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## Introduction

“We don’t believe in waiting until after the revolution. . . . If you want a better world you should start acting like it now.”

—Unbound Bookstore, Chicago<sup>1</sup>

“We need not conquer the world. It is enough to make it anew.”

—Subcomandante Marcos<sup>2</sup>

“All human experience teaches that methods and means cannot be separated from the ultimate aim. The means employed become, through individual habit and social practice, part and parcel of the final purpose; they influence it, modify it, and presently the aims and means become identical. . . . The ethical values which the revolution is to establish in the new society must be *initiated* with the revolutionary activities of the so-called transitional period. The latter can serve as a real and dependable bridge to the better life only if built of the same material as the life to be achieved.”

—Emma Goldman<sup>3</sup>

In this book, I argue that some forms of popular art exemplify anarchist principles and commitments that, taken together, prefigure deeper forms of democracy than those experienced by most people in today’s liberal democracies. Prefiguration has two meanings, one descriptive and the other prescriptive. First, it means descriptively that current social forms contain hints of future possibilities. In this book I will explore hints found in popular art forms of specifically more democratic future possibilities.

Second, and prescriptively, prefiguration means that the ways we organize our lives in the present *should* model the characteristics of the world we want to create in the future. Our means should match the ends we seek.<sup>4</sup>

The forms of art that I address in this book include DIY (Do It Yourself) punk music, poetry slams, graffiti and street art, and flash mobs. Marked as they are by tensions and contradictions, none prefigure utopian worlds. Yet each directs us toward alternative possibilities and new horizons. Each embodies commitments and practices that challenge contemporary political, economic, and cultural forms of domination while offering promise of more creative, satisfying, and democratic worlds. People involved in these alternative worlds of popular art expressly or implicitly signal to the world their unwillingness to play by (all) the rules imposed on them by others and by institutions and structures of domination. They instead carve out spaces—both physical and temporal—where they live parts or all of their lives according to central anarchist principles. My task in this book is to describe their efforts and show how they prefigure a different, more democratic world.

Before turning to those art forms, I outline in this chapter the rationale for pursuing a prefigurative strategy and defend a focus on popular arts and culture. In the second chapter, I address anarchism and democracy, exploring their affinities and tensions while identifying analytical footholds for interpreting the case studies that follow. Chapters 3 through 6 are case study chapters addressing, in order, DIY punk music, poetry slams, graffiti and street art, and flash mobs. In chapter 7, I return to the themes of prefiguration and political strategy.

## Strategies for Progressive Change

Sociologist Erik Olin Wright identifies three general strategies for progressive change that he calls ruptural, symbiotic, and interstitial. *Ruptural* strategies, which Wright identifies primarily with revolutionary socialism, entail a direct assault on the state and capital, and are considered successful to the degree that a wholesale and complete rupture with those institutions is achieved. The vestiges of state and capital must be decisively destroyed or abandoned for a new order to emerge. Revolutionary individuals and groups seek not to engage productively and positively with existing institutional forces; rather, they seek to destroy them via direct confrontation. Wright characterizes this bluntly as a “Smash first, build second” strategy.<sup>5</sup> Social classes are the main historical actors in this war

of competing forces, with the working class serving as the primary agent for driving ruptural change.

Some theorists and activists continue to view this ruptural strategy as viable, despite the apparently long odds. The dissolution of the former Soviet Union took with it the most obvious threat to neoliberalism, capitalism, and liberal democracy; and, anyway, few progressives viewed the former Soviet Union as an example worth emulating. Worldwide, the primary agent of revolutionary change in Marxist theory, the working class, has largely not fulfilled expectations. According to Marx, the working class would eventually recognize the exploitation it experiences and its own class interest in overturning capitalism. Marxists anticipated that workers' widespread disenchantment with capitalism would lead to revolt to overturn capitalism in favor of socialism and, eventually, communism. Instead, most workers in industrialized countries have largely abandoned whatever revolutionary goals they may have at one time embraced in favor of higher wages, better working conditions, and social welfare spending that mitigates the harsher edges of capitalism. Many have become enthusiastic believers in ideologies that naturalize capitalism and its attendant inequalities. Overall, workers in the United States and elsewhere hardly seem poised to assume a revolutionary role.

On a smaller scale, some activists engage in ruptural strategies such as social banditry and sabotage in various forms. James Buccellato, for example, describes the social and political role of outlaws in U.S. history in terms of their direct assaults on institutions of state and capital.<sup>6</sup> According to Buccellato, despite—or perhaps because of—their illegality, these outlaws were widely viewed favorably by common people who saw them as representing struggles against the odds that resonated with their own struggle to attain material security. Buccellato also cites cyberjamming, factory occupations, graffiti art, rioting, and squatting as examples of outlawry in direct attack on the state or capital. At least some contemporary anarchists embrace these forms of outlawry. As noted by Patrice Jones, “Outlaws routinely disregard the authorities and boundaries established by people while working cooperatively with one another to pursue their own purposes in the context of human exploitation and expropriation. This is anarchy in its purest form.”<sup>7</sup> Whatever success one can ascribe to these outlaws, it is largely temporary, brief, and falls far short of achieving significant ruptural change. Those who view this ruptural strategy skeptically advocate some form of gradualist, evolutionary strategy that would produce desired changes through a process of metamorphosis. Wright's second two strategic categories reflect this shift to gradualism.

Wright's *symbiotic* strategy, which he associates with social democracy, accepts that, at least in the present, the state and capital must be reckoned with; they cannot simply be ignored or frontally assaulted. They must be engaged, while seeking to gradually transform them. This engagement requires the forging of coalitions between progressive forces and regressive forces of state and capital, and a process of collaboration with them.

A symbiotic strategy requires at least some willingness to work "within the system." Attempts to work within the current political system to democratize power and challenge domination have occasionally met with some success. For example, social democracy in Europe, and the New Deal and Great Society programs in the U.S., rounded off the rougher edges of capitalism with social welfare spending to limit the deprivation experienced by millions on the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. Also, President Obama's support for gay marriage, and the U.S. Supreme Court's 2012 decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act, also point to marginal steps forward.

Despite gains, there are nevertheless reasons to avoid relying entirely on this strategy. First, as Wright notes, gains achieved using a symbiotic strategy are always "precarious and vulnerable to counterattack."<sup>8</sup> Since the surge of neoliberalism during the 1980s and beyond, many of the previous decades' gains have been reversed. In the United States, social welfare spending has been attacked successfully by Republicans and centrist Democrats, resulting in the partial dismantling of public assistance welfare, the steady decline of spending on education, constant threats to Social Security and Medicare, and an increasingly regressive tax code.

Second, despite undeniable gains in progressive directions, most steps forward are marginal victories that fail to fundamentally challenge elite domination. Many progressives understandably question whether significant change can occur within the existing liberal democratic framework. Third, success within a liberal democratic political framework often comes with high costs. For example, electoral victory today requires enormous expenditure of time and money. It also increasingly requires negative campaigning, dissimulation, propaganda, lies, half-truths, and pandering. The costs to civic and public life are often steep, resulting in widespread cynicism, distrust and enmity against public leaders, and deep, often-hostile fractures separating members of the public from each other and from any hope of common ground.

The likelihood of progressive symbiotic change in the near future appears remote, and may instead decline. Electoral politics in the U.S.

appear to promise little more than slight variations on the Democrat-Republican centrism that occasionally offers progressives small victories, but overall they yield the same end result: domination by entrenched economic and political elites. Moreover, what passes for centrism has shifted dramatically to the right since the 1980s. While these variations are important at the margins, they stop short of moving in the transformative direction favored by most progressives. Without dismissing this strategy outright, it appears to many progressives that, in the foreseeable future, this symbiotic strategy offers scant hope and promises little movement forward.

In this context of declining confidence in ruptural and symbiotic strategies, some theorists and activists are turning to a third strategy, one that Wright calls *interstitial*, referring to those efforts occurring “in the spaces and cracks within some dominant social structure of power.”<sup>9</sup> The notion of an “interstitial” space emerged earlier in the writing of anarchist Colin Ward: “Far from being a speculative vision of a future society . . . [anarchy] is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society. . . . [T]he anarchist alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand.”<sup>10</sup>

Interstitial strategies begin from the recognition that dominant institutions contain contradictions and weaknesses; they are riven with fissures, discontinuities, and inconsistencies. Pursuing an interstitial strategy entails identifying existing cracks and fissures, while opening new ones where possible. Over time, these cracks and fissures can be widened, drawing new and more participants into them. In theory, these cracks and fissures may grow to the point that they threaten major institutions of domination. This strategy focuses on the present, but with an eye to the future of gradual emancipation.

Although social movements represent the paradigmatic interstitial form of collective action, Wright also offers as illustrations of existing interstitial strategies and activities “worker and consumer co-ops, battered women’s shelters, workers’ factory councils, intentional communities and communes, community-based social economy services, civic environmental councils, community-controlled land trusts, cross-border equal-exchange trade organizations, and many others.” Each of these has in common “the idea of building alternative institutions and deliberately fostering new forms of social relations that embody emancipatory ideals

and that are created primarily through direct action of one sort or another rather than through the state.”<sup>11</sup>

Sociologist John Holloway explores themes similar to Wright’s interstitial strategy in his *Crack Capitalism*. According to Holloway, there is a growing awareness that we “cannot wait for the great revolution.” Instead, we must begin now altering the conditions of our lives. He emphasizes the necessity of beginning with a great refusal, of saying, “Enough! Ya Basta! We have had enough of living in, and creating, a world of exploitation, violence and starvation.”<sup>12</sup> But “cracking capitalism” entails more than simply refusing to play by established rules. It also involves creating a different world by seizing the initiative and setting the agenda. Holloway advocates an experimental approach to develop new forms that will represent “the embryos of a new world, the interstitial movements from which a new society could grow.”<sup>13</sup> These new forms are to be created in the interstices and cracks that can be found within capitalism. Over time, this process will “expand and multiply the cracks and promote their confluence,” leading eventually to systemic change.<sup>14</sup>

These cracks can be either spatial or temporal, or both. Spatial cracks are new spaces within which new forms of life can be identified and created. Individuals find each other within these spatial cracks, and embark together on the creation of alternative forms of life. Temporal cracks entail going off the clock, resisting the dominant pressures and narratives of efficiency and instrumental rationality, substituting instead the possibility of doing things more for their own sake. As Max Horkheimer earlier lamented,

Less and less is anything done for its own sake. A hike that takes a man out of the city to the banks of a river or a mountain top would be irrational and idiotic, judged by utilitarian standards; he is devoting himself to a silly or destructive pastime. In the view of formalized reason, an activity is reasonable only if it serves another purpose, e.g. health or relaxation, which helps to replenish his working power.<sup>15</sup>

Resisting this logic of instrumental rationality and action opens a temporal crack; it challenges the logic of efficient use of time for production and consumption. Holloway’s vision anticipates that as these cracks multiply, there will be “radiating waves of rebellion” that can ultimately threaten the viability of capitalism.<sup>16</sup>

Like Wright, Holloway associates “crack capitalism” at least partly with anarchism. Like Wright, he links an interstitial strategy to larger transformational change, arguing that living and working within the cracks can create the conditions for large-scale progressive change. And like Wright, he demonstrates empirically that the interstitial experiments he condones are already well under way. The bulk of *Crack Capitalism* includes descriptions of existing interstitial efforts.

Neither Wright nor Holloway, however, focuses on artistic and popular cultural efforts in the interstices of state and capital. Both focus their empirical research primarily on interstitial efforts in civil society, and on alternative economic forms such as cooperatives. Examples cited by other thinkers similarly ignore the arts and popular culture. For example, James Horrox lists “autonomous social centers, popular assemblies, small-scale decentralized agriculture, LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems), alternative currencies, mutual banking, credit unions, tenants committees, food cooperatives, allotments, directly democratic extended neighborhood communities, household and home assemblies, employees’ associations, cooperative housing associations, alternative education institutions and progressive forms of home schooling, temporary and permanent autonomous zones, community gardens, guilds, co-housing, alternative and sustainable technology and numerous different kinds of low-impact living initiatives.”<sup>17</sup> Ruth Kinna cites co-housing, health clinics, creating an alternative economy, co-ops, neighborhood services, schools, radio stations, squatting, hactivism, monkey-wrenching, unions, neighborhood collectives, and various forms of decentralized self-governing units.<sup>18</sup>

This book addresses artistic and popular cultural practices found in the interstices—in the cracks and on the margins—of dominant institutions of state and capital. It attempts to give the same careful attention to several popular art forms that Wright, Holloway, and others give to civil society and the economy. I argue that these popular art forms have the potential to “radiate waves of rebellion” outward, to increase political vision, and to demonstrate alternative ways of organizing our everyday lives. Taken together, they, like the practices described by Wright and Holloway, challenge or circumvent dominant institutions of state and capital. On a daily basis, each is deeply practical, in that the people involved in them are already creating alternative worlds and living within them. Each is prefigurative: each realizes and expresses alternative anarchist values in everyday cultural production, circulation, and reception, while promising a more democratic future.

## Art and Popular Culture

Fine-arts purists may wish to reserve the term “art” for the works of famous canonical painters whose work hangs in museums and composers whose music is performed in grand halls and theatres. The line between so-called fine art and popular cultural art is blurred. I take as art any attempt to express ideas and emotions through a medium that includes aesthetic and affective dimensions, as well as potentially analytical and intellectual dimensions. Artists employ imagination and skill to create objects, experiences, or environments that typically include an aesthetic dimension. It is a powerful means of expressing and sharing experience, one that potentially engages the whole person.<sup>19</sup>

Since the translation in 1971 of his work into English, many scholars and activists interested in the political significance of arts and culture have turned to the work of the Italian Marxist of the early twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937).<sup>20</sup> Gramsci believed that revolutionary transformation would be won or lost partly on the terrain of culture. He described the convergence of ideological and material social forces in terms of hegemony, or a relatively close fit between dominant ideology and the material forces under which a society is organized and which are legitimated by that dominant ideology. In a context of hegemony, people generally accept the circumstances of their lives without question. The political economy in which they live and work appears as natural and inevitable. It appears to them as common sense. In a context of neoliberal hegemony, for example, capitalism appears as the best—and perhaps only—way to organize society’s productive forces and, more generally, everyday life.

Gramsci advocated a “war of position”—a protracted, patient struggle in various social realms including cultural—as part of an overall revolutionary struggle to subvert that common sense and the hegemony it represents as a necessary precondition for changing the material bases of social organization. The leaders of this war of position, dubbed “organic intellectuals” by Gramsci, are embedded in, and drawn from, the working class. Their role is to express the revolutionary interests of the working class, to begin showing members of the working class that their common sense is distorted, to open the possibility for a new critical consciousness, and to help imagine a different world in which their exploitation would end. It was a natural step to count artists among the ranks of organic intellectuals in this war of position. Many subsequent scholars have taken Gramsci’s lead and applied his theoretical and practical framework to the study of art and popular culture.<sup>21</sup>



Gramsci's insights have given theorists and activists new analytical tools for understanding and challenging domination. And he has provided a convincing rationale for treating arts and culture as terrains of political struggle. Yet his understanding of domination was firmly rooted in one form of domination: class. And his revolutionary strategy emphasized class struggle, with little attention to other forms of domination and struggle to overcome it. Additionally, like Marx himself, Gramsci's war of position focused on seizing control of the state, albeit temporarily, to use it as an instrument for revolutionary change. In Marxist theory, this seizure of the state would be temporary; eventually, the state would wither away, leaving a classless society. Anarchists are not alone in wishing to broaden the scope of understanding of domination. While class domination remains a defining element of a capitalist, neoliberal society, progressives have broadened the discussion to include other forms of domination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, the environment, and other social categories. Anarchists are unique, however, in rejecting the use of the state under any circumstances to advance a revolutionary agenda, fearing the centralized power it represents and the inevitable threats to autonomy and freedom.

Like Gramsci, the pragmatist and participatory democrat John Dewey (1859–1952) viewed culture as a site of domination, a source of democratic capacity, and a terrain of political action. From the 1920s until his death in 1952, he focused much of his attention on attacking “the existing system of control of power” that produced a culture of domination, and to developing democratic alternatives.<sup>22</sup> Dewey's *Individualism Old and New* (1929/30) can be read as an extended analysis of the culture-wide domination imposed by economic interests in the capitalist political economy of his time. In it he addressed two related problems: a culture dominated by a “pecuniary” ethos—everything is about money, making money, amassing money, and spending it—and a culture dominated by powerful economic interests that exert hegemony over all areas of life. This pecuniary ethos extended throughout culture, well beyond such obvious targets as advertising, banking, and shopping malls to include education, technology, science, and even religion.<sup>23</sup>

In *Freedom and Culture* (1939) Dewey reiterated earlier points, especially the dominating impact of a political economy oriented toward private gain at public expense and an educational system that emphasized fitting into the existing political economy rather than critical intelligence. He also increased his attention to popular culture and art, and their role in legitimizing domination. According to Dewey, “the theater, the movie and

music hall, even the picture gallery, eloquence, popular parades, common sports and recreative agencies, have all been brought under regulation as part of the propaganda agencies by which dictatorship is kept in power without being regarded by the masses as oppressive.” Although Dewey wrote this passage with the growing European fascist threat in mind, he viewed Americans as susceptible to the same misuse of art and popular culture to legitimize domination and oppression. Repeating themes from his *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey argued that “emotions and imagination are more potent in shaping public sentiment and opinion than information and reason. Indeed, long before the present crisis came into being there was a saying that if one could control the songs of a nation, one need not care who made its laws.”<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, he believed, this power of art and popular culture was increasingly used for undemocratic rather than democratic purposes.

If culture represented a terrain of increasing domination, it also represented for Dewey a terrain for creating critical consciousness and deepening and extending democracy. Like Gramsci, Dewey saw a vital role for artists. Dewey’s democratic vision emphasized widespread access to art and participation in art. In a democratic culture, art would not be something consigned to museums for consumption by elites; it would be spread throughout daily life, a potent form of everyday experience.

His *Art as Experience* earlier detailed his belief in the communicative power of art and its role in creating democratic communities and expanding horizons. Art powerfully captures human experience, renders it intelligible to others across differences, and breaks through barriers to understanding. Dewey called art the best form of communication that can occur in “a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience.” Art “strikes below the barriers that separate human beings from one another.” Art helps people recognize common experiences, and potentially helps them understand and adapt to different experiences of different people.<sup>25</sup> Art gives us access to others’ lives, and through the encounter we gain a critical foothold for examining our own lives and experiences. It helps us to see ourselves differently. This potentially forces us to rethink our assumptions and beliefs. The “function of art,” according to Dewey, “has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness” in order to see more clearly and critically.<sup>26</sup> This is the “moral function” of art: “to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, perfect the power to perceive.”<sup>27</sup> Through the sharing of experience, we expand our horizons; our vision is deepened,

sharpened, and broadened. In short, art can prefigure new, more democratic ways of life.

Gramsci and Dewey both saw clearly that culture is a terrain where identity is formed and reformed, for better and for worse; where beliefs and ideologies are contested; where political action occurs; where the capacities of democratic citizenship are both developed and undermined; where horizons are opened and closed; and where the struggle for democracy is won or lost. Both viewed the artist as a key player in this struggle for democracy, one whose imagination and creativity is summoned to forge new democratic identities, organize political action, build capacity for critical thought and action, open new vistas and horizons, and lead others in the struggle for liberation and justice. Both gave the artist an important role in shaping and contesting the character of our everyday lives. Additionally, Dewey's emphasis on the visionary capacity of art is especially relevant to this book's theme of prefiguration.

### Art, Prefiguration, and Everyday Life

The prefigurative potential of art lies in the arts as a domain of creativity and imagination, where artists constantly innovate new cultural forms. Each new artistic or cultural form represents new potentialities for human thought and action. Of course, artists also often simply reflect changes that are occurring in other domains. Artists constantly strive to put their feelings and ideas onto canvas and onto stage and into words, feelings and ideas that often lie outside the margins of current ways of life. In their work we can see alternative futures.

Since the inception of the anarchist movement in the nineteenth century, "the arts have been an integral part of the [anarchist] movement."<sup>28</sup> An early hint of this can be seen in the mid-nineteenth-century French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's (1809–1865) book on the social role of art. Proudhon assigned art an ambitious and lofty social role: "the physical and moral perfection of our species." In words that Dewey would later echo, Proudhon argued that art is a "representation of nature and of ourselves." It reflects back on us; it reveals ourselves *to* ourselves and to others. This opens the possibility of self- and social criticism. The task of art, he wrote, "is to warn us, to praise us, to teach us, to make us blush by confronting us with a mirror of our own conscience."<sup>29</sup> Nineteenth-century Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) also wrote of the social role of art in anarchism. His pamphlet "Appeal to the

Young” included artists as central players in any social revolution. In it, he addressed youth as “true poets” who “will come and take the side of the oppressed because [they] know that the beautiful, the sublime, the spirit of life itself are on the side of those who fight for light, for humanity, for justice!”<sup>30</sup>

In the early twentieth century, U.S. anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940) lectured on drama, seeing it as a powerful vehicle for revolutionary ideas. According to Goldman, “Any mode of creative work which with true perception portrays social wrongs earnestly and boldly is a greater menace . . . and a more powerful inspiration than the wildest harangue of the soapbox orator.”<sup>31</sup> Goldman also is alleged to have said, “If I can’t dance I don’t want to be part of your revolution.”<sup>32</sup> She never actually said or wrote those exact words, but did express something similar in her two-volume autobiography in which she described her love of dancing, and related an incident in which she was chastised on the grounds that “it did not behoove an agitator to dance” since it was “undignified” and “frivolous.” In her considered response to her accuser, she wrote:

I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from convention and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement would not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody’s right to beautiful, radiant things. Anarchism meant that to me, and I would live it in spite of the whole world—prisons, persecution, everything.<sup>33</sup>

Goldman also wrote that modern art should be “the dynamite which undermines superstition, shakes the social pillars, and prepares men and women for the reconstruction” of society.<sup>34</sup> Many anarchists, past and present, have emphasized art’s role in adding beauty and joy to any life worth living, as well as its role in challenging superstition and social conventions.

Contemporary anarchist David Graeber asks, “Why is it that artists have so often been drawn to revolutionary politics?” The answer, he argues, “must have something to do with alienation.” Artists imagine things and then bring them into being; and this is the essence of unalienated production. The link to imagining and then creating revolutionary alternatives is a natural one. And this is especially true “if that alternative is the possibility of a society premised on less alienated forms of creativ-

ity.”<sup>35</sup> Graeber highlights an important point about anarchists past and present: they do not accept the often dreary, mechanical, regimented, work- and efficiency-obsessed world defined by capitalism and the liberal democratic state. It does not have to be this way, they affirm. We can create a better world, a world less marked by the mind-numbing, alienating forms of work and leisure conceived primarily in terms of consumption.<sup>36</sup> We can create a world marked instead by creative, joyful, satisfying work and play. We can bridge the gap between art and everyday life.

Allan Antliff’s analysis of Henri-Edmond Cross’s (1856–1910) lithograph “The Wanderer,” contributed in 1896 to Jean Grave’s anarchist publication, *Les Temps nouveaux*, exemplifies this connection between art and anarchists’ critique of alienation. The lithograph portrays an old wanderer sitting in a dark foreground. Figures working and dancing around him are rendered in bright light and color, portraying a future of radiant happiness. The dancers circle remnants of the old world as symbolized by a crown and a banner. The old man represents the dreamers who seek to break from the past to create a better future. As interpreted by Antliff, the wanderer and his companions

. . . were outcasts, but they also were free. Their freedom resided in a day-to-day life apart from capital, as well as the revolutionary vision they propagated to those encountered along the way. . . . [They] abandoned time, possessions, labor, and slavery in a refusal to obey. . . . They existed in counter-rhythm to a society in which their ideals were deemed valueless. But they also struggled for a better world.<sup>37</sup>

The figures depicted in the lithograph enjoyed their freedom in the “day-to-day life” rather than in some abstract sense. They were free in that they “abandoned” many of the trappings and demands of “time, possessions, labor, and slavery.” They lived outside—in the cracks and on the margins—of capitalism and its imperatives. But their great “refusal to obey” also served as a “revolutionary vision” of an alternative world of autonomy. In short, their freedom resonated beyond the immediate concerns of each individual figure. They served as a model, a prefiguration of a freer, less alienated world to work toward.

Many contemporary anarchists focus on the political importance of everyday life and culture as a source of potential “counter-rhythms” to the dominant society. Deric Shannon, for example, argues that “anarchists should fight for a post-capitalist future in the terrain of ideology

and culture.” Echoing Gramsci, Shannon asks why exploited workers have failed to recognize their collective class interest in overthrowing capitalism. And, like Gramsci, the answer “could be found by looking at the cultural sphere.” Like both Gramsci and Dewey, Shannon argues that culture itself is shaped in the interests of capital, and the interests of capital are transmitted and taught through various cultural institutions and practices. Taking a cue from feminism, Shannon argues that “the personal is, indeed, the political,” and we should make changes in our everyday personal lives by creating “egalitarian cultural forms.” Collective activities such as Food Not Bombs, infoshops, social centers, and “really really free markets” can also contribute to cultural transformation. As individuals and members of collectivities, we need to “recognize the value in reinventing our daily lives and the role this plays in revolutionary politics.” He acknowledges that reinventing our individual daily lives will not by itself create revolutionary change, which requires linkage with social movements. However, it does begin to change the culture, to create different, alternative forms of everyday life absent the domination, and these provide the foundation for revolutionary change.<sup>38</sup>

Art is a space “where our assumptions about how the ‘real’ world works can be temporarily put on hold.”<sup>39</sup> This liberates the imagination, allowing us to envision new possibilities. Jill Dolan’s work on “utopian performatives” examines this enlisting of art as a vehicle and vocabulary for seeing outside existing worlds to alternative ways of life. Utopian performatives are artful performances in which performers and audiences alike are transported out of their ordinary, sometimes-alienating and dissatisfying lives into alternative emotional, psychological, and physical spaces that offer both the concrete experience of, and the visionary hope for, different, more beautiful worlds. They “describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense” as that created momentarily by the performers. Utopian performatives “make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better.”<sup>40</sup> In utopian performatives, performers and audience members experience those alternative worlds directly and physically. To illustrate, Dolan draws on musicians’ oft-remarked testimonies of finding a groove, of getting tight, of reaching a musical state of heightened affect and joyful expression:

There are these rare moments when musicians together touch something sweeter than they've ever found before in rehearsals or performance, beyond the merely collaborative or technically proficient, when their expression becomes as easy and graceful as friendship or love. This is when they give us a glimpse of what we might be, of our best selves, and of an impossible world in which you give everything you have to others, but lose nothing of yourself.<sup>41</sup>

These experiences of heightened affect do more than give us glimpses of different worlds, according to Dolan. In offering us a vision of a better world, they goad us to seek that better world; they “move us to social action” to achieve that better world.<sup>42</sup>

The case studies that follow in chapters three through six provide illustrations of artistic and cultural forms that prefigure “something sweeter.” They give us glimpses of “what we might be, of our best selves,” and of a more just, humane, and democratic world. Before turning to those case studies, in chapter 2 I develop themes for analyzing them by more systematically addressing the theory and practice of anarchism and democracy.