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THE RISE OF ETHICAL ANARCHISM IN BRITAIN 1885-1900

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## ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century, anarchists were strict individualists favouring clandestine organisation and violent revolution: in the twentieth century, they have been romantic communalists favouring moral experiments and sexual liberation. This essay examines the growth of this ethical anarchism in Britain in the late nineteenth century, as exemplified by the Freedom Group and the Tolstoyans. These anarchists adopted the moral and even religious concerns of groups such as the Fellowship of the New Life. Their anarchist theory resembled the beliefs of counter-cultural groups such as the aesthetes more closely than it did earlier forms of anarchism. And this theory led them into the movements for sex reform and communal living.

## THE RISE OF ETHICAL ANARCHISM IN BRITAIN 1885-1900

Art for art's sake had come to its logical conclusion in decadence . . . More recent devotees have adopted the expressive phase: art for life's sake. It is probable that the decadents meant much the same thing, but they saw life as intensive and individual, whereas the later view is universal in scope. It roams extensively over humanity, realising the collective soul. [Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (London: G. Richards, 1913), p. 196]

To the Victorians, anarchism was an individualist doctrine found in clandestine organisations of violent revolutionaries. By the outbreak of the First World War, another very different type of anarchism was becoming equally well recognised. The new anarchists still opposed the very idea of the state, but they were communalists not individualists, and they sought to realise their ideal peacefully through personal example and moral education, not violently through acts of terror and a general uprising. The turn of the century witnessed the rise of peaceful, communal varieties of anarchism inspired by Prince Kropotkin and Leo Tolstoy. What brought about this change in the anarchist movement? Why did the new anarchism come into being? We will explore these questions with reference to the British experience.

It is no coincidence that the turn of the century also witnessed the disintegration of European culture into what we call modernism - a collection of fragmented pieces lacking secure, accepted principles. Many people interpreted the demise of the established order as a destructive process culminating in decadence, but for others, particularly the decadent themselves, it represented a new start promising a cultural renaissance. Contemporaries teetered on a parapet uncertain whether jumping would plunge them down to a vile abyss and social catastrophe or propel them upward to a higher life and new social order. The fin de siecle was a janus-faced culture of decadence and optimism, and the new anarchism emerged as an expression of the optimism. The new anarchists saw themselves as the peaceful and constructive harbingers of a harmonious society based on a higher morality.

They were part of a broad bohemia trying to liberate art, the individual and society from the perceived shackles of Victorianism. They had less in common with their anarchist predecessors than with sex reformers and utopian communalists.

### The Origins of British Anarchism

Anarchism grew out of nineteenth-century radicalism, with Proudhon and Bakunin hoping to liberate the individual from the oppression and exploitation they associated with the state.<sup>1</sup> The anarchists wanted individuals to be free from obtrusive authority, and, in particular, free to do as they saw fit with the product of their own labour. It was this sort of anarchism that inspired Henry Seymour, a secularist from Tunbridge Wells, to begin publishing The Anarchist in 1885. Seymour was a classical anarchist of the old school.<sup>2</sup> Like Bakunin, he moved from a secularist hostility to the church imposing God on the individual to an iconoclastic denunciation of society imposing its values on the individual. His anarchist vision fused Proudhonian mutualism with the more extreme individualism of various American anarchists to envisage small proprietors co-operating with one another in voluntary schemes. His ideal was a free-trade utopia, with 'absolutely free competition' making cost 'the just limit of price,' thereby ensuring individuals reaped the full benefit of their labour without monopolists or the state extracting a tithe.<sup>3</sup>

Most of Seymour's contributors regarded themselves vaguely as socialists of a libertarian persuasion, not specifically as anarchists. Sympathizers included Fabians such as George Bernard Shaw and new lifers such as Edward Carpenter, but many of them later withdrew entirely from anarchist groups, and some even wrote tracts condemning anarchism.<sup>4</sup> In the 1880s, socialists became increasingly theoretically sophisticated, and, as their ideas matured, some turned to anarchism as an alternative to the statism of the Marxists and Fabians, whilst others came to view anarchism as naive and utopian. It was in

this way that anarchism came to dominate the Socialist League after it had split away from the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. The anarchists of the League also belonged squarely in the radical tradition of Proudhon and Bakunin. Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation of 1878 led to an influx of refugees into Britain, including people such as Victor Dave and Johann Most, who joined earlier refugees such as Herman Jung and Andreas Scheu as well as survivors of the Paris Commune such as Richard Deck and Albert Reynard. Most of these refugees were not anarchists, but they were social revolutionaries who disapproved of Marx's political views, and they did introduce a number of young Britons to the views of anarchists. It was these Britons, notably Frank Kitz and Joseph Lane, who led the League to anarchism.<sup>5</sup> Another part of the British anarchist movement consisted largely of people who had been associated with more ethical forms of socialism, and who correspondingly rejected Marxism not only as statist, but also as an immoral doctrine preaching violence and a selfish and sectional ethic of class interest.<sup>6</sup> It is these latter, new anarchists on whom we will focus.

When Kropotkin came out of Clairvaux Jail, he took refuge in Britain, where, with some followers, he joined Seymour to form an editorial collective to run The Anarchist.<sup>7</sup> Kropotkin was an anarcho-communist, not a Proudhonian mutualist, and he and his followers soon clashed with Seymour on a range of issues. In June 1886, Seymour complained about the practice, introduced by the editorial collective, of only publishing unsigned articles.<sup>8</sup> This dispute was a long-standing one. Even before the first issue of The Anarchist appeared, Seymour told Shaw he preferred signed articles, at the same time as the leading Kropotkinite told Shaw articles should be unsigned.<sup>9</sup> Now Seymour publicly complained that under editorial collectives 'individuality gets extinguished to maintain a "general tone", which may for all I know be true Communism, but isn't true Anarchism.'<sup>10</sup> To the Kropotkinites, true communism just was true anarchism. Whereas Seymour thought anonymity undermined

individual responsibility, they regarded anonymous articles as an expression of a communist ethic. Before long, Seymour also began to complain that Kropotkin and his followers demanded an equality which sacrificed the 'rights' of labour to the idle.<sup>11</sup> Because he rejected their social ethic, he could see no way of defending the hard-working against the lazy, so he could not accept their communism. In October 1886, Kropotkin and his followers broke with Seymour to start their own newspaper, Freedom.

Kropotkin's followers espoused a new anarchism which resembled other bohemian beliefs of the romantic nineties more closely than it did the radical individualism of Seymour and the Socialist League. Kropotkin appealed to them not because they wanted to assert the rights of the autonomous individual, but because they believed a new life was emerging from the decay of the old order, and they identified this new life with anarcho-communism. As Richard Le Gallienne, himself an aesthete, described the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, the criticism of Arthur Symons, the paintings of James Whistler, and the plays of Oscar Wilde, so we can describe the anarchism of Dr John Burns-Gibson, J.C. Kenworthy, J. Bruce Wallace, and Charlotte Wilson: they tried 'to escape from the deadening thralldom of materialism and outworn conventions, and to live life significantly - keenly and beautifully, personally and, if need be, daringly.'<sup>12</sup>

The new anarchism emerged principally from the Fellowship of the New Life, a discussion circle formed around Thomas Davidson, a much-travelled philosopher. The Fellowship broke with the founders of the Fabian Society in order to concentrate on spiritual and moral issues, not economic and political ones. Those associated with the Fellowship, including Ernest Rhys, a member of the Rhymers' Club, typically thought Darwinism had undermined traditional religious and moral assumptions thereby raising the spectre of a deadening materialism.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, they remained optimistic, believing they could steer a course between the Scylla of the rigid doctrines of old and the

Charybdis of a meaningless technocracy. They looked to a new morality and a new aesthetic to inspire a new society and a new life. It is here we find the basis of the sympathy between the new anarchists and other bohemians. They all wanted to break with the past by promoting a new ethic based on a new sensibility, not by introducing economic and administrative reforms such as those associated with the Fabians.

The fin de siècle was a rebellion against Victorian mores. The Victorian era was characterised by incessant theological controversy and periods of intense social disturbance, but someone looking back at it legitimately could characterise its culture as a stable composite of Protestantism and Liberalism. Debates over things such as the means of grace occurred against the background of a broad agreement on the nature and implications of Christianity: the creeds expressed the essentials, the Bible was a trusty guide, and the main religious duties were Bible reading, daily prayer, and attendance to matters pertaining to the hereafter. Victorian Liberalism was a political expression of this faith: although the main concern was the hereafter, this concern required the quiet, proficient performance of familial and civic duties - cleanliness, the moral education of the young, charity to deserving cases, and social service. It is possible to exaggerate the extent to which people broke with this culture in the 1890s, but some sort of decisive shift did take place. It was not common for people to lose their faith altogether, but it was common for the content of their faith to change decisively.<sup>14</sup> Often they turned from a literalist approach to the Bible, a transcendental view of God, and an austere individualist concept of social duty, to a pluralist approach to theological speculation, an immanentist view of God, and a concept of duty infused by an ideal of fellowship. This change paralleled developments in late Victorian society making for a less stable religious and moral culture. The growing scale of places of work, widespread migration from country to town, and the emergence of the nuclear family, all



acted as corrosives on traditional attitudes, whilst improved transport and the burgeoning leisure industry drew people away from traditional pastimes. However, the most important source of the change was perhaps the intellectual difficulties undermining Victorian Protestantism. Geology, historical criticism, and the theory of evolution led people to an immanentist faith; this immanentism prompted a greater religious pluralism by devaluing creeds and orthodoxies; and it prompted a new concern with the ideal of fellowship by emphasising the unity of all.

The idea of bringing Kropotkin to England to publish a newspaper emanated from Mrs Wilson who corresponded with Sophie Kropotkin while the latter's husband was in jail. Mrs Wilson (nee. Martin) was educated at Cheltenham Ladies College and Merton Hall (a precursor of Newnham College, Cambridge) after which she married Arthur Wilson, a stockbroker, with whom she set up home on the edge of Hampstead Heath.<sup>15</sup> She became a pre-Raphaelite bohemian, furnishing her cottage with the objects, fabrics and prints then being championed by William Morris and his circle. Like many literary radicals, she joined the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom which flourished on Stepniak's popularity amongst fashionable Londoners.<sup>16</sup> She even hoped to found her own 'literary sort of society' to be called the Russian Society, but in the end settled for a single 'drawing-room meeting' when Stepniak told her he saw no role for anything more than this.<sup>17</sup> She had a romantic view of the Russian peasantry, arguing that they retained the 'democratic and communistic spirit' of primitive socialism, so 'Russia may yet lead the way in social re-organisation.'<sup>18</sup> This idealisation of Russia led her to Kropotkin and thence anarcho-communism.

For several years, Mrs Wilson kept the black flag of anarchism aloft in the Fabian Society. She was a member of the Executive Committee, the host of the Hampstead Historic discussion group where the Fabians thrashed out their ideas, and the author of the section on anarchism in a Fabian Tract describing

the main varieties of socialism.<sup>19</sup> In the mid-1880s, however, the Fabians became increasingly committed to parliamentary action. Mrs Wilson regarded the Fabians as a group committed to discussions 'where socialists of every shape of opinion may find a common meeting ground.'<sup>20</sup> She argued political action was unnecessary and immoral, and anyway the Social Democratic Federation already provided socialists with a suitable vehicle for any political action they might want to undertake. As the Fabians turned to politics, she withdrew from the Society, effectively founded Freedom, and collected a small group around the paper.

Mrs Wilson's main British associates in the Freedom Group were: Dr. Burns-Gibson, a district police surgeon and a medical officer with the Post Office, who proposed the resolution founding the Fellowship, and who spoke on anarchism to the Hampstead Historic; Mrs Dryhurst, an Irish Nationalist and early Fabian; and Agnes Henry who lived in a communal residence of Fellowship members in Bloomsbury, London.<sup>21</sup> Outside this inner circle, there were several sympathizers and contributors, generally socialists who acknowledged anarchist leanings. These included: Emma Brooke, a friend of Mrs Wilson's from her student days who studied economics under Alfred Marshall only to leave Cambridge 'deeply dissatisfied with orthodox economics,' and who later became Secretary to the Hampstead Historic; and Edward Carpenter, a romantic poet inspired by Walt Whitman, who resigned a clerical fellowship in Cambridge, joined the Fellowship, and moved north to seek a simple life of manual labour and comradesly love.<sup>22</sup>

In the early 1890s, the Fellowship inspired a second wave of anarchists when several prominent members, led by Bruce Wallace and Kenworthy, became committed Tolstoyans.<sup>23</sup> Bruce Wallace was born in India to a Presbyterian missionary and his wife, but he was educated in Ireland where he graduated from Dublin University in 1874. He studied theology at Bonn University before becoming a Congregationalist minister. In the early 1880s, he heard Henry

George speak on land reform, began to think about social problems, and eventually started a newspaper, Brotherhood, to promote the social gospel he believed contained the solution to these problems. A few years later, he crossed the Irish Sea to found a non-doctrinaire Brotherhood Church in Southgate, London.<sup>24</sup> Kenworthy was born in Liverpool in 1863. In the early 1880s, he read Ruskin, and joined the movement for land reform, eventually becoming Honorary Secretary to the English Land Colonisation Society. He spent some time working in Mansfield House Settlement, part of a movement aiming to uplift the urban poor by encouraging middle-class folk to live and work in deprived parts of London. In the late 1880s, he turned to anarchism, contributing regularly to Freedom. In 1892, he read Tolstoy's writings whilst travelling to America and became an instant convert.<sup>25</sup>

When Kenworthy returned to England, he joined Wallace in opening a Brotherhood Church in Croydon to add to those then existing in north and north-east London at Forest Gate, Southgate and Walthamstow. These churches sought 'to apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount literally and fully to individual and social conduct, which they interpret into action by efforts to found industries and businesses on what may be described as Socialist Co-operative lines.'<sup>26</sup> In 1894, Kenworthy and Wallace founded the Brotherhood Trust, which undertook co-operative production and retailing, with any profits being put aside in order to purchase land for the establishment of anarchist communes. In this way, members opted out of the capitalist economy, and with each member supposed to recruit one new member every quarter, the hope was the alternative society of the communes would spread until capitalism and the state were no more. Wallace described the Trust as 'an organisation of industry and commerce which should substantially and increasingly benefit an ever-widening circle of honest workers, should illustrate the operation of sound moral and economic principles, and should thus serve as an object-lesson and example far more persuasive than many blasts of oratory.'<sup>27</sup> The Trust

opened stores at Croydon, Southgate and Walthamstow, all of which refused to have any dealings with firms not paying a living, or trade-union, wage. Later still, members of the Trust founded Brotherhood House, a communal residence in Croydon.

### The Theory of New Anarchism

The bohemianism of the 1890s represents an attempt to liberate the human spirit from the restrictions of Victorian religion and morality without thereby descending into a crude materialism bereft of values. On his 1882 lecture tour of America, Wilde spoke of an English Renaissance characterised by a new birth of the spirit of man.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Mrs Wilson thought the English had got rid of their 'vague dreams about a Kingdom of God,' and discovered a new ideal of 'a kingdom of man,' combining science with religion, 'animalism' with 'spirituality.'<sup>29</sup> The new anarchists, the aesthetes, and other bohemians opposed all exterior systems of religious and moral rules, but they found meaning and value in things such as liberty, art, and science. True, the new anarchists espoused a political theory, not an aesthetic, so they were less interested in defending an art free from Victorian solemnity than in devising a society free from Victorian prudery. Nonetheless, the overlap between the new anarchists and aesthetes is striking because they reacted against the same values and they hit upon similar alternatives. The political theory of the new anarchists parallels the aesthetic of the aesthetes. True, the aesthetes' concern with the limit society places on art often ends in social alienation, whereas the new anarchists' concern with a future utopia often inspires optimism. Nonetheless, the overlap again is striking for when the new anarchists considered the present, they too were alienated, and when the aesthetes pondered the future, they too dreamt of a quasi-anarchist utopia. In short, the new anarchists, unlike their predecessors, sought to realise their ideal through the spread of a new

sensibility, and this sensibility had much in common with that purveyed by the aesthetes.

Oscar Wilde wrote in The Soul of Man Under Socialism:

Socialism, Communism, or whatever one chooses to call it, by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting co-operation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism, and insure the material well-being of each member of the community. It will, in fact, give Life its proper basis and its proper environment. But, for the full development of Life to its highest mode of perfection, something more is needed. What is needed is individualism.<sup>30</sup>

No wonder Wilde acknowledged a debt to Kropotkin, and, in an interview of 1894, described himself as something of an anarchist, for here he articulates the central tenet of the new anarchism. The new anarchists wanted to avoid a dull materialism as well as the dogmatic Protestantism of the Victorians. They insisted that although socialism will bring economic well-being, something more than material satisfaction is necessary. They championed a new spirituality associated with a higher individualism; not the individualism of the Manchester School, but their own social individualism. Mrs Wilson, said the hopes of the anarchists rest on the 'spread of a higher morality,' reconciling 'absolute personal freedom with the growing desire for social unity': 'It is,' she explained, 'a question of sufficiently enlightened or socialised self-interest.'<sup>31</sup> Kenworthy described 'the complete Anarchist' as 'the perfect idealist,' 'the man whose goal is entire freedom of action for all, knowing this to be the only possible condition in which equality and fraternity can exist.'<sup>32</sup> Anarchism will resolve the conflict between the individual and the community by allowing people to do as they wish within a framework of mutual co-operation and fraternal comradeship.

A higher individualism provided the keynote of the new anarchism - the

first issue of Freedom expressed a commitment to a type of liberty at 'one with social feeling.'<sup>33</sup> The new anarchists condemned contemporary social arrangements for suppressing and distorting social impulses that otherwise would blossom into this higher individualism. Mrs Wilson called for the eradication of all forms of domination on the grounds that authority and feelings of superiority corrupt our fraternal instincts. Although western societies have done away with such striking forms of despotism as slavery and serfdom, there remains 'the spirit of domination in the concrete form of Property, guarded by law, upheld by the organised force of Government, and backed by the yet undestroyed desire to dominate in certain individuals.'<sup>34</sup> Like many anarchists, she regarded the state as a double evil. For a start, it defends class-interests embodied in the so-called rights of property: the law provides a veneer of legitimacy, but when the law fails, the police and army deal with threats to property, thereby revealing the force which really sustains current inequalities. In addition, it is an evil in its own right because others rule one through it: even democratic authority involves 'the government of man by man,' reducing the individual to a 'slave of the simulacrum that now stands for society.'<sup>35</sup> Socialist collectivism can not liberate the human spirit because the continued existence of the state entails the perpetuation of domination.

The only way to eliminate domination is to establish an anarchic community. Mrs Wilson denounced all legal systems because she believed 'in the absolute right of every adult to do exactly what he chooses' provided only he does not thereby infringe the equivalent right of others.<sup>36</sup> Only in a free society can individuals realise that true individuality which entails social feeling but not subordination to society. The existence of the state implies the imposition of a pattern of development on individuals, whereas anarchists want to see the individual 'developing himself to the utmost' by 'expanding from within outwards until his soul is one with humanity.'<sup>37</sup> The higher

individualism has to come from within, so only an anarchic society will do. As Freedom explained, anarchists believe in 'self-guidance, voluntary association, general action by the direct and unanimous decision of the persons concerned.'<sup>38</sup>

The Tolstoyans placed a similar ideal in a loose, Christian framework. Their inspiration came from the life of Christ, especially the Sermon on the Mount, not the established Church, which they condemned for renouncing Christian morality and taking on the authoritarian garb of the state. According to Kenworthy, Tolstoy 'returned to the principles of conduct taught by Jesus Christ,' sweeping aside the dogmas of the churches to leave a broad mysticism associated with John's Gospel.<sup>39</sup> Although all Christian churches teach such principles, only Tolstoy puts them into practice. Besides, Kenworthy continued, only Tolstoy recognises that Christian morality rests on passive resistance; 'the heart of the teaching of Jesus' lies in an insistence on 'self-surrender, truth, and perfect love to all,' because 'self-defence and violent resistance can never establish justice among men.'<sup>40</sup>

The Tolstoyans condemned contemporary society for transgressing Christian teachings. The capitalist economy enshrines principles of self-interest and competition, not love and cooperation, and it persists because of the illegitimate power of the state, and the failure of the Church to preach the true Gospel of Jesus. Modern society rests on a huge deceit 'concocted by a false political economy, based upon a perverted philosophy, sanctioned by a venal Church, and enforced by the State's power to kill.'<sup>41</sup> Thus, Tolstoy gave up his possessions because even if he had used his property to do good, it still would have depended on the force of police and soldiers, thereby implicating him in an immoral social system. To follow Jesus, people must renounce private property and adopt an ethic of love, and to follow the Sermon on the Mount, society must rid itself of the state and adopt anarchy. Kenworthy equated the Christian principle that we should treat others as we

would have them treat us with the realisation of the revolutionary trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity. Socialism embodies equality, and communism incorporates fraternity, but only anarchism combines these principles with liberty. Christian morality requires anarchy.

The new anarchists believed the higher individualism will emerge inevitably as the outcome of the evolutionary process. The whole of history reveals the growth of a spirit of cooperation which ultimately will take the shape of an anarchic society. The key to future development lies in the extension of this spirit of cooperation into a new sensibility. Thus, changes in institutional arrangements are far less important than the growth of a new consciousness. Certainly Kenworthy believed the anarchist ideal will arise from people subscribing to a new religious sensibility. He said: 'the Utopia we seek is not a pious hope with which to comfort ourselves, but a practicable reality to be brought about by entering into relationship with the spirit world which is part of the one Nature to which we all belong.'<sup>42</sup> He also distinguished wayward materialists who want to change the system but in the meantime happily profit under it from right-thinking mystics who recognise the system is 'the outward manifestation of an indwelling life' and attempt to change the system by living the new life.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Mrs Wilson stressed 'each individual must feel that the responsibility for the realisation of his share in the advance towards his ideal rests with himself alone.'<sup>44</sup> This attitude meant the new anarchists concentrated their energies on transforming their own lives and educating people in the new morality.

Not only did the new anarchists focus on personal regeneration, many of them refused to countenance established forms of political action. The majority argued authoritatively to decree an end to authority is both contradictory and immoral, and so doomed to fail. Mrs Wilson insisted anarchists 'cannot conscientiously take part in any sort of government' because they thereby would strengthen the 'idea that the rule of man over man



is a right and beneficial thing.'<sup>45</sup> The Freedom group as a whole stood by this view, arguing, for example, that expropriation will fail if it is undertaken by an organisation embodying the principle of authority.<sup>46</sup> Amongst the Tolstoyans, Kenworthy too opposed political action on the grounds that 'the stage of law, of force, will not cease, cannot cease, while I and others continue to use it.'<sup>47</sup> In contrast, Wallace defended political action in principle, though he thought such action probably would prove to be ineffectual.<sup>48</sup>

### New and Old Anarchism

Although the new anarchists differed from one another in some of their opinions, a few of which we have mentioned, they clearly shared enough in common for us to contrast them with traditional anarchists such as Seymour and the members of the Socialist League. The latter all belonged to a radical tradition stressing the liberation of the individual from the fetters of the state, and sometimes the capitalist economy. They thought individuals generally should be free to do as they wish without reference to the community. In contrast, the new anarchists wanted to bring the individual into a proper relationship with the community through the spread of a new sensibility. They thought individuals generally should recognise that their particular good consists in the good of the community. Kenworthy said Tolstoy's great discovery was that 'mankind is the creation of a God who is love,' so 'love and service to one another are the only relations in which man can exist happily.'<sup>49</sup> These constraining perspectives inspired lively debates within the anarchist movement on the nature of the ideal, and how the ideal can be established.

Let us begin by considering the nature of the anarchist ideal. Proudhon and Bakunin advocated desert-based concepts of justice according to which individuals should consume goods in proportion to the work they perform.

Proudhon hoped to realise a just society by retaining private property but introducing a mutual credit bank to lend money free of interest and thereby remove all possibility of exploitation.<sup>50</sup> Bakunin believed in criteria of 'work' because 'society cannot . . . leave itself completely defenceless against vicious and parasitic individuals,' but he hoped to realise his ideal by collectivising the means of production, and presumably arranging distribution through something akin to a market economy.<sup>51</sup> When Kropotkin advocated a need-based theory of justice, he did so for two reasons.<sup>52</sup> First, he argued pragmatically that desert-based systems can not work. We can distinguish neither the means of production from the means of consumption nor the precise contribution of a particular individual to the process of production. Second, he argued morally that a need-based society is preferable to a desert-based one. Private property of any sort encourages acquisitiveness and a desire to dominate both of which are detrimental to the ideal of mutual aid. Thus, he concluded consumption should be communal with everyone taking whatever they need from a collective store. Clearly people could become anarcho-communists for either of these reasons. Proudhonites and Bakuninites sometimes accepted his pragmatic arguments but not his moral arguments. We can think of them as reluctant and pessimistic anarcho-communists: they adopted anarcho-communism somewhat reluctantly when they realised their more individualistic ideal could not work; and they were pessimistic about the prospects of anarcho-communism because of their more individualist view of human nature.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Kropotkinites accepted his moral arguments about the social and cooperative nature of humanity. This is one plausible distinction between the old and new anarchists.

Certainly Seymour never became anything other than a reluctant and pessimistic anarcho-communist. It was a debate with Kropotkin which led him to adopt an ideal of 'voluntary communism.' He acknowledged common ownership of the means of production without free consumption requires some sort of rule

to abolish inheritance thus preventing private accumulations of wealth and a consequent return to inequality. Hence the need for communism. But he also insisted that because compulsory communism is antithetical to individualism, to compel people to accept communism is to violate anarchist principles. Hence communism must be voluntary. Thus, although he acknowledged the validity of Kropotkin's pragmatic argument, he remained wedded to an ideal of autonomous individuals doing as they please, and reaping the consequences, outside of any context of social relations. The problem was his old individualist sympathies left him opposing a number of positions which follow more or less logically from a commitment to anarcho-communism. For instance, he sought a mechanism to prevent idlers consuming goods produced by the hard-working even though any such mechanism necessarily undermines a need-based system of consumption.<sup>54</sup> What is more, his old secularist sympathies prevented him resolving the tension between anarcho-communism and his individualism by appealing to a social instinct such that free individuals necessarily strive for the common good. For instance, he remained implacably 'opposed to all nonsense known as "public morality" as set up by a "public opinion",' affirming instead 'there is no morality but liberty.'<sup>55</sup> Even after he became an anarcho-communist, he continued to regard the idea of social solidarity with suspicion as a threat to the autonomous individual.

In contrast, the new anarchists placed an even greater stress on Kropotkin's moral argument than he did himself. All anarcho-communists must explain how a society where an individual's consumption of goods bears no relation to his or her production of goods can guarantee the community will produce a sufficient amount of goods to meet the total demand for consumption.

Kropotkin held a very Victorian concept of progress such that the primary solution to this dilemma lay in science: technological advances will enable humanity to produce sufficient goods to meet any conceivable demand. The new anarchists found the primary solution to this dilemma in the emergence of a

new sensibility: a new ethic will inspire people both to work for the general good and to consume only what they need. Of course, both Kropotkin and the new anarchists used both of these arguments, but Kropotkin seems to have rested his view of human nature on the natural sciences, whereas his followers and the Tolstoyans placed more emphasis on morality understood in terms of reason or spirit. For example, Mrs Wilson, responded to an objection raised by Shaw by saying the sense of security people currently obtain from owning property will come in an anarchist society from 'the moral attitude of the public' to the claim of the individual.<sup>56</sup> The ideal of the new anarchists was not the autonomous individual of Seymour but a social individual who attains personal freedom through the community: social solidarity is not a threat to the individual but the means of self-realisation for the individual. Thus, they naturally opposed any attempt to divide society into workers and idlers.

Let us turn now to debates about anarchist strategy. Bakunin viewed violence as illegitimate in itself but legitimate as a means of ensuring the triumph of anarchy. Consequently, his strategic concerns centred on the question of under what circumstances intrinsically immoral violence became a morally acceptable means to a desirable end. He believed the masses did not establish anarchy because the coercive and unjust nature of society kept them ignorant and downtrodden. How could anarchists break through this stupor to initiate the revolution? Bakunin argued human instincts are more powerful and trustworthy than reason: whereas doctrine kills life, all urges, including the destructive urge, are creative. Thus, he concluded violence provides a legitimate means of awakening the revolutionary instincts of the masses. For most of his life, he took this to mean anarchists should use violence in the course of an uprising designed to initiate a popular revolution.<sup>57</sup> But after he led an ill-fated uprising at Castel del Monte in 1874, a number of his followers decided insurrectionary acts alone could prompt the masses to turn an uprising into a popular revolution. It was this faith in insurrectionary

acts that gave rise to the doctrine of propaganda by the deed, and so, in the 1890s, those isolated and pointless acts of terror known as attentats.

Kropotkin always believed violence might well be necessary for the seizure of property during the revolution, and, for a while, he even advocated something akin to propaganda by the deed.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, he focused primarily on working for a revolution by appealing to reason through peaceful persuasion, not by appealing to the instincts through action. He had greater faith in the reason of the people than did Bakunin. Thus, he wanted anarchists to persuade the people to initiate their own spontaneous revolution. He did not want anarchists to use action or putsches to try to propel the people into revolution, a strategy he thought probably would prove unsuccessful, and even if it did prove successful, probably would end in authoritarianism. This is another plausible distinction between the old and new anarchists.<sup>59</sup>

The anarchists of the Socialist League emphasised the role of violent deeds as a form of propaganda. Indeed, this emphasis on violence was what most angered members of the League who did not consider themselves to be anarchists - Morris and his followers finally resigned from the League when Nicoll published articles on 'Revolutionary Warfare' in 1890.<sup>60</sup> At times, the anarchists within the League seemed almost to delight in violence, or at least the idea of violence, for its own sake. They wrote joyously of workers throwing stones at the police during a strike in Leeds, complaining only that 'no corpses [were] to be seen'; they called on people to start 'a fire that would end the whole damn thing'; and they argued an anarchist 'should take what he requires of the wealth around him, using violence whenever necessary.'<sup>61</sup> This faith in the efficacy of violent deeds led several members of the League to toy with attentats. When, in 1893, a bomb went off at the opera house in Barcelona killing thirty people, Henry Samuels wrote: 'yes, I am really pleased.'<sup>62</sup> On 15 February 1894, Martial Bourdin, a brother-in-law

of Samuels, fell over, landed on a bomb he was carrying, and blew himself up.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, the new anarchists typically eschewed violence as an instrument of propaganda. The Tolstoyans rejected all violence as immoral, championing an ideal and strategy based on passive resistance. The Freedom group accepted the revolution probably would be violent, but they opposed violence as a means of preparing people for the revolution, trusting to the gradual evolution of a rational morality. Although they considered attentats to be understandable, they condemned them as unhelpful.<sup>64</sup>

These different attitudes to violent deeds were a source of tension amongst anarchist groups. When Freedom and the League organised a meeting in 1891 on behalf of the Chicago Anarchists, a member of the League sniped at the Freedom speakers, saying 'we have heard much of the doctrine of brotherhood and love tonight, but the doctrine of hate and vengeance is just as necessary and right.'<sup>65</sup> At about the same time, another member of the League complained although Carpenter wrote poems full of anarchist sentiment, he 'disavows all connexion with Anarchists [of the Socialist League]' and 'has never except in a half-hearted way done anything to support our propaganda.'<sup>66</sup> The issue of violence reached a climax with the Walsall Anarchist Case. Fred Charles, a member of the League, moved to Walsall in July 1891, and later that year he was joined by Victor Cailes, a French refugee brought into the League by Coulon, a member of the North Kensington branch. In January 1892, six Walsall anarchists were arrested and charged, under the explosives act, with possession of materials for making a bomb. They were: Cailes, Charles, a refugee called Battola, and three local men, Deakin, Ditchfield, and Westley. Battola, Cailes, and Charles got ten years imprisonment, Deakin got five years, and Ditchfield and Westley were found not guilty. Afterwards Nicoll wrote an article entitled 'Are These Men Fit to Live,' attacking both Coulon, who he suspected of being a police agent, and the police officers who had conducted the inquiry.<sup>67</sup> He was arrested and sentenced to eighteen months for

incitement to murder. After this episode, the League fell apart, leaving a small circle clustered around their newspaper, Commonweal, which lost money until publication finally ceased in May 1894. Also in 1894, Mrs Wilson resigned from Freedom for personal reasons, and without her financial backing the paper folded in January 1895, though it reappeared later that year under the control of some of those who had belonged to the League.

### Anarchism and Sex Reform

The bohemians who broke with Victorian mores earned the nineties a plethora of titles such as decadent and naughty. However, those involved, including the new anarchists, saw themselves as the prophets of a deeper spirituality and a larger morality. They believed their higher individualism showed conventional standards to be rigid and arbitrary: Victorian morality rested on a dogmatic theology already found false. Furthermore, they believed personal and social salvation depended on their success in living in accord with the new sensibility. As Kenworthy explained, 'the part of our "programme" which differentiates us from others who seek after the ideal society, is the determination that, let the world go in such way as it pleases, we, each one for his own part, for the "salvation of his soul" must live honestly and fraternally.'<sup>68</sup>

Here we have the new anarchists' alternative to violent deeds. They believed anarchy would come about as a result of the spread of a new ethic based on reason or spirit, and one way of peacefully persuading people to adopt this new ethic was by putting it into practice. Besides, they could not be true to themselves without incorporating the new ethic into their own lives. It was for these reasons they became involved in movements from which the old anarchists generally stood aloof (even when they were sympathetic) to devote themselves to liberating the people by insurrectionary deeds and revolutionary action. Many of the Freedom group became involved in the

movement for sex reform trying to devise personal relationships in accord with the new ethic. And although the leading Tolstoyans opposed sexual liberation, they formed utopian communities to embody the new ethic. The connections between new anarchism and these other bohemian movements were both personal and intellectual: various new anarchists participated in these movements, and they did so because their theory pointed them in these directions. Moreover, when the new anarchists joined the movements for sex reform and communalism, they associated themselves with other bohemians to give a new slant to these movements. Of course, although we will focus on the activities of the new anarchists, they were only a small proportion of those involved in these movements.

Throughout the 1890s, various bohemians rejected what they saw as the fixed rules of the Victorian era for a flexible sensibility enabling people to relate simply and freely to one another and things. Three connected distinctions capture this shift away from the Victorian. The new anarchists and their associates stood for the control of individuals over their moral development, not moral conventions; for personalities, not principles; and for sensibility, not morality. As they broke with Victorian mores, they talked of the virtue of living in accord with one's own feelings, and developing one's own innate character to the highest possible perfection. Good behaviour became behaviour rooted in one's inner self, and a good life became a life expressing one's inner nature in the way a work of art expresses the personality of the artist. People should expand and beautify their own selves, not slavishly follow external codes.

The most controversial aspect of this fin de siècle morality was the challenge to sexual mores. If people are to follow their instincts, their sexual desires can not be denounced. The bohemians argued pleasure was not suspect and natural functions were not evil. Sex is there to be enjoyed, perhaps even enjoyed in whatever manner one wishes. Thus, épater la



bourgeoisie became a fashionable sport with many of the players being motivated by a genuine conviction that established conventions imprison the human spirit, so to break these conventions is to liberate the soul. As Wilde explained, the higher individualism 'converts the abolition of legal restraint into a form of freedom that will help the full development of personality, and make the love of man and woman more wonderful, more beautiful, more ennobling.'<sup>69</sup>

The most noted feature of the sex reform movement of the 1890s was the prominence given to 'the woman question' by the fiction of the new women. They tried to make their female characters more realistic and vital than the passive and insipid heroines of much Victorian literature. Their female characters were intelligent and sexually sophisticated in ways which gave them independence and bohemian glamour. In addition, they used their fiction to raise feminist issues exploring the sexual and economic bases of the oppression of women, with plots revolving around the restricted opportunities available to women in marriage and the labour market.<sup>70</sup> A significant number of new women were active in the burgeoning socialist movement, usually as exponents of ethical socialism which emphasised the making of socialists at a local level as both a means to successful parliamentary action and an end in itself. They thought of socialism and feminism as expressions of a single ethic of human emancipation, and sometimes they further extended this ethic to embrace the concerns of homosexuals. A few had an interest in the cocktail of evolutionary mysticism and sexual liberation taught by James Hinton.<sup>71</sup> But most adopted a more cautious and conventional outlook, typified by the Men and Women's Club, a group founded in 1885 by Professor Karl Pearson, who later became a prominent eugenicist, for the purpose of 'free and unreserved discussion of all matters connected with the relations of the sexes.'<sup>72</sup> The Club took heterosexuality as a given and refused to have any dealings with Hintonians, who they believed to be advocates of free love.<sup>73</sup> However, even

within these boundaries, the formal discussion of sexual matters, by women as well as men, was a daring enterprise at the time.

The new anarchists were active in all of these compartments of the sex reform movement. Miss Brooke was a new women novelist whose heroines rejected the standard Victorian view of their nature and role. Her novel A Superfluous Woman deals with the gulf between the role society imposes on women and their natural emotions.<sup>74</sup> The heroine, Jessamine, is an upper-class girl whose upbringing centres on the goal of a materially successful marriage. She flees from the artificial society of London to the Scottish Highlands, where she returns to a simple life amongst local crofters. Her natural emotions return, and she falls in love with Colin, a crofter, who stirs within her a sexual passion totally at odds with the ideal of a lady she had been brought up to accept. After a period of emotional turmoil, she returns to London and marries a Lord, a capitulation to social norms which leads to her nervous breakdown and ultimate death.

Miss Brooke and Mrs Wilson were part of the loose circle of socialists and sex reformers centred on Carpenter and Olive Schreiner, a circle including Katherine Conway, Isabella Ford, and Enid Stacey all of who turned to socialism partly due to the influence of Carpenter. This circle theorised the dilemmas explored in the fiction of the new women by reference to the sexual, social, and economic inequalities facing women. They believed women had to break free of the male stereotype of their sex and take control of their own lives, something many of them associated with the actions of Nora in Ibsen's A Doll's House.<sup>75</sup> Carpenter argued women lack the education and financial independence to be anything other than domestic drudges or prostitutes. Men have reduced women to chattels who might be able to offer sex, but certainly not comradeship; and because men can not find comradeship with women, they themselves are perpetual adolescents. Until women overcome the social forces keeping them passive and dependent, personal relationships will remain

unsatisfactory. Many of the circle around Carpenter believed economic independence to be a requirement for women taking control of their lives. This prompted a concern not only with the dependent nature of the marital relation, but also with the problems of female industrial workers. Miss Ford in particular played a leading role in supporting unionisation and strikes amongst the female weavers of Yorkshire. Moreover, this concern with female industrial workers inspired a number of studies of their plight: Miss Ford distilled her practical experience in a short treatise on wages, and Miss Brooke produced a tabulated comparison of the relevant legislation across Europe.<sup>76</sup> In 1908, some years after resigning from Freedom, Mrs Wilson returned to the Fabian Society where she founded the Fabian Women's Group, acting as its Secretary until 1914, with Miss Brooke also being a member. The Group supported the suffragists, whilst emphasising social and economic questions, and again investigating the wages and conditions of female workers.<sup>77</sup>

Carpenter, himself a homosexual, expressed especially radical views. He argued whilst eastern mystics approach the new sensibility by contemplating the divine within themselves, the Western way will remain the path of love.<sup>78</sup>

The meaning and purpose of love lies in fusion, not procreation; it can be identified with comradeship and divorced from sex. He viewed homosexuality as congenital, as did his friend Havelock Ellis, a sex psychologist and member of the Fellowship, but he did not treat homosexuality as an abnormality so much as a model of the comradeship defining the new sensibility.<sup>79</sup> The special, comradely nature of homosexuals appears in their unique role throughout history. In primitive societies, women did domestic chores, men hunted, and homosexuals undertook the cohesive and caring work of teachers, medicine men and prophets. The Spartans formalised the teaching role of homosexuals, calling the lover inspirer and the youth hearer. Now the love of homosexuals crosses barriers of class, so homosexuals act as the harbingers of Democracy:

'the uranian people may be destined to form the advance guard of that great movement which will one day transform the common life by substituting the bond of personal affection and compassion for the monetary, legal and other external ties which now control and confine society.'<sup>80</sup>

Miss Brooke and Mrs Wilson also were involved in the Men and Women's Club, which consciously rejected the evangelical basis of Victorian morality by considering personal relations 'from the historical and scientific as distinguished from the theological standpoint.'<sup>81</sup> Debate within the group centred on marriage, the possibility of equal relationships between the sexes, prostitution, and the role of the state in all such matters. The female members of the Club soon began to articulate a critique of the Victorian concept of womanhood, and the pattern of relationships this concept encouraged. For example, Miss Brooke insisted on the reality of female sexuality, arguing problems in sexual relations arise because women currently have sole responsibility for child-bearing.<sup>82</sup> Men have a false image of women as typified by the ideal of the madonna and child. Women enjoy sex just as much as men, and men want children just as much as women. The only relevant difference is women suffer the torment of giving birth and men do not. Thus, whereas women desperately try to avoid perpetual child-bearing by means of chastity, preventive checks, and the like, men shun self-control and force women to have child after child, thereby denying them control over their own bodies. She recommended both sexes exercise self-control to ensure child-bearing occurs only where there is love sanctioned by duty and only under circumstances that enable women to retain the strength necessary to raise the children they do have.

The new anarchists and their fellow sex reformers significantly altered the nature of the suffrage movement. The early suffragists drew on a tradition of enlightenment liberalism dominated by Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill.<sup>83</sup> This tradition emphasises the common attributes of men

and women as an argument for giving them the same legal and political status.

Although Wollstonecraft and Mill acknowledged motherhood as an important aspect of many women's lives, they did not recognise it as a structural impediment to equality. The early suffragists demanded the vote as a right, but they had little to say about the particular social and economic problems facing women. The sex reformers of the 1890s did much to initiate a new form of suffragism. They promoted a concern with sexual differences, and the way these affected relations between men and women; they raised issues relating to marriage, prostitution, and venereal disease. The suffragists did not develop a uniform approach to sex reform - some advocated birth-control and even free love whilst the majority looked for greater abstinence within marriage - but they did start to consider issues neglected by Wollstonecraft and Mill. Moreover, the emergence of these new issues led some of them to adopt novel arguments for extending the vote to women. They argued women have particular nurturing characteristics which will benefit the state, especially in an age when welfare legislation is giving it an increasingly caring role.<sup>84</sup>

#### Anarchist Communalism

The new anarchists pinned their hopes on a new ethic liberating our personal and social lives. The new life requires an anarchic social framework consisting of a federation of local communes each of which acts as an autonomous unit of production and distribution, with individual members giving according to their ability and taking according to their need. But this framework is just a framework. The important thing is the new ethic. Thus, many of the new anarchists, particularly the Tolstoyans, concentrated their energies on building communal experiments where people could live in accord with this ethic. Their activities resembled those of utopian socialists who concentrated on living out their ideal, not those of anarchists who adopted propaganda by the deed. As Hubert Hammond, a Tolstoyan, explained, 'we do not

desire to press our views upon anyone, but to seek out for ourselves the source of true life and earnestly to strive to live this life.'<sup>85</sup>

The most prominent communalists in Victorian Britain were the Owenite socialists, whose communes reflected both an abstract concern to realise a harmonious society based on small, local, voluntary associations, and a practical experience of cooperatives as a model for economic organisation.<sup>86</sup> The Owenites wanted to provide working examples of more equitable, but also more efficient, systems of production and exchange. In the 1870s, other groups of communalists emerged from the romantic wing of the back to the land movement. Ruskin founded St. George's farm at Abbeydale, just outside of Sheffield, for industrial workers to avoid the ills of industrialism. This romantic dream of a pastoral utopia soon met up with growing worries about urban unemployment, and, in the 1880s, a number of Ruskin's followers, including Kenworthy, formed the English Land Colonisation Society to resettle unemployed workers and their families in self-sufficient, agrarian communes.

The relevance of the Owenites and the land colonisers to the new anarchists appears in the origins of the first anarchist commune. The Clousden Hill Communist and Cooperative Colony was formed in 1895 by some of Kropotkin's followers who wanted to provide practical confirmation of his theories by running a twenty acre farm on anarcho-communist lines. The main figures behind Clousden Hill, Frank Kapper and William Key, met at a Cooperative Congress, and they told Le Temps they had been influenced by E.T. Craig who had been a member of the Owenite Commune at Ralahine.<sup>87</sup> When Kapper and Key wrote a prospectus for the commune, they deliberately addressed it 'To all Friends and Sympathisers of Land Colonisation.' Their first six points would have been familiar to the Owenites, whilst the last two embodied the distinctive contribution of Kropotkin:

#### OBJECTS

1. The acquisition of a common and indivisible capital for the

establishment of an Agricultural and Industrial Colony.

2. The mutual assurance of its members against the evils of poverty, sickness, infirmity, and old age.
3. The attainment of a greater share of the comforts of life than the working classes now possess.
4. The mental and moral improvement of all its members.
5. The education of the children.
6. To promote or help any organisation to organise similar colonies.
7. To demonstrate the superiority of Free Communist Association as against the Competitive Production of to-day.
8. To demonstrate the productivity of land under intensive culture.<sup>88</sup>

The next anarchist commune to be formed was the Norton Hall Community just outside of Sheffield, the inspiration for which was Carpenter, who himself lived a self-sufficient life as a market-gardener nearby in rural Derbyshire.

The Norton colonists specialised in horticulture, growing flowers, fruit, and vegetables in five greenhouses and a large garden. In 1898, they also started to make sandals, which Carpenter believed liberated the feet.

The first Tolstoyan colony was founded in 1896 at Purleigh, Essex where Kenworthy himself built a house.<sup>89</sup> Other residents included Aylmer Maude, the leading translator of Tolstoy, who raised a thousand pounds for the Dukhobors with the help of Vladimir Tcherthoff, a friend of Tolstoy's who arrived at Purleigh in the spring of 1897.<sup>90</sup> The number of colonists rose to over sixty, a quarter of who lived on land owned by the colony, whilst the remainder resided nearby. In accord with the concept of Bread Labour that Tolstoy had taken over from Bondaref, each colonist had to earn their own livelihood by their own labour, although the community guaranteed them the opportunity so to do. The colonists tried to go back to the land by farming ten acres; they had a kitchen garden, apple trees and gooseberry bushes, and they kept cows and hens. They did much of the work by hand, although they also used an old horse

which earlier had pulled a London bus. In 1899, Kenworthy began to print New Order, the main Tolstoyan publication, at Purleigh, and for a while the colony offered holidays to sympathizers who paid for their board and lodging. On Sunday evenings, the colonists held meetings at which they sang Labour Church hymns and heard readings from works such as Morris' A Dream of John Ball. Individual members also pursued personal crusades: one of them described how 'some have decided not to hold legal titles in property, others endeavour not to use money, others not to use stamps, others protest against railways.'<sup>91</sup> However, as with many of the colonies, the members had some difficulty fitting their experiment into the commercial world. When they advertised their products in New Order, a correspondent complained this smacked of competition, and to be true to their principles they should rely solely on word of mouth and the grace of God.<sup>92</sup>

Other Tolstoyans formed colonies nearby at Ashingdon and Wickford, though many of the latter were 'City men' who continued to commute to work in London.<sup>93</sup> In 1898, a dispute over the vetting of applicant members ended with the less restrictive of the Essex Tolstoyans decamping to found a new community at Whiteway, Gloucestershire.<sup>94</sup> A few of the Whiteway colonists worked in small industries linked to those of the nearby village of Sheepscombe, but the majority again worked the land. The colony began with forty acres of farmland, later expanding to include a dairy. True to their principles, the colonists burnt the title deed to their land, saying all land was given 'by the Supreme Being for the use of man and therefore should be free to everyone.'<sup>95</sup>

Only a few of the new anarchists formed urban communes. The most important of these was in Leeds, where, in 1897, Albert Gibson helped workers who had suffered in an industrial dispute to form a Brotherhood Workshop to make bicycles and repair electrical goods whilst engaging in religious and philosophical discussions.<sup>96</sup> Later the colonists started a sideline in



publishing under the Leeds Free Anarchist Group imprint. They published pamphlets by Kropotkin and Mrs Wilson as well as a northern newspaper titled The Free Commune. In 1899, an offshoot of the Leeds group set up a similar commune in Blackburn, again devoted to the repair of electrical goods. Finally, the new anarchists promoted the occasional self-help enterprise such as the Swadlicote Colony near Burton-on-Trent. The Swadlicote Colony was begun with the aid of financial loans from Wallace and J. Theodore Harris when the local colliery failed under capitalism. The miners used the loans to keep the colliery going under their own management, and for a while they supplied coal to various other anarchist colonies such as Purleigh. Soon, however, the miners had to seek further capital by selling shares.<sup>97</sup>

The anarchist communes represented attempts to live out an alternative to the prim, narrow-minded, commercial existence of the Victorian middle-class. They embodied a new sensibility which led members to pool their resources, and generally, though by no means always, to work hard for the common good. Members also ignored Victorian conventions in the name of a free and proper relationship to one another and the things around them. Many communes were exclusively vegetarian out of respect for living creatures. Anarchist papers carried adverts for unusual clothes, and several of the colonists followed Wilde in rejecting the absurdly tight-fitting fashions of the time, whilst a few even followed Shaw in rejecting the use of vegetable materials in favour of Jaeger's woollens. The colonists generally looked upon marriage as an optional commitment, with many couples preferring to live together rather than, as they saw it, make the woman the chattel of the man. The women all worked alongside the men, though the men do not seem to have been quite so ready to muck in with the household chores.

Eventually most of the communes suffered from the difficulties that so often beset such experiments. The colonies attracted idlers, the standard of living went down, members began to bicker, key figures left, and in the end

the communes disbanded or disintegrated. At Purleigh, various disputes over who should do what led to a series of departures with those who remained doing less and less work. In the end, health inspectors closed the colony down following an outbreak of smallpox amongst the few undernourished and cold colonists who remained. Similarly, the organisers of the Leeds Colony decided to allow the workers to work as and when they pleased, but such generosity did not make for financial viability, so the organisers tried to return to regular hours of work, only to meet with hostility from the workers and finally the collapse of the workshop. The Whiteway Colony alone survived far into the twentieth century, and there the members kept things going only by rejecting communism for a Proudhonian system based on individual possession of particular plots of land.

### Conclusion

The 1890s witnessed the growth of a new type of anarchism, significantly different from the radical, individualist tradition of Proudhon and Bakunin. The new anarchists championed a spiritual ethic designed to fuse a higher individualism with an open communalism. They wanted a stateless society incorporating a communist system of distribution, and they hoped to realise this society by converting people to their ethic by non-violent means, and especially the moral power of the example they offered. Thus, they shunned revolutionary and terrorist activities, concentrating instead on the transformation of personal relationships and the creation of communes.

This new anarchism with its emphasis on sex reform and communalism has become an increasingly prominent side of the anarchist movement during the twentieth century. It originally arose as one facet of the broad intellectual currents that define fin de siecle bohemianism. Social developments and intellectual discoveries undermined the Liberal and Protestant culture of the Victorians, leaving many people searching for an alternative way of life.

Thus, whilst there were differences between the new anarchists, aesthetes, sex reformers, and communalists, there also were significant overlaps of both personnel and ideas. They all sought a new sensibility enabling individuality to flourish within a context of social harmony without coercion or authority.

To extend an image of Le Gallienne, we might imagine the bohemian world of the 1890s as a series of booths at a fair, each with a lusty crier inviting us in to shows covering aestheticism, anarchism, environmentalism, feminism, spiritualism, theosophy, vegetarianism, and so on. A member of Whiteway described the early meetings of the colony when 'every kind of "crank" came and aired his views on the open platform': there were 'Atheists, Spiritualists, Individualists, Communists, Anarchists, ordinary politicians, Vegetarians, Anti-Vivisectionists and Anti-Vaccinationists.'<sup>98</sup> The change in the anarchist ideal was part of a broader cultural shift from a Liberal and individualist Protestantism to a romantic and optimistic modernism.

## NOTES

1. Although some scholars give 'anarchy' a more ancient lineage, the fact is Proudhon was the first to use the word to describe a political outlook, and it became associated with a historical movement only when Marx used it to describe the views of Bakunin and his followers. Even Bakunin preferred to describe himself as a 'collectivist' so as to distance himself from Proudhon. Only in the 1880s did a self-styled anarchist movement emerge. For a general study see J. Joll, The Anarchists (London, 1979). On British anarchism see H. Oliver, The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian London (London, 1983); and J. Quail, The Slow Burning Fuse (London, 1977). On Victorian reactions to anarchism see B. Melchiori, Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel (London, 1985); and H. Shpayer, 'British Anarchism 1881-1914: Appearance and Reality', Phd., London, 1981.
2. On Seymour see The Labour Annual (1899), p. 162.
3. The Anarchist, March 1885.
4. eg. G. Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', Fabian Tract 45 (1893).
5. Kitz published his autobiographical reflections in Freedom, Jan.-July 1912.
6. This ethical critique of Marxism was common amongst new lifers and their Fabian sympathizers: see P. Chubb, 'The Two Alternatives', To-day viii (1887), 69-77; J. Ramsay MacDonald, 'A Rock Ahead', To-day vii (1887), 66-70; and S. Olivier, 'Perverse Socialism', To-day vi (1886), 47-55 & 109-14.
7. His autobiography is P. Kropotkin, Memoirs of a Revolutionist, pref. G. Brandes, 2 Vols. (London, 1899). On his London years also see J. Hulse, Revolutionists in London: A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists (Oxford, 1970), pp. 53-76.

8. Originally Seymour said 'each writer must be alone responsible for his or her views': The Anarchist, March 1885. But later he had acquiesced in the collective's decision only to publish anonymous articles: The Anarchist, 20 April 1886.

9. Seymour to Shaw, 5 & 6 Jan. 1885, Shaw Papers, British Library, London, BM50511; and Mrs Wilson to Shaw 10 Dec. 1884, BM50510. Numbers in the Shaw Papers are provisional.

10. The Anarchist, 1 June 1886.

11. The Anarchist, May 1887.

12. R. Le Gallienne, The Romantic '90s (London, 1951), p. 157.

13. On Davidson see T. Davidson, 'Autobiographical Sketch', ed. A. Lataner, Journal of the History of Ideas xviii (1957), 531-36; and W. Knight, ed., Memorials of Thomas Davidson (London, 1907). On the Fellowship see its journal Seedtime. Rhys's autobiography is E. Rhys, Everyman Remembers (London, 1931).

14. On this process and its political implications see M. Bevir, 'Welfarism, Socialism, and Religion: On T.H. Green and Others', Review of Politics, lv (1993), 639-61.

15. Mrs Wilson was the model for Gemma in E. Voynich, The Gadfly (London, 1897).

16. On Stepniak and the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom see Hulse, Revolutionists, pp. 29-52.

17. Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 24 Jan. 1886, Pearson Papers (PP), Bloomsbury Science Library, University College, London, PP:900.

18. C. Wilson, 'The Condition of the Russian Peasantry', To-day iv (1885), 357.
19. C. Wilson & Others, 'What Socialism Is', Fabian Tract 4 (1886).
20. Mrs Wilson to Shaw, 13 Sept. 1886, BM50511. This was a common view amongst anarchists. The Anarchist, July 1885 said 'although the Fabian Society is as yet bourgeois in constitution and sentiment it is the only meeting ground in London for English Socialists of all denominations.'
21. Mrs Wilson's history of the Group is in Freedom, Dec. 1900. Also see Freedom: A Hundred Years (London, 1986). On Dr Burns-Gibson's talk to the Hampstead Historic see Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 4 March 1886, PP:900.
22. On Miss Brooke see The Labour Annual (1895), p 163. Carpenter's autobiography is E. Carpenter, My Days and Dreams (London, 1916). Recent studies of Carpenter's life and thought include S. Pierson, "Edward Carpenter: Prophet of a Socialist Millennium", Victorian Studies xiii (1970), 301-18; S. Rowbotham & J. Weeks, Socialism and the New Life: The Personal Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis (London, 1977); and C. Tsuzuki, Edward Carpenter 1844-1929 (Cambridge, 1980).
23. For Tolstoy's anarchist beliefs see L. Tolstoy, The Kingdom of God and Peace Essays, trans. A. Maude (London, 1936). Not all members of the Fellowship took to Tolstoy. Most were vaguely sympathetic, but critical of his stress on the spiritual and individual at the expense of the physical and social: see H. Rix, 'The Later Works of Count Leo Tolstoy', Seedtime, Jan. 1893. Kenworthy captured the situation, saying of the Fellowship, 'in economics we are Socialists; in our ideal we are communists; in politics we are, some of us, Anarchists of Peace': Seedtime, April 1895.
24. The Labour Annual (1895), p. 191.

25. He wrote about part of his life in J. Kenworthy, My Psychic Experiences (London, 1901). Also see The Labour Annual (1895), p. 177. He wrote a series of articles on 'Charity: True and False', Freedom, July-Oct. 1896.
26. The Labour Annual (1896), p. 44.
27. J. Bruce Wallace, Towards Fraternal Organisation: An Explanation of the Brotherhood Trust (London, 1894), p. 3.
28. R. Ellmann, Oscar Wilde (Harmondsworth, 1988), pp. 157-58.
29. Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 11 Nov. 1884 & 8 Oct. 1885, PP:900.
30. O. Wilde, The Soul of Man Under Socialism (London, 1912), p. 6.
31. Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 30 Oct. 1884 & 19 Dec. 1884, PP:900.
32. J. Kenworthy, Tolstoy: His Life and Works (London, 1902), pp. 120-21.
33. Freedom, Oct. 1886.
34. C. Wilson, 'Social Democracy and Anarchism', The Practical Socialist i (Jan. 1886), 11.
35. C. Wilson, Anarchism (Leeds, 1900), p. 4.
36. Mrs Wilson to Shaw, 10 Dec. 1884, BM50510.
37. Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 4 March 1886, PP:900.
38. Freedom, Nov. 1890.
39. Kenworthy, Tolstoy, p. 29. He wrote a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount in New Order, Dec. 1897 & Jan. 1898.

40. Kenworthy, Tolstoy, p. 34.
41. Ibid., p. 130.
42. Kenworthy, Psychic, p. 19.
43. Kenworthy, Tolstoy, p. 42.
44. Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 19 Dec. 1884, PP:900.
45. C. Wilson, Anarchism and Outrage (London, 1893), p. 4.
46. 'Labour Leaflet', Freedom, Aug. 1890.
47. New Order, Nov. 1897.
48. New Order, Dec. 1897.
49. Kenworthy, Tolstoy, p. 28.
50. P-J. Proudhon, What is Property, trans. B. Tucker, 2 Vols. (London, 1898-1902).
51. M. Bakunin, 'Revolutionary Catechism', in Bakunin on Anarchy, ed. S. Dolgoff, pref. P. Avrich (London, 1973), p. 80. Bakunin did not outline any clear system of distribution for an anarchic society, probably because his real concern was to defend a federalist principle of social organisation against the statism of Marx. The problem of how criteria of work could be applied, and even of what such criteria meant, only became an issue when Kropotkin put forward his critique of Bakunin.
52. P. Kropotkin, Mutual Aid (London, 1915); and P. Kropotkin, The Conquest of Bread, ed. P. Avrich (London, 1972).



53. It is significant that erstwhile Bakuninites who became anarcho-communists sometimes criticised Kropotkin for being too optimistic. See E. Malatesta, 'Peter Kropotkin - Recollections and Criticisms of an Old Friend', in V. Richards, Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas (London, 1977), pp. 257-68.
54. The Anarchist, May 1887.
55. The Anarchist, March 1885.
56. Mrs Wilson to Shaw, 16 Feb. 1887, BM50511.
57. For his account of the revolution, and of secret societies in advancing it, see Bakunin, 'The Program of the International Brotherhood', & 'Letter to Albert Richard', in Bakunin on Anarchy, pp. 148-55 & 177-82.
58. He gave a detailed account of the desired revolution in Kropotkin, Conquest of Bread, chaps. 4-7. For his early endorsement of propaganda by the deed see P. Kropotkin, 'The Spirit of Revolt', in Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, ed. R. Baldwin (New York, 1970), pp. 35-43.
59. It is significant that erstwhile Bakuninites sometimes criticised Kropotkin for fatalism precisely because they thought his views on the triumph of reason undermined the revolutionary spirit. See Malatesta, 'Kropotkin'.
60. The articles appeared in Commonweal, Oct. & Nov. 1890.
61. Commonweal, 12 July 1890, 16 Aug. 1890, & 29 Nov. 1890.
62. Commonweal, 25 Nov. 1893.
63. The Greenwich explosion provided the inspiration for J. Conrad, The Secret Agent (Cambridge, 1990).

64. Wilson, Outrages.
65. Commonweal, 21 Nov. 1891.
66. Commonweal, 28 Nov. 1891. The poems are collected in E. Carpenter, Towards Democracy (London, 1985).
67. Commonweal, 9 April 1892
68. Seedtime, April 1895.
69. Wilde, Soul of Man, p. 31.
70. For instance, I. Ford, Miss Blake of Monkshalton (London, 1890); and O. Schriener, The Story of an African Farm (Harmondsworth, 1971).
71. On Hinton and his views see E. Hopkins, Life and Letters of James Hinton (London, 1982); and J. Hinton, Life in Nature, intro. H. Ellis (London, 1932).
72. Minute Book of the Men & Women's Club 1885-89, PP:10.1.
73. For the hostility of the Men and Women's Club, especially Professor Pearson, to Hintonianism see the letters in PP:10.61. Mrs Wilson believed Hintonianism and anarchism were incompatible: Mrs Wilson to Professor Pearson, 21 Feb. 1886 & 4 March 1886, PP:900. Miss Brooke described her negative recollection of her personal contact with Hinton in Miss Brooke to Professor Pearson, 4 Dec. 1885, PP:70.
74. E. Brooke, A Superfluous Woman, 3 Vols. (London, 1894).
75. On this circle and their beliefs see R. Brandon, The New Women and the Old Men (London, 1990). For their feeling for Nora, and dislike of distorted versions of the play altering her character, see E. Aveling, "'Nora", and

"Breaking a Butterfly"', To-day i (1884), 473-80.

76. I. Ford, Women's Wages (London, 1893); E. Brooke, A Tabulation of the Factory Laws of European Countries in so Far as They Relate to the Hours of Labour, and to Special Legislation for Women, Young Persons, and Children (London, 1898).

77. For an example of their investigative work see E. Morley, ed., Women Workers in Seven Professions: A Survey of Their Economic Conditions and Prospects (London, 1914).

78. E. Carpenter, From Adam's Peak to Elephanta (London, 1910), pp. 178-81.

79. Havelock Ellis' autobiography is Havelock Ellis, My Life (London, 1940). His beliefs are discussed in Rowbotham & Weeks, Socialism and the New Life. He married Edith Lees, a member of the Fellowship who had lived in Bloomsbury House, and followed Carpenter and Hinton: see E. Havelock Ellis, Three Modern Seers (London, 1910).

80. E. Carpenter, Selected Writings, intro. N. Greig, Vol. 1: Sex (London, 1984), p. 238.

81. Minute Book of Men & Women's Club. Historians of women have paid some attention to the Men & Women's Club. See, in particular, L. Bland, "Marriage Laid Bare: Middle-Class Women and Marital Sex c. 1880-1914", in J. Lewis, ed., Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1940 (Oxford, 1986), pp. 123-46; and J. Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight (London, 1992), chap. 5.

82. Emma Brooke, 'Notes on Karl Pearson's Paper of 9 July 1885 on The Woman's Question', PP:10.2.

83. M. Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women', in The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, eds. J. Todd & M. Butler, Vol. V: A Vindication of the Rights of Men, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Hints (London, 1989), pp. 71-266; and J.S. Mill, 'The Subjugation of Women', in The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, ed. J. Robson, Vol. XXI: Essays on Equality, Law, and Education, intro. S. Collini (London, 1984), pp. 259-340.

84. Mill spoke of 'a softening influence' introduced by women, but he did not relate this to a consideration of sexual or biological differences: Mill 'Subjugation of Women', p. 327.

85. New Order, Sept. 1897.

86. For general studies of Victorian Communalism see W. Armytage, Heavens Below (London, 1961); and D. Hardy, Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England (London, 1979).

87. There is an account of the commune in Le Temps, 29 Sept. 1897. Its history can be traced through the reports in the Newcastle Daily Chronicle and Freedom. For Craig's views see E. Craig, The Irish Land and Labour Question, Illustrated in the History of Ralahine and Co-operative Farming, (London, 1882).

88. Torch, 18 May 1895.

89. New Order carried a regular column of news from Purleigh which provides useful insights into the history of the colony. For reminiscences by a colonist see P. Redfern, Journey to Understanding (London, 1946). For his views on Tolstoy see P. Redfern, Tolstoy (London, 1907).

90. For his comments on Purleigh and Tolstoy see A. Maude, Life of Tolstoy

(London, 1930). For his view of the Dukhobors see A. Maude, A Peculiar People: The Dukhobors (London, 1904).

91. New Order, May 1899.

92. New Order, April 1898.

93. New Order, March 1898.

94. See New Order, Sept. 1898. For a participant's account see N. Shaw, Whiteway: A Colony in the Cotswolds (London, 1935).

95. New Order, Sept. 1899.

96. The latter history of the commune can be traced in The Free Commune. For the views of a colonist see D. Foster, Socialism and the Christ and the Truth (Leeds, 1921).

97. New Order, April 1898.

98. Shaw, Whiteway, p. 21.