

THE ANARCHIST CITY OF AMERICA: LIBERTARIAN URBAN UTOPIAS IN THE NEW WORLD

Santiago Juan-Navarro

A map of the world that does not include
Utopia is not worth even glancing at . . .

Oscar Wilde

Since the Age of Discovery, cultural production in the New World has been shaped by utopian ideals. From the onset, America was conceived of as an empty canvas to be filled by the prodigious imagination of Europeans (Pagden 1982, Fuentes 1990). The Mexican philosopher and historian Edmundo O’Gorman (1958) asserted that America was not discovered in 1492, but rather “invented,” alluding to the effect that the first explorations of the New World had upon the fantasies of Western Europeans.¹ It is worth remembering that, although rooted in Plato and Augustine, modern Western discourse on Utopianism begins to articulate itself around the phenomenon of the “Discovery” (Cantú 45).² At the start of the 16th century, Sir Thomas More writes his *De optimo Reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia* (1516) under the spell of the recently discovered lands and, soon thereafter, the Franciscan bishop of Michoacan, Vasco de Quiroga, applies More’s theories to the Tarascan Indian communities of Mexico: abolition of private property and money, six-hour workdays, equal distribution of goods, and a lifestyle in balance with

¹ In a now celebrated phrase, Alfonso Reyes pointed out that America “before being felt as a presence, was perceived as an absence,” alluding to the conception of America as a purely virtual space where Europeans hoped to fulfill their frustrated dreams and ideals. Before it was discovered, America had been dreamt of, and it became necessary to accommodate the reality to the dream, because the dream was not the reality of America, as of yet unknown, but the ideal of constructing an imaginary *topos* which could replace the existing European *topos* (Cerutti Guldberg 227).

² Thomas More, who was familiar with the travels of Columbus, Peter Martyr and Amerigo Vespucci, set his Utopia on an island in the Caribbean, and suggested that perfection could only be attained in the New World.

nature. Thus began a two-fold utopian tradition: descriptive (of a literary nature) and empirical (based on radical social reforms).

For Europeans and Americans alike, the New World contains the two basic ingredients for the creation of Utopia: space and time, or in other words, a place in which the utopia can be founded, and a history endowed with a past in need of recovery or a future in which to project itself. America allowed for the objectification of the abstract utopian dreams of Antiquity and the Middle Ages by providing a real place for the imagining subject in a process of mutual recognition (Ainsa, *De la edad de Oro* 10), a predisposition that would survive for centuries. The Jesuit missions among the Guaraní of Paraguay in the 17th century maintained the tradition of More's thought. Founded on the principles of agrarian collectivism, egalitarianism, labor rotation and the commercialization of surplus production, the missions were a model of organization and prosperity until Charles III ordered the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 (Gómez Tovar 11).

For Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, the "Discovery" constituted a "new creation;" and in the 19th century, Tocqueville (507) and Hegel (90) described the Americas as a place oriented toward the future. "The continent of the imagination"—as Rémond called it—or the "Nation of the Future"—as Hegel baptized it, the New World has traditionally represented the hope and potential for a new life, a symbolic "starting from scratch" (García Cantú 11; Orvell 447; Rama xv). However, as Ainsa reminds us, the counterpoint to that exultant youthfulness is the negation or ignorance of the past, reduced to a mere archaeology of "primitive" civilizations or a simple inventory of "dead" cultures (*De la edad de Oro* 11).

The theory and praxis of Utopian Socialism during the first half of the 19th century would not be put to the test in Europe, but rather in the Americas. That is where the disciples of Owen and Fourier went, and that is where the passionate autarchic experiences of Icaria, New Harmony, Freedom Colony, Utopia Book Farm, Equity, Valley Farm, Nashoba and so many others would arise and evolve under various guises until today.³ The vast migrations that took place at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries were suffused with the foundational spirit of utopian thought. Once again the utopian aspiration was spatial and geographic: the overwhelming desire was

³ Utopian communal movements have been the object of numerous studies. Pitzer's collection of essays (1997) examines the communal experiences of both religious millenarianism and utopian socialist movements. For an in-depth treatment of 19th century socialist utopias, consult Bestor (1950), Holloway (1966) and Guarneri (1991).

to colonize an America in which the Promised Land had been made visible. New spaces were suddenly made available for conquest, opening up territories where ethnic, religious or political groups could settle freely. These places, the names of which evoke a "lost paradise" (Puerto Alegre, Ciudad Paraíso, Puerto Edén, Valparaíso), imposed a new human geography upon the continent, where the idealization of America as the land of economic promise could plainly be heard in the popular Spanish saying "hacer las Américas" ('to make it big in the Americas' / 'to live the American Dream').⁴

The utopian communities of this period contributed significantly to the social consolidation of many of the newly founded South American nations. Especially in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and later in Brazil and Venezuela, the utopian myth shaped the national landscape, and inevitably influenced their incipient national literatures (Rama x). The dictatorships that dominated Latin America at that time generated opposition movements that in turn proposed numerous "ideal republics." Juan Montalvo, in his collection of essays entitled *Catilinarias*, fought against the theocracy of the Ecuadorian dictator García Moreno; José Martí coined the expression "Our America" in his struggle for Cuban independence, and Benito Juárez imagined a different Mexico, free of despotism.

The tendency of American utopianism, which had begun as a European aspiration, was progressively transformed by a move toward Latin American cultural autonomy and the call for what was known as "the right to our own utopia." The writings of Alfonso Reyes (*Última Thule* or *No hay tal lugar*) or Henríquez Ureña (*La utopía de América*) are paradigmatic examples of the resurgence of utopian discourse in Latin America during the 20th century. This line of New World utopian thought, while differing in the models it proposes, expresses similar concerns and interests as the earlier Americanist projects of Eugenio María de Hostos, José Enrique Rodó and the work of Manuel González Prada, Manuel Ugarte and José Vasconcelos (Ainsa, "Utopías" 9, 41).

UTOPIAN SOCIALISM IN THE AMERICAS

The 19th century was marked by continuous efforts at social reform. The Americas became a virtual magnet for utopian-reformist movements based on collective ownership, egalitarianism, transformation of the individual and the search for harmony with Nature.

⁴ This expression refers to a long tradition of Spanish migration to the New World, where one could work, prosper and quickly get rich (Souviron López 195).

The image of the New World as a laboratory for European utopians quickly became a reality. In this context, utopian narratives were no longer necessary. Utopias could become a reality, and in fact became so, if only briefly, on American soil.

Faced with the impossibility of realizing their projects in Europe, many utopians looked to the New World. One of the most well known of these was the Englishman Robert Owen who set off for the United States in 1824. His ultimate objective was the creation of a social order based on "voluntary association in a system of collective ownership in the form of small agrarian or industrial communities" (Capelletti 64). American laws were less restrictive and still free of what were viewed by the utopians as corrupt European customs. Owen purchased Harmony Colony, which consisted of 30,000 acres in what today is the state of Indiana. Judging from surviving illustrations, the colony appears to have been a large quadrilateral, like the cloister of an old European university, only much larger. New Harmony was inaugurated on May 1, 1825, lasted for two years, and experimented with at least seven different forms of government. While not initially inspired by Communist ideas, the colony adopted a constitution in January 1826 on the basis of collectivist principles: absolute equality among members and compensation independent of effort or productivity.

Confrontations among the members over economic and religious issues progressively eroded the foundations of the community. Expulsions and desertions grew in frequency until New Harmony was finally dissolved in May of 1827 (Cepeda 69). However, Owen did not consider it to have been a negative experience. In September 1828 he requested a land grant from the Mexican government in the territory on the Gulf of Mexico between Texas and Coahuila with the goal of establishing "a rational and just society." Owen's proposal emphasized the advantage of locating his project on the border as a means of diffusing interstate rivalries and avoiding armed conflict. The project would never come to fruition as the war prophesied by Owen came to pass and Texas was annexed by the United States in 1844.

Twenty years later, when Etienne Cabet asked Owen for advice on a location for his own utopian community, Icaria, the elderly Englishman recommended he go to Texas. Cabet's project was the first of its kind to base itself on a work of literature: *Travels to Icaria* (1840) had become a bestseller in its time. The success of his book inspired him to attempt to establish Icarian communities in America. After acquiring a million acres, Cabet founded his colony on July 1, 1847, but difficulties became immediately apparent. To begin with, the territory was located in an inhospitable region that was inaccessible by

river. The million acres were not contiguous, but spread out among discrete parcels of land separated from one another. Sickness, lack of food and medicine, and the difficulties of administering such a vast and disconnected area forced the colonists to abandon their territory. Adding to the failure of the Icarian experiment was the Revolution of 1848, which opened up new possibilities for socialists in Europe and rendered the "American Dream" temporarily unnecessary.

Faced with these difficulties, Cabet decided to leave his Texas landholdings and purchase an abandoned Mormon community in Nauvoo, Illinois. He repaired old buildings, constructed living quarters and printed a great many books and pamphlets promulgating his ideas. In this way he was able to attract numerous collaborators in France and North America, and the community eventually grew from 280 original members to 500. The colony eventually declined because of various legal claims made in France against Cabet, who in time became more authoritarian and withdrawn. He died in 1856, but his Icarian communities survived until 1895. They had lasted for half a century.

Fourierism in the Americas was not so fortunate. The ideas of Fourier had been introduced into the United States by Albert Brisbane, a young American who arrived in Paris in 1832, where he made the acquaintance of Victor Considerant. When he returned to the United States he published *Social Destiny of Man* (1840), which was well received and contributed to the establishment of various societies and "phalansteries." In 1854 Considerant left for New York with a hundred colonists. His goal was to acquire 20,000 acres near Dallas, Texas, and establish a Fouriest colony together with Brisbane. Soon after another colonist group joined his, and the phalanstery "La Reunión" was founded in 1855 with 300 members. This was the period when Texas, newly annexed by the United States, granted territory to all those wishing to settle there in an attempt to rapidly expand its population. However, the project failed and by the end of 1856 most of the members had abandoned the colony. A year later Considerant published a pamphlet in San Antonio entitled *Du Texas, Premier rapport à mes amis*, in which he explained his difficulties and proposed remedies for future colonies.

In 1863 the Civil War in the United States brought about the final ruin of Considerant's colony. And so ended the era of one of the great apostles of Utopian Socialism (Owen, Cabet, Considerant) who attempted to put his theories into practice in the New World. While many other collectivist experiments continued to take place during the second half of the 19th century and throughout the 20th, the explosive revolutionary conditions in Europe and the unique circumstances

of the new Latin American nations offered more favorable conditions for the implementation of utopian projects.

Two key European developments—the 1848 Revolution and the Paris Commune of 1871—would affect the social development of Latin America, as many of the leaders of these radical movements sought refuge there after their defeat. Plotino C. Rhodakanaty, upon his arrival in Mexico in February of 1861, published his celebrated *Cartilla socialista* (1861), where he described the principles of a utopian community under the guise of a Socratic dialogue. He omitted any mention of authority and posited a communal organization similar to that proposed by Anarchism. In fact, his disciples would be among the initiators of the Mexican *campesino* movement of libertarian inspiration.

Near the turn of the century, Brazil was the site of one of the most important utopian projects of the 19th century. Giovanni Rossi, a doctor and agronomist, had published *Un comune socialista* (1878) in Italy, where he outlined a project inspired by anarchist principles. The recent success of the first Anarcho-Communist experience in Cremona led the Emperor of Brazil, who had been in Milan around that time, to show an interest in establishing similar colonies in his own country for land cultivation. And so it came to be that Dom Pedro II authorized the founding of a commune in Palmeiras, in the province of Paraná in the north of Brazil.

On February 20, 1890, soon after the fall of the Emperor, Rossi left Genoa with a group of colonists. After overcoming the isolated nature of the territory and the difficulties of the terrain, the group succeeded in establishing the Cecilia colony. Rossi's goal was the creation of a classless society and the implementation of anarchist-communism. In contrast to the utopian experiments of the first half of the century, the success of Rossi's colony was due primarily to the homogeneity of the colonists, who were all militant Italian anarchists. The colony soon grew to a size of 300 members and its fame spread throughout Latin America. Aiding in the growth of its reputation was the presence of illustrious visitors, including the ex-president of Uruguay, José Batlle y Ordoñez. For the first time the practical viability of anarcho-communism was made evident.

But the poor quality of the land, the loss of the Emperor's support, the difficulties of transporting the harvest to the central government and the intervention of the newly formed republican administration contributed to the decline of the colony. By 1893 only 64 colonists remained. Nevertheless, Giovanni Rossi remained in Brazil for many years as a professor at the Superior Institute of Agriculture at Taguari

and as the director of an agricultural center.

In almost every case mentioned so far, the causes of failure were the same. Socialist utopians were attempting to escape the realities of the Old World, but also those of the New World. The majority of these projects were undertaken completely ignoring the reality of the Americas themselves, and often in ways that ran counter to the historical evolution and circumstances of the region. By distancing themselves from the urban centers and creating autarchic societies, these communities undermined their own sustainability, leading to their eventual dissolution.

ANARCHIST UTOPIAS

By the middle of the 19th century key utopian ideas were transmitted to the labor movement by writers working in the anarchist tradition, who continued to draw on, develop, and deploy utopian themes. The first literary Anarchist utopia (*L'Humanisphere*) was published in serial form in New York between 1858 and 1859. The author, Joseph Déjacque, was a manual laborer, self-taught journalist, writer and activist who had fought in the Paris barricades in 1848. For the first time, and before even Kropotkin had formulated many of his collectivist ideas, Déjacque described a society organized according to the ideology of anarchist-communism. The story takes place a thousand years in the future and the plot follows a conventional formula, in which the "Idea" (Utopia) narrates the future to the author.

Starting with the prologue ("What is This Book"), the author establishes the proletarian character and apocalyptic tone of the work: "I, humble proletarian...hounded by the brutality of exile or prison, crack open the abyss beneath the feet of my tormentors and apply the potion of vengeance to my open wounds" (16-17).⁵ More than just a utopia, Déjacque proposes a virtual theory of radical, militant discourse. He shatters the bourgeois myth of the literary work of art written by and for the privileged classes: "This book is not a literary work, it is an INFERNAL work, it is the cry of a rebel slave (16)." He returns art to its popular roots: "This book...has not been written by the gloved hand of a daydreamer...it is a cry of insurrection, a clarion call that makes the Idea's hammer ring out in the ear of popular passion" (17-18). Déjacque aspires to the creation of a "new man" with the aid of an aesthetics of belligerence: "This book is not written in ink; nor are its pages...made of paper. This book is forged steel and

⁵ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

loaded with the fulminate of ideas. It is a projectile of authoricide that I fire in a thousand copies upon the pavement of civilized society... This book is not a piece of writing, it is an act" (25).

The most well known theorist of anarchist-communism, Piotr Kropotkin, designed a political and philosophical system based upon the ideal of a society without government. His theories acquired international renown beginning with the Geneva Conference of 1882 and had a determining influence on the anarchist utopias written in Europe and America in the last half of the 19th and first decades of the 20th centuries.

Kropotkin argued for a free and egalitarian society free from any form of coercion. His solidarity principle, which he considered inherent to each individual, was founded on the idea that humans freely grouped into small communities were happier, in part because they could resolve their problems in a fraternal spirit. This led him to idealize the medieval city, turning it into a sort of mythical origin for his anarchist ideal. For Kropotkin, the medieval city "was an attempt at organizing, on a much grander scale than in a village community, a close union for mutual aid and support, for consumption and production, and for social life altogether, without imposing upon men the fetters of the State, but giving full liberty of expression to the creative genius of each separate group of individuals in art, crafts, science, commerce, and political organization" (*Mutual Aid* 43-44). He believed he saw the basis for what would become anarchist-communism in his idealized vision of the medieval world: "the more we learn about the medieval city, the more we are convinced that at no time has labor enjoyed such conditions of prosperity and such respect as when city life stood at its highest... not only many aspirations of our modern radicals were already realized in the middle ages, but much of what is described now as Utopian was accepted then as a matter of fact" (*Mutual Aid* 54).

Kropotkin had developed some of these ideas previously in *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899): "...we maintain that the ideal of society—that is, the state towards which society is already marching—is a society of integrated, combined labor; a society where each individual is a producer of both manual and intellectual work...and where each worker works both in the field and the industrial workshop (23)." According to Kropotkin, work rotation would eliminate monotony, stimulate production, and create more leisure time.

Kropotkin also proposed industrial decentralization. Instead of large centers of production, he recommended the creation of small factories spread out among communities throughout the countryside.

He anticipated potential critics (and there were many) by clarifying that he was not rejecting technological advancement: "...it would be a great mistake to imagine that industry ought to return to its hand-work stage in order to be combined with agriculture. Whenever a saving of human labor can be obtained by means of a machine, the machine is welcome and will be resorted to..." (Campos 195).

His insistence on integrating manual and intellectual labor forced him also to reconsider the role of education, which, according to Kropotkin, should be integrated and holistic as well as theoretical and practical. It should not tend toward specialization, but rather toward the transmission of general knowledge, which is not surprising in light of his goal of eliminating the division of labor. The free community was presented as the clear solution to all of the social, economic, political and cultural problems that had arisen under capitalism after the industrial revolution (Rama xviii).⁶

William Morris, an English contemporary of Kropotkin's, wrote a widely read utopian narrative of the time entitled *News from Nowhere*. Like Kropotkin, Morris was not a supporter of unrestrained industrial development. He argued for a radical transformation of social relationships and a simplification of the means of production. Morris' ideology was halfway between collectivist anarchism and Marxism. His utopia portrays a communist society that, after coming to power through revolutionary struggle and passing through a transitional stage, has succeeded in eliminating the State.

In Morris' book, the dissolution of private property and social classes means that work is no longer felt as a punishment and becomes a pleasure: "happiness without happy daily work is impossible (112)." Huge factories disappear, and in their place small workshops proliferate throughout the countryside. Only that which is needed is produced. Poor-quality goods, as well as those deemed superfluous, are prohibited. The most grueling labor is done by machines and only that which is pleasurable is made by hand. Each individual works in that which is most in accord with his tastes and aptitudes.

Morris does not reject the social and economic advantages of modern technology, but he is against man becoming a slave to the machine. Like Kropotkin, he vindicates the traditional arts and crafts of the Middle Ages. Morris' book, like those of his Russian predeces-

⁶ In *El organismo económico de la revolución*, Diego Abad de Santillán criticized these ideas from within the Anarchist ideology. Thus, he rejects some of Kropotkin's ideas as anachronistic. His medieval inspiration is not seen as compatible with a postindustrial economy, and the return to local self-sufficient communities as difficult to sustain in the midst of an incipient globalization.

sor, presents an idealized vision of the daily life of that epoch, in which the guilds were organized around small autonomous communities. Cities disappear in *News from Nowhere* along with the overcrowding and dehumanization that they produce. London is replaced by small villages with solid, simple, happy homes separated by gardens in such a way so as to render meaningless the distinction between city and country. This social organization promotes the reintegration of human beings and the natural world, the importance of aesthetic creativity, and a new conception of justice based on the principle of forgiveness. The institution of the family is replaced by free association among couples.

THE ANARCHIST CITY OF AMERICA

The writings of Kropotkin and the literary utopias of Morris and Déjacque would come together in the work of Pierre Quiroule, *The Anarchist City of America*. This utopian narrative revisits some of the most controversial topics of the philosophical debate on Anarchism, while simultaneously offering practical alternatives to previous models of anarcho-communism. However, before analyzing Quiroule's work, it would be helpful to explore the historical and social context in which it arose, namely, the Argentine anarchist movements at the turn of the 20th century.

Argentine Anarchism was, from its beginnings in 1880 until the 1930s, one of the dominant ideologies of the urban proletariat in Río de la Plata (Cappelletti and Rama ix; Oved 1; Zamora 461). In turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires, intellectual debate was dominated by Positivism, late-period Romanticism, new currents in pedagogy, literature and politics, and Cosmopolitanism. Proletarian immigrants from all over the globe came together there, having brought with them the revolutionary philosophy of Socialism and Anarchism. The first anarchists in Argentina were essentially individualists under the sway of German philosopher Max Stirner. They were the enemies of organized movements and supported direct action as the most effective form of propaganda. This modality of Anarchism reached its zenith around 1890, but faced with the rise of organized Anarchism, it soon fell into decline (Vázquez 102).

The presence in Buenos Aires of the Italians Enrique Malatesta and Pietro Gori and of the Spaniard Antonio Pellicer Paraire bolstered the supporters of Anarchism in general and of the anarchist unions in particular. By the end of the 19th century, various libertarian-inspired worker's associations, periodicals, popular libraries and conferences were being organized. Groups such as the *Círculo Comunista*

Anarquista (Communist-Anarchist Club) (1884), the *Círculo de Estudios Sociales (Social Studies Club)* (1885), the *Círculo Socialista Internacional (International Socialist's Club)* (supported by Malatesta from 1880-1884), the *Federación Libertaria (Libertarian Federation)* (organized by Gori) and the *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina-FOR A (Argentine Regional Worker's Federation --F.O.R.A.)* (1914) were founded.

The revolutionary press was also dominated by anarchist newspapers and magazines: *La Vanguardia (The Vanguard)* (1894) and *La Protesta Humana (The Human Protest)* (1897), which would later be known simply as *La Protesta (Protest)* starting in 1903, became daily newspapers with wide circulations as of 1904. Other periodicals, such as *El Perseguido (The Persecuted)*, *La Miseria (Misery)*, *Ni Dios ni Amo (No God or Master)*, *La Autonomía Individual (Individual Autonomy)* and *La Voz de la Mujer (Women's Voice)* had similar ideological tendencies. Anarchist periodicals were even published in immigrant languages like Italian (*Lavoriamo, La Riscossa, La Questione Sociale, Venti Settembre* and *La Conquista di Roma*) and French (*La Liberté* and *Le Cyclone*).

Not only were the worker's movements strongly ideological, intellectuals were also highly active politically. Roberto J. Payró, José Ingenieros, Juan B. Justo and Leopoldo Lugones were all socialist sympathizers, while Florencio Sánchez, Alberto Ghirardo, Pascual Guaglianone and Roberto González Pacheco were active members of the Anarchist movement.⁷ Argentine literature of the period reveals ideological traces of these movements that have not always been recognized. In the case of Anarchism, this lack of attention can be attributed to ignorance, both willful and inadvertent. In the history of Socialism, written typically from a Marxist perspective, Anarchism has more often than not been treated as a marginal and minor ideology, "the product of revolutionary immaturity, abstract utopianism, home-grown and petty bourgeois rebelliousness, etc." (Cappelletti and Rama x).

Anarchist influence had grown so powerful by the beginning of the 20th century that the Argentine Regional Worker's Federation recommended at its Fifth Congress to "instill in workers the economic principles of Anarcho-Communism" (Abad de Santillán. *La F.O.R.A.* 142). The presence of Anarchism in Argentine society had

⁷ In their prologue to *El anarquismo en América Latina (Anarchism in Latin America)*, Cappelletti and Rama assert that "[i]n Argentina and Uruguay it would be safe to say that the majority of writers who published between 1890 and 1920 were, at some point and to some degree, anarchists" (xii).

not appeared out of nowhere. The utopian tradition in Argentina stretches back to the Generation of 1837 and the influence of Saint Simon. Years later, Fourier and Proudhon would become the most influential thinkers on Argentine political thought. By the end of the century, the experience of the Paris Commune together with massive European immigration, industrial growth and the creation of a diversified working class would set the stage for the dissemination of anarchist ideas.⁸

This is the context in which Pierre Quiroule's *The Anarchist City of America (A Work of Revolutionary Construction)*, published in 1914 by Ediciones Protesta must be understood. Pierre Quiroule was the pseudonym adopted by the Frenchman Joaquín Alejo Falconnet, born in Lyon in 1867. Quiroule emigrated to Buenos Aires as a boy and at the age of 23 began collaborating with *El Perseguido (The Persecuted)* (1890-1897). He also founded *La Liberté* (1893-1893) and was a member of the editorial board of *La Protesta*, which was the most representative publication of Anarchist journalism in Argentina. The great many books and pamphlets he wrote made of him "one of the most prolific authors of Argentine anarchism" (Weinberg 64). He worked for many years at the National Library, a job he acquired thanks to his friend and compatriot Paul Groussac. He retired from political activism in the 1920s in order to dedicate himself to his philosophical writings, which he did until his death on November 30, 1938.

Quiroule is of crucial importance in understanding Argentine utopianism. He wrote the most well-known Anarchist utopia, *The Anarchist City of America*, which is the initial volume in a trilogy whose other two titles develop similar themes: *Sobre la ruta de la anarquía/ On the Road to Anarchy* (1912) and *En la tierra soñada del Ideal/In the Promised Land of the Ideal* (1924). The first of these deals with the problems that would arise after a radical transformation of society, and proposes strategies for guaranteeing social reorganization. The latter establishes a distinction between social ideals and material progress. All of them attempt to respond to the questions that "scientific" Socialism had left unanswered: What to do after revolutionary change has taken place? How to organize a communist society without committing the same errors as before? How to guarantee well-being, order and happiness without relying on authoritarianism

⁸ Utopias reappear in Argentina at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries due to the social and ideological realities brought about by immigration. Buenos Aires grew from 76,000 inhabitants in 1853 to five and a half million by 1920, almost half of whom were Italians and a third of whom were Spaniards.

and the concentration of power? Quiroule's answers are occasionally so extravagant and colorful that they may appear naïve, or even comical, to some readers, but the fact remains that Quiroule took a risk in attempting to break through conventional frames of thought by offering original and, occasionally, reasonable alternatives.

Quiroule's work begins with a dedication: "To the valiant revolutionaries of Mexico who fight for LAND AND LIBERTY!" (3). It is worth remembering that *The Anarchist City of America* was written at the height of the Mexican Revolution, where the Zapatista rebels fought under that banner, inspired by a vision of society that was clearly influenced by Anarchism. A second dedication recognizes the author's debt to Utopian thought: "To the admirable Utopians who forged the Ideal, glorious optimists of Human Thought..." (5).

The book itself begins with a preface ("*Two words of explanation*") in which Quiroule engages in a ferocious critique of capitalist society. Reform is not an alternative, only radical revolution: "We Communists intend to change everything, to innovate in all things" (11). He insists on the need to replace the present system for "a more rational and perfect society." In some ways, Quiroule counters the negativity that had characterized anarchism, which often rejected bourgeois society without offering a viable alternative. In *The Anarchist City of America*, he attempts to outline this future ideal society.⁹ Its most recent precedent had been *La société au lendemain de la révolution* by Jean Grave (Paris, 1882), translated as *La sociedad futura (The Future Society)*. Grave's book studies potential social problems arising after the success of a hypothetical revolution.

Quiroule emphasizes that change should not end with the removal the bourgeoisie from power. He argues for a radical and profound transformation of society. Authentic revolution, according to Quiroule, can only be achieved by establishing communities organized into small cities in direct contact with nature. In contrast to "scientific" Socialism, Anarchists fight for the individual to be free of the booby-traps of life in society. Quiroule, unlike other utopians, enters the difficult arena of causal history. Traditional utopias had never explained how the revolution would take place. The changes were given, the new order was in place, and functioned properly and without question. Quiroule also distances himself from previous

⁹ Quiroule was perfectly aware of this critique of Anarchists and addresses it at the conclusion of his preface: "It has been said over and over again that Anarchists are excellent critics and demolishers of the present order, but that we completely ignore what we would put in its place... This outline of a libertarian city and an organized future in the Anarchist community is meant to destroy that prejudice. P.Q." (16).

utopias by locating his in an easily identifiable place. The first utopias of the 16th and 17th centuries had always portrayed a distant ideal location of almost impossible access (usually an island), guaranteeing an ideal and exotic alterity. Having run out of undiscovered lands, the utopias of the 19th and 20th centuries usually took place in the future: *L'an 2440 (The Year 2440)* by Louis Sebastian Mercier is at the forefront of this tendency toward utopian futurism, to which could be added *Le monde dans deux mille ans (The World in Two Thousand Years)* by Georges Pellerin, *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy and *A Modern Utopia* by H.G. Wells).

Quiroule operates in a more clearly defined territory. Toponyms in his novel are fictional, but they bear an unmistakable resemblance to Argentine geography (Weinberg 69). The region where the revolution that makes possible, decades later, the foundation of the ideal Anarchist society is called the Kingdom of El Dorado, which takes its name from the ancient mythical kingdom that the Spanish conquistadors believed existed in the New World. The capital city is named Las Delicias (Buenos Aires?) and is located on the banks of the Diamond River (River Plate?). The new city where anarcho-communism is implemented is located to the north of Las Delicias, near the province of Santa Felicidad (Santa Fe?). Quiroule alludes to vast, monotonous plains to the south of the new city (the Pampas?). He also refers on many occasions to the Native Indians as the ancient lords of the land, which was taken from them by the conquistadors. And if that weren't enough, "the legendary figure of the untamed gaucho of the Argentine plains (23)" makes an appearance as well.

Time in the novel is treated with ambivalence, and the action takes place at an indeterminate time; however, the time frame can be approximated. The prologue refers to the fact that the monarchy had been abolished twenty years previous and there is an allusion to a new century that has recently begun. The revolution that topples the government takes place during the festivities on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the installation of the monarchy, which recalls the celebrations that were held throughout Latin America for the First Centennial of Independence in 1910. Although the indispensable temporal ambiguity of utopian narratives is maintained, it is feasible to assume that the revolution had triumphed in 1910 and that the story of life in the new society takes place in 1930. Just as in classic utopian narratives, the author speaks of the future from the point of view of the present. Utopia, therefore, happens in a parallel timeframe.

At the start and conclusion of *The Anarchist City of America*, the question of attaining power and the problems inherent to a post-revolutionary scenario are addressed. The overthrow of the monarchy

comes about as a consequence of a *coup d'état*. A small group of insurrectionists take advantage of the confusion surrounding the patriotic celebrations and detain the monarch, prime minister, cabinet ministers, and chief of police late one night and lock them up in a barracks in the capital city. The next day the rebels declare the fall of the bourgeois monarchy and announce the establishment of free communities. The news is received with joy and enthusiasm by the masses, who take to the streets to proclaim their loyalty to the new revolutionary regime.

The capitalist nations declare an international boycott soon after the Communist takeover of El Dorado, which leads to the adoption of severe centralization measures. In this way many of the difficulties that would soon be confronted by the Russian Revolution of 1917 are brought to light. The metallurgical industry, for example, requires laborers willing to sacrifice for the national good; after all, someone still has to do the dirty work after the revolution. The peasants remain tied to the land and working for someone else (collective farms in this case, as opposed to landowners). Soon the risk of a split between the city and the country becomes apparent. One solution (the one most often adopted by "real-life" socialism) would consist of concentrating power and imposing authoritarian measures. The problem that Quiroule addresses is that a true anarchist would never be satisfied with a mere change in government leadership or in the economic and institutional organs of the State.

The Anarchist City of America's originality resides precisely in the raising of these questions, which had never before been addressed by utopian narratives. Quiroule's solutions to these questions are proposed via the visionary predictions of a "scientist" and architect of the so-called "Second Revolution of El Dorado." This archetypal character goes by the name of "Super," immediately evoking the Nietzschean concept of the superman. His companions are equally emblematic, with names that also carry allegorical resonance: Optimus, the mechanical inventor; Utop, artist and sculptor; and two women, Corola (Corolla) and Caricias (Caresses). Together, these characters pursue a revolutionary plan of action of truly anarchist character in the hope of implementing a radically new societal model.

Quiroule blames the failure of the First Revolution on the fact that it had installed itself in the grand capital city of the old regime. The type of radical transformation of daily life that the anarchists aspired to is impossible to achieve in large cities. To begin with, cities give rise to armies of bureaucrats and speculators who are considered to be a useless, if not malignant, force in society. Moreover, the metropolis exists thanks to a large service sector and heavy industry operated

by a working class forced to engage in unpleasant labor. The remedy proposed by Super and his collaborators is to proclaim limitless freedom, and to organize work "according to new principles that do not restrict the individual to only one profession or lifestyle." The first step then is to "flee from the big cities and demolish them...as though they were cursed" (146). The alternative they offer is the creation of "small towns that by producing everything they need are self-sufficient." Thus, the new society is built upon a foundation of intensive agricultural production.

The transformative process requires progressive adaptation to the new order of things. It takes four years for the communities to become self-sufficient; another four for the philosophical basis of anarchist communities to take shape; an additional ten years before the new towns develop the customs and appearance that they enjoy at the time the narrative begins. At the start of Quiroule's utopia, the "free and happy society" has already taken root. Both the revolutionary and reform processes that had occurred prior to its establishment are not presented to the reader until the end of the book (chapters 17 and 24).

The anarchist city succeeds after Super experiments with a new deadly weapon of mass destruction: the Vibraliber, which leads to the defeat of the bourgeois governments of Europe and brings about the universal implementation of anarchist-communism. The dialogues between Super, Optimus and Utop are a pretense for engaging in a meticulous description of how the utopian "City of the Children of the Sun" has been organized. The city's urban plan follows the pattern of other previous and contemporary utopian narratives. Its geometric layout is intended to guarantee the imagined new order, hence the importance given to urban planning. Such is the ambition of many utopians, who have always trusted the layout of an Ideal City more than the unpredictable range of human conduct (Ainsa, *La reconstrucción* 196).

The geometric heart of the capital city is occupied by the Anarchist Plaza. Four diagonal avenues—Humanity, Friendship, Harmony and Liberty—originate from this point and divide the city's concentric quadrilaterals into proportionally identical sectors. The first quadrilateral surrounds the gardens of Anarchist Plaza and contains mechanical and electrical workshops, shoe and furniture manufacturers, printers, bakers, watchmakers, weavers and pasta makers. Each workshop is equipped with a technical library and classrooms. The second urban loop consists of storehouses for agricultural goods and related products, garages for storing agricultural machinery and warehouses for clothes and domestic items. Residential housing is

located on the periphery of the city, scattered among manicured gardens, and consisting of pre-fabricated chalets built of heat-resistant glass. The farms and production centers are located in the countryside on the outer limits of the city.

The keys to the proper functioning of the anarchist city are its small size and complete autonomy. The inhabitants do not need to travel long distances to work or acquire goods. Everything they need is within reach and every community is almost entirely self-sufficient. The population for each city is limited to between ten and twelve thousand individuals. Once this limit has been passed, one or two thousand members create a new city at a distance of no less than twenty kilometers away.

Among the various communist institutions that function in the city are the *Cuna* (Crib), where newborns are cared for far from the guidance and control of their parents until the age of six, the Hospital, the House of Health, the "bathing and swimming establishments," and the astronomical observatory. Four Education Centers, responsible for the intellectual development of children over six, complete the reorganization of the educational system.

Social life in the anarchist city occurs in various centrally located venues. Leisure time is organized around the Coliseum, a mix between an Athenian *agora* and a Roman circus, where artistic performances glorifying Life, Nature, the Sun, Anarchy, Liberty and Solidarity are held. Next to the Coliseum is the governing headquarters of the capital city, known as the Advisory Council (*Sala del Consejo*), where every night active members of the citizenry deliberate together. It also serves as an information center. As they pass by each evening, the city's inhabitants can draw attention to everyday problems that are resolved the following day.

The transformation of the means of production leads to radical changes in the daily life and customs of the citizenry, who now enjoy a great deal of leisure time to participate in lectures, conferences and sports. Individuals do not live within families (the institution of the family has been abolished in the new society), and women, who have been liberated and enjoy the same rights as men, organize themselves independently. Romantic relationships are voluntary and involve no legal obligations.

The detail with which Quiroule treats each and every aspect of the anarchist community, together with his somewhat overwrought poetic style, renders his descriptions laughable on occasion. Such is the case of his meticulous description of anarchist clothing, which consists for men of sleeveless summer tunics or winter ponchos with

baggy trousers and sandals like those worn by gauchos. Women use a blouse and pants or skirt for work, and long tunics the rest of the day:

And so it was that the female anarchist workers upon returning to the city after their workday in the fields or upon leaving their jobs at the community workshops, would remove their semi-masculine garments in favor of an outfit more in tune with natural beauty of women, discretely revealing their feminine charms, just as the chrysalis removes its rough, temporary shell so as to morph into the delicate and radiant butterfly. (110)

Quiroule's urban utopia is full of paradoxes. Although no authority figures are visible in the anarchist city, the social space and organization of the community follow a rigorous symmetry. Proposals are open to debate, but are for the most part uniform in nature. Be it food (vegetarian), education (holistic) or clothing (classical), everything happens in accordance with a planned, rigid order that doesn't mesh well with the anti-authoritarian spirit of Anarchism (Gutiérrez 164). The centralized urban planning, organized around the institution of Advisory Council, runs counter to the libertarian spirit, and entirely overlooks a tradition as typically Latin American as the public plaza. The community rejects all forms of hierarchical organization, but the most important decisions all seem to be made by a small group of elite visionaries led by Super, who is also known as the Physicist, the Inventor and the Ancient One. In fact, it is suggested that the entire revolutionary project has been designed by him alone.¹⁰ Quiroule's city lacks large-scale factories and centers of specialized study, yet he doesn't explain how the inhabitants have developed such sophisticated inventions as heat-resistant glass housing, helicopters, mobile telephones and weapons of mass destruction (the aforementioned "Vibraliber").

The only thing that does not follow the rigid urban planning of Quiroule's city is the quaint distribution of the housing units, which mirror the bourgeois residences of the vacation areas outside of Buenos Aires. However, the statistics provided by the author are not very reliable. How would it be possible to house ten to twelve thousand inhabitants in such a spread-out fashion without the need for public transportation? Moreover, the urban plan that the author includes in the book accounts for only 650 housing units. A detailed representation of the residential sector's organization clearly demonstrates the

¹⁰ Gómez Tovar has pointed out that "Super's character is aligned with the Positivist notion of the researcher as a pragmatic man schooled in the laws and secrets of scientific discovery and capable of dominating and perfecting Nature by means of an ethical and political commitment (58)."

difficulty of implementing such an urban utopian project. For these and other reasons, Ramón Gutiérrez disregards Quiroule's project, perhaps with excessive severity: "his proposal is contradictory [...] it's urban design is weak and from a functional and economic point of view it is impractical" (173).

In other aspects, Quiroule's vision is prophetic. Some of his ideas are not only possible, but have already been implemented. His ecological vision, following in the footsteps of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City in *Tomorrow* (1898) with its grand open spaces and autonomous neighborhoods replacing the sordid working class tenements on the outskirts of large cities, has come to exist in many places and at many times. Cities were built on this model in England (Letchworth and Golden Green). A few years later, the Argentine architect Wladimiro Acosta foreshadowed the construction of a new type of city in his book *Outline of the City of the Future* (1938) (*Bosquejo de la ciudad del futuro*), based on interlocking urban and rural zones and the rational organization of space dedicated to housing, work, industry and agriculture.

Quiroule's proposals regarding alternative energy are particularly farsighted. He foresees electricity being generated from wind, hydraulic, solar and geothermal power sources. Regarding his social and administrative proposals, some have been put into practice and others remain in use. Weinberg mentions the collectivization of land properties in Aragon during the Spanish Civil War, Chinese communes and the Israeli kibbutzim (94). In addition Ainsa refers to the 1960s communes and recent anarchist experiments in France, Italy, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Argentina and Uruguay. These usually take the form of autarchic, closed communities, in which utopianism abandons theoretical speculation and literary imagination, so as to become an everyday reality (*La reconstrucción* 199).

The Americas have been a utopian laboratory since colonial times. While it is true that in the New World the founding of actual utopian communities preceded the writing of literary utopias, by the end of the 19th century a narrative tradition of imagining ideal societies, generally of a libertarian nature, had taken root in the Americas. This process reversed the tendency of European utopian thought, where Renaissance narratives (More, Campanella, Bacon) heralded utopian experiments centuries later. But both have shared the vision of America as the natural habitat for Utopia. We continue to refer to this continent as the "New World," a young world where the ideal is still attainable. And yet, the social realities of the Americas often resemble the anti-utopias of some of our most dystopian fiction (Giudicelli 6-7). The American dream of reason often produces American

nightmares. This ideal America that stands in stark contrast to the real America is all the more evident when we consider that every utopia is a projection of the binary tension between the world we have and the world we want. The land of Utopia, which is “no-place,” implies a creative effort to bring another world into existence, an alternate universe that recovers the virtues of the past, projects itself into the future or simply represents itself as already existing somewhere else. That *other* world, insofar as it is an alterity, operates as a critical reflection of a reality that pretends to correct itself by imposing modifications on an unjust structure.

Santiago Juan-Navarro
Florida International University
United States of America

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