom within the same power structure. Anarchism is different because it is, by definition, an opposition to the formation of those originating structures, both linguistically and in political practice. For this reason, Giovannitti is concerned to stress that 'Proem' offers no creed or covenant. Instead, the poem is anti-foundationalist in its attitude towards such originating principles.

Anti-foundationalism promotes action in Giovannitti's work as an oppositional techne to the episteme of fixed thought structures. By this I suggest that in a poetic or political context the episteme, here taken to mean the inherent belief system of a movement that has been derived from moments of intellectual certainty, exists as a part of a knowledge transfer between a higher power and its subjects. This is true of a religious covenant, as it is of a creed passed down through the organisational structure of a political movement. It is also true of the fixed principles set out in a manifesto for modern art such as those proclaimed as Imagism or Vorticism. 'Proem' is evidence that Giovannitti's anarchism set both his poetry and his politics against any of these hierarchical systems of knowledge reception and transfer. 'Proem' declares itself to be a song rather a poem in order to emphasise orality, populism and collectivity rather than to express itself as the epistemology of an individual. It is a song, as already quoted, that 'holds no covenant or pledge / For him who dares no foe assail'. That it to say, it offers no truths to those unwilling to act, a message to which Giovannitti includes himself as an addressee. The blows of his 'own sledge' against his 'own jail' are also an attempt to escape the intellectual certainty of the self. The title of his collection, *Arrows in the Gale*, refers to a maxim of Marcus Aurelius suggesting that a mind undistracted by the self can act unwaveringly against its target. Giovannitti may have chosen this title to reflect how his poems were stronger and more direct statements on the nature of modern society as a result of his mind being absorbed in activity instead of divided by ideology.

'The Cage' is another poem of Giovannitti's from which an anarchistic sense of anti-epistemic, anti-foundationalism emanates. It was written at the request of "Big Bill" Haywood, a renowned American labour radical. Giovannitti was in jail in Boston serving his time for the

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<sup>156</sup> It is described in this way by Hestor Furey in 'The Reception of Arturo Giovannitti's Poetry and the Trial of a New Society', *Left History* (1993), p. 46.

charges that related to his alleged role in the Lawrence textile strike, when Haywood visited and asked him to compose a poem about 'Sixteenth Century courts trying to solve Twentieth Century problems'.<sup>157</sup> Giovannitti obliged Haywood by writing 'The Cage', a 'modernist long poem' according to one recent critic, which attempted to allusively critique the Massachusetts legal system that had convicted him.<sup>158</sup> The poem describes a decrepit green room in the centre of which sits an iron cage. Several old men sit on faldstools around the cage while three men are locked within it as a result of 'what dead men had written in old books'.<sup>159</sup> Outside the room the roaring and thunderous sounds of human industry can be heard. The scene is temporally indeterminate but clearly alludes to the cage in which Giovannitti and his fellow labour agitators Joseph Ettor and Joseph Caruso were confined while awaiting sentencing.

The poem received national attention from across the political and cultural spectrum. It appeared in the progressive magazine *The Outlook* in July 1913 and garnered high praise from cultural luminaries such as Randolph Bourne.<sup>160</sup> 'The Cage' was also published by the conservative *Atlantic Monthly* in June 1913 alongside the declaration that 'if there is a poetry of anarchy, this is it'.<sup>161</sup> This was intended as both praise for it being a 'rhapsody' of rebellion in 'thought and form', and as criticism for Giovannitti's apparently illogical decision to attack the legal system that ultimately freed him.<sup>162</sup>

What this criticism failed to recognise was that the cage and the old room were an abstraction and that Giovannitti's concern was an over-attachment to thought and knowledge. On the surface, the poem is anti-judicial. It appears to critique a centuries-old system of justice functioning anachronistically in the modern world, and there is little doubt that Giovannitti's anarchism and his incarceration during the trial in Massachusetts support this interpretation. However, on another level the poem is deeply anti-epistemic. In its opening lines there are descriptions of old tomes that 'mouldered' on 'dusty shelves' (5). There is a sense that in this room knowledge becomes increasingly corrupted over time,

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<sup>157</sup> This information appeared as a biographical accompaniment to the first printing of the poem. See 'The Contributor's Club', *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 111 (Jun 1913), p. 854.

<sup>158</sup> Furey, p. 32.

<sup>159</sup> 'The Cage', *Arrows in the Gale*, p. 43, l. 74.

<sup>160</sup> Bourne sent a poem of his own to his friend Horace Traubel in the summer of 1913, with a letter acknowledging the impact of Giovannitti's verse on his own: 'The enclosed "poem" is for your private perusal only. You will see the influence of Barr and Giovannitti; of course, you saw The Cage in the June Atlantic. Didn't you think it magnificent, or is your blasé mood, induced by the pageant, still strong upon you?' See Eric J. Sandeen (ed.), *The Letters of Randolph Bourne: A Comprehensive Edition* (New York: Whitston, 1981).

<sup>161</sup> 'The Contributor's Club', p. 854.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 853.

ultimately ending in the form of senility. The room that houses the cage is described as 'old, and cold and mournful, ancient with the double antiquity of heart and brain' (2). The brain here is under threat of ruination. In other words, it symbolises a warning against any thinking that is too deeply-rooted in the *arcanus* of a few powerful minds, not only against thought related to laws or legal traditions. Three individuals are enclosed by the iron cage but knowledge is also a prison that has incarcerated the old men who are within the room but outside the cage. The men know nothing but the contents of 'old, yellow books' (12) and they are 'lifeless' (10), talk in 'cracked voices' (7) and sit under moth-eaten paintings of other old men. It is a deliberately unsettling visual composition designed to reflect the poet's anxiety that the knowledge of the brain is vulnerable to corruption and decay and therefore threatens to subordinate the heart's potential for passionate action.

Such action functions oppositionally to knowledge in 'The Cage'. In contrasting, interruptive stanzas it celebrates the potential role of technological power and self-organising industry on human progress. The quiet, lifeless metaphysics of the old men is put deliberately at variance with aurally charged material forces that can be heard outside the green room. The odour of decay is replaced with the 'healthy smells of life and labor' (46). That smell is allied to the sound of great, clanking machinery, giant cranes and falling rocks that 'thundered and clamored and roared outside of the great greenish room' (18). Inside, the room contains the 'silence of centuries' (119) but outside 'wires hummed, the dynamos buzzed and the fires crackled' (27-28). The disinterested knowledge of the men is antithetical to the loud, passionate, industrious rhythms of human labour in the outside world. Life there is continuous, concrete and immediate.

Life outside the room represents the same spirit of self-organising industrial, technological democracy that Giovannitti passionately advocated in his address to the jury after the Lawrence strike. He urged the jury not to focus exclusively on the 'methods and tactics' used by the strikers, but to think about the 'human and humane' part of their ideas.<sup>163</sup> These ideas, he argued, encouraged 'the Hercules of the world of industrial workers' to break the wage system and the 'infamous rule of domination of one man by another'. Giovannitti pleaded that he advocated a break with such systems not out of a preoccupation with violence but rather because 'the man who owns and controls the bread that man eats therefore owns and controls his mind, his body, his heart and his soul'.<sup>164</sup> In other words, he argued to the jury that he urged workers to re-establish self-organising, self-controlled

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<sup>163</sup> Giovannitti, *Address to the Jury*, p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

industry out of respect for life and liberty. Giovannitti campaigned with similar sentiments at Paterson and other strike zones of the early 1910s.

From this duality, I deduce, Giovannitti's anarchism operates as an interdisciplinary poetic-political craft, but even beyond that it involves itself with the activation of new social relations between art, politics and machinery. From the perspective of his anarchism, the practice of *techne* unifies the technical action of the labourer, activist, poet and the industrial process. This unification is evident in 'The Cage', in which *techne* can be construed as not simply the craft or strategy for political art but as a practice of synchronising the relationship of art, work and society to a single, self-governing, constructive purpose. Twice in 'The Cage' Giovannitti refers to an 'anthem of human labor' (41; 139). However, on neither occasion is it possible to discern whether the anthem is in fact his own poem that celebrates human industry or whether the anthem is the cacophonous noises generated by such industry that the poem describes. It subsequently becomes clear that Giovannitti is attempting to weld together an amalgamated vision of a singular purpose between them:

Out of the chaos of sound, welded in the unison of one will to sing,  
rose clear and viable the divine accord of the hymn. (32-33)

This accord synthesises the technical processes of 'life and labor' into a harmonious unity. Their unity takes the sound of a hymn, one sung in the spirit of Giovannitti's speech to the jury in Lawrence, in which he declared that life and labor are a 'new gospel'.<sup>165</sup> Here Giovannitti envisions the systematic crafting together of art, work, technology and life into one sustained human note. The synthesis is similarly envisioned when Giovannitti writes

Sonorous was the rhythm of the bouncing hammers upon the  
loud-throated anvils [...] most pleasant was the hymn of its might polyphony. (22-23)

In both of these couplets the relationship between poetics, labour and technology is synchronised into one unifying discourse. Giovannitti compounds the craft of *techne* and the expression of logos in order to integrate the social relationship between art and work within a vision of industrial technology. The result is a bold, reconstructive imagining of modern socio-industrial relations run on anarcho-syndicalist principles.

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<sup>165</sup> Giovannitti, *Address to the Jury*, p. 6.

In 'Proem' and 'The Cage', Giovannitti sets out an anti-epistemic, anti-foundationalist and socially reconstructive attitude, but one must look to a poem such as 'The Walker' to discover how this spirit becomes aestheticised into an anarchistic poetics. 'The Walker' is arguably Giovannitti's most famous poem; it was described contemporaneously by the journal *Current Opinion* as 'unsurpassed in power by anything ever published in America'.<sup>166</sup> The poem's power comes from how Giovannitti finds a formal dimension with which to express his anarchistic political and social concerns. The subject of 'The Walker' is a long night in the life of a prison inmate who is forced to listen to the endless footsteps of a fellow prisoner pacing endlessly backwards and forwards across the cell above his head. In the silence of the night, we learn, the inmate is forced to endure many terrible sounds: an old clock, sinister laughter, muffled sobs, rattling coughs, oaths and prayers, the smothering of the dying and distant bells among them. None of them, however, are as terrible as the sounds of the prisoner's footsteps as he walks with a scrupulous rhythm the same nine feet between a yellow brick wall on one side of his cell and a red iron gate on the other. The opening lines describe a perfect regularity in the subject's movements above the prisoner's head:

I hear footsteps over my head all night.

They come and they go. Again they come and they go all night.

They come one eternity in four paces and they go one eternity in four paces.<sup>167</sup>

The aural effect of these lines is a sense of the speaker's voice beating against metric walls. Where imprisonment operates at a thematic level in 'Proem' and 'The Cage', it becomes configured into form in 'The Walker'. The repetition of sound and metre makes prison walls of each line's phonetic boundary between silence and non-silence. Within those boundaries the voice swings back and forth like a pendulum confined by the regularity of time:

One-two-three-four: four paces and the wall

One-two-three-four: four paces and the iron gate. (12-13)

There is a sense here of the poem being confined by the beginning and end of its own phonetic termini. This rigid construction of time, metre and sound shares a mutually captive condition with the pacing prisoner. The form of the poem aestheticises the experience of his incarceration.

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<sup>166</sup> 'The Social Significance of Arturo Giovannitti', *Current Opinion* (Jan 1913), p. 26.

<sup>167</sup> *Arrows in the Gale*, p. 5, ll. 1-4.



This form is a simulacrum of oppression, and an indictment of the state's natural inclination to oppress the freedom of thought. Ambiguity arises as to whether the pacing prisoner is real, whether it is a 'phantom of the jail' (10) or whether it is a manifestation of the listener's internally oppressed state of mind. The prisoner 'walks to and fro within the narrow whirlpit of this ever storming and furious thought' (75) but who owns this thought, himself or the listening inmate, is left unconfirmed. The exact nature of the thought concerns the key that opens the prison gate. It is the same thought shared by 'two hundred minds' (84) who are coercively democratised into a single idea - 'the same gate, the same key and the same exit' (110) - by 'the supreme wisdom of the jail [...] that equalizes all, even in mind and sentiment' (86). The minds of jailed prisoners are represented as a political territory. The freedom of this territory has been breached by the imposition of the prison's democracy. This system of power has ironically equalised the inmates to the same state of reductive intellectual oppression:

Fallen is the last barrier of privilege, the aristocracy of the intellect. The democracy of reason has leveled all the two hundred minds to the common surface of the same thought. (86-88)

Democracy reduces the inmates to a 'monstrous cabala' (109), or an enforced meditation on their own incarceration. In both the political and intellectual manifestations of this state, 'all natural things' (78) such as 'bread, work, happiness, peace, love' (79) are deemed impossible. From a distance, the poem recalls a letter written by Bakunin in 1865 urging his followers to 'emancipate thought from the yoke of authority and our will from the tutelage of the state'.<sup>168</sup> 'The Walker' ends with a comparable aphorism in which the inmate asks the pacing prisoner to sleep, because 'it is not the key alone' (119) but the aggregated will of the prisoners' claims to freedom that can 'throw open the gate' (119-120). With this will, the poems suggests, the prisoners might resist the intellectual oppression of the state, a sense of constriction which is aestheticised by the poem's unyielding form.

Giovannitti integrates time, structure and conformity in a similar way in a later work entitled 'The Day of War: Madison Square, June 20th', an anti-war poem that first appeared in *The Masses* in August 1916. The poem's subject is a 'hawk-faced youth' who stands on a 'shaky chair' leading a protest in Madison Square, New York.<sup>169</sup> The crowd gathered before him are faceless and apparently indifferent, 'yawning' (5) and wondering 'why they listen' (8). The

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<sup>168</sup> *Il Popolo d'Italia*, (Sep 1965). Qtd in Pernicone, Nunzio, *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>169</sup> *The Masses* 8:10 (Jun 1916), p. 20, ll. 1-2.

youth stands under a great tower that 'challenges the skies' (3-4). John Timberman Newcomb's analysis of the poem helpfully informs us that the tower in question is, in fact, that of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.<sup>170</sup> Until 1913, the tower was the tallest man-made structure on earth. Each of its four sides were adorned by a separate twenty-five foot clock face. In the poem, the tower is 'terrible like a brandished sword' (4). It is a naked symbol of military-corporatist autocracy. The tower's clock faces share with the prison walls of 'The Walker' a power that enforces conformity. The sound of 'twelve tolls of the clock that makes time' (52-53) mark the countdown to war but they also recall the confined pacing of the walker in how they demarcate the borderlands of freedom. In both poems, freedom appears to exist beyond the reality that time protects. In each case, the will of the poem's subjects appears to be the only counter-measure against this imposed reality; standing 'straight and rigid and inexpugable / Amidst the red omens of war' (55-56) the anti-war youth faces off against the tower, offering a lone resistance to its autocratic dominion over freedom and time.

### **The Aesthetics of Sabotage and Direct Action**

Both 'The Walker' and 'Day of War' offer an aestheticised representation of state oppression, but this representation is only one part of how Giovannitti employs form in his anarchistic poetic-political techne. Perhaps the most dominant part is concerned with representing the modalities of direct action. These were the methods with which anarchists and their associated groups sought to disrupt the apparatus of the state through targeted collective action against church, government and capital. The International Workers of the World movement was formed in 1905 and Giovannitti was affiliated to it through his leadership role in the closely-aligned Italian Socialist Federation in New York. Both organisations set out to conduct a campaign of direct action against the institutions they believed were their economic and political oppressors. The aims of direct action were later summarised by the anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker as follows:

the strike, in all its graduations from the simple wage struggle to the general strike; the boycott; sabotage in all its countless forms; anti-militarist propaganda.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> John Timberman Newcomb, *How Did Poetry Survive?: The Making of Modern American Verse* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012), p. 73.

<sup>171</sup> Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938), p. 116.

During the early 1910s, Giovannitti was heavily involved in propagating each of these methodologies. In word and deed, he supported numerous strike actions and boycotts in addition to the major actions at Lawrence and Paterson. He also helped form, lead and encourage direct action in the Italian Dress Makers' Union and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Giovannitti campaigned extensively against American involvement in the First World War and was involved in protests against Theodore Roosevelt's Preparedness Movement, which sought to increase the nation's military involvement in the conflict. In fact, 'Day of War' is a work of anti-militarist propaganda directly targeting the Preparedness campaign. Yet of all the methodologies outlined by Rocker the one that consumed Giovannitti the most both in practice and poetry was sabotage. In several of his poems, including 'Out of the Mouth of Babes' and 'Sermon on the Common', his work deliberately disrupts the machinery of bourgeois poetics. It aestheticises the sabotage practices of direct political action being carried out by the radical organisations with which he was associated.

Giovannitti's interest in sabotage can be traced back to the work of two political predecessors, Errico Malatesta and Émile Pouget. The agitational methods that Malatesta employed in southern Italy during his leadership of the nascent Italian anarchist movement of the 1870s set a general precedent for Italian social anarchist practice. Malatesta also had an indirect influence on Giovannitti because during the years 1899-1900 he lived in New Jersey and assumed editorship of the Italian anarchist newspaper *La Question Sociale*, as well as speaking frequently to the immigrant anarchist communities into which Giovannitti would later migrate. However, the work of Pouget was a more direct, explicit and, in some ways, more foundational influence on Giovannitti's poetry and politics, not least because Malatesta's own beliefs on sabotage were affected by Pouget's writings in the 1890s.

Pouget was a French trade union leader who in 1896 declared that sabotage should become the main weapon of resistance for the working classes against capitalist oppression. His seminal work *Le Sabotage* (1898) theorised a moral argument for its practice as follows:

Since the day a man had the criminal ability to profit by another man's labour, since that very same day the exploited toiler has instinctively tried to give to his master less than was demanded from him. In this wise [sic] the worker was unconsciously doing SABOTAGE, demonstrating in an indirect way the irrepressible antagonism that arrays Capital and Labor one against the other.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Émile Pouget, *Sabotage*, trans. A. Giovannitti (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1913), p. 37.

Sabotage was thus defined as any means by which a worker sought to disrupt the flow of capitalist production in resistance to oppressive working conditions or wage exploitation. There was no intention in Pouget's theory to advocate violence or criminal damage. Its intention was to encourage direct action through anonymous disruption and subterfuge to slow down machinery or reduce output. The result would be to bring production back into balance with the quality of the conditions in which it was requested that labour be carried out.

Giovannitti translated *Le Sabotage* into an English language edition in 1913. It included a self-penned introduction establishing his own vision of sabotage, which also provides clues as to how that vision would become aestheticised as a key part of his poetic-political techne. In the introduction, Giovannitti identifies the bourgeois Socialist party as his main antagonist because he believed that they had conspired with the capitalists to corrupt the meaning of anarchy and sabotage ever since the Lawrence Textile Strike. He argues that these terms had become co-ordinately associated with fear and chaos through the capitalist presses in order to blame such actions on 'frothy-mouthed foreign agitators' (11) such as himself. Giovannitti encourages his fellow radicals to follow Pouget's lead and declare sabotage an 'expedient of war' (12) against this bourgeois conspiracy. He urges his readers to make sabotage practices a 'real and deliberate trespassing into the bourgeois sanctum' (14). To Giovannitti, sabotage would form the basis of a belligerent, hidden economic warfare consisting of direct action in mills, factories and other institutions controlled by individuals from that social strata.

In his introduction to *Sabotage*, Giovannitti outlines a vision of how carrying out sabotage against the capitalists and bourgeois socialists functions to disrupt the mechanisms of production and it is here that we can begin to draw parallels with how such practices might operate poetically. This is because Giovannitti viewed the poem and the production process as twinned methods of bourgeois operation. In other words, in his poetic and his political career he treated them both as institutions of power to be targeted, hijacked, destabilised and undermined. The introduction contains a clear message to those he deemed to be his capitalist oppressors that sabotage and direct action would one day overthrow those institutions so that they could be replaced by an anarcho-syndicalist confederation:

We are going to take over the industries some day, for three reasons:  
because we need them, because we want them and because we have  
the power to get them. (33)

Giovannitti also sought to allay any fears that direct action necessarily involved violence and conflict. However, in doing so he makes the suggestion that he saw the practice of sabotage as a multi-dimensional 'art' embodied by intuition and intention, writing:

there is no danger in any art in itself when it is determined by natural instinctive impulse and is quiet, unconscious and premeditated. (34)

This enticing alignment of poetry and politics as a dual artistic craft is accompanied by no further guidance as to how he might have wished his work to be read in such a fashion. Nevertheless, Giovannitti's extensive descriptions of how to sabotage the mechanisms of production allow for an interpretation of the poems he wrote that appear to aestheticise such methods. For example, he describes how a single act of disruption should be executed through a momentary interruption to the regular output of a production process:

A skilful operation on the machinery of production is intended not to destroy it or permanently render it defective, but only to temporarily disable it. It is nothing more or less than the chloroforming of the organism of production. (24)

There is a tempting parallel between poetry and politics suggested here by the drawing together of images that describe the slowing down of a machine, on the one hand, and the silencing of an organic voice, on the other. Giovannitti later exhorts his readers to carry out a 'mischievous tampering with the machinery' (36) of production. His own subversive meddling with the mechanics of poetic production characterises several of his early poems.

None of Giovannitti's poems imagine a more opulent vision of the 'bourgeois sanctum' than 'Out of the Mouth of Babes'. Its setting is a grand residence with an Upper West Side hue, owned by the chic and fashionable character known as 'milady'. She sits 'under pink wax-light' in a great hall where gold, silver and crystal adorns the furniture.<sup>173</sup> The hall is a sanctum in both senses of the term. It is a place invested with sacred irony, in which milady feeds the small dog in her lap a 'heavenly gruel' (16) as if she was 'ministering the nectar to the last god' (14). It is also a sanctum in the sense that is exclusive and exclusionary; the poet's narrator looks in on the setting through a window, awestruck by the lavishness displayed before him and unable to decide 'what resplended the most' (2). The narrator

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<sup>173</sup> *Arrows in the Gale*, p. 14, l. 1.

stands outside in heavy snowfall under the house's grand Italian colonnade. Half-way through the poem, he is joined in looking through the window by a hungry paper boy who cries as he shares the tragedies of his life: his mother died, his father is in jail, his sister is a drunk and his papers are now wet and unsellable. Through the window, the boy's ravenous eyes devour the 'uncarnal beauty' (15) of milady and he wishes that he could exchange places with her pampered pet. There appears nothing remarkable about the scene. Two poor, hungry individuals stand in the cold outside, looking in at the warmth and luxury enjoyed by a member of the moneyed cosmopolitan elite. The window between them secures a temple of 'holy' riches inside the house.

Not all is as it first appears though, and it soon becomes clear that in 'Out of the Mouth of Babes' Giovannitti is carrying out a clandestine execution of sabotage against the mechanics of its form. The poem appears to be a genteel prose poem concerning the unfortunate fact of wealth inequality. Its form and content embody particular expectations with regard to decorum and propriety. Milady is a subject who one might anticipate epitomising the bourgeois mannerliness of a wealthy, propertied urban woman. The fate of the narrator and his poor, hungry companion could typically function as an inauspicious makeweight to her life of great luxury. However, Giovannitti seeks to tamper with the representation of their social dualism.

The first sign that Giovannitti is operating subversively is that on milady's dining table, alongside some gold and silver cutlery, is the 'lucid head' (4) of her 'severe and solemn waiter' (4-5). Its appearance is shocking in its understatement; neither milady nor the narrator remark on the presence of the severed head. Instead, the waiter is simply 'there because of milady and not milady because of the waiter, as some may think' (6-7). In other words, urban capitalist economics determines that milady's riches have granted the waiter the great fortune of becoming a decapitated head on her dining table, not that milady is afforded her exalted position, as Giovannitti would have seen it, because she feeds on the exploitation of the working classes. Subsequently, this irony becomes literal. It is soon apparent that the 'heavenly gruel' milady feeds her dog is the 'soul and and brain of the waiter diluted with a little spoon of gold in a creamy fluid, in a noble silver bowl' (10-11). By offering such a distressing depiction of the apparently parasitic urban wealthy, Giovannitti trespasses into the 'bourgeois sanctum' of milady's grand hall. He also transgresses the sanctum of a bourgeois lyrical form. The waiter's head leaves blood on milady's 'chaste' (3) tablecloth, just as Giovannitti's startling image of it desecrates a poetic canvas protected by the alleged sensibilities of class. This visual impression leaves a wrench in the machinery of readerly expectation.

Events outside milady's house also aestheticise the poet's intended disruption of the social hierarchy between the powerful urbanite and her powerless observers. A dialogue takes place between the narrator and the paper seller. The boy weeps as he makes a plea to exchange places with milady's dog. The narrator responds sympathetically, assuming that the boy intends to suggest that he wishes to dine richly from the hand of his mistress. In response to this, the boy becomes angry. In a single moment, he appears to acquire the spirit of revolt and to recognise his own revolutionary potential. The boy declares rebelliously 'No, damn you, no' (32), and that if he was the dog he would 'tear her nose off'. Instead of conforming to social expectations, remaining passive and accepting his destitution, Giovannitti depicts the boy as performing an act of economic disobedience. He demonstrates a willingness to resist his social conditions and to obstruct the system that keeps him impoverished and dependent, with violence if necessary. The boy's sudden realisation of his own power becomes spiritually epiphanic, but has deeply ironic, ecclesiastical undertones. He runs 'away in the raging blizzard' (33) but the narrator sees 'the sun, the great sun, the luminous warm sun, right in front of him' (34). His wisdom reflects the psalmic spirit of the poem's title. However, the boy utilises that wisdom to defile the churchly virtue of milady's 'bourgeois sanctum', with its 'heavenly gruel' and its canine 'god'. By rooting his subject's non-compliance in biblical teaching, the anarchist poet turns the machinery of his enemies against itself.

Giovannitti aestheticises the practices of sabotage and direct action against the church once more in 'The Sermon on the Common'. The poem is essentially an aggrandisement of an address he gave on Lawrence Common during the textile mill strike of 1912. It hijacks the lexical structure of Christ's 'Sermon on the Mount', but replaces the original teachings with Giovannitti's anarcho-syndicalist impulses, and in doing so provocatively undermines their initial intention. Christ's voice is replaced by that of a rabble-rousing revolutionary and his disciples on the mountain are replaced by a multitude of immigrant diasporas, nomads and tribal groupings:

And they came from all parts of the earth, the Syrians and the Armenians,  
the Thracians and the Tartars, the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans, the  
Iberians and the Gauls and the Angles and Huns and the Hibernians and  
Scythians, even from the desert sands to the deserts of ice, they came unto  
listen to his words.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *Arrows in the Gale*, p. 34, ll. 3-6.

What Giovannitti represents here is a pan-historical vision of an anarchist society. From horse-riding Iranic pastoralists to itinerant Celts, multiple independent confederations of global communities and ethnicities come together in celebration of 'freedom's spirit' (8). Giovannitti paraphrases the beatitudes of the biblical sermon. However, in the case of 'The Sermon on the Common' they become assimilated into a radical form of revolutionary address. Blessed become not the weak, but 'the rebels / For they shall reconquer the earth' (11). Blessed are not the children of God but the 'children of Liberty' (16), the 'Plebs, Populace, People, Rabble, Mob, Proletariat' (37) who shall 'eat the fruits of their labor' (12) and 'live and abide forever' (37). The biblical cadences of the original verse become radicalised to envision the possibility of a stateless, post-revolutionary, anarcho-syndicalist world community.

'The Sermon on the Common' mischievously tampers with the sensibilities of the gospel by camouflaging an alternative voice within its original teachings. Jesus warned his followers against the hypocrisy demonstrated by those who fast, pray and give to the needy only in order to receive commendation from others. Giovannitti's substitute sermoniser attempts to expose a moral hypocrisy in the association between Christian philosophy and the powerful institutions of modern society. He implies that under the auspices of Jesus's teachings, the common worker has been told not to resist, not to take when taken from, but instead to worship the chains that imprison them, and never to question their subservience to their masters:

if your masters, or your masters' servants smite you on the right cheek,  
turn unto them the other also, and if they take away from the you the  
heritage of your father, give unto them also the birthright of your children. (74-76)

Jesus's teachings warned against false prophets but the modern prophets in 'The Sermon on the Common' are the 'scribes of the press' (20) who, the speaker warns, 'shall revile you' (19) and the judges and priests who 'shall call you criminals' (20) instead of revolutionaries. Jesus urged his disciples not to think that he had come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. Similarly, in Giovannitti's version of the sermon the speaker asks the assembled crowd to 'think not that I come to destroy the law' (39). However, the speaker's law is an 'eternal law of progress' (41) based on 'lives and labors' and that law, he declares, 'shall become liberty' (95-96). The prophets are not false prophets but the assembled confederations he is addressing, who are 'the power of the earth' (25) and the 'makers and dispensers of all the bounties' (26) of society. Such textual subversion continues throughout 'The Sermon on the



Common'. In accordance with Giovannitti's phrase from his introduction to *Sabotage*, the speaker assumes the authority of the biblical lexicon in order to 'chloroform the organism'. In the process of doing so, he replaces Christ's pedagogical voice with that of a speaker who proclaims self-managed 'life and labor' to be the pathway to social and economic freedom.

In 'Out of the Mouth of Babes' and 'The Sermon on the Common', Giovannitti aestheticises three key anarcho-syndicalist commitments into an action-oriented *techne* reflecting the practice of direct action. The first is the general tendency of anarcho-syndicalism to interrogate the structures of hierarchy and domination, and to challenge their legitimacy. To anarchistic radicals like Giovannitti, the structural social and economic apparatus he provocatively challenged in these works was not self-justifying. In her review of *Arrows in the Gale*, Harriet Monroe described images such as the starving newsboy and the subverted gospel as 'agitating to the comfortable conservative'.<sup>175</sup> Giovannitti aimed to maximise his agitation of the conservative mindset in order to actively question the validity of the institutions it sought to protect.

Secondly, it is an anarchist belief that if these structures cannot legitimise themselves they must be dismantled and reconstructed from below. Giovannitti performs this act on a textual level by dissolving the narrative framework of Christian teaching and reforming it into a provocative new literary-political aesthetic. The new aesthetic is simultaneously a lexical and a social reconfiguration of the original text. Therefore, thirdly, once these structures have been broken down, the aim of anarcho-syndicalism is to develop more just institutions and ultimately a world of free associations and worker's communities. A new social structure is imagined in 'The Sermon on the Common' directly in place of the gospel's old rhetorical and cultural formation. It is one in which the action and commitment of immigrant labourers, modern men of 'the plough and the hammer, the helm and the lever' (91), can recreate the world anew in freedom and liberty. It also reflected Giovannitti's hope that industrial modernity might be actively organised into such an arrangement.

Yet if these poems best exemplify Giovannitti's poetic embodiment of resistance, no poem celebrates what freedoms might result from resistance than 'O Labor of America: Heartbeat of Mankind'. In fact, the significance of this work is that Giovannitti combines all of the formal, linguistic and thematic elements identifiable as his own particular response to modernism. The poem breaks out of classical form and adopts Whitman-esque structural patterns such as expanded, ascriptive sentence lists and other related conjunctive devices. The speaker's exhortations ('Come then, come now) echo those of 'Song of Myself' and in each poem these devices have the same objective, to find in totality the fullest possible expression of liberty. Like Whitman, Giovannitti also uses synonymous, biblical parallelism

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<sup>175</sup> Harriet Monroe, review of *Arrows in the Gale*, *Poetry*, 6:1 (Apr 1915), p. 36.

(‘And you, Braddock... / And you, Pueblo... / And you, McKeesport’), albeit with a much greater thematic emphasis on the New Testament ethos that one must ‘take our bread to the starving’ and ‘comfort the widows the orphans and the bereft’.<sup>176</sup> Yet as well as looking back to Whitman and Christ, Giovannitti also looks forward, using contrasting signifiers to express a futuristic, industrial declaration of human liberty. These combine the moral terms of Judeo-Christian teaching with the dazzling technologies promised by a modern, industrial American economy. Giovannitti’s speaker appeals to the ‘vestal’ hearth goddesses of ancient Rome that they bless the future-creators of the modern America labour force, the ‘engineers of chasms, escalators, the defiers of the Babylon heights.’ Similarly, the conventional industries of ‘coal’, ‘steam’ and ‘wood’ are actioned by ‘human machines’ in a futuristic arrangement of the relation between man and technology, which he envisions occurring in the long-established American industrial heartlands of Duquesne and Akron, Ohio, now the ‘matrices of the new world’. It is this arrangement of elements, the formal embodiment of liberty, old world ecclesiasticism and anarcho-industrial futurism that best define Giovannitti as a revolutionary modern poet.

The hope of a future based on anarchist principles was effectively ended for Giovannitti and his fellow anarchists by the events of 1917. After the United States entered the First World War, many of the anarchists who had coalesced within the movement based on its anti-war, anti-draft principles became disillusioned and left to pursue alternative causes. Inevitably, Bolshevism was foremost among these. The government’s Espionage Act of 1917 also outlawed organised opposition to the war and led to the shutting down of many significant anarchist publications. Anarchist meetings were raided and leading activists were sentenced to long prison sentences. These leaders included the two most significant figureheads of the anarchist movement in the United States, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who were initially imprisoned for encouraging draft avoidance before being deported to Russia. While activists were being forcibly removed from the country, the 1917 Immigration Act blocked entry into the United States for any individuals the government considered to be potential radicals or disrupters, from ‘idiots, imbeciles, epileptics, alcoholics, poor, criminals, beggars’ to ‘polygamists and anarchists’, including ‘those who were against the organized government’.<sup>177</sup> The focus of those anarchists who remained altered significantly from a movement focused on economic, gender and sexual equality to one focused on the fight against fascism as it grew in the interwar period.

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<sup>176</sup> Arturo Giovannitti, *Arrows in the Gale & Other Poems* (Niantic, CT: Quale Press, 2004), p. 57.

<sup>177</sup> Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in the United States* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 3.

Not surprisingly, anarchist art and literature that engaged with modernist movements suffered almost irrecoverable losses as a result of the events of 1917. Many leading anarchist artists of the Modern School with whom Giovannitti was closely associated, including the Russian playwright Manuel Komroff, left the United States and returned to their homelands. Literary-anarchist magazines to which Giovannitti contributed such as *The Blast* continued to oppose Bolshevism by representing it satirically as a new bourgeois state, but their influence and readership had diminished significantly. His contributing editorship of *The Masses* ended in 1917 when it was forced to close owing to offences that related to the Espionage Act. In the process, what was arguably the most influential radical literary forum to have permitted anarchism under its banner was also lost. Its editor Max Eastman re-emerged in 1918 with *The New Masses*, committed to commenting on events in Leninist Russia. Futurist anarchism also by this time no longer played any part in the radical art movements of American cities. For all of these reasons, Alan Antliff is justified in many respects in describing 1917 as the 'denouement of anarchist modernism' in the United States.<sup>178</sup>

In other respects, anarchism after 1917 took part in what was as much the beginning of a new stage of cultural radicalism as it was the end of its old order. A timeline of significant literary-political engagements that ends in 1917 would fail to identify significant subsequent work by Giovannitti and other anarchist artists; it would also overlook the understanding that can be drawn from the new context to which they were responding. For example, anarchism and other radical movements, in fact, strengthened their ties within ethnic communities in New York City in the subsequent period. Radicals of many nationalities including Russians, Poles, Lithuanians and, of course, Italians, met frequently at the People's House, a six storey building on East 15th Street near Union Square Park in south central Manhattan. The building was bought in late 1917 by the Rand School of Social Science, an organisation committed to raising class consciousness and which also considered itself a training school for trade unionists. The idea of the People's House was imported from Europe and its aim was to provide a community space in which the working classes could gather to appreciate art and culture as well as to provide a base for radical organisation. The People's House in New York was a 'regular beehive of socialist and labor activity'.<sup>179</sup> It housed the largest radical bookstore in New York City and an auditorium capable of holding six hundred spectators. The auditorium was used by Giovannitti and others to run an experimental

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<sup>178</sup> Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, p. 207.

<sup>179</sup> It was described in this way in January 1919 by Raymond Wilcox, the business manager of socialist newspaper the *New York Call*, in a letter to the celebrated union leader Eugene Debs. See: J. Robert Constantine (ed.), *Letters of Eugene Debs, Volume 2: 1913-1919* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 486.

theatre group known as *Teatro del Popolo* (The People's Theatre) and through this group he produced literature that responded to the new circumstances of the anarchist movement in the city, and which emphasised the educational nature of the organisation in which it operated.

What is known about how the artists of *Teatro del Popolo* responded to post-war modernity relies on reviews produced by the Italian newspaper *Il Lavoro* (1917-18). The newspaper's self-declared concerns were 'organisation and class struggle'.<sup>180</sup> It was originally intended as a voice for the United Garment Workers' Union, latterly the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' of America, two organisations with which Giovannitti was engaged. *Il Lavoro* was an unifying organ of multi-lingual radical propaganda that aligned its aims with the building of independent industrial unions run by immigrant labourers. Both the newspaper and *Teatro del Popolo* consisted of a union of nations much like the one imagined by Giovannitti in 'Sermon on the Common'. *Il Lavoro* also served as an educational tool for the theatre group and its associated organisations. However, in January 1918 the newspaper reinvented itself from a weekly newspaper to, in its own words, a 'multiform book' (98) of both political and extended general review. One of its first assignments in this new form was to provide a review of *Teatro del Popolo*, a task which was carried out by the journalist Vincenzo Vacirca.

The January 1918 edition of *Il Lavoro* records that the group produced a mixture of speeches, as well as original and classical political drama. *Teatro del Popolo* saw its purpose as a 'school, tribune and forestage for the elevation of the mind ... serving the cause of freedom and justice through the means of the arts, and promoting critical thinking instead of just fun.'<sup>181</sup> According to Marcella Bencivenni, whose scholarship has done much to uncover the historical and cultural configuration of the group, it 'aspired simultaneously to modernity, artistic experimentation, and political experimentation' as well as to create a 'specifically revolutionary aesthetic'.<sup>182</sup> This experimental aesthetic took the form of staged debates, audience engagement, and dramatic performances at political events. Bencivenni argues that *Teatro del Popolo* was 'a major creative outlet for intellectual radicals as well as an important opportunity for political action', a description that also recalls the twinned nature of poetic and political action evident in Giovannitti's pre-1917 poetry. The group provided a forum in which he could also extend his dual craft into political theatre.

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<sup>180</sup> Bénédicte Deschamps, 'Il Lavoro, The Italian Voice of the Amalgamated, 1915-1932', *Italian American Review*, 8:1 (Spring/Summer 2001), p. 87.

<sup>181</sup> Vincenzo Vacirca, 'Teatro del Popolo', *Il Lavoro* (Jan 12, 1918), p. 4.

<sup>182</sup> Marcella Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 105.

Very few of the works produced by *Teatro del Popolo* have survived, but one document that has been archived in its entirety is the script of Giovannitti's play *The Alpha and the Omega* (1917). Its setting is the Fifth Avenue home of John D. Rockefeller. Shortly after midnight one Fourth of July, a burglar whose name is Jim O'Rooney is observed making his way out of the house carrying a sackful of Rockefeller's silver on his back. The burglar is thwarted by Rockefeller's sudden appearance and responds by forcing the financier, under threat of assassination, to open his safe. Here Rockefeller begins to regain control of the situation by confusing O'Rooney with his explanation of the complicated assortment of shares, bonds and promissory notes contained in the safe. He follows up his advantage by drawing out a wily set of scenarios to convince O'Rooney his plan is doomed to fail: that the numbers on his banknotes are registered and will be traced by the police, that all of his silver is monogrammed and trackable, and that to kill such a notable individual would undoubtedly lead to O'Rooney being hanged, burned or electrocuted. O'Rooney is entranced by the arguments Rockefeller spins; so much so, that he not only gives up his gun but also leaves behind his shoes and trousers before exiting, convinced that they must somehow also belong to the powerful capitalist.

The play naturally follows on from Giovannitti's poetry in targeting Bakunin's interdependent triumvirate of church, capital and legislature through the writer's direct, destabilising methodologies. When Rockefeller enters the scene he does in a saintly 'nymbus' [sic] of light.<sup>183</sup> He is the Alpha and the Omega of the play's title and the personification of all forms of power, both theological and capitalistic. Such is the literal nature of his embodying these powers, he is described as being outwardly an 'architectural combination of a gothic cathedral and national bank' with 'eyes like the windows of two buildings' (4). Rockefeller not only describes himself as a 'Christian gentleman' (9) but he is also able to convince O'Rooney that to kill him would be an offence 'infinitely more heinous' (21) than the crucifixion of Jesus. He justifies the power of his capital through Christian values, arguing that his power over O'Rooney is comparable to that of a good Samaritan 'trying to reason a wayward brother away from the road to eternal perdition' (18). Likewise, he claims to want to take Rooney's gun for the same reason Jesus convinced Peter to drop his sword after he had smited a servant in John 18:10, positioning himself as a benevolent corrector of rashness and misinterpretation.

Giovannitti, of course, elevates the character in order to expose his proclamations as fraudulent and ridiculous. He also attempts to expose a conspiracy of power in his plot

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<sup>183</sup> The Arturo Giovannitti Papers, Italian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, p. 3.

between the Christian capitalist and the corrupt legislature: Rockefeller passes quickly over explaining a share certificate worth 1.9 million dollars intended for the fictional senator John B. O'Moore which is contained within his safe. It is clear that Giovannitti considered this relationship a particularly American hypocrisy; he has Rockefeller's character declare with ludicrous irony that the Fourth of July is 'the glorious day of our nation's independence from all forms of oppression and slavery' (21). As with his poetry, Giovannitti sought to sabotage the social machinery of power by undermining the framework in which it was perceived.

Moreover, through the organisation of its theatrical elements, Giovannitti is able to extend the revolutionary aesthetic of his drama beyond what was possible in verse. By this I refer especially to the apparent relationship between Giovannitti as the writer-director of the play, the audience and the events on stage. In the prelude to his dialogue, Giovannitti positions himself self-consciously as an observant character, barely more significant in determining events than any member of the audience or the theatre's technicians:

(The Private business office and study of Mr John. D Rockefeller in his Fifth Avenue home. Having never been there, nor read any description of it and not being even sure of its existence, the Author is unable to give any information as to what it looks like, and leaves it entirely to the imagination of the reader and the sapience of stage hands. (1)

He encourages audience engagement by allowing the wisdom and imagination of his spectators to determine the stage's appearance. In an experimental departure from dramatic convention Giovannitti, with self-referential awareness, ungoverns the play and frees it of his own direction. This is true, at least, of any interference beyond what he declares to be absolutely necessary for the play to progress:

for the sake of what is going to take place, he insists upon a couch and a safe, altho' Mr. Rockefeller might never have heard of the latter. (1)

Giovannitti, or his intradiegetic persona, is accordingly not to be considered responsible for the events to follow. Instead, he is 'merely listening' to the 'bewildering circumstances' (4) unfold as would any observer of the spectacle. The only hierarchy in his imagined auditorium exists between the play's Fifth Avenue setting and its audience. The voice of the director 'meekly suggests' (1) that flickering streetlights might add to the dramatic tension of the scene, before it suggests satirically that

such intermittent lamplights actually exist in the Bronx, tho' they are not likely to indulge in such excentric and undignified antics on Fifth Avenue. (1)

With this deliberate pun, Giovannitti configures Fifth Avenue as a power centre superior to the marginal and 'ex-centric' social and economic communities in New York City. The pun also organises observers of the play into the spectators and the director in the audience, on one side, and the 'governments, business men and burglars' (4), on the other. In contrast to the former, the latter both exist on stage and rule over the centre of the city. The revolutionary aesthetic of the play relies heavily on this non-hierarchical arrangement of Giovannitti's director persona and his audience, who share an equal absence of authority over the power centre in which its dramatic events unfold.

The aesthetic of *The Alpha and the Omega* reflects the educational programme of the institution within which *Teatro del Popolo* operated. The commonality between the writer-director and his audience is crucial in this respect. Giovannitti's play exposes a number of problems with the contemporaneous system of social and economic organisation. When Rockefeller refuses to show O'Rooney the way out of the house he argues that 'business is business' and that he is 'entitled to fight for the best obtainable terms for my money' (13), from which can be inferred Giovannitti's position on the absurdity of competition and the illogical nature of the market mechanism. Rockefeller repeatedly refers to O'Rooney as a businessman and not as a burglar. Between them, capitalist discourse is played out as a complicated game of trickery, deceit and sleight of hand in which O'Rooney is eventually trapped. Eventually, the burglar is convinced to believe that the inequality between them is to his own benefit: Rockefeller convinces him to take a place at one of the soup kitchens he patronises. In exposing such inequities the writing is never intentionally didactic. Giovannitti makes clear from the beginning that the director's knowledge cannot be relied on and that he will 'refrain from any comment' on the intentions of the characters. The play's pedagogy is anti-epistemic, reliant not on knowledge but instead on an active, interpretivist form of social science using social critique and symbolic interpretation. In the new, post-1917 context of radicalism, Giovannitti added an educational element to his anarchist techne for the benefit of adult worker education. He did so by using drama as an active study of society and as a critique of the power factors determining its unequal economic and political structure.

Giovannitti is not the only Italian writer whose social critique subverts the assumption that the art and practice of sabotage ended in 1917; the poetry of Francesca Vinciguerra also reflects a commitment to aestheticising sabotage and revolt. Only a few biographical facts about Vinciguerra are certain, but those that do exist suggest that she lived a lifetime of

political engagement, both at a literary and a social level. Like many politically-committed Italian emigrants, Vinciguerra was born in Sicily, in 1900, emigrating with her parents to the United States in 1907. Raised in Harlem, by the early 1920s she had married her first husband, the infamous Communist propagandist Victor J. Jerome. Vinciguerra became well-known in the 1930s for writing several award-winning historical biographies in which her concern was to illustrate the revolutionary spirit of such literary figures as the Rossettis, the Romantics and Walt Whitman.<sup>184</sup> In 1937, she stood alongside other American writers at a congress against fascism organised by Ernest Hemingway. However, like Giovannitti, it was in the poetry she wrote during her youth that she was most fervent, radical and directly critical of social injustice.

In addition to versifying direct action, Vinciguerra also spent several decades occupying the same cultural circles as Giovannitti. The two never explicitly name one another in their writings. However, in the autobiography of their shared mentee and fellow poet Joseph Tusiani, it is revealed that all three were members of what became known as the Union Square circle in lower Manhattan during the 1950s.<sup>185</sup> The circle was a forum in which the attendant friends could participate in conversation about their own art and about topical affairs. Giovannitti and Vinciguerra also shared an esteemed association with the poet and sculptor Onorio Ruotolo. Giovannitti and Ruotolo co-directed the anti-war literary-political magazine *Il Fuoco* in 1914. Vinciguerra helped Ruotolo to found the Leonardo da Vinci Art School in 1923, a community educational facility which aimed to make learning about art affordable for the working poor. In their individual projects with Ruotolo, both writers demonstrated a dedication to redistributing social power, an active practice which is evident in their poetry. Vinciguerra published a biography of Ruotolo in 1949, by which time she and Giovannitti had occupied similar society since the 1910s, the decade in which both writers began their literary careers as contributors to radical magazines in New York City.

Three interconnected tanka poems written by Vinciguerra were published by *The Liberator* in its edition of April 1920.<sup>186</sup> The tanka is a lyrical form broken down into lines of 5, 7, 5, 7 and

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<sup>184</sup> The magazine *Atlantica* was a forum for showcasing the contribution of immigrant Italians to the social, cultural, historical and scientific life of the United States. It interviewed Vinciguerra in 1933, who revealed that her biography of the Rossettis, *Poor Splendid Wings*, had recently won the book prize of the *Atlantic Monthly*, for which she was awarded five thousand dollars. See: Mary Iacovella, 'A Winner in Biography: Francesca Vinciguerra', *Atlantica* (Nov 1933), p. 256.

<sup>185</sup> Joseph Tusiani, *La Parola Difficile: Autobiografia di un Italo-Americano* (Fasana: Schena, 1988), p. 406.

<sup>186</sup> While it is generally accepted as a matter of historical record that Vinciguerra contributed poetry to radical magazines in the interwar period, exactly which magazines she contributed to has been a matter of significant confusion and, ultimately, error. Several sources erroneously claim that she wrote for *The Masses* at the age of eighteen, for example Helen Barolini, *The Dream Book: An Anthology of*



7 syllables. In Japanese poetry, it is a historical precursor to forms such as the haiku and the renga. Traditionally, the tanka was written as an exchange between lovers. It also tended to be in some manner a reflection of nature. This could take the configuration of an internal human state or an impression of the natural environment, and often involved an active mirroring of both co-existing conditions. Two of the most prolific tanka writers of the early twentieth century were Yosano Akiko and Saitō Mokichi whose poetry focused respectively on female sexual equality and left-wing activism, two concerns that function interdependently in Vinciguerra's verse. One historical possibility is that she was introduced to the form indirectly by the Japanese-American writer Carl Sadakichi Hartmann. A friend of Walt Whitman, Stéphane Mallarmé and Ezra Pound, Hartmann is credited with introducing the haiku to experimental poetry circles in New York City. During the mid-1910s he produced a series of highly influential articles on Japanese poetry in Guido Bruno's bohemian art magazine *Greenwich Village*, and his work with the form in the early twentieth century predates that of Ezra Pound and other modernists. The obvious influence of Symbolism within the Japanese forms utilised by both Hartmann and Vinciguerra strengthen this supposition. Ultimately, though, in her contributions to *The Liberator*, Vinciguerra employed the tanka form as a medium for her own unique aesthetic of political violence, direct action and social justice.

The first of Vinciguerra's tankas is an avant-garde arrangement of eastern and western cultural currents:

WHITE water-lilies  
Glide on the pond's pale waters  
Like opal tear-drops  
On the wilted lily cheeks  
Of wan and broken girl-blooms.<sup>187</sup>

Her choice of flower recalls Mallarmé's 'The White Water Lily' and Monet's lilies under a Japanese bridge. In its symbolism, though, the poem is reflective of *Hanakotoba*, the Japanese language of flowers. Each flower in the language communicates an unspoken meaning, and each colour in the poem articulates its own distinct, concentrated, emotional

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*Writings by Italian American Women* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), p. 113. Chronologically, this would have been impossible as Vinciguerra was aged only seventeen when the magazine was forced to close in 1917. Additionally, the large-scale digitisation and indexing of literary periodicals has made it easier to establish that Vinciguerra contributed only to *The Liberator* and never to *The Masses*.

<sup>187</sup> 'Tankas', *The Liberator*, 3:4 (Apr 1920), p. 49, ll. 1-5.

totality. Though the white lily is a symbol of peace, purity and chastity, in this first tanka peace is a prelude to revolt. The opal tear-drops gesture towards both flowers and jewellery. The wilted cheeks and broken girl-blooms provide an undertone of femininity and grief, and suggest the image of a woman mourning, holding a precious stone against her face. The image reflects the twinned states of internal and external nature typical of tanka poetry. Untypically though, Vinciguerra sets up this impression of latent sadness as a harbinger of impassioned insurrection.

An evolving sense of disturbance becomes apparent in tanka two. The poem functions as a transitional forewarning, and as a point in flux between the stillness, chastity and silent mournfulness signified in the first tanka and the frenzied, violent uprising that occurs in the final verse:

Fireflies of gold  
Sprinkled on the earth's green veil,  
Diamond fireflies  
Scattered on the sky's blue mats,-  
Which shall strew my bridal gown? (5-10)

Once again, images of east and west are set against one another in order to convey two contrasting emotional impressions. The first two lines refer to gold fireflies that are known to illuminate the sky during Japan's rainy seasons. In the final three lines, the speaker imagines the fireflies as adornments on a western bridal gown. The initial fireflies are 'sprinkled', the word communicating a sense that their formation exists within a state of natural, organic order. In contrast, the 'diamond fireflies' on the gown are 'scattered' and 'strewn', suggesting an association of confusion and disorderliness. Similarly, the veil in the first two lines is earthly and part of the order of nature but, contrastingly, the bridal gown is the concern of an anxious question and what seems to be an emotionally disruptive human experience. There is a change in colour tone from the whites of tanka one to the symbolic golds and green of this verse. Gold, the colour equated with marital commitment, is aligned with the organic, green order of the first two lines, but diamonds, the stone of the promised, are identified with a sense of disquietude in its final three lines. By placing these impressions at variance with one another, the poet appears to be conveying the virginal, pre-marital apprehension of a young woman. However, what will become clearer in tanka three is that the social values associated with such traditional notions of femininity are, in fact, the true subject of its disruption and disarrangement.

Immediately in tanka three the developing sense of unease the poet cultivates in the previous verse becomes a furious, violent confrontation:

Red, glowing lanterns  
Nodding in the shrieking dark,  
Grim, bloody faces,-  
Faces that the daimyo sees  
In dreams before the battle. (11-15)

In addition to the obvious undercurrent of danger and distress they provide, red lanterns have an important military and political symbolism in Japanese culture. Historically, they were used a communication device between soldiers on a battlefield. A second informative connotation in relation to the poem is that red lanterns were used in cultural festivals that marked the departure of a loved one. We therefore become aware that the poem is proceeding on a political footing and that it has potentially acquired nuances related to both militarism and personal loss. These two meanings also have relevance in line two. The blue sky of tanka two has become night, the nodding of the lanterns creates a sense of rapid movement, possibly a battle, which is occurring amidst the 'shrieking' cries of human anguish emerging from the darkness. Whoever the soldiers are, their faces have already been bloodied, suggesting a thirst for vengeance in their frenetic movement across the battlefield. The multiple nodding lanterns indicate that they are many in number but line four reveals that their enemy is only one: the daimyo. This term refers to the title of a military warlord in feudal Japan. The term daimyo is derived from two words - dai meaning 'large' and myo meaning 'private land' - and it is this symbolic figure who becomes the central subject of tanka three's confrontation.

There is an interesting and sudden confluence in the poem between personal and political emancipation. The way in which the anxious question that ends the second tanka develops into the dystopian dreams of the daimyo in the third suggests that what the poem describes is a dual, prepotent state of sexual and political revolution. The daimyo functions here as bloodying symbol of cultural and fiscal patriarchy, from which we can infer that the battle that comes to pass in the third tanka is being fought over the territory of both gender and material relations. Vinciguerra takes us inside the daimyo's dreams in order to expose the fear inherent to the powerful and wealthy male patriarch, which impels his need to preserve control. In a letter of 1942, Vinciguerra praised editor Max Eastman for his poem 'Lot's Wife'

which, she declared, supported the 'ennoblement of women'.<sup>188</sup> In her tankas, Vinciguerra uses concentrated symbolic nuances to pitch the poem from a state of virginal stillness into a bloody, revolutionary battle. She aestheticises the struggle for sexual and social freedom and, in doing so, similarly exalts both women and the politically powerless.

## Conclusion

By 1920, Giovannitti and Vinciguerra had each developed an aesthetic that fully engaged with the realities of political modernity as they understood it. As with the Futurists, Giovannitti's work was anti-foundationalist. It rejected the past as a troubling anomaly, one that needed to be replaced with a future and an art renouncing beginnings and traditions. The form of his poetry simulates the power structure of allegedly coercive, outdated and illegitimate institutions, including the church, the military and the American justice system. His verse caught on intellectually to the currents of European philosophy that outlined the practices of sabotage and direct action, which subsequently became aestheticised into poetry that mischievously tampered with the mechanics of form, hijacked classical lexicon and trespassed into the sanctum of bourgeois lyricism. His work did not only reflect the tendencies of classical anarchism, though; it evolved and responded to the changing political situation in the United States after 1917 and it exemplified the new educational initiatives promoted by *Teatro del Popolo*, *Il Lavoro* and the Rand School of Social Science. Vinciguerra's poetry also aestheticised direct, anti-patriarchal, revolutionary action in a way that suggests it was registering the contextual social circumstances related to universal suffrage and sexual emancipation. When combined, all of these elements constitute a *techne*, and an action-focused dual craft of art and life. In practising this craft, each writer sought to rearrange the inequitable social and economic relations towards which their dissatisfaction with contemporary politics was targeted.

Paradoxically, the more deeply Giovannitti and Vinciguerra's work engaged with political modernity, the more it diverged from the sources, tactics and programmes that comprised the sphere of literary modernism with which it was in contact. In fact, social anarchism had been under attack since Marinetti's article 'War, the Only Hygiene of the World' was published in the *Little Review* in November 1914. Its title paraphrased a line from the 1909 Futurist manifesto, but the intention of the article was much different. It set out Marinetti's justifications as to why Futurism should be considered a superior revolutionary movement to anarchism and it outlined three areas in which each faction conflicted in their attitude

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<sup>188</sup> Frances Winwar to Romana Herdman, October 3 1942, Max Eastman mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

towards modernity. Firstly, Marinetti mocked the anarchist movement's interest in family and human collectivism. He derisively associated these concerns with weakness and femininity and with 'interlocked embraces in the open fields'.<sup>189</sup> Secondly, although social anarchism was explicitly secular, Marinetti compared its pacifistic attitude to that of Christianity and to the 'waving of palms' towards Jesus. To Marinetti, the only acceptable attitude was to be fatalistic and to fully embrace the inevitable chaos of war. Thirdly, he disagreed strongly with social anarchism's promotion of multiracial equality, a goal which he described as 'impure gangrene'. Marinetti argued that there was no time to be idealistic about 'the amicable fusion of difference races' because war would determine to retain those in possession of a 'healthy power'. Though Giovannitti's work shared Futurism's anti-foundationalist methodology to a limited degree, and despite both movements sharing an anarchistic temperament, his writings and those of Vinciguerra embodied a vastly different social programme.

It was not only Marinetti's article, but the *Little Review* more generally that began to turn against social anarchism in 1914. Its editor, Margaret Anderson, had been a strong supporter of the movement at the time the magazine was founded in March of the same year. In May 1914 Anderson published an article entitled 'The Challenge of Emma Goldman' in which she offered the revolutionary feminist and anarchist her fulsome, near-deific, admiration, describing her as someone who stood for 'some of the greatest traits in human nature'.<sup>190</sup> However, Anderson shared Marinetti's view of the association between anarchists and weakness, describing them as a 'fashionable feminine audience'; to both Anderson and Marinetti, anarchists were synonymous with the sentimental, soft-minded and weak of spirit. Contextually, her decision to publish Marinetti's attack on anarchism in November was informed by these changing political views.<sup>191</sup> By 1917 Anderson had publically determined to no longer preach anarchism's tenets, declaring 'I have long given them up'.<sup>192</sup> Her decision was a significant loss to the movement both politically and artistically. The *Little Review* was arguably a forum in which social anarchist art might have coalesced into a codified avant-garde. After all, Giovannitti's collection *Arrows in the Gale* was reviewed

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<sup>189</sup> Marinetti, 'War, the Only Hygiene of the World', p. 30.

<sup>190</sup> Margaret Anderson, 'The Challenge of Emma Goldman', *Little Review* 1:3 (May 1914), p. 6.

<sup>191</sup> In addition to Marinetti's influence, significant external pressures also affected Anderson's diminishing support for anarchism. The articles that she wrote in favour of the movement in 1914 were considered too radical by her funders and subscribers. As a result, revenues diminished and Anderson was forced to move out of her home in Chicago to a makeshift tent compound on Lake Michigan. For a detailed overview of these events, see Susan Noyes Platt, 'The *Little Review*: Early Years and Avant-Garde Ideas', *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 150.

<sup>192</sup> Margaret Anderson, 'What the Public Doesn't Want', *Little Review* 4:1 (May 1917), p. 20.

enthusiastically in the magazine in September 1914.<sup>193</sup> However, Anderson's decision to turn away from social anarchism meant that the publication of his work remained by and large confined to the less influential political periodicals of New York and Boston.

The *Little Review* also began to embrace an individualist strain of anarchism, which was a key tendency of Futurism. If Marinetti's movement can be considered a splitting off from the socialist anarchist tendencies shared by the likes of Goldman and Giovannitti, it is this more individualistic anarchism that Anderson grew to support. In her 1917 article 'What the Public Doesn't Want', she declared that she had principally supported the movement because it represented the best way to prevent 'the exceptional being sacrificed for the average'.<sup>194</sup> Anderson had come to understand anarchism as an emancipation from the inner state rather than the nation state, and as a way to concentrate the power of the individual. This was a very different disposition to that embraced by social anarchists, who wished to change society by dissolving dominant, coercive institutions into a fraternal and self-managed federation of world communities. Anderson's new perspective in 1917 coincided with the recent appointment of Ezra Pound as Foreign Editor of the *Little Review*. Pound brought the influence of his association with Dora Marsden's London-based anarcho-individualist journal *The Egoist*, the predecessor to which, *The New Freewoman*, had drawn on the ego-Futurist programme in the early 1910s. When the *Little Review* reconfigured its own programme towards similar inclinations, all was set for egoism to become the dominant strain of modernist anarchism in both territories.

In reviewing Italian anarchism's bifurcated engagement with American modernism, it is clear that social anarchism suffered in comparison to the more gregarious and competitive spectacle of Futurism. Its commitment to anti-foundationalism meant that it offered no equivalent manifesto and no dramatic public exhibitions. Instead it pursued a quiet, uncontroversial commitment to questioning the legitimacy of powerful institutions and to aestheticising the methods of reordering society on more equitable principles. In his trial speech to the jury at Lawrence, Giovannitti asked why more citizens were not pursuing 'the better and nobler humanity where at last there will not be any more slaves, any more masters'.<sup>195</sup> In doing so, he was knowingly paraphrasing the anarchist and labour slogan 'No Gods, No Masters', which was displayed prominently on thousands of pamphlets handed out

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<sup>193</sup> In his review of *Arrows in the Gale*, Charles Ashleigh described the collection as a 'compact of life - life as it is today, made, not for the titillation [sic] of dilettantes [sic], but for the enjoyment and inspiration of men who can appreciate the meat of life redolent of sweat and blood and tears.' See 'The Poetry of Revolt', *Little Review*, 1:6 (Sep 1914), p. 24.

<sup>194</sup> Anderson, 'What the Public Doesn't Want', p. 20.

<sup>195</sup> Giovannitti, *Address To The Jury*, p. 8.

by the Industrial Workers of the World organisation during the Lawrence strike. Without the notoriety, bombast and self-deification of a figurehead like Marinetti though, Italian social anarchism's more subtle, collective history, as a second Italian avant-garde engaging with American modernism, has been obscured and overlooked. The way in which Giovannitti and Vinciguerra formally embodied in their writings a progressive programme committed to the destruction of social hierarchy, to interactive egalitarianism, to resisting the oppression of women and to embracing the potential of free, self-organising humans has up to now been all but lost to the intellectual past.

### Chapter 3

#### Making the Man-God: Emanuel Carnevali and Pragmatic Anarchism

Described by his American modernist peers as 'the genius of his age' and the 'true poet' of his generation, Emanuel Carnevali's principal concerns remain curiously undefined.<sup>196</sup> Between 1918 and 1922 he contributed prolifically to magazines including the *Little Review*, *Others*, *Poetry* and *Youth: A Magazine of the Arts*, using his experiences as a struggling immigrant writer to both challenge and redefine the way in which those magazines responded to the experience of modern living. Objecting to their ideologies, he refused to align his work with poetry and art which sought to turn itself away from the public. Yet, so compelling has this notion become in our understanding of the American modernist intelligentsia, no contemporary scholarship has been able to accommodate the way in which he attempted to redefine the role of American avant-garde writing by re-attuning it to public life.<sup>197</sup> As an intellectual in the modernist circles of New York and Chicago, he did perhaps more than any of his contemporaries to vociferously dispute the way in which American literary modernism characterised itself. However, the philosophy with which he did so has never been fully investigated or articulated.

He was a close associate of *Others* and in particular William Carlos Williams, who upheld Carnevali's objections in editorials for the magazine, but Carnevali fought rebelliously to set his philosophy apart from those of his contemporaries and to disassociate his ideas from their movements. In a speech to Williams, Lola Ridge, Marianne Moore, Alfred Kreymborg, and the *Others* coterie in the spring of 1919, Carnevali argued that art was the only useful human activity; that their focus on non-utilitarianism and their decision to turn away from the public represented not radical progress but symbols of their defeat. He declared that his own writing would be a talk to the people and this his experimentalism would emerge through violently capturing the form of the moment. This position added to his notoriety and helpfully overcame his problematic identity as an outsider and an exile, as a poor immigrant Italian among American intellectuals. Instead of seeking to extend in new directions the movement

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<sup>196</sup> These descriptions of Carnevali can be found, respectively, in Ernest Walsh, 'A Young Living Genius', *This Quarter*, 1:2 (1925), p. 322, and Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), p. 173.

<sup>197</sup> For example, Mark Morrison writes of a 'sense of inevitability' regarding modernist poetry that 'can turn away from the masses.' See *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905:1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), p. 98. It is rarer for critics to recognise, as Charles Taylor does, a modernism which 'tries to recover a public poetry' and even then Taylor refers here to late British modernism of the 1930s. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 483.



that *Others* had created, Carnevali defined himself on the basis of ferociously rejecting it. He utilised the infamy this created as a way of encouraging others to follow his own vision of a modern art that was practicable, publically engaged and philosophically invigorated. He self-consciously established his persona as a conspicuous commonplace in the centre of the American avant-garde's detachment from public life. To his modernist peers, he was as much a poet as he was a dark insurgent: the peak of his notoriety occurred in July of 1919 when Williams shut down *Others*, writing that Carnevali had irreconcilably exposed its focus on technique, style and detachment as a lie.<sup>198</sup> Yet the depiction of Carnevali as an unyielding, philosophical rebel-poet can be found in the writings and memoirs of numerous American literary modernists, including Ezra Pound, Harriet Monroe, Robert McAlmon, Edward Dahlberg, Ernest Walsh, Louis Zukofsky, Sam Putnam, Sherwood Anderson and Kay Boyle.<sup>199</sup>

What these writers failed to elaborate upon, if indeed they were aware of it, was the exact nature of the philosophies that set Carnevali apart; that before he arrived in New York in 1916, his adolescence in Florence had immersed him in the cultural politics of anarchism and Futurism; and how between his arrival and his involvement in American modernism he had become intellectually involved with the pragmatist pluralism of William James and the avant-garde, anarchistic version of that philosophy adopted by James's mentee Giovanni Papini.<sup>200</sup> As I hope to make clear in this chapter, while Carnevali more self-consciously defined himself as an artist than Papini, whose most famous work was the philosophical pseudo-biography *Un Uomo Finito* (1912), his intellectual debt to Papini was substantial. In Florence, Papini championed an anti-authoritarian approach to the institutions of art and culture commensurate with the practices of the European avant-garde. Yet, Papini also enlarged upon James's pragmatism to prescribe a philosophy that militantly focused on the

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<sup>198</sup> Williams bookended the final, July 1919 edition of *Others* with two editorials, 'Gloria!' And 'Belly Music'. Carnevali is a significant subject in both but his impact on Williams's outlook is discussed more extensively in the former. See William Carlos Williams, 'Gloria', *Others* (Jul 1920), pp. 3-4.

<sup>199</sup> The specific works I refer to include Sherwood Anderson, 'Italian Poet in America', *Decision*, 1:1, Oct 1941, pp. 8-15; Edward Dahlberg, *Alms for Oblivion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967); Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Sam Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost and Found Generation* (New York: Viking, 1947); Ezra Pound, 'A Writer with Encephalitis', *New York Herald*, Paris (August 26, 1933); and Zukofsky, Louis, 'Program: Objectivists', *Poetry*, 37:5, Feb 1931, pp. 268-272. His most involved biographer was Kay Boyle, with whom Carnevali shared a correspondence that Boyle reconstructed to posthumously create *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967).

<sup>200</sup> In August 1919, Carnevali wrote to Papini to announce the arrival of a new periodical, prospectively entitled *Compromise*. Over the course of the summer of 1919, Carnevali had been involved in discussions regarding the formation of a new project with William Carlos Williams, the advocate Mitchell Dawson and the publisher Robert McAlmon. For several months Carnevali had promised Papini that this new project would feature his own serialised English translation of Papini's 1912 novel *Un Uomo Finito* ('A Finished Man'), but ultimately it never materialised.

practical and the particular, in the belief that this programme would augment the power of the individual by allowing knowledge to encompass faith. That is to say, he believed that by placing himself at the juncture of practical and divine knowledge, an individual could become Un Uomo-Dio (a Man God) and the master of his reality. Carnevali's philosophy adhered to Papini's in several regards and, accordingly, he cultivated anti-authoritarian artistic convictions that sought, through a combination of polemicism and practicability, to question the American avant-garde's representation of the modern experience. From his perspective as an immigrant Italian artist, he defined American modernism and its periodical culture as an institution to be opposed, and he used this perspective to leverage alternative methods and powers with which modernity could be understood.

Although he readily absorbed and applied the transatlantic intellectual inheritances of James and Papini, the way in which Carnevali utilised his philosophy to redefine the role of the artist was new, radical and subversive, especially to New York modernist circles. As Williams would come to admit in editorials on Carnevali for *Others*, its poets had become too focused on technique, their aesthetics too self-isolated, apolitical and socially disengaged.<sup>201</sup> The magazine's original intention to publish unconstrained free verse had seen individual poems increasingly float free of their cultural and historical exigencies, a situation that Carnevali's work helped convince Williams was unacceptable. Williams was looking for new direction and Carnevali capitalised on this uncertainty by drawing attention to how his own poetry overcame many of the perceived failings of *Others*: in keeping with his philosophy it advocated aesthetics that were distinguished by practicable, pragmatic everyday realities, where formal innovation was determined by the form of a moment and by its auricular and emotional particulars. At around the same time, Carnevali published a number of long poetic sequences which exemplified his aesthetic ideals, including 'Splendid Commonplaces' (1919) and 'The Day of Summer' (1919). Through such work, Williams recognised in Carnevali a poet who was also looking to root verse in the localities of experience, to draw it upwards from the soil of modern living, and who was looking towards poetry as an affirmation rather than a denial of reality. Yet, unlike Williams, Carnevali's was influenced by Papini's anarchistic cultural individualism; his work developed a corresponding syntax based around iterative instants of experience devolved from a centralised subjectivity. It was a radical departure from the syntax of democratic pluralism sometimes ascribed to Williams's

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<sup>201</sup> Williams concedes in the editorial entitled 'Gloria' that Carnevali convinced him in this respect, writing: 'We older can compose, we seek the seclusion of a style, of a technique, we make replicas of the world we live in and we live in them and not in the world.' See *Others*, 5:6, Jul 1919, p. 4.

verse forms, and indeed from the configuration of any poet contemporaneously contributing to *Others*.

Carnevali broke away from the modernism of *Others* by formulating of a pragmatic, anarchistic poetry that would fittingly reflect his experience of modernity. In contrast to Williams, his intention to pull the universal from pragmatic particulars had been radicalised by Papini's anarchism. Recent criticism has argued that the pragmatic modernism was fundamentally opposed to the entrenched ideology of modernism defined by shock, opposition, anti-institutionalism and violent innovation.<sup>202</sup> However, Carnevali's pragmatism embraced all of these characteristics. He repudiated the elitism, exhibitionism and exclusivity he considered to have been cultivated by the inner circles of modernist publishing. Yet, he was unwaveringly dedicated to innovation, fashioning socially concerned poetry that brazenly defied the modernist programme, doing so in order to reflect the quotidian realities of immigrant experience in the American city. Carnevali found a way to embed in his poetry the Man God - the Papinian Uomo-Dio - as a powerful subjective centre-point, yet one who delights in the commonplace, and whose divinity becomes devolved into the ordinary instants of time and place in city life. Carnevali looked to engage the intense, rebellious individuality of the Man God with the struggle and privation of modern living as he experienced it, reconciling these antitheses into an avant-garde of the everyday.

The focus of this chapter is Carnevali's unfamiliar philosophical configuration, which I will attempt to examine thoroughly and extensively in the context of its intellectual inheritances, preceding historical conditions, formal characteristics and its impact on our evolving understanding of pragmatic and anarchistic modernisms. It is less about Williams and *Others*: while I use them to situate Carnevali historically and geographically in the current contexts of modernism, and despite how usefully Williams's liberal pluralism functions as a counterweight to Carnevali's more extreme individualism, further analysis would be required to fully appreciate his impact on modernist publishing in New York and Chicago. Neither have I chosen to focus on poetry that necessarily has generated the greatest critical interest. Carnevali's earliest work prior to 1918, for example, has been read as illustrative of his interest in Symbolism which, while being a movement not entirely free from the entanglements of anarchism, preceded his intellectual involvement in pragmatism and his discovery of Papini.<sup>203</sup> Likewise, his contributions to European and American literary

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<sup>202</sup> This argument is explicated by Lisi Schoenbach in *Pragmatic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>203</sup> For example, Mario Domenichelli writes that Carnevali's 'inspiration, his dark muse combines clear symbolist roots with the brief and yet violent shake he gave the American poetic *milieu* at the very

magazines subsequent to 1922, after which time he returned to Italy and slowly died of lethargic encephalitis, have been analysed as a form of an avant-garde Catholicism.<sup>204</sup> Therefore my choice of period and poems is largely dictated by the circumstances that gave rise to his most intense interest in pragmatist and anarchist philosophy and his most prolific desire to versify them in form. The events of 1919, his speech to *Others* and his poetic sequencing of that year 'Splendid Commonplaces' and 'The Day of Summer' exemplify his intentions in this respect; they can be readily situated in the long evolution of James's philosophies into the radicalism of Papini and the modernism of Carnevali, and it is also where the most recent critiques of his work have been concentrated.

### Method and Revolt in 'My Speech at Lola's'

Recent scholars of modernism have assigned Carnevali a reputation - in both word and deed - as a fractious, destructive anti-authoritarian. Eric White writes that Carnevali 'built a reputation for writing unconventionally phrased and evocative free verse and for tempestuous behaviour'.<sup>205</sup> Erin Templeton concurs, describing him as a 'firebrand' who would 'call for nothing short of revolution' against the state of modern American poetry.<sup>206</sup> Both critics enlarge upon Ezra Pound's observation that in his life and work Carnevali demonstrated 'temperament, "fire" and 'a refusal to be controlled'.<sup>207</sup> He was certainly consistent in his unwillingness to respect the social and intellectual propriety of modernist publishing. On one occasion, *The Dial* rejected a manuscript of Carnevali's on the grounds that it did not correspond with the magazine's existing publishing policy; his response was to 'let loose a flood of profane vituperation on the head of the Assistant Editor'.<sup>208</sup> Suzanne Churchill detects corresponding proclivities towards insubordination in Carnevali's verse, writing that it expressed a 'reckless disregard of technical rigor'.<sup>209</sup> In all of these readings,

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outstart of Modernism'. See 'Emanuel Carnevali's "great goodbye"', *Beyond the Margins: Readings in Italian Americana* (Farleigh Dickinson Press: New York, 1998).

<sup>204</sup> Dorothy Dudley wrote the foreword to *Tales of a Hurried Man* (1925), the only collection of his work published during Carnevali's lifetime. In the foreword, she noted of his verse that 'opposites had value for him; dissonance and harmony, as they do in Catholic litany'. See Emanuel Carnevali, *A Hurried Man* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1925), p. 7.

<sup>205</sup> Eric White, *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 91.

<sup>206</sup> Erin Templeton, 'For Having Slept Much the Dead Have Grown Strong': Emanuel Carnevali and William Carlos Williams, *William Carlos Williams Review*, 30:1-2 (Spring-Fall 2013), p. 139.

<sup>207</sup> Pound is quoted with offering this description of Carnevali in Louis Zukofsky, 'Program: Objectivists', *Poetry*, 37:5 (Feb 1931), p. 271.

<sup>208</sup> 'Gloria', p. 4.

<sup>209</sup> Suzanne Churchill, *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Basingstoke: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 127.

his work is characterised by a lexical lawlessness that deliberately violates modernism's meticulous and often ironhanded word systems.

Others bestow upon him an apparently contrasting historical identity as a writer whose approach to poetry was methodical, and which was rooted in the experiences of ordinary people. In 1928, the French critic Regis Michaud observed that

While the Imagists ransacked the museums and libraries, Carnevali sought his poetry in the ghettos and in the taverns of New York.<sup>210</sup>

Michaud alludes to how for all of its apparently reckless indiscretion, Carnevali's verse was concerned with constructively integrating art, culture and everyday experience in line with other human activity. Carnevali argued for modern poetry to become the highest expression of the most quotidian human experiences. He also urged the *Others* coterie that the verse discussed in their poetry meetings should stop being so distinct from the happenings in the streets outside. Through his verse, he attempted an analysis of the self, based on the verifiable experiences of living. He argued that form and experience was 'one and universal' and that poetry should reflect this truth.<sup>211</sup> Williams makes reference to Carnevali's anti-authoritarianism in an editorial entitled 'Gloria!'. The article appeared in the final, July 1919, edition of *Others*. It explains his decision to end the magazine, in which the emergence of Carnevali played a significant part. Williams admitted that this focus on truth had exposed that *Others* was 'not enough' and that it had 'grown inevitably to be a lie, like everything else that has been a truth at one time'.<sup>212</sup> In Williams's view, Carnevali's rootedness helped to rescue the *Others* group, and his own work in particular, from the methodological dogmatism within which it had imprisoned itself. He was encouraged by Carnevali's influence to press on in search of a verse form that was naked, unvarnished and grounded in its own locality. Williams's responses to Carnevali's work in the final edition of *Others* did much to establish the latter's ongoing reputation. It consolidated Carnevali's reputation as a writer whose poetry courageously and truthfully methodised his experiences as a struggling immigrant Italian in New York City and Chicago.

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<sup>210</sup>Regis Michaud, *Panorama de la Littérature Contemporaine Americaine* (Paris: Kras Publishing, 1928), p. 44. Michaud also assessed Carnevali's work alongside Williams Carlos Williams's to be the only modernist poetry 'of an international standard'.

<sup>211</sup>'The Book of Job Junior', *Youth: A Magazine of the Arts*, 1:4 (Jan 1922), p. 10.

<sup>212</sup>'Gloria', p. 3.

Williams was shaken and disturbed by the insurrectionary convictions with which Carnevali attacked the *Others* group. The yellow cover of the magazine was adorned in its final incarnation by the dedication 'FOR EMANUEL CARNEVALI'. Williams discloses that Carnevali's seditious judgements about *Others* implicated the staleness and lethargy into which it had descended. The magazine, he writes, had become a 'rat in the garbage heap of New York', 'putrefying' in its inertia and poisoned by its own 'deadly fumes'.<sup>213</sup> *Others* began in 1916 as a forum for social and intellectual progressivism intended to accommodate a plurality of perspectives, including the seemingly dangerous or offensive. Here at the end of its life, Williams recognised a lost opportunity to develop the magazine as a new space allowing for unorthodox representations of sexuality and ethnicity, which it had once threatened to become. Carnevali advocated intellectual mutiny, laying bare Williams's far more tentative aspirations. It shocked Williams into closing *Others* to carry out a reassessment of his own literary schema.

Williams also discusses Carnevali's methodical integration of experience and aesthetics. He was troubled by the way Carnevali exposed the inapplicable nature of his own poetic methods, particularly regarding his early literary ambitions to cultivate verse in American soil. Williams argues that Carnevali had disturbed the stagnancy and forced him to confront the error of his ways, confessing 'he is right. I am wrong when I yell technique at him' (3). In its short life, Williams steered *Others* through a series of destructions and rebirths. Yet, those rebirths had resulted in little more than new poetic processes for ending lines, unorthodox stanzas, jagged versification and fiddling with syntactic units. In other words, by his own admission Williams had become enthused by novelties, not great innovations. He conceded that he and the older poets of *Others* lived in the replicas of the world they created and 'not in the world' itself (3). As such, Williams's work had become an abrogation of his early ambitions to animate a rooted, modern American vernacular. John Beck detects in Williams's project a 'hopeless vagueness over specifics' at times and this was never broadly more evident than in the *Others* years.<sup>214</sup> Williams admits in 'Gloria!' that *Others* was 'not enough' and that it had 'grown inevitably to be a lie, like everything else that has been a truth at one time'.<sup>215</sup> Carnevali offered Williams a regenerative perspective on his verse by focusing on verifiable aesthetic, auricular and emotional localities. It was a perspective convincing enough to catalyse Williams's decision to close *Others* and to move onto the next stage of his search for an authentic American poetic idiom.

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<sup>213</sup> 'Gloria', p. 3.

<sup>214</sup> John Beck, *Writing the Radical Center: William Carlos Williams, John Dewey and American Cultural Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press), p. 161.

<sup>215</sup> 'Gloria', p. 3.

Carnevali's apparently double-edged philosophy is most clearly accessible in a coruscating speech he made during early 1919 that was later published as an essay entitled 'My Speech at Lola's'.<sup>216</sup> Several members of the *Others* group gathered for a party at the apartment of the poet Lola Ridge to celebrate George Washington's birthday. Invitees included Maxwell Bodenheim, Alfred Kreymborg, William Saphier, Marianne Moore and, of course, Williams himself. In fact, Carnevali later indicated that the party was their first encounter and that subsequent to his speech Williams's offered his friendship 'without any difficulty'.<sup>217</sup> Still relatively unfamiliar to many of those gathered at the party Carnevali proceeded to discharge, he would later write, 'an ultimatum and an attack' (141) against the very principles upon which the group existed: their fallacious obsession, as he saw it, with "the new", with technique, with alienating the public and with producing non-utilitarian art. Carnevali made a rebellious insurgency against the figureheads of American poetic modernism, as they were in 1919. In doing so, he exposes four internal structures of his own modernism that reveal connections between its constructive/deconstructive dualism.

Firstly, Carnevali's attack on the *Others* group provides a deeper insight into the nature of his anti-authoritarianism. He begins his preamble to the essay version of the speech with an immediate offensive against any form of systemisation or categorisation. Carnevali even refuses to classify his own work beyond referring to 'this thing' he has written. He mocks attachment to categorisations and associates it with twee conventionalism:

This is an article or whatever you want to call it to suit your traditional gentleness, o gentle reader. (141)

This theme develops further as the speech itself begins. Though he addresses a gathering of cultural luminaries who provided a forum for his work in their magazines, Carnevali derisively caricatures them as, for example, 'the heavy scented drunkening whirlwind that is Williams' and 'the sweet simplicism and the capering that is Kreymborg' (141). In doing so, he deliberately seeks to destabilise their jurisdiction as literary standardisers while mocking the notion of standardisation itself.

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<sup>216</sup> The essay has been published twice. It first appeared under the title 'Maxwell Bodenheim, Alfred Kreymborg, Lola Ridge, William Carlos Williams', in Emanuel Carnevali, *A Hurried Man* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1925), pp. 247-268. It also appeared under the title 'My Speech at Lola's in Emanuel Carnevali, *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali*, ed. Kay Boyle (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), pp. 141-148. In this chapter, I will refer to the second version because it contains a useful preamble that Kay Boyle drew from her correspondence with Carnevali and subsequently added to the essay in her editing of his autobiography.

<sup>217</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 139.

Carnevali explicitly rejected the hierarchical manner in which modern poetry was becoming schematised by such self-proclaimed literary authorities. Ezra Pound was not present, but Carnevali nevertheless scorned Pound's influence on periodical culture in America during his speech. He made Pound the subject of his most vituperative accusations regarding the systematisation of verse:

But please, I am disgusted with your little-review [sic] talk of technique and technicians. Easier than everything, commoner than everything, is to have a technique, to talk like Ezra Pound does in his "Subdivisions of the Poetical Department Store with Antiques for Sale Only to Those Who Know How the Oriental Pooh-Pooh-Chink Wore His Slippers. The fakers need a technique." (147)

Carnevali charges Pound with stripping culture of its essential value and leaving only the scaffolding of technique. To him, that technique was dictated by a top-down imposition of literary authority, which was appropriated and imitated by a cadre of plagiarisers. He argued that far from exalting "the new", so-called literary vanguardists such as the *Others* group sustained themselves through concentrating their power while reproducing themselves in increasingly dilute and insignificant forms.

Carnevali's method of choice in rejecting the *Others* group's literary authority was to advocate a decentralising approach to both power and language. His speech defined the modernist situation in terms of a battle between tyrannical elite poets and the common individual. To Carnevali, their 'retaliation against the public' was a 'sign of the defeat of the poets'.<sup>218</sup> He asserted that non-utilitarianists, along with others in positions of cultural authority who encouraged the turn away from the public, had written down their own destruction. In relation to language, each level of the speech's linguistic structure is correspondingly decentralised. It contains an uncategorisable mixture of forms and refuses to maintain a principal theme. At times, the speech is an aggressive polemic, which by its own terms is 'obese with bombast, clamorous with objections, obstreperous and violent' (141). At other points it is biographical. Carnevali recalls his discovery of the *Others* group and their work while he was living in New York City and how it left him with the fear that what he 'understood by literature was in danger of collapsing' (142). Latterly, the speech becomes

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<sup>218</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 143.



a lyrical lament regarding his outspoken attack. A 'contrite' Carnevali promises to mute his 'insurrective trombone' (146), before he ends his intercourse in verse form:

Let me look for my heart:

In the loam, in the black earth of my country. My heart is  
buried deep in the heart of my country and it cannot  
complain. (148)

His resistance to the modernism of *Others* is simulated by the dispersive structure of his speech. Once again, Carnevali alludes to a desire that he could place his own experiences at the heart of his poetry, and that he could draw them from the fertile soil of a rooted, inherited vernacular.

Secondly, the speech reveals that Carnevali's modernism involved the use of an experiential methodology to determine the value of poetry. In appraising the poetry that members of the *Others* group produced, he seeks a satisfactory sense of the relationship between their poetry and his own experiences, recalling

I have done some reading of their works and have seen each of them  
separately and all of them together. They are one of my experiences. I  
want to gather together and express by elevating myself above it, if  
possible, or by sinking under it, if necessary. (141)

In Carnevali's philosophy, there is no distinction between experience and interpretation. Instead, the creation and interpretation of poetry is part of the continuous structure of experience, and it accepts the conjunctive and the disjunctive on equal terms. Carnevali is concerned to experience the works of the *Others* poets as a means of gathering a sense of truth, by using the encounter itself as an interpretative methodology. This approach was a contrast to what he perceived to be the rational certainties of the *Others* group's modernism, which to him appeared untainted by the contingencies of experience. Carnevali argued that such certainties made its writers little more than 'photographing machines' who were 'reproducing themselves and each other instead of creating as an act of experience' (145). Although creative experience was antithetical to the detachment and impersonality of the *Others* group's poetry, Carnevali urged them to believe that the next great poetic movement would only emerge from 'concentrated attempts at truth' with which 'poets will need to methodically find its next incarnation' (146). His approach to poetry as both expression and interpretation went against the grain of *Others* because it was a method defined by

assessing the creative, sensory and verifiable relationship between verse and the structures of experience.

Thirdly, in the speech Carnevali's voice possesses a sense of demiurgic agency. That is to say, he positions himself as an autonomous poet-god who disassociates himself from the collective psyche of his fellow writers. He claims to be in possession of 'an aboriginal knowledge' (147) containing the intrinsic intelligibility of a world to which he also threatens to 'set fire' (148). In his speech, Carnevali is a creator-poet and a world-maker. In his own words, he is a 'god seeking around the world what there is need to create' (142). He is also a self-described 'incarnator, going quicker through radical changes than nature with her routine of seasons' (142). Carnevali seeks to use this radical power to instil a higher linguistic unity. He wishes to convince the poets of *Others* to abandon their non-utilitarian vernacular and instead speak '*the world's language*' (144). His ambition as a poet-god is to bridge the linguistic collectivity of human beings. Carnevali advocates the joining together of 'the clenched fist of the worker' with 'the lazy pale hands of the count dawdling over the curved arm of a chair' (142). He personified his modernism through the voice of this creative demiurge.

Finally, Carnevali uses a poet-god persona to make art a means of heightening the commonplace. His demiurge is an agent of radicalising the quotidian and investing everyday moments with a sense of quasi-religious significance. It threatens the *Others* group that he will become 'an enormous commonplace rolling over their delicate miniatures' (148); that the technical poetry of these alleged 'fakers' (145) will seem insignificant alongside the work of a poet who is attempting to tap into aboriginal knowledge and become a depositor of the absolute. Carnevali informs those gathered to hear his speech that instead of striving for technical perfection he endeavours to embody the moment a flower threatens to 'break and burst open' (142). He seeks in his poetry to capture the moments in which life remains unfinished but on the edge of divinity, soon to unfold but still in a 'posture of perfect receptiveness' (142). This idea recurs many times in Carnevali's work. In a later essay entitled 'The Book of Job Junior' concerning the function of art, he argues that the true artist is one to whom 'every sorrowing moment of every sorrowing day brings a new concept of art'.<sup>219</sup> In the poem 'Noon' the lunch counters of New York City become 'altars of a little comfort' and the bar stools become 'tripods of a little secure religion'.<sup>220</sup> In each form, instants of ordinary time become spiritually heightened into moments of secular sacrament.

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<sup>219</sup> 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 10.

<sup>220</sup> Emanuel Carnevali, 'Noon', *Poetry*, 14:6 (Sep 1919), p. 322.

These internal elements - anti-authoritarianism, experience and aesthetics as method, and the demiurgic radicalisation of the everyday - appear to support either but not both of the critical readings previously cited. On the one hand, Carnevali is considered in his lexicon and in his attitude towards modern poetry, or at least the kind encouraged by *Others* and the *Little Review*, to be anti-authoritarian, insubordinate, lawless and seditious. His naked opposition to technique and systemisation would appear to support this supposition, as would his oppositional, creator-poet ego. On the other, his writings have been interpreted as methodical, grounded, constructive and localised. In 'My Speech at Lola's' Carnevali cites as an essential component of his work the empirical, experiential representation of the common voice, 'the enormous commonplace', in a heightened representation of its own locality. Therefore, the evidence appears to support the second set of readings with equally clear determinacy. What needs to be established is therefore threefold: firstly, why the two perspectives remain divided; secondly, whether analysing these mechanisms within Carnevali's work can overcome the delimitations that divide his reception; and thirdly if it might be possible to resituate his modernism under a more unified series of categorisations.

The problem with both sets of interpretations is that critics have become habituated to reading Carnevali in caricature. Leonardo Buonomo writes that Carnevali 'flashed like a meteor across the scene of modern American literature'.<sup>221</sup> Such a suggestion embodies the central limitation in Carnevali criticism, which is that it consists of a series of important, erudite, but fragmentary flashes. When Williams referred to him in the final edition of *Others* as 'the black poet, the empty man' it began a tendency towards summarising the memory of Carnevali in an appropriate sobriquet without applying a deeper level of analysis. To his publisher Robert McAlmon, he was the eponymous hurried man of his only full-length work, to Carl Sandburg he was a 'sun treader'<sup>222</sup> and to his friend and biographer Kay Boyle he was 'the rebel, the man on the run'.<sup>223</sup>

These elegiac bynames have been relied on and rarely transcended by contemporary critics. The reputation afforded Carnevali by Eric White 'for writing unconventionally phrased and evocative free verse and for tempestuous behaviour' exists intact, in accordance with the way he was written about contemporaneously.<sup>224</sup> It is true that his poet-god persona was a form of self-caricature that makes opening up the question of his deeper underpinnings a potentially troubling ambition. However, the alternative proposition is more troubling still: to

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<sup>221</sup> Leonardo Buonomo, *From Pioneer to Nomad: Essays on Italian North American Writing* (New York: Guernica Editions), p. 49.

<sup>222</sup> Qtd in *Autobiography*, p. 19.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>224</sup> *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes*, p. 91.

leave Carnevali, a significant, influential and prolific modernist (he contributed nearly fifty times to little magazines in a two and a half year period from late 1919 to early 1922), described by peers as the 'genius of his age', floating in a depthless critical and historical space.<sup>225</sup> Carnevali's critical reputation remains suspended between anti-authoritarian 'firebrand' and ghetto methodologist. His contribution merits an attempt at deepening the backdrop to his writings in order that the two readings might be reconciled, or at the very least extended beyond what currently amount to series of critical pasquinades.

In order to accurately situate the philosophies Carnevali brought to bear upon modernism in America it is necessary to move beyond already-explored critical boundaries, to leave America behind and instead begin by considering his early life in Italy for the first time. During his formative years, a coalescence between the seditious and the systematic Carnevali is already apparent both in himself and in his contemporaries. He writes the following of his youth:

I have never regretted one day that I was not at school. I had the spirit of rebellion and these days marked my awakening to many things. For instance, I discovered "Futurismo". I wore a flowing necktie and was believed to be either an anarchist or a futurist, the two things being strangely linked together.<sup>226</sup>

Carnevali was a native of Florence, therefore the Futurism to which he refers is the Florentine avant-garde movement lead by Giovanni Papini, not the Milanese Futurism of Filippo Marinetti.<sup>227</sup> Papini was an egoist or individualist anarchist in the mould of the nineteenth-century German philosopher Max Stirner, to whom Papini referred as 'the one teacher I could not do without'.<sup>228</sup> Consequently, he gained a reputation as a polemical anti-authoritarian reformer in the fields of art and philosophy. However, Papini combined his anarchistic tendencies with what he referred to as a 'practical exploitation of the spirit' (200). In this respect he was heavily influenced by the pragmatism of William James. After reading James's 1896 lecture 'The Will to Believe', Papini writes, 'I threw my lot in with the pragmatists and the truths of the new doctrine' (199). The 'strange link' between anarchism

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<sup>225</sup> This description was offered by Ernest Walsh, publisher of the Paris-based literary periodical *This Quarter*. See Ernest Walsh, 'A Young Living Genius', p. 322.

<sup>226</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 61.

<sup>227</sup> The two movements were linked for a short period in the early 1910s, during which time Papini's journal *Lacerba* became a forum for Milanese Futurism.

<sup>228</sup> Giovanni Papini, *Un Uomo Finito*, trans. by Mary Prichard Agnetti (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), p. 89.

and Futurism that Carnevali writes about also speaks to the fusion of anarchist and pragmatist tendencies embodied by Papini. In turn, they provide a starting point in situating the anti-authoritarian, methodical characteristics of Carnevali's polemic 'My Speech at Lola's'.

Firstly, however, the work of James himself is even more germane in seeking out the roots of Carnevali's modernism, because he synthesised anarchism and pragmatism earlier than perhaps any other major philosopher of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, including Papini. James's foundational contribution to pragmatist philosophy is well known. However, the degree to which anarchism became an allied aspect of his vision in his later years is less clearly understood. In a letter of December 1907 to the author William Dean Howells, James writes 'I am becoming more and more an individualist and anarchist and believe in systems of things almost exclusively'.<sup>229</sup> Such proclivities were hinted at even earlier. James expressed a celebratory tone regarding the 1901 assassination of President William McKinley by the anarchist Leon Czolgoszc. He referred to Czolgoszc as 'our great deliverer' and expressed a certain degree of relief at McKinley's demise.<sup>230</sup> Earlier still, James connected with four significant anarchist writers. The James archive at Harvard University contains an extensively annotated copy of Henry B. Brewster's *The Theories of Anarchy and Law: A Midnight Debate* (1887). James reported on having read the communist-anarchist Peter Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1889) between 1901 and 1903. A further influence was the social theorist and activist Morrison Swift, whose major work was *Anarchism and Liberty* (1899). To James, Swift was a 'valiant anarchist writer' whose work *Human Submission* (1905) he referred to extensively during his pragmatism lectures of 1905.<sup>231</sup> Finally, James shared correspondence with the reformer and author Ernest Howard Crosby, who was a disciple of Tolstoy's religious anarchism. James articulated his opposition to the reductive rationalism of nineteenth century philosophy by describing its antithesis as a 'radical pragmatist' who would themselves be a 'happy-go-lucky anarchistic sort of creature' (124). In doing so, he became the first and most important proto-modernist philosopher to fuse anarchist and pragmatist tendencies, an affiliation of elements later hinted at in Carnevali's attack on the *Others* group in 1919.

The configuration of James's integrated anarchistic and pragmatic philosophy is detectable in Carnevali's speech. This is not surprising in light of evidence that suggests Carnevali had

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<sup>229</sup> Qtd. in Deborah J. Coon, 'One moment in the world's salvation': Anarchism and the radicalization of William James' *The Journal of American History*, 83:1 (Jun 1996), p. 80.

<sup>230</sup> To Katherine Buckley Sands he writes 'you've no idea how it lightens the atmosphere to have that type of being gone! - meaning the McK Type!'. Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>231</sup> William James, *Pragmatism: A Method* (New York: Longmans Green & Co, 1907), p. 498.

fully familiarised himself with James's work.<sup>232</sup> Neither is it necessarily surprising in a general sense that anarchism and pragmatism had become amalgamated in the work of each individual. Both philosophies shared a critique of authority and an anti-foundationalist skepticism towards fixed points of origin. Describing the temperament of his pragmatic method, James's description could as easily be applied to an anarchistic one. He argues that pragmatism is:

an attitude of orientation... The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories', supposed necessities, and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.<sup>233</sup>

Both philosophies sought to unsettle the obedience towards rule. In a sense, anarchism was the praxis of this interpretation of pragmatism. James considered those who were activating his pragmatic ideas to be radical reformers such as Swift and Czolgosz; the methods with which these individuals confronted the problems of the modern world was to rectify them through different varieties and methods of experience.<sup>234</sup> Within his own field, we might tentatively consider Carnevali as being another of these activators. James expressed a deep skepticism towards industrialisation, bureaucracy, institutionalism and other forms of social 'bigness'. Deborah Coon argues persuasively that this sentiment was rooted in James's attitude towards early American imperialism, particularly the Spanish-American war, as well as the American military presence in the Philippines and Hawaii. He wrote the following on the subject to his brother Henry:

The day of "big"ness - big national desires, political parties, trade-combines, news-papers, is sweeping every good quality out of the world. (74)

Carnevali's perception of the problems afflicting modern American poetry was notably similar. In 'My Speech At Lola's' he decried its institutionalisation and dogmatism. He

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<sup>232</sup> In a letter to Papini of February 1919, Carnevali offers assurance that Papini's name is known in American intellectual circles due his being written of in James's work *Pragmatism* (1907). He writes 'Lo so bene che W[illiam] James scrisse di lei — e la menzionò nel suo «Pragmatism a – method..» ('I know well that W. James wrote of you - you are mentioned in this Pragmatism a - method [sic]'). Carnevali also wrote about pragmatism in depth in an article he contributed to the January 1919 of *Poetry*. The article is entitled 'Five Years of Italian Poetry'. In it Carnevali confesses that his perspective on the 'consciousness of modernity' giving rise to modern poetry is 'mainly a pragmatic one'.

<sup>233</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, p. 32..

<sup>234</sup> In fact, James admitted to relying on others in regard to the activation of his ideas. To his friend Pauline Goldman, he wrote 'I am getting to be more and more of an anarchist myself, in my ideas, though when it comes to applying them to life I am helpless'. Qtd. in Coon, p. 84.

accused the schools of thought imposed and standardised by Ezra Pound, the *Little Review* and *Others* of promoting 'the lowliest of expedients'.<sup>235</sup>

Frameworking the fusion of anarchism and pragmatism in James's thinking, there is also a discernible religious configuration; one with traces in Carnevali's demiurgic creator-poet. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), James argues that moments of heightened spiritual and mystical consciousness are in direct relation with everyday, individual human reality. In his own words, he describes them as:

the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude,  
so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they  
may consider the divine.<sup>236</sup>

This belief developed in concert with his pragmatism, which was underpinned by the ambition to make a 'hypothesis of God' accessible to both the 'tough-minded' rationalist and the 'tender-minded' religious idealist.<sup>237</sup> In other words, James's philosophy possessed overlapping religious, pragmatic overtones that sought a connection between experiences of divinity and the verifiable structures of real world phenomena. In some of his last writings, this philosophy expanded further. The political feelings that had been latent in James's thinking since the turn of the century, which were accessible in his private correspondence but not yet overtly featured in his published work, became apparent. In a letter of October 1901 to Ernest Howard Crosby, James advocated the setting up of co-operative social communities:

As long as freedom remains, isn't the way for lovers of the ideal to  
found smaller communities which should show a pattern? [...] Why  
won't some anarchists get together and try it.<sup>238</sup>

With the publication of *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), the composition of James's philosophy broadened to encompass his major vision of a decentralised universe, in which the ideal and the material, or the divine and the actual, were all of one kind. After all, pluralism for James

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<sup>235</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 43.

<sup>236</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) p. 38.

<sup>237</sup> Doris Olin (ed.), *William James: Pragmatism, in Focus* (London; New York: Routledge), p. 24.

<sup>238</sup> William James to Ernest Howard Crosby, October 1901, in *The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), p. 90.

meant 'anarchy in the good sense'.<sup>239</sup> The quasi-mystical persona that Carnevali employed in 'My Speech at Lola's' appears to aestheticise aspects of James's unified religious, political and philosophical configuration.

Carnevali's familiarity with James's work is evident in his essays and in his personal correspondence; however, it also seems apparent in the imbricated traces of anarchism and pragmatism detectable in his attack on *Others* during the spring of 1919. James offered an anarchistic, anti-institutionalist rejection of all authoritative truths not derived from concrete experience. Carnevali applied a similar maxim to what he considered the doctrinaire schools of thought imposed by Pound, the *Little Review* and *Others*. To Carnevali, their ideas had become entrenched and inflexible, making the poetry of its contributors reproducible rather than irreducibly truthful. Secondly, Carnevali's speech is anarchistically decentralised. This is the case in a formal sense. It also true with regard to the dispersive nature of Carnevali's fragmented central persona, as a result of which the speech lacks a singular point of authority. Aesthetically, it is comparable to James's anarchistic conception of a decentralised universe in which, James writes, 'the finite elements have their own aboriginal forms of manyness in oneness'.<sup>240</sup> Thirdly, James's universe provided an ontological structure in which to make a pragmatic consideration of the metaphysical. In turn, Carnevali's creator-poet personifies the meeting point between the everyday 'commonplace' and the divine. In each of these three points of apparent convergence, Carnevali cultivates the anarchistic and pragmatic concepts discernible in James's thinking into aesthetic form.

There is, however, a degree of difference in the depth of radicalism with which James and Carnevali articulate anarchism and pragmatism in their work. James conceived of a centreless pluralism which in social terms was derived from his belief in liberal, melioristic individualism. His biographer Ralph Barton Perry writes that American philosophers like James who were writing 'in the transcendental/pragmatist traditions' were 'generally more interested in melioration than in revolution'.<sup>241</sup> It was therefore certainly not from James's work that Carnevali cultivated his destructive revolutionary spirit. His attack on *Others* was a militant demolition of everything for which modernism in American poetry had come to stand. It was lawless and scornful, invoking apocalyptic visions in an attempt to overturn the despotic control Carnevali accused America's avant-garde of having over the direction of modern verse. James declared that he wanted a 'world of anarchy' but his anarchism

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<sup>239</sup> William James, *Manuscript Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 311.

<sup>240</sup> William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 147.

<sup>241</sup> Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). p. 341.



remained the practice of thought rather than practice of life and culture.<sup>242</sup> Between James and Carnevali, the former's moderate ideals had become expanded into the field of revolutionary action.

Carnevali's demiurgic alter-ego did not directly evolve from Jamesian philosophy either. James's pluralistic universe was a religiously-associated metaphysical premise that, like Carnevali's creator-poet persona, ontologically connected the material and the spiritual. Yet, there appears to be a missing transition point at which James's idea leapt forward into Carnevali's anthropomorphic mysticism. In 'My Speech at Lola's, Carnevali embodies the universe that James conceived of in a creative consciousness. It was the consciousness of a demiurge who was petitioning for cultural regeneration on the basis of anti-authoritarian pragmatism. In his speech, Carnevali argues that the destructive, transformational power of poetry derived from the truths and 'enormous commonplaces' that emerge from poets applying pragmatic precepts to verse. James's pragmatism encountered a radical catalyst before it was to be wielded as a weapon of cultural reconstruction by Carnevali's creator-poet ego.

The catalyst for the development of James's philosophy into Carnevali's more militant, radical form was, I propose, the Florentine avant-gardist intellectual Giovanni Papini. Papini links the two together because he was both a collaborator of James between 1905 and 1910 and a long time correspondent and ideological mentor of Carnevali in the late 1910s. He co-founded the Florentine Pragmatic Club in 1904 after being inspired by the influence of James's work. Papini also edited the journal *Leonardo* (1903-1907) which, the historian Carlo Golino argues, 'became the outstanding exponent of pragmatism not only in Italy but in Europe' during its lifetime.<sup>243</sup> In April 1906, James presented a series of five papers on pragmatist philosophy at the Fifth Annual Conference of Psychology meeting in Rome. The conference in Rome afforded the first opportunity for a meeting between James and Papini. Deeply impressed by Papini's interpretation of his philosophy, James confirmed his appreciation in the essay 'Papini and the Pragmatism Movement in Italy', published later the same year. A reciprocal intellectual relationship subsequently developed which was crucial in the evolution of both philosophers' ideas. Those ideas had much in common. Each combined anarchist anti-authoritarianism, pragmatism and religious overtones in their work. Papini attacked the institutions of late nineteenth-century Italy as James had condemned the 'big' bureaucracies of America in the same period. Both philosophers opposed bigness by foregrounding autonomous, individual agency in a decentralised conception of the universe.

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<sup>242</sup> James, *Manuscript Lectures*, ix.

<sup>243</sup> Carlo Golino 'Giovanni Papini and American Pragmatism', *Italica* 32:1 (Mar 1955), pp. 42-43.

James himself would come to admit, though, that Papini had raised pragmatism to a new level of rebellion: he described Papini as 'the most radical conceiver of pragmatism to be found anywhere'.<sup>244</sup> Papini was a revolutionary anarchist in the European egoist, individualist tradition of Max Stirner, in contrast to the more moderate anarchist American tradition of Benjamin Tucker and Morrison Swift which had inspired James. James was an anarchist thinker but Papini positioned himself, in his own words, as 'a willing incendiary' needed by the world to 'ruthlessly burn and dismantle' it.<sup>245</sup> This disparity in their radicalism also underpinned the extremities of their take on pragmatist philosophy. In Papini's hands pragmatism developed from a methodology focused on practicable spiritual and material truths into one concerned with human ascendancy and self-mastery. This change in the essence of the philosophy is apparent in an essay of 1904 entitled 'What is Pragmatism?', in which Papini contends that 'pragmatism is nothing but a collection of methods for augmenting the power of man'.<sup>246</sup> Rather than ruminate about the bureaucratic, dogmatic and entrenched organisations of modern life, Papini sought to make their destruction, and the return of their power to the individual, a practice and an activity of life. He writes

I am possessed by the desire to overthrow everything, to upset beliefs, reveal what is hidden behind every opposing front, to upset beliefs, reveal what is hidden behind every opposing front, the spots on every star, the frail props of greatness, all the dastardly purposes of respected institutions.<sup>247</sup>

With its focus on self-power, destruction and anarchistic egoism, Papini transformed pragmatism into an insurgency by the individual consciousness against the world of externalities.

James also recognised Papini's even more specific effect on the religious frameworking in which he situated pragmatism; in fact, he encouraged the way in which Papini's mutinous new configuration was driven by a form of spiritual anarchy, writing that

In the writings of this youthful Italian I found a tone of feeling well fitted to rally devotees and to make of pragmatism a new, militant form of religion, or quasi-religious philosophy.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method*, 3 (1906), p. 337.

<sup>245</sup> Papini, *Un Uomo Finito*, p. 306.

<sup>246</sup> Trans. Katharine Royce, *Popular Science Monthly* 71 (1907), p. 351.

<sup>247</sup> Papini, *Un Uomo Finito*, p. 306.

At the centre of Papini's new religion was Il Uomo-Dio, or the man-god. This incarnation was a being imagined as creating or fashioning the world through individual consciousness. It was an apocalyptic automyth set out by Papini on, in his own words, 'a methodological quest for miracles and seers'.<sup>249</sup> The man-god embodied a radicalised anthropomorphism of pragmatism's practicable connection between the earthly and the divine. Of this incarnation, Papini writes:

when ends and means are studied together to work creatively on all possible programs for man's life [...] man becomes a kind of God and where are we to draw his limits? (312)

In other words, Papini's interpretation of pragmatism was that to make all experience, both material and spiritual, accessible and verifiable would be to engender a God-like power to the individual. In fact, Papini takes the interpretation further and offers this empowerment as a potential rebirth for all of humanity:

the dominating thought was one only and always the same: to render possible, desirable and imminent the palingenesis of the human race, the transfiguration of the man-beast, the universal advent of the man-god. (183)

Papini tinged his egoism with evangelism and his pragmatism with a thirst for divinity in a way that was actively championed by James, who argued that 'the program of a man-God is surely one of the possible great-type programs of philosophy'.<sup>250</sup> As such, Papini became the standard bearer for a militant, religious form of James's pragmatist philosophy.

Papini radicalised Jamesian pragmatism with a more extreme form of anarchistic, spiritual individualism, but he was unique between them in applying his tenets to the fields of art and culture. Papini writes in *Un Uomo Finito* (The Failure):

I am a poet and a destroyer [...] I will not accept this world as it is, and I therefore strive to make it in imagination and to alter it by means of destruction. I reconstruct it with the help of art. (302)

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<sup>248</sup> James, 'Papini and the Pragmatism Movement in Italy', p. 338.

<sup>249</sup> Papini, *Un Uomo Finito*, p. 215.

<sup>250</sup> James, 'Papini and the Pragmatism Movement in Italy', p. 340.

Papini's mission was to embody his radicalised, quasi-religious pragmatism in a new form of creative consciousness. Once again, this transformation was not to be confined to the individual but offered to all of humanity. Walter Adamson writes that Papini sought

a cultural regeneration through the secular religious quest for "new values" [...] the transformation of the whole of civilisation with a revolutionary vision inspired by art.<sup>251</sup>

James belonged to a tradition of nineteenth century America intellectualism which had social reform as its end point. In contrast, as Adamson indicates, Papini belonged to a European philosophical tradition including Stirner and Nietzsche which shared the belief that a new communal faith could be inspired by a great artwork. The ultimate goal for Papini was that pragmatic individualism could be applied to art in order to create a revolution in consciousness. He set out on this quest with a missionary zeal and, he writes, two tools: 'determination and poesy'.<sup>252</sup> In *Un Uomo Finito*, Papini's focus on creativity as the centre-point of a militant, secular religious pragmatism took the philosophy into new conceptual and cultural territory.

Papini's contributions to art and culture, and in particular *Un Uomo Finito*, convinced Carnevali to become his disciple, much as Papini had become a devotee of Jamesian philosophy. In his autobiography Carnevali declared an awareness of the anarchist and Futurist movements which were active in Florence during his youth. However, he did not truly discover Papini's work until he reached America. During the summer of 1918, Carnevali was working as a research assistant for the literary critic Joel Elias Spingarn when he happened upon a copy of Papini's journal *La Voce* (1908-1916) in the New York Public Library. Soon afterwards, Carnevali read *Un Uomo Finito*, which he later confessed had caused him to weep 'tears of fire'.<sup>253</sup> He began a correspondence with Papini that lasted for more than a year. It was during this exchange that Carnevali reported on how aware American intellectual circles were of Papini's work due to James's coverage of it in *Pragmatism: A Method*. He also reported to Papini on a new literary magazine entitled *New Moon* that he was developing in Chicago with Robert McAlmon, the lawyer-poet Mitchell

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<sup>251</sup> 'Modernism and Fascism: The Politics of Culture in Italy, 1903-1922', *American Historical Review* 95 (1990), p. 360.

<sup>252</sup> Papini, *Un Uomo Finito*, p. 200.

<sup>253</sup> Gabriel Cachet Millet (ed.), *Voglio Disturbare L'America: Lettere a Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Papini ed altro* (Milan: La Casa Usher, 1981), p. 11.

Dawson and a loosely-involved William Carlos Williams.<sup>254</sup> Carnevali wrote of his plans to contribute a serialised translation of *Un Uomo Finito*, but the journal ultimately never materialised. According to Carnevali, their correspondence ended tersely in 1920 with Papini claiming that he no longer had time to be 'preoccupied with the fate of all his disciples'.<sup>255</sup> Nevertheless, the deep impression Papini had made on Carnevali's philosophies about art and culture endured and were much in evidence during his attack on the *Others* coterie in 1919.

Through the influence of *Un Uomo Finito* on 'My Speech at Lola's', Papini handed on to Carnevali the radicalised pragmatist-anarchist programme he adapted from James. In turn, Carnevali applied it to the context of modern American poetry. Carnevali took on Papini's agitational, militant and anarchistic individualism and employed it in a seditious, systematic attack against Pound, Williams, *Others* and the *Little Review*. Within this persona he appropriated Papini's anthropomorphic Uomo-Dio, which symbolised pragmatism's attempt to unify spiritual and material consciousness into one truth. The Uomo-Dio became Carnevali's demiurgic alter ego and his 'god seeking around the world what there is need to create'; it also became the 'enormous commonplace' with which he threatened to punish the modernist agenda of turning away from the public. Papini's revolutionary activation of pragmatism transitioned into Carnevali's exhortation that the proponents of modernism should seek to demonstrate 'great big truths' in their verse.<sup>256</sup> In fact, Carnevali directly invoked Papini's work as an achievement comparable to their alleged failures, asking of the *Others* group 'where are your *Un Uomo Finitos*?'<sup>257</sup> The current analysis began by identifying anti-authoritarianism and practicability as two critically, but individually, appraised characteristics of Carnevali's work. The fusion of anarchist and pragmatist tendencies initiated by James and radicalised by Papini, repositions them as a unified

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<sup>254</sup> Carnevali would write to Papini of his ambitions: 'Yes, that high VOICE has things that need to reach the cotton wool glue ears of this decrepit new world', *Ibid.*, p. 36. An investigation of other sources suggests that in the letter Carnevali may have exaggerated his involvement in the attempt to launch *New Moon*. Randy Ploog writes that 'it was probably as a result of conversations with Williams and Kreymborg about the uncertain future of *Others* while in New York that Dawson conceived the idea of founding a new literary magazine. The first mention of this venture appeared in his correspondence shortly after his return to Chicago. After consulting Sherwood Anderson and [Carl] Sandburg, he formulated a plan to employ Carnevali to work exclusively on the magazine'. See 'A New *Others*', *William Carlos Williams Review* 30 (1:2), p. 121. Yet, as Ploog clarifies elsewhere, this was only as a 'potential assistant editor'. See 'The Double Life of Mitchell Dawson: Attorney and Poet', *Legal Studies Forum* 29:1 (2005), p. 191. Ultimately, as Eric White notes, despite 'extension discussion and several titles changes - in 1920, Williams and McAlmon began referring to it as *New Moon* - the magazine never emerged'. See *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism*, p. 95.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> Carnevali, 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 9.

<sup>257</sup> Carnevali, *Autobiography*, p. 146.

philosophical programme, one which places Carnevali in a serious lineage of intellectual thought. With this programme, he radically reinterpreted the modernist situation in America in the spring of 1919.

### **Pragmatic Anarchism in 'Splendid Commonplaces' and 'The Day of Summer'**

Carnevali's pragmatist-anarchism went beyond simply duplicating Papini's philosophy in order to attack the American modernist coterie of *Others* though; uniquely to him, he used those ideas to inspire a body of his own modernist poetry and prose. With it he versified his interpretation of James and Papini's pragmatist-anarchist ideas. In 'The Book of Job Junior', Carnevali declared that 'the world needs pragmatic works' and he lead through example with more than fifty contributions to literary journals between 1918 and 1930. In many of these works, such as 'Noon', 'In This Hotel', 'His Majesty the Letter Carrier', and 'Commonplaces', the emblematic characteristics of the philosophy apparent to 'My Speech at Lola's' find an aesthetic form. The speaker in these works is often a quasi-religious persona, palpating the structures of everyday experiences. Carnevali outlined his artistic vision in Jamesian terms:

Form. Form is one and universal. There is but man and the universe that is a necessary premise. Man understands form only when he is form. When he is swept by an emotion into forms and becomes the intrinsic part of form. It is form which assimilates the artist.

This vision describes both the structure of the universe according to Carnevali's understanding as well as the structure of his poetry, which aestheticises that universe and employs the narrative 'man-god' as its voice.

His forms versified pragmatist metaphysics, but they also anarchistically questioned the legitimacy of modernism's authority by accusing it of being a closed institution of 'undignified exhibitions', and by undermining its focus on detachment and technique.<sup>258</sup> Carnevali believed the modernist poetry of *Others* and the *Little Review* had forgotten that 'the artist is an inseparable limb' of the world.<sup>259</sup> His response to its perceived failures was to rebuild poetic form by allowing the structures of reality to be determinative, which he termed 'striving towards the form of the moment'.<sup>260</sup> That is to say, Carnevali aestheticised a reality still in the making in order to practicably evaluate truth through his art. In doing so, he turned the

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<sup>258</sup> Carnevali, 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 9.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. p. 10

pragmatist-anarchist programme of James and Papini into what might be considered his own modernist verse form.

Two critical issues need to be overcome, however, before the pragmatic anarchism of Carnevali might legitimately be considered a modernist form: the first is that such a configuration of elements is without precedent in American modernist poetry. The term 'pragmatic anarchist' was once applied to the late British modernist Basil Bunting, but such nomenclature has never found a place among modernists in America.<sup>261</sup> Even an early American anarchist such as Josiah Warren, who himself has occasionally been described as a pragmatic anarchist, was a gradualist and reformist social practitioner.<sup>262</sup> The transatlantic movement of American pragmatism, radicalised by European anarchism, and reapplied to verse in an American context by Carnevali has no antecedent in modernism, or perhaps elsewhere. Therefore, a nascent theory of how such a modernism might be defined needs to be cultivated in order to support its place within the period.

To overcome this difficulty it should be remembered that the concept of pragmatic anarchism has other cultural precedents that can be usefully applied in this context, even in the absence of more specific modernist or literary ones. The British anarchist theorist Herbert Read defines pragmatic anarchism in an essay of the same title as 'pragmatic activity, consistently directed to a revolutionary end'.<sup>263</sup> Without reference to Papini or any other radical pragmatist philosopher, he describes freedom in terms of 'man as an individual who becomes whole and god-like by deliberate disassociation from the collective psyche' (58). This description both recalls Papini and Carnevali's man-god and suggests a certain universality inherent to this conceptual territory, even across varying cultural spheres. It may be that both Papini and Read found the psychological origins of the concept in the work of Max Stirner, whose empirical, egoist anarchism posed the question 'what is left when I have been freed of everything that is not I?' and the answer 'Only I, nothing but I'.<sup>264</sup> Therefore, only the conjunction of pragmatic anarchism and modernism is unique, not the wider cultural relevance of the concept.

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<sup>261</sup> Eric Mottram, 'Basil Bunting: human framework and "nature"', Sharp Study and Long Toil: Basil Bunting Special Issue, *Durham University Journal* (special supplement), ed. R Caddel, (Mar 1995), p. 72 (71-82)

<sup>262</sup> For discussion of Warren's pragmatic anarchism see, for example, Luisa Cetti, *Un falansterio a New York: L'Unitary Household (1858-1860) e il riformismo prebellico americano* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1992).

<sup>263</sup> *Encounter* (Jan 1968), p. 61.

<sup>264</sup> Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; 2002), p. 148.

Secondly, where pragmatism has previously been examined as a modernist practice, it has been done so in such a way as to deliberately set it aside from revolutionary, avant-garde movements such as anarchism. Lisi Schoenbach writes in *Pragmatic Modernism* that as a modernism it 'defines itself through a gradualist, mediating approach to social change and artistic innovation that was fundamentally different from the revolutionary aesthetic of the avant-garde'.<sup>265</sup> Once again, this definition sets pragmatism in a melioristic American context, the same one that saw William Carlos Williams 'graft idiom from idiom', but in this case based on how James, Dewey and other philosophers influenced Gertrude Stein and her fellow American writers on the Left Bank. However, historicising pragmatism in such a framework also sets aside the anarchist proclivities of James. It also fails to allow for the possibility of transatlantic re-circulation and imbrication in this field of ideas. This definition of pragmatic modernism cannot account for the movements in which pragmatism is both revolutionary and avant-garde, particularly where America or Americans are involved, which is unfortunate because revolutionary and gradualist pragmatism share certain characteristics that illuminate the practice of each.

Furthermore, in order to highlight a divergence between pragmatism and the avant-garde, Schoenbach argues that habit, as the 'inevitable medium through which all thought and action takes place' (6) is what separates the two movements, on the basis that the former foregrounds everydayness and continuity, while the latter valorised rupture and renewal. Yet, the celebrated sociologist and anarchist Howard J. Ehrlich characteristically declared that anarchists 'need to cultivate the habits of freedom so that we consistently experience it in our lives', suggesting perhaps that there is more in common than this separation can allow for between the two programmes.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, it was James who emphasised a re-examination of the commonplace in order to reconceive of a newly structured society, and he did so in a way that was consistent with anarchist tendencies. This was heightened in Papini's radicalisation of the everyday, and later aestheticised in Carnevali's poetry, a transnational circulation which destabilises Schoenbach's distinction. Instead, his verse demonstrates that a revolutionary pragmatism might be possible in an ostensibly modernist form.

To overcome this second issue, points of recursive conceptual unity in Carnevali's work need to be found where pragmatism is aestheticised as a revolutionary, not a reformist or a gradualist, literary practice. One way of distinguishing between these practices is to make a comparison of the philosophy's individual influence on William Carlos Williams and

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<sup>265</sup> Schoenbach, p. 3.

<sup>266</sup> *Reinventing Anarchy, Again* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1996), p. 139.



Carnevali. Both writers had an antecedent in James. Yet, Williams's work drew on the models of cultural anthropology set out by John Dewey and Franz Boas in order to stress the need for pragmatically finding 'Americanism' (to quote Dewey) in its localities rather than in a more notional approximation of the term. Carnevali's pragmatism was essentially a radically modified, Papinian iteration of James's philosophy. Therefore, one reason why Williams was so shocked by Carnevali's attacks, and so definitive in his decision to shut down *Others*, was that he recognised they were each working similarly on the problem of finding an appropriate, representative modern vernacular, but that Carnevali was doing so in a vastly heightened and more intense scale and tone. David Kadlec argues that Williams's pragmatism was based on an 'isometric economy of relations in literary praxis' or, in other words, that he attempted to aestheticise his localism in poetic syntax.<sup>267</sup> The same isometrics are apparent in Carnevali's work but the scale is universal, as per the Jamesian model, and its speaker is the Papinian Uomo-Dio. Carnevali's aesthetic embodies a radicalised pragmatism in his poetry, but this practice must be fully conceptualised in order to overcome the perception that pragmatism cannot co-exist alongside the revolutionary or avant-garde in modernist writing.

In order to understand if and how Carnevali was able to generate such an aesthetic we must look to 1919, which was the seminal year in the evolution of his pragmatism. In January of that year, he contributed an article to *Poetry* entitled 'Five Years of Italian Poetry' in which he celebrates the pragmatism to which Papini had 'given his life'.<sup>268</sup> Elsewhere in the article, he describes how the consciousness of modern man sees 'a more intricate and nearer, even if apparently smaller, world than the large one of the old artists' (213). It was an observation he confessed to being a 'mainly pragmatic' view, and one that would help define his poetic method. From February of 1919 through to August of 1920 Carnevali was in continuous correspondence with Papini, during which time he discussed his interest in James's *Pragmatism: A Method* (1904). In the spring came his coruscating speech to the *Others* group. He decried the lack of pragmatism in their work and lamented how they had written nothing to compare with Papini's *Un Uomo Finito*.

It is therefore unsurprising that two poetic sequences representing the apogee of his pragmatic verse were published during this time. The first was 'The Splendid Commonplace', which appeared in *Poetry* in March 1919. It pertains to observations on the movement of human life that Carnevali made from his down-at-heel hotel room in New York City. The

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<sup>267</sup> *Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>268</sup> 'Five Years of Italian Poetry', *Poetry* 13:4 (Jan 1919), p. 210.

second entitled 'The Day of Summer' also appeared in *Poetry*, in September of the same year. Across five individual poems, Carnevali relates through one sustained tracking movement the moments of a day in Manhattan. The two titles are suggestive of the smaller, more intricate world Carnevali wrote of in 'Five Years of Italian Poetry' and this world has three distinct characteristics. Firstly, it is fashioned through using verse to pragmatically model the continuous, verifiable structures of experience. Secondly, it is observed from the anarchistic, egoist modern consciousness of the 'man god', whose persona represents one complex component in the unbroken field of existence. Finally, pragmatism and anarchism intersect in the radicalised instants of quotidian human practice from which experience, as it recorded in the poems, is woven.

'The Day of Summer' is a sequence of five interconnected individual poems, 'Morning', 'Noon', 'Afternoon', 'Evening' and 'Night, observed from the perspective of a young immigrant artist in Manhattan.<sup>269</sup> The artist rises to greet the dawn, passes through the morning commotion of the city, dines, walks through a dusty park and finishes the day back in the insalubrious, diseased surroundings of his furnished hotel room. From the beginning of the poem, we become aware that time, history and experience are being interlaced into one horizon of consciousness. The artist asks whether the dawn he sees was the same one that 'pleased Homer' (l. 2). He asks whether it was 'among flowers / Dew-full, tearful for the love of dawn' that Petrarch 'sang his best song for Laura' (l. 3-7) and whether the symbolist Paul Fort could also see the dawn 'well once' (l. 8). There is a sense in which each artist is co-existent in observing a shared field of life.

The sense of completed experience in the poem is deepened by the way in which the sequence of 'Morning' through to 'Night' is also paralleled by a progression from birth to death, and by the continuous flow of life between and even beyond these points. 'Morning' begins with the dawn appearing in a 'swollen-faced hour' (l. 13) like the arrival of a newborn baby and 'Night' ends with the artist in a duel of wills with death, asking through the darkness of his hotel room: 'What would you want, o Death / Face-of-character / With a faceless man like me' (l. 336-338). In-between, the form of the sequence is ongoing, with no clear beginnings or ends save for the title of each new section. This continuity offers a heightened sense of duration, of spatial possibilities and a heightened sense of moving life, particularly in its description of the soundless, commuting masses in the city:

This is the hour they go to their work  
Eastward and westward

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<sup>269</sup> 'The Day of Summer', *Poetry* 14:6 (Sep 1919), pp. 314-327.

Two processions

Silent

Without knowing one another,

ALL

TOGETHER

Eastward and Westward?

The world has decreed:

These men go

Acknowledged

Eastward and Westward. (l. 97-108)

Like the sequence, their momentum is seamless and propulsive. Both are reminiscent of James's vision from *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) in which he describes 'concrete pulses of experience' that 'run into one another continuously and seem to interpenetrate'.<sup>270</sup> In 'The Day of Summer' these pulses include the silent moving workers, but also other phenomena such as the noises of the city, shouting fruit sellers, warring children, the wallowing heat, dusty crowds and other sensations that greet the artist on his walk through Manhattan. He experiences a constant encounter with life, which appears as an uninterrupted tapestry of sentience. James is again echoed in his supposition that 'the whole universe in its different spans and wavelengths, its exclusions and developments, is everywhere alive and conscious'.<sup>271</sup> The subject flows through such a continuity of life, which apparently proceeds even beyond the moment of his own death. In his hotel room, he muses posthumously that 'There must be a comfortable little place / For me in the world / Now I'm dead enough' (l. 342-344). The subject's death affirms an impression of his universe as being a network of localised awareness that exists without the reticulations of time, history, material and spirit.

The flows of life in 'The Day of Summer' take their overall shape from the localities of experience they encounter, or what Carnevali describes as his 'striving for the form of the moment'.<sup>272</sup> In other words, the poems take their form from the pragmatic exploration of individual moments, the experience of which in each case is determinative of its own structure. Although Carnevali's model is universal in scale, it is a universe formed from concrete particulars. He is concerned not with its sum total but rather with instants of knowledge, action and truth. Poetically, this creates an economy of language. Dialogue is

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<sup>270</sup> p. 127.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>272</sup> 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 10.

shaped only by the form of an active experience, much as it would later be in Williams's 'This Is Just To Say' (1934). For Carnevali though, poetic configuration results directly from the speaker's evaluatory actions, and truncated metrics reveal no more than is expedient in order to determine the truth of its internal inquiry.

Carnevali's attempts to find the form of the moment, at first sight, appear to support Schoenbach's position that pragmatic modernism stresses continuity and everydayness over shock and rupture. Schoenbach argues that pragmatic modernism derives its experimental aesthetic strategies from the way it 'instead engages the relationships between past and future, daily life and spectacular event... in all their complexity'.<sup>273</sup> I am inclined to agree with this analysis insofar as Carnevali's pragmatic approach implicitly engenders a range of heterodox forms. There is no recognised poetic doctrine, principle or technique applied to either sequence, and no sense of forcing the world to act in a particular way. Instead, instants of time are explored in a pragmatic framework to determine their multiplicity in the practice and activity of life. Expression is not embellished beyond its *a posteriori* experience. As a result, Carnevali's aesthetic fully allows for the particulars of each experience to find form. At times, these localities are dialogic, as with the extended speech pattern of a Manhattan street grocer, who yowls in precise, dialectic syllables 'pota-a-a-a-t-o-w-s, yeh-p-l-s, waa-ry meh-l-n?' (l. 54). At others they are auricular, as in this passage from 'Morning' in which the subject's words are aurally framed by the movement of a train on an elevated subway line:

Now has the deep hot belly of the night  
Given birth to noises.  
The noises pass  
Over me,  
I lie  
Insensible,  
Under.  
Work, milk, bread, clothes, potatoes, potatoes...  
This is  
The big  
Beauty rumbling on. (l. 37-47)

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<sup>273</sup> Schoenbach, p. 5.

These lines begin with a slower pattern of enunciation determined by the train's approach, speeding to a crescendo in the eighth line, before slowing again as it passes onwards. As well as allowing for each moment to find its fullest and most representative form, such passages also articulate the pragmatic inseparability of mind and world. The result is a work of jagged, idiosyncratic, unfinished creation. It seems to favour Schoenbach's contention that pragmatic modernism's literary experiments 'relate the minutiae of daily life' to punctuation, syntax and discursive structure.<sup>274</sup> Such an approach appears to utilise the singular form for a poetry of pragmatic practice which records only the real, vital and emergent in the living field being observed.

Yet, while Carnevali's verse shares certain aesthetic stratagems with those of Schoenbach's pragmatic modernists, closer analysis reveals how his work, in fact, significantly destabilises her distinction between pragmatism and the avant-garde. Schoenbach positions pragmatic modernism, with its 'steady reorganization of custom and institutions' in direct contrast to Peter Berger's enduring notion regarding the 'attack of the historical avant-garde movements on art as an institution'.<sup>275</sup> However, this delineation cannot account for the transnational vector of Carnevali's work in how it appropriates both American pragmatist ideas and Italian avant-garde radicalism. That is to say, it fails to allow for how he defines modernism itself as an institution to be attacked by an avant-garde, anarchistically-driven form of pragmatist philosophy. Carnevali argues in 'The Book of Job Junior' that modernism had become an academy of 'ludicrous stunts', to which he offers 'pragmatic works' as a cultural antidote.<sup>276</sup> Far from using pragmatism as a method of engaging with and drawing on institutions and habits, as per Schoenbach's argument, Carnevali sets his philosophy against modernism on the very basis of its anti-pragmatism.

In order to interrogate modernism within an institutional framework, Schoenbach quotes Lionel Trilling's argument that modernism had lost its effect when domesticated by post-war academic study; but to Carnevali as an outsider, an Italian, and an anarchistic revolutionary pragmatist, the institutionalisation of modernism appeared to take place much earlier.<sup>277</sup> To him, the modernism of *Others* and the *Little Review* was itself the establishment against

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>276</sup> 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 10.

<sup>277</sup> In his essay 'On the Teaching of Modern Literature', Trilling describes the classes he gave on modernist texts to Columbia University undergraduates as 'an outrage I have conspired to perpetrate on a great literature'. See Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 27.

which 'a man must yell' rebelliously and subversively 'if he wants to be heard'.<sup>278</sup> Carnevali attacked its proponents as a faculty of technicians and specialists. In his view, they did not lead the charge of the avant-garde but rather reflected the impracticable vocationalism of the age. This was an indivisibility he describes in the following terms:

ours are times of categorization, classification, specialisation... In the beginning, Psyche was something of a light, agile and naïf Greek myth, but now we have psychology, psycho-analysis [sic], psychiatry, psychic sciences, patho-psychology, patho-pathology, subliminal selves... etc.... In the beginning there was a lonely Phidias that made statues and hardly knew, if at all, why or wherefore. Now every irreverent mongrel who lifts his hind leg to leave a desecration of ink on clean paper talks of technique.<sup>279</sup>

To Carnevali, specialisation, which was also a reference to the technical obsession of Williams and *Others*, was both unpragmatic and institutionalising. Like the branches of psychological medicine, it offered a fragmentary, inefficient route to understanding the interconnected nature of all forms, both self and non-self. Carnevali shared with James a belief that pragmatism's riverhead was the Aristotelian internal form, immanent in consciousness, for which he makes the Greek sculptor Phidias representative. His ambition was to represent this psychic and material totality through pragmatic works. Yet, doing so constituted a pragmatic attack on the institution of modernism as he saw it, thereby undermining Schoenbach's dialectical conception of pragmatism and the avant-garde.

Schoenbach also argues that discrete boundaries exist between pragmatic and non-pragmatic modernists due to their differing levels of dedication to revolutionary practice, but the anarchistic tendencies in Carnevali's sequences further weaken the integrity of this segregation. Citing *transition* magazine's 'Testament against Gertrude Stein' (1935), Schoenbach identifies an apparent division between Stein's pragmatic refusal to privilege conflict or revolution in her art and the 'authentically revolutionary motivations' identified by her detractors.<sup>280</sup> Her work contends that this exemplifies how Stein's 'gradualist, mediating approach to social change and artistic innovation', which would 'complicate and question the ideology of rupture and opposition', was 'fundamentally different from the revolutionary aesthetic of the avant-garde.'<sup>281</sup> Yet, the marriage of pragmatism and anarchism in

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<sup>278</sup> 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 10.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>280</sup> Schoenbach, *Pragmatic Modernism*, p. 1.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

Carnevali's work further complicates such discrimination by offering a vision both pragmatic as well as possessed of genuinely revolutionary intent.

Carnevali's verse obfuscates Schoenbach's boundaries because he utilises pragmatic forms for the conveyance of his anarchistic attitudes. He does so in a manner reminiscent of the way in which James relied on Swift, Morrison and other anarchists to become the activators of his pragmatist ideas. Carnevali's avowal in 'My Speech at Lola's' to become 'an enormous commonplace rolling over the delicate miniatures' of American modernism becomes embedded in moments of polemical, violent, egoist discourse within 'A Day of Summer'.<sup>282</sup> In 'Noon', during a visit to one of the city's lunch-room counters, his subject forewarns of a 'malediction on the cowards who are afraid of the word' (l. 209), that is the words of

The few poets, they who weigh with delicate hands  
Walk in the unfrequented roads,  
Maundering,  
Crying and laughing  
Against the rest. (l. 212-217)

Here, he envisions striking down threats to those with alternative, revolutionary and anti-establishment literary motivations; in his case the motivation to fulfil the world's need for 'pragmatic works'.<sup>283</sup> Schoenbach suggests that 'the modernist call to live fully, to engage directly, and to fight against the existing social order depends on the rejection of daily habit'.<sup>284</sup> Yet, the revolutionary, anarchistic aspect of Carnevali's pragmatism animated him to fight on the very basis of representing the world in such a way.

It is apparent through analysing Carnevali's verse that when employed with an underlying set of anarchistic intentions, pragmatism operates in a profoundly different fashion than the one Schoenbach so usefully offers to explain pragmatism alone. This first theory of pragmatic modernism argues convincingly that the ideology of discontinuity has been overprivileged in contemporary modernist studies. However, it can make no allowance for the radical philosophical commitments of a pragmatic anarchist, and how such a modernist might represent continuity and habit with revolutionary intent. It positions pragmatism in opposition to the European avant-garde, including Fauvism, Cubism, Dada, Surrealism, offering Gertrude Stein as an exemplar of how the two movements were 'never ideologically

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<sup>282</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 148.

<sup>283</sup> 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 10.

<sup>284</sup> Schoenbach, *Pragmatic Modernism*, p. 21.

intimate'.<sup>285</sup> Yet, the deep ideological interconnectedness between pragmatism and Futurism became highly developed in James and Papini's writings and, later, Carnevali's poetry. In fact, in nearly all of the ways in which Schoenbach distinguishes non-pragmatic modernism, including its celebration of heroic opposition, its anti-institutional stance, its insubordination and its revolutionary subjectivity, his verse demonstrates that, when anarchistic proclivities are present, these attributes can become intellectual attachments of both pragmatic and revolutionary, avant-garde modernism.

The current understanding of pragmatist modernism is therefore not sufficient for interpreting Carnevali's anarchistic versification of the philosophy; it demands a distinctly new set of concepts to define its role and meaning as a modernist form. To animate this critical conversation, I wish to propose four embryonic definitions with which to understand 'The Day of Summer' as a work of pragmatic anarchist modernism; four devices through which the two philosophies function in aesthetic co-dependency to foster a modernism not yet understood. The first is that the sequence examines everydayness with authentically revolutionary motivations. By this I mean to draw attention to precisely how the preoccupations of Carnevali's pragmatism differed from the writers already associated with this particular modernism such as Henry James and Gertrude Stein, whose pragmatic middle class concerns included manners, customs, traditions, domestic routines and social mores. Instead, Carnevali is concerned with scrutinising the quotidian realities of the dusty, hungry and unemployed who were living in the furnished rooms of New York City. As an immigrant artist with pragmatic and anarchistic tendencies, Carnevali is less interested in examining the role of democratic institutions in daily life than he is interrogating the institutions that maintain his privation, and then investigating which way to freedom. In 'Morning', his subject's routine at this part of the day is to rise from a 'torn bedspread' (l. 305) in a 'soiled-linen box' (l. 319) to a view which is a customary reminder of how the city governs his social incarceration:

Houses there  
In a thick row  
Militarily shut out the sky;  
Another fence  
In the east;  
Over this one a shameful blush  
Strives upward. (l. 17-22)

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 2.



He then cleans himself because, he writes, to be dirty is 'to go to war', meaning the war of daily survival, 'unbelievably' (l. 14-15). The subject steps out of his cheap hotel to be greeted by the diurnal '*street's greeting*: / I'm out of work' (159-160). He moves around the city through the morning but remains 'chained to the sidewalk' (l. 180) with his 'eyes upwards' (l. 181). The everydayness being examined here under the auspices of pragmatism is not Stein's domestic island of living but 'damn work' (l. 161); nor James's practice of visiting museums and theatres, but of needing 'to work and come home in the evening hungry / for all the things that could have been done instead' (l. 161-162). In keeping with Herbert Read's definition of 'pragmatic activity, consistently directed to a revolutionary end', Carnevali's pragmatic anarchism offers a transformative perspective on the social routines of immigrant city life.

In 'The Day of Summer', Carnevali embodies the egoist, individualist anarchism of European philosophy in the form of contemporary American verse. Carnevali himself previously cites two reference points of American poetry which, it seems apparent, he used as a waypoint to translate egoism's sensibilities into works such as 'Morning', 'Noon' and 'Night'. In his autobiography, Carnevali alludes to how he wished to reprise the way 'Emily Dickinson meant solitude' and the way 'Amy Lowell meant voluminous and disorderly culture'.<sup>286</sup> The speaker of 'Morning' exemplifies the solipsism and the solitude of the egoist, rising at dawn a successor to Homer and Petrarch, before performing the motions of the day as a series of sacred, individual rituals: washing, observing the noises of the postman, the railways and the sight of daily commuters. It is also clear such rituals are an act of disruptive resistance. It is precisely to wake and rise in the filthy and unhomely furnished room of the immigrant that is 'to go to war'; likewise, it is precisely to step outside, find oneself 'chained to the sidewalk' and yet to 'hold our eyes upward' that brings a sense of disorder to the natural rhythms of New York City culture.<sup>287</sup> Disruption in dark places such as the poorly lit room in which the speaker begins the day or the sickness-infested brothel in which the sequence ends means disrupting the balance of light and dark in contemporary city life; as Carnevali writes elsewhere, 'All shadows / Whisper of the sun'.<sup>288</sup> This is how Carnevali embodies pragmatic egoism in modernist verse and it is also, we might surmise, what he hoped his own poetic name 'meant' in view of the associations he made concerning Dickinson and Lowell.

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<sup>286</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 37.

<sup>287</sup> 'The Day of Summer', p. 121.

<sup>288</sup> 'Walt Whitman', *Poetry*, 14 (Apr-Sep 1919), p. 60.

Secondly, Carnevali combines a pragmatic examination of everydayness with the creation of radical, localised communities of experience. This is to say, instead of privileging subjectivity, the sequence's form is decentralised into a composite that depicts heightened instants of ordinariness. The narrative moves in a linear chronological fashion through the periods of the day, but the subject's experiences become divested into an intensified representation of the habits and practices of city life. As 'Morning' draws to a close our attention is refocused on a member of the New York City police force whose routine vocational behaviours become amplified into acts of spiritual empowerment. On account of his mannerisms, he becomes the 'Kaiser of the lightness of the morning, the policeman' who, 'swinging his stick, writes sacred hieroglyphs' (l. 191-192) in the air. Papini wrote in *Un Uomo Finito* that the purpose of his anarchistic pragmatism was to find methods with which to augment the power of man. Here, Carnevali augments a simple custom of city living with sacred potential. Doing so creates an equalising effect, deprivileging the literariness of Paul Fort, Homer and Petrarch, with whom the sequence began, and realigning it alongside the revolutionary capacity of everyday individuals. Such amplifications of the commonplace continue in 'Noon', wherein the city's working residents dine not at a saloon but at a 'wooden yellow temple' (l. 207), sitting not on stools but on 'tripods of a little secure religion' (l. 231), dining not from counters but from 'altars of a little secure comfort' (l. 227). In each case, subjectivity devolves from the centre of the narrative to the margins where we encounter a community of moments. In each of them, quotidian city life acquires a radical, divine potential.

Thirdly, Carnevali's pragmatic anarchism set him against bigness in all its forms. James warned that bigness was 'sweeping every quality out of the world', writing that 'the bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed'.<sup>289</sup> Carnevali observed this mendacity frequently in American modernism and exposing it became one of his missions. In 'My Speech at Lola's' he argued that the 'fakers' of American avant-garde poetry needed the institutionalising doctrine of 'a technique', disparaging its proponents as 'they who go lying for a cent and lying more for a cent and a half', an implication that they were not as autonomous from the common marketplace as they wished it to be perceived.<sup>290</sup> He was no less relenting in 'The Book of Junior' in which he lamented that 'today wants new approaches, new absurdities, new crazes, new dances, new dislocations. Today does not want truth'.<sup>291</sup> In the same essay, he explains his position of being against modernist bigness through an anatomical allusion. Carnevali writes that the

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<sup>289</sup> William James, letter to Mrs. Henry Whitman, June 7, 1899, *Letters*, p. 90.

<sup>290</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 147.

<sup>291</sup> 'The Book of Job Junior', p. 11.

'brain is the center without which could not exist without the circumference... the circumference is our own nerves... Only the senses are our interpreters... the vessel that bears truth'.<sup>292</sup> That is to say, he perceived that a pragmatic approach to verifying truth was best carried out in the extremities of experience. An anarchistic process of dispersion and devolution of bigness into smaller, less mendacious units of life would make this possible.

What becomes apparent is that 'The Day of Summer' was a paragon of this anti-bigness standpoint because Carnevali applies the very same perspectives and processes to his poetic sequence. That is to say, it purposely investigates the circumference of his experiences as an immigrant in New York City because he believed that the further from the centre his subjectivity remained the closer those experiences would come to bearing truth. These decentralising processes occur on a conceptual level, capturing experience in cheap lunch rooms, dusty parks and feculent furnished rooms. They occur on a formal level, in a staccato flow of focalisation between the subject, the city, its noises and voices. They also occur on a linguistic level, where syntax is sometimes disassembled into the smallest units of value in which experience could be expressed, as here when the subject receives his morning post:

Oh, MAIL!

Ah beggars:

"I am-though-I-refrain-from-saying-it better-than-you-in the-end. I-am-perfectly-honestly-evidently-nothing-up-my-sleeves... It-is-out-of-my-bounteous-goodness-that-I-like-you-a-little-in-spite-of..." (l. 82-87)

The structure of 'The Day of Summer' aligns word, form and subjectivity into a federative aesthetic framework. It was borne of a pragmatic anarchist philosophy that sought truth in communities of experience, and which on of all these levels set his work against the institutional collaborations of American modernism such as *Others* and the *Little Review*.

Finally, though, the summative representation of Carnevali's pragmatic anarchism in 'The Day of Summer' and 'The Splendid Commonplace' is undoubtedly his Papinian man-god. It is the agent of his revolutionary motivation to aestheticise Papini's interpretation of pragmatism. In other words, it is the emissary of his wish to make humanlike the meeting point become the worldly and the mystical, representing as intellectually accessible the

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

moment at which, as James notes of Papini's programme, 'man becomes a kind of God'.<sup>293</sup> This contingency is captured through instants when everydayness merges into radicalised experience, such as in 'His Majesty the Letter Carrier' who carries the mail that Carnevali's subject hopes is a letter of acceptance from an editor, in the policeman who writes sacred hieroglyphs with his baton, in the consecrated New York City lunch-rooms eaters, in the subject's maledictions, and in his eyes in 'Afternoon' that see 'the last visions of salvation' (l. 254) across a dusty park through the 'o sacred soul of the crowd' (l. 264), while whispering hortatively 'no one dies, don't be / Afraid (l. 265-266)'. These representations of individualised immanence cultivate a sense of raising the power of men above the often squalid conditions in which the institutionalising practices of the city have abandoned them.

Yet, despite its Papinian origins, Carnevali uses pragmatic anarchism in his poetry for unique reasons: the meeting point embodied by the man-god is the meeting point between art and the people. It is the conjunction in 'My Speech at Lola's' between the artistically-inclined god, seeking around the world what there is need to create, and the enormous commonplace crushing modernism's delicate miniatures. A voice anthropomorphising this reconciliation rings clear and true in the poem 'In This Hotel', through a subject who declares that

One day I would come down to the world  
I would have a trumpet as powerful as the wind  
And I would trumpet out to the world  
The splendid commonplace:  
"Nice day to-day!"<sup>294</sup>

In reimagining Papini's meeting point not simply as a method for augmenting human power, but as an artistic response to the American avant-garde's focus on technique and impersonality, Carnevali affirms the deliberately anti-modernist (in so far as it had been conceived by the *Little Review* and *Others*) configuration of his pragmatic anarchism. To oppose and to attack their self-appointed status as arbiters of cultural standards in American literature was, as he writes in 'The Book of Job Junior', 'the big situation, the crucial point'.<sup>295</sup> To do so by writing aesthetic-philosophical poetry that forced a turn back towards the public, by applying a pragmatic focus on the everyday, with an anarchistic, revolutionary charge, was his method. With it, he sought through the man-god to aestheticise his ambition that

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<sup>293</sup> 'G. Papini and the Pragmatist Movement in Italy', p. 341.

<sup>294</sup> 'The Splendid Commonplace: In This Hotel', *Poetry*, 11:6 (Mar 1918), p. 298, l. 14-18.

<sup>295</sup> p. 9.

‘every work of art shall be a talk to the people’, in order to fulfil the want of ‘today’ for ‘pragmatic works.’<sup>296</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed anarchistic pragmatism as a modernism antithetical to the avant-garde of Williams and *Others*, yet it is notable that, despite his deep misgivings regarding the insularity and conformity into which *Others* had declined, Carnevali remained immersed in its future purpose and in helping to launch its replacement. During the summer of 1919, Carnevali began work in Chicago with the lawyer-poet Mitchell Dawson on a new journal project. ‘We finally have firm and defined plans’, he writes to Papini in early August of the same year, ‘we have ourselves a magazine, my American friends and me. It will contain all that is good in America: Carl Sandburg, Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, William Carlos William, Alfred Kreymborg, Robert Frost... it will be massive and expensive’.<sup>297</sup> Later that month he made a further announcement: ‘It will be called NEW MOON. It will be a big deal, based on the foundational sum of \$50,000, a Napoleonic figure for a man who went hungry yesterday in New York’.<sup>298</sup> Yet, if there are indications in taking up the venture that Carnevali was willing to make concessions regarding his individuality, there are other signs suggesting that his associates in the new venture were equally willing to accommodate, and even encourage, his agonistic qualities. Alfred Kreymborg, who like Williams maintained a skeptical distance from the ostensible successor to his *Others* project, declared in correspondence with Williams his disdain for ‘Grinding the personal ax, using the pages of a magazine for any purpose not allied to contribution to art... This is the universal shortcoming of every magazine in America to-day...’ before admitting ‘I mention this detail because Dawson hinted that they were going to attack Masters, Lowell and Bodenheim in an article, to be written, I surmise, by Carnevali’.<sup>299</sup> Kreymborg’s letter hints at the possibility that Dawson sought to embed Carnevali’s anarchistic proclivities in the ideology of the project in order to overcome the lack of fervour and rebelliousness that sank its predecessor.

In fact, it would appear that in the three years between the dissolution of *Others* and his enforced return to Italy, Carnevali’s philosophical anarchism left a legacy of both pragmatic and anarchistic values in certain jurisdictions of American literary modernism. In those years, he wrote poems, essays, critical reviews, letters and speeches about the nature of art that

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>297</sup> Millet, p. 50.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>299</sup> Qtd in Randy Ploog, ‘A New *Others*: The Correspondence between William Carlos Williams and Mitchell Dawson’, *William Carlos Williams Review*, 30:1-2 (Spring/Fall 2013), p. 125.

rebelliously questioned the direction of American writing set by its avant-garde literary magazines. In response, it would appear that Carnevali had become a small tributary pulling a larger tide of modernist opinion towards him. Randy Ploog notes that one of the titles for Dawson's new project was *Compromise*, conjecturing that this title 'probably reflected his belief that the publication needed a broad appeal among writers and potential donors to be successful'.<sup>300</sup> While such appeal may well have been borne of fiscal necessity, in 'The Book of Job Junior' Carnevali alludes to the possibility that the title was, in fact, his: 'From now on, every work of art shall be a talk to the people. Call it compromise, if you will, I thought myself of that word. Today wants pragmatic works.'<sup>301</sup> In either case, the title is fittingly symbolic of the way in which Carnevali had encouraged *Others* and its successor to expand its engagement with common life. The title was a direct response to the uncompromising anti-populism of Ezra Pound and the *Little Review* that Carnevali had so ferociously undermined in 'My Speech at Lola's'.

Meanwhile, Williams paid frustrated attention to the development of their new project with a renewed intensity about the future. Many times, Carnevali articulated his anarchistic fervour about art in terms of a hunger for 'great big' pragmatic truths.<sup>302</sup> He writes in 'The Book of Job Junior' of himself and his associates, including Williams, that 'we are hungry, and the times has come when the artists, or call them what you please, are yelling for food. Food, food, food.'<sup>303</sup> The same appetite for urgency is apparent in Williams's agitation over the delayed appearance of *Compromise*: 'You have a project to launch that teases my imagination but what of that? I am in [the] position of a man who is hungry and wants food when a friend comes and asks him which odor he likes best that of beefsteak or fried scallops? I answer to hell with your damned odor, I want something to eat!'.<sup>304</sup> Despite this desire, Williams was not convinced to engage further with the project before its pre-launch cessation, but in his last editorials for *Others* and his renewed avidity it would seem that Carnevali had ungirded a more radical instinct to his thinking about the future potential of avant-gardism in American magazines. Williams's decision to characterise his next project *Contact* around the immediacy of direct experience ('Contact', its second issue cover explained, meant 'a vast discharge of energy forced by the impact of experience into form') suggests that Carnevali's radical pragmatism may have renewed a desire to structure his communion with American localities into a homegrown literary configuration.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>301</sup> p. 10.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>304</sup> Ploog, p. 128.

<sup>305</sup> [Cover], *Contact* 2 (Jan 1921).

Therefore, instead of seeing his tendencies only in opposition, the vigour of Carnevali's pragmatist philosophy and poetry might be understood to have reinvigorated some of the latent tendencies with the *Others* project began. Certainly, in his editorial for the final edition of the magazine, Williams makes it clear that Carnevali, the 'beast with a bone in his throat', whose 'poems will not be constructed' because 'they cannot be', was a reminder of the 'the New York which does not exist'.<sup>306</sup> One senses that the two arms of Carnevali's philosophy, when understood in the context of the modernists he influenced, renewed the possibilities for what might potentially exist in two different projects. In the first, Carnevali's pragmatism finally killed off Williams's faith in the New York that should have been, and renewed his intellectual conviction in cultivating a localised incarnation of it via *Contact*. In the second, Carnevali's anarchism imbued Mitchell Dawson's magazine *New Moon/Compromise* with a combative remit to call out and reject concentrations of power in American periodical culture. Its impact only arrested by the illness that dictated his return to Italy, Carnevali's pragmatic anarchism epitomised the spirit and the practicable, lived experience with which these enclaves of modernism wished to represent themselves in 1920.

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<sup>306</sup> 'Gloria', p. 3.

## Chapter 4

### **‘Order Without Power’: Ezra Pound, Italian Fascism and Anarchist Economics**

Up to this point, the current thesis has built on a pre-existing supposition that the relevance of anarchism to American modernist practice remains insufficiently valued. It has done so by modelling the transatlantic movement of anarchistic politics, poetry and philosophy between Italy and America from the turn of the nineteenth century through to the early interwar period. The anarcho-socialism of Bakunin and Malatesta, I have argued, embedded itself in the politics and the semiotics of Arturo Giovannitti and Francesca Vinciguerra. In a like manner, the pragmatic anarchism of James and Papini prefigured the polemical philosophy of Emanuel Carnevali. In each case, the transposition of anarchism into modernism results in an idiosyncratic, power-resistant configuration: Giovannitti's poetry undermines the conformation of classical verse; Vinciguerra's tankas dismantle the structures of sexual domination; and Carnevali's man-god persona delegitimises the hierarchy upon which the American avant-garde was attempting to elevate itself above the commonplace. The latter work, in particular, modified the bearing of *Others* and the New York modernist coterie in the late 1910s.

Yet despite the extremely profitable ways in which these three activist-writers expand the interrelationship between Italy, literacy anarchism and the radical face of American modernism, certain limitations remain unaddressed. It is evident that alone they occupy a marginal historical position. Giovannitti remains better known for his labour activities, and Vinciguerra for her later writing of literary biographies, while Emanuel Carnevali was diminished too soon by sickness for his full threat to his contemporaries to be realised. As a singular literary entity, their presence might delineate anarchism as a form of outsider modernism. The timeline of their radical writings ends with Carnevali's return to Italy in around 1921, which potentially adds credence to the notion that anarchism's potency was disestablished by Bolshevism and by the anti-anarchist political culture of the early 1920s. These writers confine anarchist modernism to the disciplines of politics and philosophy. What is more, the lack of detailed coverage in previous modernist scholarship also precludes comparative linguistic modelling between the arrangement of modernist and anarchist elements in their verse. Therefore, the way in which they expand the contact zone between anarchism, Italy and literary modernism in America is highly significant, but further investigation is required to establish how this field of work can threaten the deeper assumptions in respect to how modernism expressed itself.



To overcome these limitations I propose to contextualise the same triangulum of contact points - Italy, anarchism and American literary modernism - around the work of Ezra Pound; like Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali, Pound's life and work also articulated the passage between American and Italian cultures, albeit on an opposing trajectory. Unlike those writers though, his productivity continued into and beyond the interwar period. A focus on Pound allows for the integration of anarchism into a wider discussion of its relationship with American modernism. Specifically, Pound's intellections might be considered interdisciplinary with regard to those already analysed, particularly in light of his interest in economics. I cite this because although, for obvious reasons, politics has often taken pre-eminence in Pound studies, economics was the far more consistent and enduring of his preoccupations. From his earliest writings, Pound's embraced A. R. Orage's epithet of the *New Age* that 'economic power precedes political power'.<sup>307</sup> His unvarying belief was that economic transformation was the only method of bringing about permanent cultural and political change. The method he advocated, a combination of distributism, mutualism, stamp scrip and Social Credit, was remarkably unaffected by his experiences in Italy before, during and subsequent to the Second World War. In contrast, as William Cookson observes, across the course of his life 'no one can pin him down and label him as belonging to one political faction'.<sup>308</sup> In fact, in November 1959 Pound wrote to his publisher James Laughlin (speaking of himself in the third person) to confess that he had 'has forgotten what or which politics he ever had', concluding that 'he certainly has none now'.<sup>309</sup> Therefore, in this attempt to extend the reciprocal transatlanticism of Italy and American modernism, Pound's economic positions offer at the very least the value of constancy.

Most crucially though, it has seldom been recognised that at the deep roots of Pound's fiscal theories can be found the anarchist economic programmes of the nineteenth century. Scholarship external to the field of Pound studies, such as John Finlay's *Social Credit: The Origins* (1972), details how deeply the movements that awakened Pound to the economic discipline, such as distributism, guild socialism and Social Credit itself owed their intellectual inheritance to anarchistic initiatives. Finlay argues that these movements sought largely to execute industrial and currency-related propositions to escape the relations enforced by states. For example, the distributists sought to forgo the involvement of the state by establishing an extended dispensation of productive property based on Catholic principles.

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<sup>307</sup> Orage frequently shortened this sobriquet to the acronym E.P.P.P.P., and described it as being analogous to 'the political moon reflecting the light of the economic sun.' See Theodore Maynard, *Carven from the Laurel Tree: Essays* (Freeport, New York: Book for Libraries Press, 1967), p. 81.

<sup>308</sup> William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: Persea Books, 2001), p. 58.

<sup>309</sup> Qtd in Greg Barnhisel, *James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), p. 172.

In unique and sometimes contradictory ways, such proposals for decentralised economic planning owe much to anarchistic theories of labour. Pound's assimilation of these propositions lead him to declare in a 1917 edition of the *New Age* that the great problem of the era was discovering 'the means to prevent slavery to a "state"'.<sup>310</sup> Yet the connection between anarchism and Pound's economics has scarcely been alluded to in the critical literature, even though by the 1930s he considered himself to be 'Proudhonian at heart', such was his intellectual allegiance to the nineteenth century anarchist economist Pierre Joseph-Proudhon.<sup>311</sup> If we are to take this affirmation at face value then the lack of attention to an association between anarchist fiscal theory and Pound's economic thought must be considered a major oversight in relation to understanding both its antecedence and its potential consequences.

The prospective repercussions of Pound's openness to anarchist-influenced economics were extremely serious. It set him within a long historical, intellectual continuum that, in a sense, began with Proudhon and ended with Italian fascism. In the early part of the twentieth century prominent Europeans with anarchistic backgrounds and a concern for economics, including G. K. Chesterton, Papini, Marinetti and Mussolini pendulated from anarchism towards reactionary causes. In the first half of this chapter, I will scrutinise the significance of Pound's interest in limited and anti-statal economic programmes; and, in particular, the way in which his desire to protect the independence of artists against state coercion allied him to an intellectual development taking place during the interwar period, from radical anarchism towards fascistic reactionism. The consequences of Pound's concern with anarchistic economics were also perhaps literary ones. The second half of this chapter will attempt to ascertain the degree of Proudhon's influence on the economic cantos of the 1930s and whether the poetry and economics of those cantos are exchangeable and interchangeable in accordance with an anarchistic economic order. Finally, with reference to Pound's 1948 description of Mussolini as a leader who 'stands for the encouragement of distribution... without government ownership', I will analyse the later cantos to establish whether such ideals kept Pound loyal to *mussolinismo* even after the downfall of the Italian fascist regime.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 58.

<sup>311</sup> See Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Albany: State University of New York Press), p. 201.

<sup>312</sup> Ezra Pound, *New Selected Poems and Translations*, ed. Richard Sieburth (New York: New Directions, 2010), p. 203, l. 16-20.

Limited and anti-statal economic programmes of the nineteenth century underpinned much of the fiscal radicalism in the following epoch. Artists, writers and intellectuals frequently looked to fascism to fulfil the promise initiated by their anarchistic systems in resolving the struggle between capital and labour. What anarchism fulfilled in the end was perhaps its own tendency towards paradox. The ultimate intention of this chapter is to initiate a critical dialogue on Pound's affiliation to this process. Examining how its economics became integrated into the *Cantos* is a crucial corollary to such a proposition. In respect of this thesis, doing so may also determine whether Pound's writings can reinforce and extend the relevance of anarchism to its contextual artistic movements; and, consequently, whether it can consolidate the presence of Italy and anarchism, introduced to the current investigation through the work of Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali, as twinned sympathies in American literary modernism. First of all, though, its task is to establish the anarchist background to Pound's economic enthusiasms and to explore how it potentially cultivated a contribution to his affinity for Italian fascism.

### **Pound, Fascism and Anarchist Economics**

Multiple hypotheses have been proposed to explain Pound's enduring support for Mussolini, but few yet consider the cultural current that took several of his artistic and political contemporaries from anarchism to fascism in the first half of the twentieth century. Several major figures of the era partook of this transfiguration. It was an ideological pathway travelled by distributists such as G. K. Chesterton, and by Italian radicals such as Marinetti and Papini. Mussolini himself is known to have had a deep and enduring anarchist engagement early in his life. In addition to his personal involvement with those radicals, previously detailed by Gunther Berghaus,<sup>313</sup> his father's fervent support for Bakunin and his own enthusiasm for Sorellian theory were intellectual origins that contributed to him forging fascism from a distorted incarnation of radical syndicalism.<sup>314</sup> The young Mussolini read Papini's *Un Uomo Finito* and admired its philosophy of anarchist pragmatism, which he also

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<sup>313</sup> Berghaus details, for example, how Marinetti's anarchistic Futurists collaborated with the anarcho-syndicalists with which Mussolini associated. By 1915, Berghaus explains, they had begun to attend the same demonstrations, being jointly arrested during two separate demonstrations in April of that year. See Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction* (Oxford: Berghaus Books, 1996), p. 78.

<sup>314</sup> Sorel advocated violent, direct action to accelerate class conflict and bring about a new civil order. Steven G. Marks writes that the elder Mussolini was 'a life-long devotee of Bakunin and raised his son in a family atmosphere accepting of revolutionary extremism'. See *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Bolshevism to Ballet* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 24.

subsequently perverted in cultivating his fascist doctrine.<sup>315</sup> With this development, Mussolini embodied the intellectual orbit of numerous Pound-associated Europeans, including Wyndham Lewis, T. E. Hulme, Maurice Barres, Maurice de Vlaminck and Georges Valois.<sup>316</sup>

Despite these individual defections, however, the extent to which modernism collectively participated in the evolution from anarchism remains poorly understood and uncoalesced, for a number of potential reasons. Firstly, anarchism's overall contribution to the radical intellectual foment occurring in literary modernism is still uncertain, and neither is it clear how deeply the presence of anarchism endured, embedded as it became in the matrix of political autocracy that characterised the late modernist period. Secondly, the notional concept of anarchism refers in practice to multiplicitous strains of thought flowing together, making the task of applying the term collectively to modernist individuals or movements extremely complex, not to mention articulating how these often competing tendencies came to acquire fascist characteristics. Thirdly, and with regard to Pound himself, it would take much to uproot the assumption that, intellectually speaking, Pound's fascism set him apart from the movements of his contemporaries rather than that it fixed him more deeply within them; in other words, it would be difficult to overturn the long held assumption that Pound was simply disposed to individual moral idiosyncrasies that affected few of his compeers.

I argue, however, that this uncertainty obscures how closely Pound accompanied the drift from anarchism to totalitarian reactionism in the preceding decades, and indeed how immediately this association began. As early in his career as 1908, Pound wryly repudiated William Carlos Williams's suggestion that he preached 'poetic anarchy'.<sup>317</sup> He responded to Williams's charge with disapprobation, writing back 'heaven forbid. I record symptoms as I see 'em. I advise no remedy'.<sup>318</sup> Interpreters of Pound's politics have seen no reason to disagree with the level of anarchism's influence that Pound apportioned upon himself here. Leon Surette writes that

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<sup>315</sup> Mussolini shared this response to Papini's novel in a letter to the militant journalist Torquato Nanni on July 2 1913. See A. James Gregor, *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 143.

<sup>316</sup> In fact, the development of anarchistic radicalism towards fascist reactionism can be also situated outside Europe and it could be argued Mussolini became the focal point for the movement of modernism from anarchism to fascism globally. For example, the Argentine poet Leopoldo Lugones who wrote radical, anarchistic poetry and short stories at the turn of the nineteenth century later lectured on Mussolini across South America in 1923 and 1924. See Gwen Kirkpatrick, *Leopoldo Lugones: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>317</sup> D. D. Paige (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), p. 4

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

for all his insistence on the individual... Pound was no anarchist. His enthusiasm for Confucian political philosophy is incompatible with anarchism of any sort.<sup>319</sup>

Yet, while Pound was not an anarchist, the movement unquestionably informed the matrix of economic intellections from which Pound drew inspiration and learning as a young intellectual. David Kadlec argues that such tendencies began evolving during his exposure to the writings of Arthur Kitson and Dora Marsden in 1912 and 1913 when, he notes, 'Pound encountered at an early date a series of anarchistic solutions to "the economic problem"'.<sup>320</sup> Kadlec asserts that through his association with Marsden and the *Egoist*, Pound's literary dynamics were reconfigured by anarchist-rooted ideas. According to this reading, anarchistic notions drove Pound towards what he himself termed a 'cleansing' of poetry, money and politics via a combination of aesthetic and social revolutionism.<sup>321</sup>

Indeed, such was the apparent pace at which Pound absorbed unstatist ideas during the period, by 1914 he was ready to declare himself a 'syndicalist, somewhat atrabilious' who would 'disbelieve vigorously in the recognition of political institutions'.<sup>322</sup> This statement, which appears in Pound's article 'Suffragettes', published under the absurdist moniker 'Bastien Von Helmholtz', was one of a number of anti-statist and anti-democratic affirmations to appear in the essay. Pound derides the 'incompetence of the vote' and is willing to allow no more than that a Prime Minister 'ought to be employed to look after traffic laws'.<sup>323</sup> 'Suffragettes' operates instructively as a critique of the state in which Pound readily accepts the anarchistic postulate that the state itself bears responsibility for division and inequality. To Pound, 'the mechanism called the state' is controlled by 'a set of more or less competent... persons' who 'run it by chicane and catch-words'.<sup>324</sup> Against this criticism, Pound sets the suffragettes issue as a method to render the very idea of being granted rights and privileges 'stupid'.<sup>325</sup> Crucially, neither it is in question that Pound identifies the central problem of the state as an economic one. He argues that the financial affairs of state

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<sup>319</sup> Leon Surette, *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 61. Surette does note, however, that Pound kept intellectual company with anti-statists and credit mutualists, the likes of 'Proudhon, Kitson and Gesell' who 'preferred a less statist solution' and whose 'remedy was to permit companies and municipalities to issue their own currency instead of borrowing from banks'. Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>320</sup> Kadlec continues that this encounter with anarchist economics 'provided a deep foundation' for Pound's continued attention to the subject. See *Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 60.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid..

<sup>322</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Suffragettes', *The Egoist* (Jul 1 1914), p. 254.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 254

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

are controlled by the 'established churches' and, as a solution, offers a correspondent combination of economics and violence.<sup>326</sup> He urges his fellow men to 'form their syndicates', while he praises the 'logical' decision of suffragettes to attack a prison surgeon sabotaging their hunger strikes through forced feeding, an act Pound deems to be 'exceeding the functions demanded of him' by the state.<sup>327</sup> It is clear, then, how forcibly Pound was willing to repudiate the institutions of governance at this point in his intellectual development, and most particularly those with an economic remit.

Yet while Pound assimilated certain anti-statist economic notions contextual to *The Egoist*, these views had developed in intensity and form by 1917 as a result of his association with Orage and *The New Age*, a journal of which John Finlay argues that anarchism was perhaps even more significantly constitutional. Finlay asserts, firstly, that 'Orage was, deep down and probably without realizing it, an anarchist'.<sup>328</sup> Despite the speculative nature of this proposition, there is evidence to support it. Orage was initially converted to socialism by the anarcho-syndicalist Tom Mann, and as such his interest in the movement could be construed as laying in its potential to implement mutual aid rather than state control.<sup>329</sup> Likewise, his advocacy of the guild socialist system owed no small part to its anarchistic economic tendencies.<sup>330</sup> Finlay's essay 'The Clues to Social Credit: Orage and *The New Age*' reminds us, secondly, that it was in the journal's pages that Social Credit and modernism first became fully affiliated. Douglas and Orage worked synchronously on what would become the 'Douglas-New Age Proposals' before the term Social Credit became permanently adopted. Finlay's work uncovers how deeply those Social Credit theories were borne of anarchist thought, writing of the one consistent nexus 'which appears in the earliest background' of the Social Credit movement. This thread, he argues, 'is anarchism'.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> John Finlay, 'The Clues to Social Credit: Orage and *The New Age*', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 4:1 (Feb 1969), p. 50.

<sup>329</sup> For example, Tom Steele quotes the writer and journalist Phillip Mairet who argued that Orage became a socialist 'by hearing Tom Mann, whom he regarded as the greatest orator he had ever heard'. See *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club, 1893-1923* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), p. 29.

<sup>330</sup> As Ruth Livesey observes, Orage was engaged by the way in which 'the spiritual power of the 'individual' underscored 'the anarchistic tendencies of guild socialism'. See *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 185.

<sup>331</sup> While Pound's interest in distributism connotes the anti-statist roots of his economic interests, Finlay argues that even stronger conclusions can be drawn from the Social Credit movement. Finlay presents various ways in which, he writes, 'from Social Credit itself the scent of anarchism emerged unmistakably, even though the term was hardly ever used'. See John L. Finlay, *Social Credit: The English Origins* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 238. Fundamentally to Finlay, Social Credit was an illustration of how anarchism could be administered within the advanced European economies. His analysis traces Proudhon's mutual credit bank directly through Douglas's national divided programme which, in turn, could be followed through to Pound's

In detailing how anarchist theory lay at the roots of monetary reform via Social Credit, Finlay allows us to confidently infer that fractions and fragments of its subject matter were becoming integrated into Pound's thoughts on economic reform during his relationship with *The New Age*. It is often assumed that Pound's flight from what he considered to be a rapacious Anglo-American culture in the early 1920s provided fertile ground for his interest in Social Credit. However, there is much to suggest that the anarchistic economics of Social Credit were taking root in Pound's intellections far sooner. If David Kadlec is correct to suggest that Pound's relationship with Kitson and Marsden at the *Egoist* later 'facilitated the poet's speedy assimilation of' Douglas's theories', then it was during his association with Orage that Social Credit and its anarchistic forbearance began to take what would become a consistent and recognisable form.<sup>332</sup> This evidently occurred both because of his personal interrelationship with ideologies of limited or anti-statal monetarism and via a wider cultural sense of economic syncretism to which *The New Age* was contextually reciprocal. Finlay also draws useful parallels between the temperaments of anarchism and Social Credit that recall Poundian antimony. He describes their shared 'profusion of paradoxical elements', an allusion to how the dynamic ambivalence of each movement may have brought Douglas, Orage and the New Age into union. Of this potential for paradox, Finlay warns that 'like all programmed movements' anarchism 'must always run the risk of oscillating into a reactionary position'.<sup>333</sup> Ultimately, however, it was not Orage but Pound who would take up that risk from 1917.

In the series of four articles entitled 'Provincialism the Enemy', published in *The New Age* across the summer of 1917, Pound once again leads by advocating a series of fundamentally anarchist maxims, but this time he does so in order to draw attention to the vulnerability of the artist in the modern 'state'. Pound argues that 'the work of the subtlest thinkers for the last thirty years has been a tentative exploration for means to prevent slavery to a "state" or a "democracy"', foregrounding opposition to such institutions as the key contemporary issue in modern intellectualism.<sup>334</sup> He decries the 'uncritical acceptance of any schematised plan laid down by higher commands of one sort or another',<sup>335</sup> and offers a definition of provincialism as 'a desire to coerce others into uniformity'.<sup>336</sup> The resistance to

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assertion in his money pamphlet 'A Visiting Card' that 'credit is a social product'. See Ezra Pound, 'A Visiting Card', *Money Pamphlets* (London: Peter Russell, 1952), p. 14.

<sup>332</sup> *Mosaic Modernism*, p. 80.

<sup>333</sup> 'The Clues to Social Credit', p. 53.

<sup>334</sup> 'Provincialism the Enemy II', *The New Age*, 19 Jul 17, p. 268.

<sup>335</sup> 'Provincialism the Enemy III', *The New Age*, 26 Jul 17, p. 288.

<sup>336</sup> 'Provincialism the Enemy I', *The New Age*, 12 Jul 17, p. 244.

coercion is both perhaps the central axiom of anarchism and, here, an indication of Pound's heightened concern regarding the future of intellectual independence and creativity. He argues that the survival of 'projective thinkers' is contingent upon the collective refusal to accept the 'hundred subtle forms of personal oppressions and coercions' that threaten their self-determination, and which represent a form of provincialist state tyranny to which art, he suggests, is an analytical antidote.<sup>337</sup> Pound uses the analogy of a scientist operating 'along a main line in accord with a main idea *dictated by someone else*'. He plays on the double meaning of an individual who 'in this state' has accepted 'the idea that he is an ant, not a human being', in order to warn against the mental destruction of scholars who embrace uniformity.<sup>338</sup> Spurred on by the failure of the 'Deutschland uber alles idea' in Europe, Pound's unstatism here solidifies around the susceptibility of the artist to becoming a 'baccilli', functionally stratified by state coercion.<sup>339</sup>

In that series of articles, Pound marries his concern for the artist's creative autonomy to the need for projective thinkers to operate within a matrix of uncoercive, individualist economics. Should an artist such as himself, he argues, not be able to afford a typewriter and instead chooses to obtain one via hire purchase, it would be unnecessary for the Corona typewriter company to take 'a large percentage' of his earnings 'for life'.<sup>340</sup> This, he suggests, is because the artist should own the intelligence behind his labouring processes which, in microcosm, is Pound's fundamental economic proposition on the matter and indeed of this period in his career. In Pound's terms,

labour without capital, but with enough directing intelligence to ensure necessary collaboration of adequate numbers of labourers, could do very well without capital, and, moreover, has done very well without capital in a sufficient number of cases.<sup>341</sup>

He advocates the decentralisation of industrial control, conducted through the inherent intelligence of labour to manage its own processes. Pound foresaw that this would result in the reacquisition of labour's power to create and retain value, allowing it to smash the assumption that intelligence belongs with capital, and to restore industrial self-governance.

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>340</sup> 'The Revolt of Intelligence VII', *The New Age*, Jan 22 1920, p. 187.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.



We can, therefore, discern from these writings that Pound's developing thesis argues for a union of artistic and economic individualism, favouring industrial self-government on the basis of applied intelligence. In doing so, it recalls another contemporaneous touchpoint of anarchistic economics, the work of Hilaire Belloc. Tim Redman notes there is a useful argument to be made that Belloc, a distributist and a regular contributor to *The New Age* who in his own terms attempted to cultivate with Orage the 'new spirit... of self-government', keenly influenced Pound through his economic treatise *The Servile State* (1912).<sup>342</sup> Redman also suggests that a later article of Pound's for *The New Age* entitled 'Revolt of Intelligence VII' is one that 'offers clear evidence of his shift to economics', perhaps as a result of his interest in Belloc.<sup>343</sup> The possibility that Pound's preoccupation with economics began at this point is contradicted by previously presented evidence that the seeds of Pound's interest in anti- or limited statal fiscal policies were sown much earlier in the 1910s. Nevertheless, Redman is right to suggest that Pound was now focused on finding a volitional form of economic organisation, one that would guarantee artists and other projective thinkers their freedom from coercion.

If Pound's publications of the 1910s set out his anti-statal economic thesis, his writings of the 1920s make equally clear which forms of economic organisation Pound considered artistically unfavourable, and which he had set himself against. During this time, his famous exhortation to go in fear of abstraction becomes bound up with a fierce intellectual hostility to all state-driven forms of abstract authority over intellectual self-governance. In *Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics and Writing* (1984), Peter Nicholls identifies exactly how unsympathetic his writings were to such arrangements during this period. Pound scorned the 'rationalistic German system' which 'forced the artist', who is 'open as nature', to become a blinkered authority on 'ab/auts, hair-length' and 'foraminifera'.<sup>344</sup> He rallied against big government socialism for how it 'subjugated the individual to the "abstract" authority of the state'.<sup>345</sup> He also criticised Marxism for the way in which it impinged upon the self-governance of labour, arguing that cooking one's own dinner or making one's own furniture was the only way to 'escape the Marxian cycle'.<sup>346</sup> Pound believed that any concession to exchange value on the artist's part, whereby productive impulses were subject to centralised authority, would undoubtedly result in the intellectual contamination he strove to elude. Pound adjudged all

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<sup>342</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Free Press* (London: George & Allen Unwin Ltd, 1918), p. v.

<sup>343</sup> Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 31.

<sup>344</sup> Peter Nicholls, *Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics and Writings - A Study of the Cantos* (London: MacMillan, 1984), p. 26.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

forms of state-centred economics to be incapable of upholding the freedoms and values which, in his words, were 'the essence of currency and of speech'.<sup>347</sup> He challenged each method of economic order in terms of its threat to the independence of labour, and found a universal potential to threaten the autonomy of artistic production.

Meanwhile, Pound's advocacy of creative self-governance was evolving from and alongside the matrices of several limited and anti-statist modernist contact points; it was a position that by the end of the 1920s had intensified over fifteen years of intense preoccupation, but it is also one that needs to be reconciled with his incoming commitment to Italian fascism. In order to understand how Pound could remain consistently unstatist towards industry and economics while developing support for an increasingly engorged political system, it is important to remember that Pound wished for economics to be analysed *in vacuo*. Leon Surette argues with regard to Pound's political ideology that 'a more uncompromising rejection of anarchism is hard to imagine'.<sup>348</sup> While this might be true in political terms, Pound repeatedly insisted on partitioning economics off from politics, believing that monetary reform should be conducted by, he writes, 'a nucleus of men who can separate political from economic equations'.<sup>349</sup> Even Surette implicitly consents to the existence of this division in observing that by 1933 Pound was 'Douglasite in economics, modernist in aesthetics and Platonic in politics'.<sup>350</sup> Moreover, it was economics that Pound deemed to be the determining factor in this equation. He writes in the *ABC of Economics* (1933) that his only use for politics was in the solving of economic problems via political analogy, although he surmised that the 'greater number' of issues could not even be considered in this way.<sup>351</sup> Pound retained a syncopated interest in two apparently paradoxical systems because economics took primacy over a political programme with which it seems at variance.

More specifically, the paradox of Pound's economic and political proclivity seems less antithetical in view of how he came to lionise Mussolini as a champion of economic order rather than of political authority. In the early 1930s, Pound frequently cited Mussolini's

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>348</sup> Surette, p. 62.

<sup>349</sup> Nicholls, p. 80.

<sup>350</sup> Surette, p. 74.

<sup>351</sup> This assertion appears as point 10 of Pound's self-termed economic treatise. It is notable from the treatise how many of Pound's economic positions remained consistent with the points of view he expressed when writing for the *Egoist* in 1913. For one, he maintained the same anti-democratic opinion that the system of democracy requires the handing down of 'special privileges' in order to prevent government from encroaching upon the economic affairs pertaining to the individual, a system Pound claims to have been 'handed down from 'medieval chaos and feudal arrangements.' For another, Pound continued to conceive of capital as a coercive 'claim on others' and as 'a right to make others work'. See *The ABC of Economics* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), p. 13.

dictum that he would 'discipline the economic forces and equate them to the needs of the nation'.<sup>352</sup> Surette argues that 'Pound saw fascism as a return from laissez-faire individualism to order and authority'.<sup>353</sup> Yet, like many critics, Surette mistakes order *for* authority as being Pound's deeper concern when, in fact, order in Pound's terms was analogous to organisation. As late as 1935, Pound writes that 'power is necessary to some acts, but neither Lenin nor Mussolini shows themselves primarily as men thirsting for power. The great man is filled with a different passion, the will toward *order*'.<sup>354</sup> Elsewhere, Pound asserts his 'own firm belief' that 'the Duce will stand not with despots and the lovers of power but with the lovers of ORDER'.<sup>355</sup> Surette concedes that Mussolini's early anti-statist tendencies were clearly attractive to Pound, but overlooks that Pound's conception of the will to order did not to him mean intensified political power. In other words, such an analysis fails to account for the possibility that the limited and anti-statist economic tendencies that were so apparent in Pound's writings up to and through much of the interwar period would not become altogether abandoned in his support for the fascist regime. Neither can it account for how, in fact, those tendencies might have been enlivened by Pound's hypothesis that Mussolini would allow the economics of the nation to be reordered on its own terms.

By this I mean to suggest that the concept of economic order that Pound projects onto Mussolini in the early 1930s incorporates the same set of unaddressed, unresolved tensions that he had accumulated ever since first encountering 'anarchistic solutions' to 'the economic problem' during his association with the *Egoist*. As Tim Redman observes, the form into which Pound's economic hypothesis was beginning to harden in the 1920s was the same form that would take him towards fascism:

a mix of socialism and syndicalism was precisely what Benito Mussolini was inventing in Italy at about the same time, and it is easy to see why Pound... would later find in fascism many congenial and already familiar ideas.<sup>356</sup>

This analysis is beginning to reveal, additionally, that the disposition of socialism and syndicalism that interested Pound was historically underpinned by anarchistic theories of industrial and economic self-governance, and it was these ideas that would find favourable alliance in Italy's evolving political circumstances. The configuration that Pound sought from

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<sup>352</sup> Pound, p. 298.

<sup>353</sup> Surette, p. 62.

<sup>354</sup> Ezra Pound, *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 99.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

new this economic order was determined by the way in which the anti-statist intellections of the 1910s and 1920s found the promise of fulfilment in Mussolini's Italy. From this it is possible to derive what it meant to Pound for an economy to be 'disciplined to the needs of a nation', and what form this economy would take. The writings previously analysed suggest that this is a syndicalist economy, constitutionally somewhere between the radicalism of Sorel and the guild federalism of Orage. It is one in which the surplus value of labour would not be 'protected' or 'offered' as a right, but rather its retention would be fundamentally embedded as the only potential outcome within the system. It is one in which the economy was the authority, itself determining the political construction of the nation and not the reverse; one which obviated the industrial enforcement of the state; and one in which that industry operated beyond the centralised chicanery of democracy or political institutions. Summatively, and perhaps most importantly to Pound, it is a volitional economy, supportive of the artist and the projective thinker, based on industrial self-governance, that enshrines intelligence within the output of labour and not capital, and which would ultimately protect those individuals from the coercion and stratification wrought by previous systems.

Pound's conception of order as an organisational rather than a political strategem recalls the French anarchist economist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, to whom the determination that anarchy is 'order without power' has been frequently ascribed, and whose work took on a particular significance to Pound at this time.<sup>357</sup> Pound came to recognise that Proudhon's work formed a backdrop to all the radical economic theses which had taken his interest over the course of twenty years or more, including distributism, Gesell's stamp scrip and Douglas's Social Credit, writing that Proudhon's ideas 'will be found somewhere in the foundations of perhaps all contemporary economic thought that has life in it'.<sup>358</sup> It was in the early 1930s, Jean-Michel Rabaté writes, that Pound first 'sees the common root of the diverging economic theories of Major Douglas and Gesell in the hidden influence of Proudhon', enough so that Pound considered himself to be 'Proudhonian at heart'.<sup>359</sup> Reading Proudhon at this time, Pound projected a fatalistic teleology of intellectual

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<sup>357</sup> Phrases sharing this sentiment have been translated into various combinations with regard to Proudhon's work. For example, Proudhon is generally considered to have declared in *What is Property?* (1840) that 'society finds its highest perfection in the union of order with anarchy'. See Iain Mackay (ed.), *Property is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Oakland; Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), p. 138. The American individualist anarchist Benjamin Tucker paraphrased a version of Proudhon's phrase for the masthead of his nineteenth century journal *Liberty* (1881-1908), which read 'Not the Daughter But the Mother of Order.' A similar epithet, 'anarchy is order; government is civil war', has occasionally been attributed falsely to Proudhon when its originator was Proudhon's contemporary Anselme Bellegarrigue. This misunderstanding is clarified historically in Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2010), p. 434.

<sup>358</sup> Pound made this observation in the opening to his obituary for A. R. Orage, entitled 'In the Wounds'. See Pound, *Selected Prose*, p. 410.

<sup>359</sup> Rabaté, p. 201.

development onto what he saw as a convergent set of economic ideologies, writing in 1934 that 'Orage grew out of Guild Socialism. The Duce grew out of Guild Socialism, and refers now and again to Proudhon'.<sup>360</sup> Yet Pound found many facets of economic order preferable in the distilled Proudhonian form rather than the more recent derivations that had previously preoccupied him. For example, Pound sided with Proudhon over Douglas in believing that the credit dividends of labour should be retained in property and production rather than offered back as additional purchasing power. Thus, while Pound did not relinquish the anti-democratic economic ideals of prior decades, his animus towards the 'servile' state, or his advocacy of industrial autonomy and Guild Socialism, in both his intellectual and artistic work these positions would begin to take on a perceptibly Proudhonian form.

Pound was not interested in simply using Proudhonian theory to look into the past and reframe his conception of interwar economic radicalism; from the economics of 'order without power' he also sought to extrapolate the future and ascribe it to the fascist programme. Pound justified the conviction of this conflated vision on meagre evidence: that 'Mussolini has mentioned him [i.e. Proudhon] with respect' and that Proudhon was 'one of the few economists' Pound had 'happened to have seen cited by M'.<sup>361</sup> This was enough, though, for Pound to anticipate Mussolini's execution of Proudhon's key economic policies, such as the formation of community credit banks and autonomous labour syndicates. Unable or unwilling to discern that such labour syndicates were in practice an extension of state bureaucracy, Pound was not deterred from talk of animating a collaborative moment of pro-Mussolini Proudhonists. In 1933, Pound wrote to Arthur Kitson concerning a group of French Caribbean Proudhon advocates who were founders of the journal *Action Nouvelle*, asking Kitson whether he was 'in touch with 'em?' and sending Kitson a copy of the journal with a view to extending his association with like-minded proponents.<sup>362</sup> The rigid presumption that Mussolini would execute a Proudhonian fiscal programme tethered his economic standpoint to a false political affiliation. Twenty years after his first encounter with anarchistic economic radicalism, Pound was unwilling to disinherit his belief in this apparent exhibition of purpose. What is more, Proudhon is also distinctively significant to Pound's subsequent verse; it is little recognised the extent to which from this point on Pound's economic cantos would become idiomatically indebted to Proudhonian theory.

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<sup>360</sup> Qtd. in Hélène Aji, *Ezra Pound and Referentiality* (Paris: University of Sorbonne Press, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>361</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose*, p. 410.

<sup>362</sup> Aji, p. 8.

## Italy, Anarchism and the Economic Cantos

The future of the economy then, as far as Pound hoped to see it in 1933, lay in Mussolini's execution of the unstatist policies outlined in this condensed history of his early fiscal criticism. Yet with regard to the precise configuration of those changes, Pound's attitudes took on an increasingly Proudhonian dimension. This development had several significant consequences. In a wide sense, it bound him inextricably to the long historical process through which the anarchistic economics of the nineteenth century oscillated towards interwar reactionism. By this I mean, Pound was one of a number of intellectuals who absorbed anarchist economics from intermediate historical movements such as Social Credit and distributism, and who pursued their ideals even as they began to overlap with fascism in the 1930s, or even perhaps in some cases because fascism emboldened them to do so. In a more immediate sense, it saw Pound begin to favour Proudhon's positions over those of his economic mentor C. H. Douglas on matters such as property ownership and production credits; in a literary sense, what Pound the writer and Proudhon the theorist shared would over the following years become more apparent in the economic passages of the *Cantos*, as its semiotics became increasingly constructed in interplay with these shared positions. One desire of Pound's that not only remained consistent but, in fact, deepened in the wake of this evolution was for the economy of the artist to become autonomous and uncoerced. In other words, that no force, whether of state, capital or other consortium should interfere with the productive intelligence of the creative labourer. This was a motive so deeply embedded that it would help determine Pound's continued allegiance to Mussolini even after the fall of the fascist regime.

The second half of this chapter, therefore, will attempt to curate Pound's developing economics of the 1930s in relation to the reciprocity granted but also the concessions enforced upon it by Italian fascism. I will do this by extracting *in vacuo* the unstatist convictions from his various fiduciary writings of the time, before analysing how he attempted both to reconcile such notions with fascist policy and organise them within his economic cantos. I wish to assess how and why fascist policy prompted Pound to steer the previous loci of his economics such as usury, distributism, mutualism, Social Credit and labour autonomy towards Proudhonian intellection. Consequently, this provides an opportunity to consider the possibility that Pound's pursuit of a Proudhonian economic solution in the Italy of the 1930s contributed to keeping him injudiciously bound to the fascist paradigm. The anarchistic components of Pound's economics represent not a decisive break from previous interpretations of the *Cantos* but a relative one. In the vein of Earle Davis's suggestion that the composition of the *Cantos* should be absorbed on 'separate but relative levels', I propose

that anarchism is yet one more lacunous fraction relating to the whole; not a substitute dimension but another episode in an unfinished hermeneutic plot.<sup>363</sup> That said, it remains a critical blind zone within the absolute horizon of the *Cantos*. Anarchism offers a new perspective on many of Pound's most-travelled economic ideas. It also offers a corollary between the European shift from anarchism to fascism and Pound's semiological exposition of it.

By this period in time, Pound's economics had evolved; the anti-statal syndicalist impulses of the 1910s giving way to an interest in Proudhon's sweeping economic reconstructivism. Pound's association with anarchism offers original possibilities examining for this evolution anew and for understanding how he intended to convey the economics of his verse in the 1930s. This would not be the first work of scholarship to detail the relationship between economics and language in Pound's verse. Richard Sieburth, for example, quotes Wallace Stevens's observation that 'money is a kind of poetry' and applies it to the 'uncanny doubling' of poetry and economics in the *Cantos*. In this reading, money and speech operate as prefigurative linguistic practices, with Pound using currency and language as a twinned medium of organisation and expression. Sieburth detects a correlation between the precision weighing of gold and silver and the 'pure proportions' of Pound's poetics. He recognises such an association in poems as various a 'Octave' (1910), a troubadour ballad, and Canto 97 (1956), a sprawling thread of marginalia largely derived from Alexander Del Mar's *History of Monetary Systems* (1896). This reading acknowledges the mutually evolving form of Pound's poetry and economics. After 1912, Sieburth writes, it 'moved off the gold standard' in order to establish a poetics in which the economy would be based on the direct exchange between 'subject and object, language and reality, word and world'.<sup>364</sup> Sieburth's analysis offers several important starter principles in relation to Pound's literary economy, such as the close interdependence of language and currency, and the way in which that economy developed in response to Pound's evolving affiliation with the discipline. However, the economics of anarchism are absent from Sieburth's reading, suggesting a need to extend the critical picture in respect to this aspect of Pound's work.

To begin with, then, it is clear that during 1933 and 1934 Pound was striving to position within the new bearings of Italian fascism the economic intellectualism of previous decades, such as the principles of distributism. On the 6th October 1934, Mussolini gave a speech to

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<sup>363</sup> Earl Davis, *Vision Fugitive: Ezra Pound and Economics* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1968), p. 17.

<sup>364</sup> Richard Sieburth, 'In Pound We Trust: The Economy of Poetry/The Poetry of Economics', *Critical Inquiry*, 14:1 (Autumn 1987), p. 142.

the workers of Milan in which he outlined a plan for a corporate society. The speech promised a new co-operative economy, one that would make accessible to the poorest in society *una casa decorosa* meaning, in Pound's terms, 'a house fit to look at'.<sup>365</sup> Pound's response was to imprudently declare that on this date the age of usury and scarcity economics ended, writing in a letter to the *Criterion* that Mussolini was ushering in 'a vision of the day when the state could sit back and do nothing', and that a new golden era of distributism was beginning.<sup>366</sup> Pound interpreted from Mussolini's speech his will to reorder the economy on two lines distinctly favourable to the desires of distributists: that the power of production should be pushed to the margins of the economy, and that uncoerced property ownership should be a central freedom of society. This uneasy divergence between distributist theory and its execution would become reiterated twice in the *Cantos*, with Pound in both cases grafting the presence of distributism onto major civilisations of the past. He declares in Canto 96 that 'Tiberius Constantine was distributist',<sup>367</sup> while he uses Canto 77 to praise the Manipurian monarch Tching Tang's so-called 'distributist revolution'.<sup>368</sup> Thus in 1934 began an extended and indeed unbroken process of dissonance between Pound's favoured economic tenets and their administration, both actual and historical.

As with distributism, Social Credit was another stratagem that Pound projected onto the fascist regime in opposition to its attestable intentions. The influence of Social Credit is undoubtedly present in Pound's misreading of fascist economics. After all, it was an eighteen-point document of Douglas's policies that Pound took into his single meeting with Mussolini in 1933. Importantly, however, Pound's thoughts on Social Credit at this time reflect a transformation in his outlook on industrial policy. They reveal how his economics began by necessity to contort into a Proudhonian form in order to make them applicable to the increasingly aggressive realities of Italian fascism. His views, and his reflections on a more vigorous sense of 'beneficence' and 'reconstruction' than Douglas ever aspired to, were increasingly shaped not by Social Credit but by Proudhon's anarchistic mutualism.<sup>369</sup> In a letter to Odon Por of 1934, Pound declares that John Hargrave and his Green Shirts, the militant wing of the British Social Credit movement, were 'probably nearer the real spirit' of *mussolinismo* than Douglas'.<sup>370</sup> With this remark, he alludes to his anticipation of a far more

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<sup>365</sup> Pound, *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, p. 88.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1986), p. 671.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 507, l. 30. These cantos are also discussed in combination as they pertain to economics in Forrest Read '76, *One World and the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 325.

<sup>369</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, p. 240.

<sup>370</sup> Ezra Pound to Odon Por, April 1934, Ezra Pound Miscellany, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



revolutionary economic change from resulting fascist fiscal policy than the relatively moderate ambitions of Social Credit would allow. In the violence of the Green Shirts, Pound could more readily apply to fascist economics a radical potential akin to Proudhonian theory, which focused on the construction of an entirely new industrial order, than the carefully engineered credit democracy proposed by Douglas.

Like distributism, Social Credit was a schema that Pound would employ discordantly in the economic cantos and it was, again, one that reflected a change enforced upon his thinking by fascist policy. The economics of Social Credit have been well-considered in relation to the internal practices of the *Cantos* and its association with the material context of the 1930s, but always in such a way as to leave anarchism outside the bounds of the discussion, despite how Pound increasingly subscribed to Proudhon's productive mutualism rather than Douglas's 'dividends for all' scheme. In practice, this meant that surplus credit between the purchase price and the cost of production would be reabsorbed by producers, as per Proudhon's formulation labour, rather than supporting the purchasing power of consumers as it would do according to Social Credit theory. In the former system, the use-value of a product could be expressed at the level of an individual worker by accounting for the number of socially necessary hours committed to its creation, where any value lost to the labourer in the marketplace was an act of theft, a premise Proudhon summarised in the banner heading of his first publication *Le Représentant du Peuple*: 'What is the Producer? Nothing... What should he be? Everything!'.<sup>371</sup> Mussolini embraced this Proudhonian concept of a 'society of producers' and subsequently Pound concurred, arguing in the *ABC of Economics* that there should be a scheme designed with the end in view of passing certificates out 'via the factory', a 'certificate of work done' which must 'equal that work', and agreeing that social pride of place should be given to those who labour.<sup>372</sup>

Pound's financial propositions in the contemporaneous economic cantos favour Proudhon and Mussolini's desire to assist suppliers, farmers and manufacturers rather than Douglas's support for purchasers. This preference towards production was one to which Pound openly admitted that he was in opposition with regard to Douglas and his followers. He concedes that his focus on 'the distribution of work' is a point 'at which the Douglasites dislike to begin', and acknowledges it was a divergence from Douglas's emphasis on a lack of 'credit slips to deal with the product' rather than the lost value of production.<sup>373</sup> When Pound writes in the

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<sup>371</sup> Qtd. in George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 124.

<sup>372</sup> Pound, *ABC of Economics*, p. 44.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

*Cantos* of his grandfather Thaddeus and the 'price of life in the occident' which caused Thaddeus's railroad business to go into receivership, he laments not simply a 'lack of labour' but the lack of value afforded to labour, both with respect to the continuance of the enterprise and to its creative significance.<sup>374</sup> Absent in Social Credit is Proudhon and Mussolini's support for community lands, which Pound depicts as being offered by the Monte dei Paschi, the 'BANK of the grassland', of Canto XLIII wherein the surplus value of grazing sheep is re-economised into local productivity.<sup>375</sup>

In fact, the primacy of producers was but one example of many in which Pound switched from a Douglasite to a Proudhonian intellectual position in order to prolong a credible attachment to fascist fiscal policy, with usury becoming another. Previous critics of Pound's economics in the 1930s have wholly attributed his progression from Douglas to fascism as a measure of his hope that Mussolini's corporatism could rectify the divide between labourers and their productive value. For example, Richard Sieburth suggests that

if Pound moves from Douglas's Social Credit economics to Mussolini's Fascism, it is largely because he sees in the Italian Corporate State yet another means of overcoming (or perhaps foreclosing) the "gap" endemic to the Age of Usury.<sup>376</sup>

Yet as previously illustrated, not only did Pound disavow Douglas on the point of production, but usury was another issue on which Pound shared far more ideologically with Proudhon. Both Proudhonian economics and Poundian aesthetics are undergirded by the fear of abstraction. While Pound declared himself to be 'all agin' abstraction' and in possession of a 'poetic I.E. concrete mind',<sup>377</sup> Proudhon, Iain Mackay observes, 'took care to base his arguments not on abstract ideology but on the actual practices that he saw around him'.<sup>378</sup> Usury and other such fractal concerns had at heart the fear of allocative inefficiency, abstruse financialism, indefinite methods of just distribution and other such matters that Pound looked with misplaced optimism for Mussolini to address. To Pound, the centrepiece of Mussolini's mutualism, at least as Pound expressed it to Por, was a 'new housing campaign' which offered a 'CONCRETE dividend', recalling Proudhon in both its concern

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<sup>374</sup> Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 101.

<sup>375</sup> Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 219

<sup>376</sup> Sieburth, 'In Pound We Trust', p. 159.

<sup>377</sup> Surette, p. 141.

<sup>378</sup> Iain Mackay (ed.), *Property is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Oakland; Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), p. 14.

with property and welfare, as well as in its aversion to the immaterial.<sup>379</sup> Indeed, Pound writes in a letter to *Esquire* of 1936 that it was 'out of Proudhon' that the anti-usurious nature of the fascist programme was growing.<sup>380</sup>

In fact, the resistance to usury is symptomatic of Proudhon and Pound's even deeper and broader theoretical commonalities. Proudhon's anti-abstractive intellectualism, we know well, found its equivalent in Pound privileging the direct treatment of the thing, concrete discourse and the just word over the 'paper-money of words' or other literary manifestations of the sublunary sphere.<sup>381</sup> Pound was notably Proudhonian in the sense that he aestheticised Proudhon's call for 'every product of labour' to be 'ready money'.<sup>382</sup> However, in amongst his wide-ranging work on economics, Proudhon also offered a little-known perspective on art that was remarkably, reciprocally, Poundian. He argued that art 'should be totally and completely free and reject any kind of control', writing 'art is liberty itself, recreating under its guise, and for its own glorification, the phenomality of things, executing... variations on the concrete theme of nature'.<sup>383</sup> A coterminous suspicion of the figural, arbitrary and, therefore, the usurious unites the deepest concerns of each intellectual across both their primary and auxiliary fields.

An opposition to abstraction is also apparent in each of their solutions to remedy the accessibility of usury, and with these same solutions Pound lobbied Mussolini to redress its influence. The abolition of usury was an ambition fiercely contested by almost all anarchists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>384</sup> Usury was viewed from the anarchist perspective as a coercive monopoly of trade, land and currency that rested on a legal privilege afforded by the state. This was an intellectual heritage of which Proudhon was significantly progenitorial; and like Pound later, Proudhon wrote extensively on how usurers drove the inequitable economic relations of ruling through abstract mechanisms such as

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>380</sup> Ezra Pound, 'How to Save Business: Invoking Social Credit plus Free Economy to Prove no Man wants Ten Million Washtubs' *Esquire* V.I (Jan 1936) p. 195.

<sup>381</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose*, p. 261.

<sup>382</sup> Mackay, *Property is Theft!*, p. 284.

<sup>383</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Stewart Edwards, trans. by Elizabeth Fraser (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 185.

<sup>384</sup> Several prominent anarchists of the period publically denounced usury. The Christian anarchist Peter Maurin argued that it meant 'to live on the sweat of someone else's brow', see Peter Maurin, *Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution* (New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1949), p. 17. Labour organiser Jo Labadie quoted Emma Goldman describing usurers as 'land grabbers' and 'profit mongers', see James Joll, *The Anarchists* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), p. 150. Meanwhile, Benjamin Tucker declared tersely that 'what Anarchistic-Socialism aims to abolish is usury', see Benjamin Tucker, *Instead of a Book By a Man Too Busy to Write One: A Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism* (New York: Haskell House, 1897), p. 404.

interest, rent and profit, denouncing its practitioners via a virulent, anti-semitic paranoia. Naturally, therefore, a distrust of surplus was also a common concern. For Proudhon, usury ransacked residual labour value by violating the proprietary rights of the wage-worker. To oppose usury, Proudhon and Pound both advocated depriving capital of its rewards by creating public banks of circulation and loan, a task that Mussolini carried out when he socialised the Banca Commerciale, Credito Italiano and Banco di Roma in 1936.<sup>385</sup> They each sought to reinstate labour as the true measure of price, a subject on which Pound spoke several times in his Rome radio broadcasts, arguing on 26th May 1942 that 'every lurch towards the just price' was an 'homage to Mussolini'.<sup>386</sup> The overarching, Proudhonian solution Pound sought from Mussolini was the re-economisation of surplus through autonomous self-governance and property ownership.<sup>387</sup> Without these remedies, they implicitly agree, the abstractions of usury cannot not be overcome and no individual can be free.

Yet, in spite of their overlaying anxieties regarding usury, critics have tended to consider Douglas as the primary intellectual benefactor behind the exposition of Pound's usury cantos and not Proudhon. Ronald Bush, for example, suggests that 'the usurers of Canto XLV owe their identities to Douglas's historical analysis', arguing that 'in the end we must acknowledge that Dante combined with Douglas in Pound's mind to make usury not just a contemporary problem but the *Cantos*' most important emblem'.<sup>388</sup> At first sight, this supposition would appear to be true; after all, Pound accepted Douglas's conspiratorial claims regarding the usurious financing of major wars. For a time Pound considered Douglas to be the foremost economic reformer of the era. His contention at the end of Canto XLV that usury is 'a charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production; often

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<sup>385</sup> In the 'Sixth Study' of his work *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851) Proudhon sets out his fiscal plan as follows: 'The organization of credit is three-quarters done by the winding up of the privileged and usurious banks, and their conversion into a National Bank of circulation and loan, at ½, ¼, or ⅙ per cent.' Pound mirrored this sentiment in his admiration for the public bank established by the Venetian senate in 1584, given extensive consideration in Canto 40.

<sup>386</sup> On May 28th 1942, Pound declared 'there is enough purchasing power based on labor, and on labor only, to run all the culture, to keep all the studies, arts, all the amenities, the good life in toto', qtd. in Rabaté, p. 215.

<sup>387</sup> While anarchism is often associated with the collectivisation of property, Proudhon (and later Pound) argued that individual property ownership was a fundamental right and a corollary to self-governance. Ownership in this sense meant a non-coercive form of possession which was in contrast, Proudhon contended, to how usurers drew abstract capital from mortgage interest. He believed that implementing this form of possession was essential in restoring the productive ownership rights of all labourers, writing 'herein lies the knot of the enigma, the arcana of property, which is essential to untangle, if we wish to understand anything about the strange consequences of the right to usury.' See Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property? An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*, eds. and trans. David R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 144.

<sup>388</sup> Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 289.

without regard to the possibilities of production' is derived almost wholly from Douglas's A+B Theorem.<sup>389</sup>

However, Pound's developing allegiance to Proudhon in the 1930s and the way in which he configures his animosity against usury in Canto XLV suggest, in fact, that Proudhon was even more crucial to Pound in this respect than Douglas. The opening section of the canto closely imitates the text of Proudhon's treatise *What is Property?*. The latter work begins as follows:

The owner [ergo the usurer], who produces nothing by himself or through his instrument, receiving products in exchange for nothing, is a parasite or a thief... The rent does not represent the instrument's products, since the instrument by itself produces nothing... the sea, without fisherman and his nets, gives no fish; the forest, without the lumberjack and his axe, gives no wood; the field without the reaper, gives no hay.<sup>390</sup>

In Canto XLV Pound proceeds along an almost identical syntactical trajectory, closely mirroring Proudhon in his enumeration of usury's economic victims:

the stonecutter is kept from his stone / Weaver is kept from his loom  
/ WITH USURA / wool comes not to market / sheep bringeth no gain  
with usura... / It rusteth the craft and the craftsman / It gnaweth the  
thread in the loom.<sup>391</sup>

It is also notable that Pound begins the canto with the subject of property ownership:

With usura hath no man a house of good stone  
each block as smooth and well fitting  
that design might cover their face<sup>392</sup>

The uncoerced possession of property was a matter evaluated extensively by Proudhon as an antidote to what he considered to be maleficent money-lending practices. Yet it was opposed by other classical anarchists and little considered by Douglas. Therefore, the canto

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<sup>389</sup> Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos and Stephen Adams, *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia* (London; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), p. 89.

<sup>390</sup> Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 141.

<sup>391</sup> Pound, *New Selected Poems*, pp. 184-185, l. 21-25; 38-39.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 2-4.

appears buttressed upon the theoretical combination of ownership and autonomous self-governance in labour which was so central to Proudhon's antidote against the abstractions of usury.

What this suggests, even beyond the presence of Proudhon's contestations in the canto, is that Pound was willing to alter his form in order to better embody the kind of economy that was shaping his representation. It has been previously been proposed that the *Cantos* possesses a reciprocal arrangement between poetic and economic form. Richard Sieburth notes of Canto 97 that each monetary symbol employed by Pound is as carefully weighed as the 'individual syllables of prosody' and that Pound's 'ratios of gold and silver' maintain 'the pure proportions of music or grammar'.<sup>393</sup> Yet among Sieburth's observations are also a number of references to the autonomous character of Pound's literary economy which, in his terms, is 'virtually autistic' and which is 'wilfully withdrawn... from circulation'.<sup>394</sup> Sieburth further describes this economy as 'primarily self-referential', 'autarkic' and as 'free from mediation'.<sup>395</sup> Alluded to in this essay but not yet developed is an opportunity to question exactly of which economic archetype these terms are synecdochic. It would seem as though such a literary economy has much in common with the autonomous, Proudhonian industrial order that Pound came to favour over guild socialism and Social Credit. As O'Hueghlin and Fenna note, Proudhon 'insisted on an agro-industrial federation constituted from autonomous enterprises and the associations of the producers of good services'.<sup>396</sup> At a point in his literary career when Pound declared himself to be 'Proudhonian at heart', the form of his cantos may have been prefigured by allied economic aspirations.

Precisely which characteristics a poetic economy would assume in order to alter itself into a form reciprocal to autonomous agro-industrialism is not yet clear. Sieburth is helpful again here, though, in offering a description of the *Cantos* as an economy of 'signifiers without signifieds'.<sup>397</sup> It speaks to the necessity of locating a literary economy in which there is no value detached between the system and its constituent parts. Sieburth's reading focuses on monetarism and on the means of exchange within the system as it pertains to Pound's verse; it never goes so far as to consider the system of exchange itself beyond one brief reference to its 'hermetic' disposition, and Sieburth acknowledges neither Proudhon nor

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<sup>393</sup> Sieburth, p. 143.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Thomas O. Hueghlin and Alan Fenna, *Comparative Federalism: A Systematic Inquiry, Second Edition* (North York: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p. 95.

<sup>397</sup> Sieburth, p. 144.

Pound's inclination towards his economic theories.<sup>398</sup> Even so, the concept of a hermetically protected structured is potentially a productive one. It leads us towards seeking out a system of verse reflective of Pound's thoughts on volitional economics, on which subject he argued that 'it is an outrage that the owner of one commodity cannot exchange it with someone possessing another, without being impeded'.<sup>399</sup> He also complained that the history of economics was defined by a 'false system of book-keeping' inserting itself between 'the producers and their just recompense'.<sup>400</sup> Therefore, we need to ask whether Pound's poetics represented this desire to suppress the visibility of its 'book-keeper' in order to allow for an autonomous system of exchange without interference. A system in which, with faithless assurance, poetry and economics move in a medium of fluid, self-contained interchangeability. This, after all, was Pound's solution to the problem of production in an economic sense. It therefore only remains to determine whether he sought to represent a literary equivalent.

We already know thanks to the analyses of Sieburth and others about the precise mirroring that took place in Pound's verse between the constituents of the wider economy and his own linguistic currency. Pound writes in Canto 97 that 'If a penny of land be a perch / that is grammar / nummulary moving towards prosody'.<sup>401</sup> He alludes here to a direct exchange occurring from rare coinage into the rhythms of language. Yet when one examines Pound's discussion of coinage within the *Cantos* the two most predominant ideas are artifice and fluctuation. With regard to the former, Pound writes ironically in *Guide to Kulchur* that 'the stamp is the essential component of the coin'<sup>402</sup> as he does in Canto 97 of British sovereigns 'stamped with Eagles' and of coins 'struck by Coeur de Lion'.<sup>403</sup> The artifice and impermanence of coinage, Pound suggests, has a direct on the fluctuating temperament of civil society. He cites Henry III's second 'massacre' of the Jews in 1264, which Alexander Del Mar related to the declining standard of royal silver and the appearance of corrupt coins in English circulation. To Pound, the economy mints form into discourse and the minting 'mould' determines the form of 'what is poured into it'. Therefore, the scope of possible linguistic meanings is limited by the quality in circulation and its corruption would inevitably have a direct bearing on the quality of language and culture. In Pound's *Guide to Kulchur* he sets out a taxonomy of transience, with fresh vegetables at one end and works of art on the

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Michael T. Davis and Cameron McWhirter (eds.), *Ezra Pound and 'Globe' Magazine: The Complete Correspondence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 144.

<sup>400</sup> Qtd in Noel Stock, *Poet in Exile: Ezra Pound* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1964), p. 186

<sup>401</sup> *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 671.

<sup>402</sup> New York: New Directions, 1970, p. 161.

<sup>403</sup> *The Cantos*, p. 670.

other. The economic constant that he sought in Canto 97 was a quality of economy giving rise to 'the bust' that 'outlasts the throne' avoiding the 'degeneracy' and impermanence of 'the coin Tiberius'. The *Cantos* offers examples of what would constitute an economy bearing sufficient quality to accommodate objects belonging to the permanent category of Pound's taxonomy. Canto XLV, for example, enumerates a series of autonomous contributions to a healthy agro-artisanal economy in Pound's itemised, unconcatenated poetics. That 'each block' was 'cut smooth and well fitting' is both industrial idealism and internal referencing, because the poem's nine refrains of 'with usura' are slate-like.<sup>404</sup> Each tile offers an autarkic contribution to the economy of the canto while at the same describing a real-world, self-sufficient, artisanal benefaction. Every subsidy is a synchronicity of art and labour: the well-constructed dwelling, the paradise fresco painted on a church wall, the music of harps and lutes, Mantenga's *Gonzaga*, Memling's portraits and diptychs, Botticelli's *Calumny*, production and cultivation, thread and craft, Pound inexorably fixated on individuality and singularity. If usura is *contra naturam*, as Pound determines it to be, then *pro naturam* means democratic autonomy; health and culture derived from local autonomy, economic devolution the spur to a virile federation of industrial particulars. The health of the economy begins to decline in the second half of the canto, as usura spreads its palsy and gives life only to the dead. In concert, its constituent blocks begin to corrode, the individual elements of form no longer retaining their hermetic interchangeability. When Pound writes of the blight that 'lyeth between the young bride and her bridegroom' we become aware that this is no longer an economy of exchange without impediment.<sup>405</sup> Individual extremities previously independent of the general circulation now discover themselves sutured to its decay.

This reciprocity of economy and form only serves to heighten the suspicion that the intensifying, anti-semitic, intellectual symbolist with which Pound states his opposition to usury was in part appropriated from Proudhon. When Pound in a later canto writes of how usury corrupts the natural order of production and propagation, he reproduces the race-agitating terms of Proudhon's writings. In a letter to his fellow economist Claude-Frédéric Bastiat in December of 1849, Proudhon describes how the serpentine *neschek* (the Hebraic term for usury) sickens the economy and debases the prelapsarian innocence of exchange:

What more effective stimulous [sic], I ask you, could be imagined for the indolent and backward debtor than this aggravation (*fœnus*)[.] this perpetual procreation (*tokos*)[.] of the Principal? What sterner Sheriff than this serpent

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<sup>404</sup> Pound, *New Selected Poems*, pp. 184-185, l. 22.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 47.



of Usury, as the Hebrews call it! Usury, say the ancient rabbis, is called a serpent (*neschek*) because the Creditor BITES his debtor by claiming more than he originally gave.<sup>406</sup>

The same *neschek* appears in Pound's work in the form of a phantasmagoric, self-propagating ophidian, sustaining itself on the common wealth:

The Evil is Usury, *neschek*  
the serpent. . . .  
The canker corrupting all thing, Fafnir the worm,  
Syphilis of the State, of all kingdoms,  
Wart of the commonweal,  
Wenn-maker, corrupter of all things.<sup>407</sup>

It would appear that in expressing his anxieties regarding the perverse economic consequences of usury, Pound replicates aspects of Proudhon's method. He combines an embodiment of agro-industrial form, concerns over its coercive potentiality and an anti-semitic invocation of biblical law. It is a triad of influence that speaks to Proudhon being a much more direct intellectual forebear of the economic cantos than has been previously considered.

In fact, even when Pound analyses usury through the prism of art criticism the same Proudhonian concerns remain present. K. K. Ruthven has termed this process 'usurocriticism'.<sup>408</sup> It refers to Pound's belief that by applying his interrogation of usury to various periods of history he would be able to determine the quality of art produced in any given society in direct correlation to the level of money-lending occurring in its economy. Pound here applies precisely the same Proudhonian, anti-semitic triangulation of anxieties to his criticism of art history as he does to contemporary economics: surplus and spoilage, with a biblical undertone. He claimed to have found the presence of usury interdependently rising in correspondence with the line that 'grows thick'.<sup>409</sup> That is to say, 'art thickened'<sup>410</sup> after the beginning of the English Reformation in 1527, following which much of Europe accelerated

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<sup>406</sup> The letter from Proudhon to Bastiat was originally written on 17th December 1849. It was translated for *The Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, 30th August 1879 by Benjamin Tucker.

<sup>407</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Cantos: Drafts and Fragments of Cantos CX-CXVII* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 11.

<sup>408</sup> K. K. Ruthven, *Ezra Pound as Literary Critic* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 153.

<sup>409</sup> Pound, *New Selected Poems*, pp. 184, l. 18.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186, l. 18.

towards what Pound terms the 'usury politic'<sup>411</sup> of Protestantism, and consequently the 'barocco'<sup>412</sup> became bloated. Yet according to Pound it was not only being ruined by excess but was also mutating into viral, usury-driven deviations on the natural order. Hence in Pound's analysis, usury's counter-charge against the natural laws of political economy contributed to the mass grave, the 'commone sepulchrum'.<sup>413</sup> Art was met thereafter by a sense of damnation: the 'design' of both art and the natural order 'went to hell'.<sup>414</sup> Such was it that these imbricated issues seeped into his perspective as a usurocritic of art history.

Accordingly, while neither anti-semitism nor usury was new to Pound in the 1930s, the prose rhetoric he expressed in his support for Mussolini also exhibited the Proudhonian mirrorings apparent in those cantos, particularly in the way it intensified against the so-called Jewish economic 'obstructors'.<sup>415</sup> Like Proudhon, Pound justified his hostility to Jewish financiers by attempting to convey a sense of economic righteousness. Proudhon is quoted in anti-semitic propaganda as arguing that the Jew was 'a negation' seeking to 'live solely on what others have produced'.<sup>416</sup> Pound picks up on this animus in his denunciation of Jews as the 'hoggers of the harvest'.<sup>417</sup> Critics such as A. David Moody argue that Pound came to anti-semitism by way of economics. Peter Liebrechts appears to concur noting that in the 1930s Pound restricted 'his [anti-semitic] outbursts, increasingly and virulently, to prose writings' concerning economics.<sup>418</sup> However, on the basis of the evidence presented here it seems truer to suggest he came to fascism by way of anti-statal economics and subsequently utilised Proudhonian economic nomenclature to justify his deepening anti-semitism, which was itself bound up with supporting Mussolini, and which enforced an ugly disfiguring of his long-held, radical economic principles.<sup>419</sup>

This possibility is reinforced by how Pound's articles maintained their Proudhonian mirrorings deep into the 1940s. It has often been argued that Pound's economic anti-semitism unravelled permanently into an all-encompassing race hatred around or after 1939.

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<sup>411</sup> Paige, , p. 439.

<sup>412</sup> Pound, *New Selected Poems*, pp. 186, l. 19.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 24.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 18.

<sup>415</sup> Qtd in Marianne Korn, *Ezra Pound and History* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1985), p. 155.

<sup>416</sup> See, for example, Telemachus Thomas Timayenis, *The Original Mr. Jacobs: A Startling Exposé* (New York: Minerva Publishing Company, 1888), p. 167.

<sup>417</sup> Korn, p. 155.

<sup>418</sup> Peter Liebrechts, *Ezra Pound and Neoplatonism* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 227.

<sup>419</sup> Moody is willing to take this position a step further, arguing that anti-semitism was not merely bound up with Pound's support for Mussolini but 'instrumental' as a 'means to the end of the financial revolution.' See *Ezra Pound, Poet: The Epic Years 1921-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 158.

However, Tim Redman observes how consistently focused on economics Pound's attacks continued to be well into the subsequent war period. For example, Redman notes of Pound's 1944 pamphlet entitled 'America, Roosevelt and the Causes of the Present War' how 'despite constant talk of usurers and usocracy, there is very little overt anti-semitism in this work'.<sup>420</sup> In the thirty-three page publication, Pound makes references to economics more than twenty-five times, including remarks on the 'economic problem' and on how the war did not result from the 'caprice... of Mussolini' but from the conflict between 'usurers and peasants'.<sup>421</sup> Hence, it would seem that while the global, geopolitical landscape reconstructed itself around him, Pound retained two occupations with remarkable consistency: from 1913, the pursuit of an anti-statal economic solution; and from the early 1930s, the adoption of Proudhon's anti-semitic, industrial feudalism appellations as a means of vindicating Mussolini's potential to deliver it.

Summatively, what Pound's ongoing economic concerns - property, usury, surplus and spoilage, abstraction and exchange - threatened to obstruct was the autonomous productivity of the artist, an anxiety first expressed in the 1910s and disclosed several times in the early interwar cantos. This concern was Pound's intellectual starting point regarding economics, during the time at which he encountered 'anarchist solutions' to the 'economic problem'. He sought a method of fiscal order capable of maintaining the independence of labour, which left the artist's exchange value unadulterated; the same intellectual value he would later perceive to be contaminated by the intervention of German state rationalism, authoritarian socialism and Bolshevik Marxism. He sought an arrangement that would protect the twinned liberties of coinage and creativity and, initially, Pound looked to Douglas, believing that Social Credit could protect the individual, he writes in 1920, from 'the complete subjugation... to an objective which is imposed upon him' and in particular that they could safeguard the artist's 'innovatory and autonomous values'.<sup>422</sup> During this time, Pound expressed a state-sceptical individualism towards projective thought. In one example, he uses Canto XIX to relate the story of a conglomerate that silences an inventor with half a million dollars in order to nullify his access to a competitive patent:

so he settled for one-half of million.  
And he has a very nice place on the Hudson.

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<sup>420</sup> Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 245.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose*, pp. 210-211.

And that invention, patent, is still in their drawer.<sup>423</sup>

The story is intended as a warning against the coercive economic corruption of creative intelligence by concentrated power, a menace regarding which Pound did not differentiate between public and private hands.

During the 1920s though, Pound's feelings towards projective individualism amplified, which lead to him seeking what Richard Sieburth recognises as an 'absolute dissociation between the economy of art... and the economy of a marketplace mediated by a system of arbitrary, reproducible signs (or currency)'.<sup>424</sup> In other words, Pound sought an economic order that would not simply protect the artist but that accommodated nothing less than unqualified self-governance. Instead of being protectively embedded within the system, the artist was to become in themselves a self-determining industrial apparatus, or a kind of intellectual penumbra functioning in the space between existing systems. Thus, by the 1930s Pound was looking for this disassociation to be accomplished on a much more significant scale, of which Proudhon produced a totemic exemplar. In *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851), Proudhon writes of a newly-organised industrial project operating 'beneath the governmental machinery, in the shadow of institutions, out of the site of statesmen and priests' in order to fulfil 'the expression of its vitality and autonomy'.<sup>425</sup> Mussolini declared that the fascist programme 'can and must protect authors', and that it must 'honour intelligence'; Pound mistakenly took such pronouncements as an indication of Mussolini's will to discipline the economic forces of the nation in order that he could patronise such as arrangement.<sup>426</sup>

Ultimately, across all of these issues a crucial and enduring misconnection in Pound's thinking is revealed: a chasmic disparity between an economic 'order without power', re-economising and reconstructive, artistically and intellectually benevolent, anti-usurious and anti-statal, and the swollen corporatism that Mussolini eventually delivered. Pound wrote to Arthur Kitson in December 1933 in anticipation that Mussolini would become the heir and enactor of Proudhonian economic theory, writing optimistically that 'Mussolini has mentioned him [i.e. Proudhon] with respect. One of the few economists whom I happen to have seen

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<sup>423</sup> Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 84.

<sup>424</sup> Sieburth, 'In Pound We Trust', p. 151.

<sup>425</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), p. 243.

<sup>426</sup> Patricia Gaborik, 'Il Duce's Directors: Art Theaters as Instruments of the Fascist Revolution', *Vanguard Performance Beyond Left and Right*, ed. Kimberley Jannarone (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 2015), p. 45.

cited by M.'. <sup>427</sup> Pound projected the Proudhonian idea of order onto Mussolini, but as the fascist state ingurgitated its own power he was unable to relinquish his faith in its eventual execution of Proudhon's economics. John Finlay argues that anarchism was a "bridge" philosophy, moving Europe from radicalism 'towards a reaction of a totalitarian kind'; yet, in Pound's thinking it was an illusory overpass, falsely linking Proudhon's anarchistic programmes to Mussolini's real-life fiscal policies. <sup>428</sup>

From this perspective, one can begin to understand how Pound embraced Italian fascism without relinquishing his hostility to the abstract forms of economic authority he so vociferously rejected in the 1910s and 1920s. Pound's long intellectual engagement with unstatist economics helps to uncomplicate this apparent paradox. It allowed him to perhaps wilfully misinterpret the deconcentration of power in Mussolini's fiduciary programme while supporting the increasing centralisation of his political agenda. In 1936, Pound described Italian fascism as a form of guild autonomism, arguing that it 'has never meant State Control of Production. It has meant exhortation to producers to settle it among themselves'. <sup>429</sup> Even as late as Canto 74, composed while Pound was awaiting trial during 1948, Pound still refused to reinterpret this position, writing of fascism as a benign mechanism for unstatist dispensation, cautioning Stalin that he 'need not, i.e. need not take over the means of production' and pointing to Mussolini's example of a leader who 'stands for the encouragement of distribution... without government ownership'. <sup>430</sup> What endured were fundamentally Proudhonian notions: that the autonomy of aesthetic labour and the freedoms of currency and speech should be protected from external governance, leaving Pound bonded to the shell of a no longer existent fascist ideal, rooted in anarchistic economics.

## Conclusion

This chapter began by proposing to examine how and to what extent Pound affiliated himself to a process of paradox. In this process, a significant demographic of the European artistic and political culture reconciled the thesis of unstatism with the antithesis of Italian fascism in the first half of the twentieth century. What is clear from the current analysis is that Pound spent the better part of his intellectual lifetime assimilating much the same paradox. The arc of Pound's economics took him from the anti-statal qualities so evident of his writings of the 1910s, through a strategic shift towards Proudhonianism in the early 1930s - a shift that

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<sup>427</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose*, p. 410.

<sup>428</sup> Finlay, *Social Credit: The English Origins*, p. 238.

<sup>429</sup> Nicholls, p. 82.

<sup>430</sup> Pound, *New Selected Poems*, p. 203, l. 16-20.

allowed him to justify his trajectory on an economic basis - and ended with an enduring intellectual commitment to its industrial policy belying the intellectual wreckage that fascism had left behind.

Yet, Pound's ideological journey, and his resolute intellectual defiance in the face of fascism's absolute failure, suggests that he was in fact more than simply affiliated to this paradox and to the rise and fall of its historical materiality. It suggests, appropriating a phrase that Vincent Sherry applies to Pound elsewhere, that he was attempting to 'outperform the paradox' and to 'outdo' its oppositional logic.<sup>431</sup> That is to say, while fascism destroyed everything that was not itself, Pound's commitment to its economic destiny only strengthened; while history closed in to enforce its termination, Pound attempted to outrun it, resulting in the ahistorical, psychological chaos of the Pisan Cantos. In those cantos, Mussolini not only lives on in spirit, but does so with a renewed willingness to consider Pound's exposition of his economic proposals. Mussolini '/... Sd / one wd / have to think about' those propositions', Pound writes in Canto LXXVII. In the arcanum of the Pisan Cantos, Pound in a sense declares not an end but a beginning, breaking the true historical trajectory of Mussolini's economic failure, shattering the poem's architectural continuity with an irruption of the authentic timeline that had fostered and then repudiated his industrial ideals.

Over the course of more than three decades, Pound's absorbed anti-statal economics, then subsequently embraced the paradox of anti-statism and fascism, before attempting finally to outdistance it; in this process his writings reinforce and extend the multidimensional relevance of anarchism to a number of modernism's deepest considerations. The evidence presented here suggests that anarchistic economics were not simply present across those writings, but that it was one of the most enduring intellectual threads. Between 1913 and 1948 Pound's work exhibits a range of anarchistic credentials, and through the field of economics extends the significance of anarchism into new disciplinary territory. Beginning with a tangible, immediate association in his anti-statal attacks of the 1910s, before developing into the wider and more totalising sense of the economic intellectualism rooted in his later modernism, at each stage his work reinforces the decisive nature of anarchistic economics with respect to his political and literary preoccupations. Anarchism is relevant to certain syntactic and semiotic developments in the economic cantos, which in themselves make clearer which economic configuration Pound ultimately sought. At heart, though, the movement is pertinent to one of modernism's most important questions: it seems

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<sup>431</sup> Vincent Sherry, 'Prose Criticism', *Ezra Pound in Context*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 18

indisputably true that anarchistic economics were embedded in the intellectualism that masked Pound's deepest failure, his incapacity to differentiate between the search for economic justice as a rational action, and the bearing of Italian fascism upon that purpose.

With respect to the current thesis, the evidence presented in this chapter further corroborates the historical and material affinity of Italy and anarchism in American literary modernism, with respect to both commonalities and differences. The role of anti-statalism in Pound's writings proves to share much with that of the Italian radicals Giovannitti, Vinciguerra and Carnevali. Where those writers question the legitimacy of industrial and artistic hierarchies, Pound interrogates the 'established churches' of state coercion. More specifically, Pound shared with Giovannitti the desire for a form of self-governing industrial federalism and with Carnevali a radical artistic individualism, one safeguarded if necessary by violent methodologies. In each case art and labour, in combination with anti-statal intellection, infused radicalism into their poetic configurations. Furthermore, like Bakunin and James, Proudhon was a nineteenth-century forebear whose anarchism, with regard to Pound, fed twentieth century modernist intellectualism from its roots. Yet much of what anti-statalism fostered in Pound's work is unique; it extends the triad of Italy, anarchism and American modernism, situating it squarely in the political and formal matrix of late interwar modernism, and in the process allying it to the wider European shift from revolution to reaction; what is more, it situates anti-statal economics historically and materially within Pound's Italy and within its fascist moment. In and through Pound's work, therefore, anarchism disruptively penetrates from the critical periphery, revealing its presence at the constitutional centre of one of Italy and American modernism's most axiomatic associations.

## Conclusion

The social historian Arnold Hauser once remarked that 'the whole exuberance, anarchy and violence of modern art' marked a decisive development, because to no previous generation 'had it occurred to make a problem of the meaning and *raison d'être* of its own culture'.<sup>432</sup> Such sentiment embodies much of the intention behind Emanuel Carnevali's attack against New York modernism with which this project began. Carnevali's rage did not make a problem of modernity but rather of the meaning and the method encapsulated by the cultural response to it, which he perceived as being bent towards elitist ends and towards the consolidation of social power. His violent rhetoric was directed towards what he saw as a world in insular caricature that had lost touch with expressing authentic human motivations. Powered by the engine of early globalisation dynamics and his experiences of migration, Carnevali was appalled by the imitatory localism of the *Others* coterie. In exuberant opposition, he embarked on a project to prove that art could be experimental and modern, individualistic, but also interdependent with the commonplace. Such intentions are also evident in Arturo Giovannitti's exuberant depictions of life, labour and art in 'O Labor of America: O Heartbeat of Mankind' (1916), in which each practice is unified to a single constructive purpose; in which each individual, whether puddler or poet, could become their own singular authority on the contribution they make to a greater, federative solidarity. They are evident in Francesca Vinciguerra's modernised Japanese tanka poems. Her daimyo symbolises how the era of unconscious hegemonic power, patriarchy and land privileges is soon to meet its end, as a mass of individual red lanterns circle towards him in the darkness. They are also evident in Pound's economic cantos. By the time of writing them his literary impulses had evolved from seeking out a nominal sense of objectivity, to being concerned with real-world implications for the autonomy of art and labour.

The anarchistic tendencies in modernist literature now seem self-evident, which represent a rapid development in anarchism's relationship with historical, literary and modernist criticism. Less than forty years ago, anarchism was to a certain degree accepted to have been written out of history; in 1989 Patricia Leighton wrote, credibly, that 'socialism is now popularly conceived as the only revolutionary movement to have risen in the nineteenth century'.<sup>433</sup> As the turn of millennium approached, the situation looked unlikely to alter significantly, for where pockets of neo-anarchism arose in association with the ecological and anti-capitalist organisations of the era, they were greeted with the same historical suspicions encountered

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<sup>432</sup> Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 319.

<sup>433</sup> Patricia Leighton, *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. xv.



by earlier iterations of the movement. As David Goodway noted, 'anarchism continues to engender... the passionate opposition it aroused at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' at a time, he continues, 'when it became irretrievably associated with bomb-throwing and violence'.<sup>434</sup> Insofar as anarchist aesthetics were concerned, contemporary opinion was willing to dismiss them, in John Moore's words, as 'suicide notes... anticipating the miraculous existence of utopia on the other side of the abyss'.<sup>435</sup> It is therefore perhaps not difficult to imagine the equivalent reception anarchist writers received within modernist studies. Critics, when anarchism was written about at all, tended to acquiesce to the opinion that 'modernist literature seldom portrays anarchist rebellion as anything more than wrong, doomed, or mindless'.<sup>436</sup> Few works ventured into a scholarly discipline that was ostensibly dubious and unprogressive.

It has been my intention that this project should partake of the spirited, revisionary ethos cultivated in the past two decades, and where appropriate to support its conclusions. This development occurred in stages, of which the first was to acknowledge the debt owed by modernism to anarchism in its own evolution. In this regard, Heyward Ehrlich reminded us that 'we may easily forget to what extent late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century socialism and anarchism were necessary stations for the avant-garde on the road to literary modernism'.<sup>437</sup> Subsequently, other critics recognised that within literary modernism anarchist artists offered 'experimentation in form and substance... as a means to contest, challenge, supercede or destroy the old values, morals, norms'. Soon the capacity of anarchistic modernism to represent a third way between 'politically engaged realist art' and 'apolitical purist art' could no longer be gainsaid, yet it remained constricted. Jesse Cohn's argument that Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* 'seems to inform almost every direction taken by anarchist modernism' now appears prematurely unequivocal.<sup>438</sup>

Yet while these valuable scholarly works have made the rediscovery of anarchistic modernism possible, they tend to adhere closely to a single disposition in respect to how it operated; I hope to have demonstrated in this project that anarchistic modernisms were, in fact, a polyvalent undertaking of intellect and activism. They responded to cultural and

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<sup>434</sup> David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>435</sup> John Moore, 'Composition and Decomposition: Contemporary Anarchist Aesthetics', *Anarchist Studies* 6 (1998), p. 118.

<sup>436</sup> Arthur Redding, 'The Dream Life of Political Violence: Georges Sorel, Emma Goldman, and the Modern Imagination', *Modernism/Modernity*, 2.2 (1995), p. 2.

<sup>437</sup> Heyward Ehrlich, 'Socialism, Gender and Imagery in *Dubliners*', *Gender in Joyce*, eds. Jolanta W. Wawrzycka and Marlena G. Corcoran

<sup>438</sup> Jesse Cohn, *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press), p. 120.

historical circumstances with both social and literary resistance practices. Labour struggles were supported by an aesthetic encouraging the potential of workers to sabotage and dismantle oppressive industrial behaviours through mass resistance. Likewise, where sexual coercion occurred, an aesthetic inspired the capacity of individual agency to oppose its structural and historical dominion. Elsewhere, avant-garde art institutionalised itself as an elitist, professional specialism, while an opposing anarchistic aesthetic reconnected the particular and the universal promise of individual experience. In response to state-level stratification that threatened the creative autonomy of artists and labourers, an aesthetic emerged in resistance to the reigning economic paradigms. Finally, when hierarchy and coercion emerged in parochial configurations, they were invariably countered with literary practices borne of jaggedly transnational co-operation.

Further to this final point, I hope to have demonstrated how essential transnational dynamics were to these modernisms. Giovannitti's collection *Arrows in the Gale* combines multiple influences: a youth spent in a region of Italy radicalised by Russian anarchism, his emigration to Massachusetts, his association with European labour resistance practices and American modernist stylings. Francesca Vinciguerra emigrated from Sicily to New York City and created fiercely political Japanese tanka poetry in the cosmopolitanism of Greenwich Village. Emanuel Carnevali appropriated Papini's Florentine Futurism, itself imbued with Stirner's egoism and Jamesian pragmatism to attack the obsolescence of New York modernist culture. Pound absorbed French anarchist economics and reconfigured it in the economics cantos in support of Italian fascist fiscal policies. Each of these variants was conceived of within the circuit of intellectualism flowing between Italy and America during the long interwar period; each illuminates the migratory logic of anarchistic modernist practice in the two countries. Yet they also illuminate a difference between anarchism and other currents of modernist transnationalism. The relationship between the two in this case is not based on the happenstance collision of migratory discourses. Instead it is an existential element of a movement that survived in exile, and which did so through a process of continual negotiation between inherited ideologies and new intercultural practices.

I have also sought to determine how the chronological rupture ascribed to anarchism and modernism in the years after the First World War belies an extended set of historical circumstances which brought the two movements into union. Critics and historians stress that by 1920 anarchism had been expunged as a cultural or a modernist force. It is argued that anarchist art could not survive while no longer associated with more successful avant-garde movements such as Futurism. Moreover, the conditions that allowed it to flourish - migration, an atmosphere of liberalism and political tolerance, and an absence of alternative

movements - were under threat from opposing ideological forces. On the surface this chronology is impossible to disagree with, but I have tried to outline a further-reaching anarchistic programme that conglomerates intellectually around significant historical circumstances, with which modernism periodically intersected. These circumstances began with William James's anti-bigness response to the American invasion of the Philippines in the 1890s. They are followed by the labour movements of the early 1910s, which coincided with the poetry of Giovannitti and early egoist modernism in Europe. The timeline continues in the presence of Carnevali's pragmatic anarchism in New York, and the rise of Bolshevik Marxism and German state rationalism. Its covert presence is recognisable in Pound's writings of the 1930s and on through the downfall of Italian fascism. In this new timeline, anarchism is consistently, strategically and conceptually reborn in new movements, cultures and philosophies. From this perspective, the postwar rupture loses much of its significance because key anarchist impulses remained undeterred after 1920. Antipathy to large scale state fiscal programmes, and correspondingly to literary anti-foundationalism, remained present in the political economy of the late interwar period.

Lastly, I have looked to establish what unifies these individuals as intellectuals, artists and activists. I conclude that, allowing for the ideological nuances of each writer, their ambitions were aggregated in the rejection of all unjustifiable authorities and principles structured into the power arrangements of society, whether through the judiciary, the church, offices of state, capital, gender dynamics, or other customs and alliances. I conclude secondly that they animated this resistance through public engagement in protest oratory, protest performance and lexical subversion, and in many cases that they did so through using the notoriety of their antagonistic public personae to lead a resistance cause. All of these activities were geared towards changing the direction of modern culture so as to take advantage of a historical opportunity to reground it on new principles. They sought to transform the culture so as to efface any force that prevented an individual from possessing absolute agency over the form and expression of their labour, whether as a blacksmith, a woman, an immigrant or indeed as a modern artist. Their mutual goal was to restore the status of art as a commonplace, free of coercion and interference from any consortium, whether of state, capital or dogmatic artist clique. They were, of course, additionally unified by defeat, and by the way their principles oscillated towards authoritarian leadership. There can be no denying Giovannitti's eventual sympathies in favour of Bolshevism, Pound's towards Italian fascism, nor what Carnevali's Man God might have foreshadowed with respect to the rise of the interwar autocrat. However, what remains is a legacy of aesthetic resistance testifying to their common commitment.

It remains, then, to determine what kind of legacy remains of these writers as anarchists, as modernists, and as contributors to interwar history. For one, an important and undeniable part of their legacy is that these writers were absolutely correct in a great many of the presumptions they made in regard to the culture they were living through. I want to contend that they were justified in conceiving of modernity as a battlefield - literally in the case of Carnevali, and implicitly in the work of others - that hosted a war between hierarchy and individualism, and that they were equally justified in warning against pseudo-individualists camping under the banner of powerful, absolutist thinkers. There was a rationale behind their attempts to mitigate the impulses of cultural or economic elitism across the spectrum of disciplines in which they operated. There was good reason for Carnevali and Giovannitti to consistently promote the restoration of art as a public good, and for the former to warn against the dangers of it devolving into institutional spaces. As William Carlos Williams came to accept, the result of this was indeed insular, inauthentic reproduction based on literary fashions. It follows then that they were also vindicated in using their various aesthetics to find a middle way between social realism, on the one hand, and the more inward-looking experimentalism of the avant-garde, on the other. This is allowing for an acknowledgement that Carnevali was hyperbolic in his professed ambition to save the modern literary system from itself. Nevertheless, given the totalitarian slaughter that was to follow, the point stands that there was a prescience in how aggressively they chose to resist the centralisation of cultural control, and how vigorously they attempted to expand the freedoms of the artist.

That said, there is no doubt that these writers made mistakes in their politics, in their art and in their aesthetic choices. It is important to remember that anarchism was not so much a political system as a decentralised social configuration in which other systems operated, hence why it is possible to conceive, as others have, of an anarchist liberalism, an anarchist capitalism or even an anarchist fascism. Giovannitti and Pound both believed that authoritarianism favoured the artisan labourer better than liberal capitalism did. Giovannitti was willing to compromise the autonomy of his industrial ideals in favour of Bolshevik dictatorship. Pound made the error of believing that fascism would accommodate his desire for economic self-governance, irrespective of how hierarchical an ideology it demanded that its citizenry accept in return. A lack of belief and an overwillingness to compromise on principles perhaps speaks to the changeability of the movement. There were also errors of artistic judgement. Giovannitti's visions were utopian and before long seemed unrealistic, even Edwardian, when set against the stark detachment of other modernistic verse. Moreover, the way in which Giovannitti and Carnevali staged their protest as performance at times threatened to undermine its authenticity. There is a danger that they might appear now

as a caricature of protest or of avant-garde leadership, or be misconstrued as a spectacle in the modernist canon.

Anarchism also perhaps erred in its choice of artistic alliances. It continually allowed itself to fragment and reform in partnership with other movements, which meant that the process of continual negotiation sustaining it also diminished its independence. Without this independence, it found itself in the position of both relying on and at the same time opposing the movements through which its impulses were hosted. Anarchism and Futurism tentatively co-ordinated in the early 1910s but in the case of social anarchism its attempt to compete on an equal artistic footing ultimately lead to a humiliating dismissal in the pages of the *Little Review*. Carnevali positioned himself against the technical modernism of Williams and *Others*, yet at the same time found himself utterly reliant on their accommodation of his talents. While, of course, these artists operated in an era characterised by cultural constellations that formed and reformed in constant succession, their tendency towards change meant they rarely played more than ancillary roles in the machinations of other avant-garde movements. Arguably, this was a characteristic of anarchism itself, and of its anti-epistemic commitments, rather than one common to its expositors. It is therefore important but not simple to determine how the anarchistic impulse might be understood in relation to other modernist avant-gardes. Comparatively speaking, anarchism is perhaps less defined by its leadership of allied factions than by its presence in the radical exploration of unhierarchical forms. However, its antagonism towards foundational principles also no doubt contributed to how a recognisable anarchistic modernist aesthetic was never settled upon.

None of which is intended to suggest that certain of these alliances were not strategically well calculated, nor that the writers in this study had equal ability to influence the leadership of the movements with which they associated. Where Giovannitti and Vinciguerra made relatively minor contributions to the artistic direction of radical periodicals, Carnevali's merciless ideological assault on *Others* lead to its closure and reverberated in American modernism during the subsequent years. It could be argued, therefore, that his pragmatic anarchism was far more successful as a vision that it was as an aesthetic strategy. William Carlos Williams's subsequent journal *Contact* was intended as a vehicle for work that presented a concrete connection to the vocabulary, idiom, feelings and experiences of everyday life, which was undeniably a response to Carnevali's influence on *Others*. There was little so specifically concrete about Carnevali's aesthetic that it was able to carry forward the same influence. Yet given the technical insularity into which *Others* had descended, but given also its contemporaneous position as an arbiter of avant-garde standards in American

modernism, Carnevali was justified in assuming a strategy of anarchistic resistance and he was prescient in discrediting its representations of modern living. As a modernist critic, then, Carnevali wielded his pragmatic anarchism with a powerful artistic intelligence. His insistence that modern poetry express its experimentalism in the world's language, seeking universal truths and commonplaces, and palpating the structure of everyday realities, underpinned the reemergence of this strategy in American modernism, in ways that are both clear and at the same time difficult to estimate. What is not in doubt, though, was his ability to offer a grand and remorseless artistic vision, rooted in revolutionary anarchism.

The spirit of revolutionary pragmatism with which Carnevali demonstrated his capacity to reground American modernism is a significant legacy in itself. It is an exemplar of anarchistic American literary modernism in its pugnacious individualism, its experimental visions of concrete realities and its opposition to cultural hierarchies. It also offers a conceptual clarity regarding what kind of anarchism this modernism might represent. Yet, from a contemporary perspective there is less clarity regarding what place it might occupy in the history of either movement. Anarchistic modernism fits uneasily into the competing set of attributions made for the role of anarchistic art by twentieth century critics, therefore its legacy within an anarchist history is complex. Modern scholars have tended to align themselves with one of three competing perspectives regarding the purpose of anarchist art. In the first of them, it is argued that the role of anarchism in art is to support the progression of the anarchist movement. Patricia Leighton writes that art 'should expose the follies and iniquities of the present social order ... to the masses... and open a path to the new social order'.<sup>439</sup> From this we can infer a role comparable to that of Marxism and social realism, yet absent a didactic class analysis determining precisely the form that art should take. A second school of thought suggests that the obligation of anarchist art is to serve no cause or master beyond what is determined in the unfettered and uncoerced expression of its individual creator. This leaves the artist open to operate as an existential terrorist, destroying and recreating realities at will in accordance with their own interests and inclinations.<sup>440</sup> The third perspective is that art can be subsumed into the routine of all everyday human activity. John Farquhar McLay argues that art can become a life practice, 'embodying the human spirit' and that this would end the atomisation of human enterprise wrought by capitalism.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Patricia Leighton, 'Réveil anarchiste: Salon Painting, Political Satire, Modernist Art', in Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland (eds.), *Realizing the Impossible: Art Against Authority* (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), p. 39.

<sup>440</sup> See Michael Paraskos, 'The Artist as Terrorist', *Artenol* 7 (Winter 2016), p. 34.

<sup>441</sup> John Farquhar McLay, *Anarchism and Art* (Glasgow: Autonomy Press, 1982), p. 12.

In response to the first of these possibilities, and for all of his revolutionary intentions, Carnevali acknowledged no explicit support for the anarchist movement in and of itself. He recognised its presence in the Florentine Futurist programmes to which he was exposed in his youth. However, while he implored in the 'Book of Job Junior' that the world needed pragmatic works, Carnevali never differentiated between the anarchist and gradualist pragmatist variants, an oversight that we might attribute to his lack of interest in theory and specialism, and to that of anarchist intellectualism more generally. Therefore neither was Carnevali straightforwardly concerned with reconfiguring the politics of the social order, even if a political, social critique is implicit in his poetic representations of immigrant working and living conditions in Manhattan. Where Carnevali stood perhaps unrivalled was in his power to expose the follies and iniquities of the cultural order as he encountered it, and in his vision for an aesthetic of experimental dynamics dictated by the structures of experience. In this sense, Carnevali better aligns with the second of the three positions cited above. He refers to himself in 'My Speech at Lola's' as a creator and destroyer of worlds, through which we can implicate his Man God persona as a strong exemplar of the existential artist-anarchist terrorist. In fact, the outlook of both Carnevali and the egoist branch of anarchistic modernism correspond well with the notion of a reality-threatening individualist. At least, that is, better than with Farquhar McLay's third perspective because such extreme individualism was clearly not well attuned to involving itself with the co-operative practices of everyday life.

In contrast to Carnevali, I would argue that the remaining writers in this study conform better to the remaining perspectives cited here regarding the role of anarchist art, the first of which relates to supporting the anarchistic cause and the second of which relates to the unity between art and labour. Giovannitti demonstrated his willingness to rally the public imagination in favour of syndicalist activities and he articulated an aesthetic intended to provoke sympathy for the values of his revolutionary cause. Unlike Carnevali, who advocated that poetry should express the world's languages, Giovannitti's poems were already simple and allusive, operating as works of political messaging contrived to induce a passionate public response. What he championed was also in keeping with Farquhar McLay's notion that anarchistic art and work could conjointly embody the practice of the human spirit. There can be few clearer visions of such an idea than those found in Giovannitti's later industrial verse. Moreover, few images demonstrate it more explicitly than the one in which the technological economy of modernity and the spirit of labour co-operate in driving the singular productive heartbeat of mankind. Francesca Vinciguerra's tanka poetry is equally explicit in its feminist anarchist convictions and it is unfortunate that too few biographical details of her life in the period remain to contextualise this verse within a wider history of her radical activities. Pound's economic interests, on the other hand, complicate all

three of these perspectives at various points in his literary career. It is clear that he was intent on promoting economics that were historically derived from anarchist theory, as he was on constructing an aesthetic that embodied the co-operation of labour and creativity. Yet, his verse never shed the unconstrained individualism with which were his first forays into economics were associated.

It is perhaps most accurate to suggest that these writers propounded a range of values relating variously to politics, expression and social co-operation. Their roles varied from offering leadership in the arena of public activism, to recharging the role of public life in art and culture, to diverting a dystopian future in which spirit and labour were irreparably divorced from capital and enterprise. It was not necessary to be an advocate of anarchist values to become affected by the political urgency that they contributed towards generating. It was not necessary to agree with Carnevali's disparagement of his contemporaries to foresee the arid artistic destiny that he prophesied. Neither did one need to be versed in the nuances of pragmatism in order to concur with the Man God of 'My Speech at Lola's' asserting that New York modernism needed to revivify itself with contact and commonplaces. Therefore, from an anarchist perspective, the role and the legacy of these writers is underpinned by the direction and the dynamism that they bestowed upon each of their respective cultural situations. While they operated in different disciplines and with different intellectual preoccupations, between them their anarchistic modernisms fulfilled all of the roles considered necessary of anarchist art according to contemporary critical standards.

Their legacy should also be situated within the long historical evolution of ideas concerning power, coercion and self-governance that preceded them. As these chapters outline, anarchism emerged from an intellectualism that was distrustful of previous revolutions in France and that was skeptical concerning those uprisings promised by Marxism. In each case, nineteenth-century anarchists feared that from the disintegration of social order would emerge new normative structures, ones based around organisational hierarchy and that would be potentially even more repressive towards individual liberty. Directly within the ideological lineage of these theorists were modernist groupings that advocated industrial, sexual, creative and economic autonomy, and these writers ought to be considered as prominent among them. While in all but the case of Pound they may not be held in high regard from the perspective of sustained literary accomplishment, they lack no legitimacy in their intense advocacy of a decentralised culture, nor in their refusal to accept that art be limited by coercion, elitism or stratification. Like their intellectual predecessors of the nineteenth century, there were times when such was their aggressive intransigence in



respect to compromising these principles that relations with their cultural allies became unsustainable. Also like those predecessors, there were times when they seemed out of step with modernistic norms, railing as they did against such standardised configurations as liberalism, capitalism or literary modernism's detachment and technicality, an opposition which they undertook with mixed degrees of success.

However, while the anarchist movement may not ultimately have been successful, it remains possible to rationalise the importance of its historical role within interwar culture and correspondingly within modernist culture. It offered a direct programme of resistance against the centralisation of political and economic power, a configuration that Bakunin had much earlier predicted in his warning that Marxism would lead to a dictatorship of the proletariat. Although anarchism failed to obstruct the rise of authoritarianism, this does not invalidate Bakunin's warning, and certainly neither does it invalidate the necessity of such a role. Anarchism was outflanked by two competing forces in liberal individualism and fascism that both encouraged the concentration of capital; it offered a substantial counternarrative to those ideologies, albeit one that was eventually overwhelmed. The social anarchist movement also fought vigorously for gender equality. Characteristically, five years before the constitution granted suffrage to American women, Giovannitti wrote an essay for his journal *Vita* arguing that the vote was a universal right not to be restricted by any qualifications of wealth, culture or gender.<sup>442</sup> The concept of anarchism, and the idea of a resistance to the emerging *telos* of power was both necessary and significant. Anarchism provoked a response to the complacency engendered by liberal democracy that was ultimately taken advantage of by authoritarianism and it offered an alternative to the iniquities of both systems. Moreover, as a result of it not being beholden to fixed principles, anarchism could continuously reshape the negotiation between individual freedom and political democracy. While an inherent absence of leadership eventually diminished its influence, the movement could operate organically as as a leaderless collective of self-educated revolutionaries. The engine of this collective was a process of dynamic, transnational negotiation, a fact that only makes its historical role all the more relevant.

I make this case because there is an equivalent argument here that also justifies the role of anarchism in modernist culture. Carnevali in particular recognised in the New York modernist coterie of Williams, Kreymborg and *Others* a concentration of power over the arbitration of cultural standards. It required the disruption of Carnevali's pragmatist anarchism to prevent it from its own internalism. Not only did his influence rescue them from a certain staleness and

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<sup>442</sup> Arturo Giovannitti, 'Votes for Women', *Vita* (1 Nov 1915), p. 77.

reproducibility, it also preventing that modernist grouping from settling on a hierarchy in regard to who could credibly write and judge literature. In this respect, Carnevali offered an aggressive counternarrative to *Others* and its elitist reflex, but it should be considered a necessary one judging by Williams's response. As an immigrant and an exile, Carnevali disarranged the various truths that the group had come to agree upon, including the power it had bestowed upon itself, but not the public, to articulate the experience of modernity. His counternarrative offered a compromise between the two extremes of didactic social realism and disaffected aesthetic liberalism. Yet, in their various ways other writers also offered artistic responses that ran significantly against modernist convention. For example, Francesca Vinciguerra appropriated a form of Japanese poetry that even when used in modernism was traditional, genteel and class-dominated, but her work annihilated all of these qualifications in support of sexual self-determination, and what is more it did so at a crucial moment in the history of suffrage. Therefore, while Carnevali resisted the *telos* of cultural power afforded themselves by the *Others* group, Vinciguerra used art to resist its evolution in the social arena. Like their non-artistic counterparts, the historical role of these anarchistic writers in modernism was to offer an organic intellectualism, one with an important responsibility to disrupt, resist and counter the accepted narratives of cultural power.

Anarchism justified its role in modernist culture on the basis of its willingness to disturb and to contest assumptions; the most important space in which it did so was in the one that lay between the idea of locally or nationally-rooted communities, on one side, and the global or unrooted, on the other. Anarchistic modernism, being both migratory and experimental, exemplified how the space between them was the new nexus of creativity, where the universal found anchorage in the particular. It is a space identifiable in Giovannitti's journey from Campobasso to Massachusetts and eventually Manhattan; in the gap between southern Italian anarchism, French syndicalism, American literary modernism and the localised communities to whom he spoke, because this was the threshold from which his poetry developed. It is identifiable in the space between Vinciguerra's Sicilian beginnings, Greenwich Village cosmopolitanism, the right to universal suffrage and the localised necessity of political resistance executed in her tankas. It is also recognisable in so much of what Italy encompassed for Pound, but in particular his denial to the very last of his Italian cantos that Mussolini stood for 'distribution without government ownership'.<sup>443</sup> In other words, there was no place for the concept of the nation in matters of economics.

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<sup>443</sup> Ezra Pound, *New Selected Poems and Translations*, ed. Richard Sieburth (New York: New Directions, 2010), p. 203, l. 20.

Again though, it was perhaps Carnevali who was perhaps most emblematic of this disruptive spirit and he also most clearly defined the space in which it operated. To Carnevali, the localism of *Others* had become moribund. In his view, it could only reclaim its relevance by reconnecting itself to what he referred to as the great big truths. Yet it was not a rallying call to revive the universalism of the Romantics. Rather, it was an observation that in light of the globalising culture being lived through that this modernism was abdicating its role when it denied the wider world, and that it needed to work towards a process of reattachment to it. Even as a young immigrant Italian, one who was barely an adult when he first wrote modernistic verse, Carnevali grew to understand the direction of history and the place of modernism, I propose, better than any of his New York contemporaries. His anarchist modernism was certainly among the most successful at embodying the rapidness of cultural death and rebirth that was so much a characteristic of the contemporary avant-garde. It placed Carnevali on the vanguard of attempting to understand the dynamic artistic relationship between the local and the global, a preoccupation which would occupy so much twentieth-century intellectualism. He understood acutely that public life could not be effaced, and that a reengagement with it would soon become unavoidable if the avant-garde was to remain in any way representational in relation to modern experience. In fact, of all the problems these writers made regarding the meaning of their own culture, this space was arguably the most important and the most contestable

What they cultivated within this space was a new, modernistic attitude towards liberty and art. This attitude meant, firstly, that life and literature were to be understood as a single aesthetic experience. Its purpose was to foment a field of resistance, one that was jointly both social and discursive. Moreover, the twinned elements of this practice were mutually regenerative; as Tudor Balinisteanu recognises in the anarchism of Joyce and Yeats, 'art and life recreate each other in breaking new ontological ground'.<sup>444</sup> In other words, with no fixed principles to fall back upon, anarchistic art had no choice but move continuously forward into new territories of meaning; territories that reflected back upon the world from which that art was derived in a perpetual circle of creative resistance. It meant, secondly, that the purpose of this modernism was not to 'make it new' but, more accurately, to make it real. It was in agreement that literary experimentalism was the only form in which to represent the new experiential structures of modernity. Yet it urged that this experimentalism focus on its concrete particulars, not on detached embodiments of a notional modern reality. Thirdly, its attitude was that artistic power should be decentralised and pushed towards the

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<sup>444</sup> Tudor Balinisteanu, *Violence, Narrative and Myth in Joyce and Yeats: Subjective Identity and Anarcho-Syndicalist Traditions* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 31.

margins of society. Only there could art be created in communal autonomy, freed from the stratification of government or the specialisation of academies. Collectively, this attitude proposed a new idea about literature that repositioned the role of modern art. It meant that a 'life lawlessly poetic', to recall Pound's phrase, meant a conviction to recreate, overthrow and then reshape all that was coercive and hierarchical in modern culture. Their 'poetica metrica' was intended to preserve as inviolate anarchism's 'social law', that no exception to 'the supreme condition of liberty and humanity' would be admitted.<sup>445</sup>

Anarchistic modernists possessed an intense and unrelenting desire for a new society based on the mutual practice of freedom and art. They expressed this desire during a period of cultural history characterised by fragmentation and reformation, genesis and destruction, a circularity that they both appropriated and offered back to their contemporaries in question form. Their interrogative mode of historical questioning interrogation took place amid the American invasion of the Philippines in 1899, the rise of radical labour and the great industrial strikes of the Atlantic north-east, the First World War, the October Revolution, the fight for universal suffrage, and the rise of fall of fascism. During their active years, they addressed every aspect of the climacteric upon which Raymond Williams defined the modernist age, the 'crises in technique', the 'crisis in the relationship of art to society' and the 'crisis of social practice'.<sup>446</sup> Their compelling and influential responses to each of these nodes of cultural adversity should assure their place in the critical history of the modernist phenomenon. As Williams observed, 'the absolute test' of a revolution 'is the change in the form of activity of a society'.<sup>447</sup> There is no doubt that their practice questioned and, at times, succeeded in changing the way in which reality was experienced, acknowledged and responded to during those years. The way in which their preoccupations went beyond politics into the many disciplines of modern cultural life means that what they attempted to achieve was something closer to what Williams termed a 'human revolution'.<sup>448</sup> It is my hope that in telling the story of how anarchistic modernism interrogated and resisted the coercive, hierarchical practices of modern living that I have contributed in some way to the understanding of how they did so.

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<sup>445</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>446</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 163.

<sup>447</sup> Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Vintage Books, 2013), p. 76.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.



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