

Foreign bodies, alternative politics and the boundaries of Americanism

Lauren L. Basson

ABSTRACT

Physical features have served as the basis for drawing distinctions between bodies identified with “us” and bodies identified with “them” in multiple contexts. Sometimes, however, the basis for defining “us” and “them” lies beyond the realm of physical distinctions. Ideological and religious distinctions, for example, are often unrelated to one’s physical appearance. These invisible distinctions can often seem threatening to authorities, who seek an immediate way to separate those who belong to the dominant group from those who do not. In some cases, authorities have addressed this issue by ascribing negative physical characteristics to members of groups they wish to exclude. By focusing on how capitalist journalists constructed anarchists as foreigners in the late nineteenth-century United States, this article examines one example of such a process.

Introduction

What does it mean to look American? What does it mean to look American but hold political beliefs defined by members of the dominant group as un-American? Why did members of the mainstream U.S. press in the late nineteenth century portray anarchists and socialists as not only ideologically foreign but also as physically non-American? This article will argue that reporters and government officials went to great lengths to portray the bodies and behaviors of anarchists as un-American, and even inhuman, in efforts to translate the ideological differences between socialists and capitalists into a visible, ascriptive boundary separating ideological “foreigners” from “true Americans.”

“Other” bodies have become the focus of intense preoccupation among scholars in recent years. This focus is part of a growing interdisciplinary interest in the human body as an important site for the investigation of the construction of boundaries defining nation, race, and gender (e.g., Chaplin, 1997; Comaroff, 1995; Faery, 1999; Hyde,

1997; McNally, 2001; Mohanroam, 1999; Turner, 1984). Feminist scholars examine portrayals of women's bodies in patriarchal discourses. Experts on race relations in the United States analyze dominant constructions of the bodies of African-Americans and other "non-whites." Immigration scholars examine mainstream depictions of the bodies of "foreign workers" or "illegal aliens." More recently, some U.S. researchers have adopted a critical stance toward racialized interpretations of bodies of the dominant group as "neutral," analyzing constructions of whiteness.

In each of these instances, physical markers have served as the basis for claims of distinction between the bodies of members of the dominant group and "other" bodies in mainstream discourses. Scholars interested in constructions of otherness do not deny physical differences among people but rather seek to understand how physical markers become incorporated into far-reaching sociopolitical discourses of otherness and the construction of boundaries between "us" and "them."

Constructions of "otherness" become more complicated and difficult to maintain in the presence of bodies that cannot be easily visibly identified as either "one of us" or an "other." People who disrupt or blur racial, gender, national or other sociopolitical boundaries dependent on ascriptive markers often provoke profound anxieties among members of the dominant group. In the late nineteenth-century United States, the "whitening" of black slaves as the result of interracial mingling provoked intense anxieties among white citizens and contributed to undermining both the institution of slavery and the system of racial distinctions on which it was based. In the post-Reconstruction era, the difficulties associated with visibly distinguishing between members of supposedly separate races ultimately led to the adoption of the "one drop" rule, according to which any body possessing even one drop of "black" blood was socially and legally constructed as black. This rule not only provided an abstract definition of racial blackness intended to resolve the impossibility of visual distinction, it also reinforced the prevailing associations between whiteness and purity, on the one hand, and blackness and mixture, on the other.

Invisible "others" challenge sociopolitical boundaries associated with physical, ascriptive markers and thus provoke particular fears among members of the dominant group. The black person able to "pass" as white constituted a different and more acute type of threat, in the dominant worldview, than a black person visibly identifiable as black and therefore immediately recognizable as "other." Such in-between people, through their very existence, challenge the boundaries that construct the sociopolitical order and consequently occupy a particularly vulnerable place within society.

Invisible "others," people who are neither members of the dominant group as it defines itself, nor visually identifiable as members of an "other" group, exist in every society. They include not only those who blur ascriptive boundaries, such as blacks who "pass" as white, or women who "look like" men, but also members of groups of "others" that cannot be distinguished on the basis of visual criteria. These include members of religious and ideological groups whose bodies are visibly indistinguishable

from those of members of the dominant group. Authorities in some states and societies have sought to visibly distinguish these “other” bodies from those of the dominant group by requiring them to wear specific garments or symbols, or by restricting their residence to particular neighborhoods. Other methods of constructing boundaries between invisible “others” and members of the dominant group include the development of discourses that suggest that ascriptive differences separate “their” bodies from “ours.”

In the following pages, I examine one example of this process. In the absence of either ascriptive or legal boundaries distinguishing anarchists from other Americans, members of the capitalist press in the late nineteenth-century United States nevertheless sought to construct the bodies and behaviors of anarchist citizens as foreign. Fear of anarchism was an issue that extended beyond ideological disagreements for many mainstream capitalist officials and political observers. The apparent threat posed by anarchists exceeded their proclamation of political beliefs that challenged and contradicted dominant capitalist assumptions. It was exacerbated by the fact that anarchists were not visibly or legally distinguishable from other Americans.

Anarchist bodies and American borders

Depicting anarchism as a foreign doctrine and defining its adherents as foreigners was one of the primary strategies U.S. officials and observers used in their efforts to counter what they perceived as a growing threat. The national capitalist press published frequent attacks on anarchism, depicting it as an un-American ideology and arguing that adherence to anarchism and other forms of socialism was a detriment to working people. The capitalist press characterized anarchists as foreigners by repeatedly claiming they were foreign-born, European immigrants. Reporters ignored the fact that most American anarchists were naturalized U.S. citizens, if not citizens by birth.

Editorials in major newspapers provided evidence of an internal struggle over how to reconcile the conceptualization of anarchists as foreigners with their legal status as U.S. citizens. One day after the Haymarket tragedy,¹ for example, the *Chicago Tribune* asserted that none of the anarchists in the city were “true American citizens”:

These alien Anarchists not only seek to inflame the passions of the mob and urge them on to violence, but they have the effrontery to claim that they are “true

1 The Haymarket tragedy involved a deadly bombing in Haymarket Square in Chicago. The bombing took place at the end of a demonstration in favor of an eight-hour working day. The bomb thrower was never positively identified or sentenced, but government authorities accused several prominent local anarchists of murder on the basis of their political platforms and activities. Four of these men were ultimately executed by the state.

American citizens,” and that they are defending the liberty for which their sires fought. Not one of them is a true American citizen. Not one of them performs the duties of a good citizen, is loyal to his Government, or has the interest of the community at heart (May 5, 1886:4).

The definition of a “true” American citizen, according to this editorial, was a moral rather than a legal or ascriptive one. “True” American citizens were “good citizens” who were “loyal” to their government and had “the interest of the community at heart.” In other words, “true American citizens” were those who upheld republican values. This definition of Americanism raised the question of why people who were neither born in the United States, nor apparently morally qualified for U.S. citizenship, were still able to obtain the legal status of citizens. It also raised questions about exactly how these moral prerequisites for “true” citizenship would be defined, and by whom.

Perhaps recognizing the difficult questions that its ideologically based, republican definition of “true American citizens” raised, the newspaper changed tactics the following day. Rather than asserting that anarchists were not “true American citizens,” it portrayed them as ungrateful and inhuman U.S. citizens who held treasonous views that rendered them politically alien. In other words, the newspaper now recognized the anarchists as technically legal citizens of the state but portrayed them as politically, morally and ascriptively unqualified for membership in the nation. Indeed, it portrayed them as enemies of the nation despite their U.S. citizenship, which, if anything, made them appear a greater threat:

These aliens, driven out of Germany and Bohemia for treasonable teachings by Bismarck and the Emperor of Austria have swarmed over into this country of extreme toleration and have most flagrantly abused its hospitality. After warming these frozen vipers on its breasts and permitting them to become citizens, with the right to vote and hold office and take part in the government of city, county, state and nation, it has given them three or four times the wages they could possibly get in their own country, given them free schools, free care in case of destitution, and an opportunity to better their condition limited only by their own ability. These ungrateful hyenas have repaid this hospitality by organizing themselves into associations whose object is the destruction of the property, law and government of the land that shelters and feeds them (May 6, 1886:4).

Their alleged commitment to the “destruction of property, law and government” transformed naturalized European-American citizens into “aliens,” “frozen vipers” and “ungrateful hyenas.” Their political views, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, rendered American anarchists not just foreign, but non-human. Together, these editorials summarized the emerging attitudes toward anarchists, communists and socialists that would eventually lead to legal changes in immigration laws designed to prevent entry

into the United States of people viewed as holding “foreign” and dangerous political views.

In 1903, following the assassination of President William McKinley by a man loosely associated with the anarchist movement, the new federal immigration act stipulated that anarchists would not be allowed to enter the United States (Jacobson, 2000:94). The 1906 naturalization act declared that prospective U.S. citizens must swear they were not “opposed to organized government,” and demonstrate their “good moral character” and attachment to the “principles of the Constitution” (cited in Jacobson, 2000:94-95).

Thus, in the twentieth century, adherence to political ideologies defined as radical, including anarchism and, later, communism, became legal barriers to immigration to the United States and the attainment of U.S. citizenship. Affiliation with such political ideologies came to legally define what it meant to be un-American. To be an anarchist or a communist deprived one of the right to become an American citizen if one was born outside of the United States, and caused one to be labeled un-American and deprived of national membership if he or she were born within state boundaries. In the late nineteenth century, however, the legal association between anarchism and foreignness did not yet exist. Anarchists therefore could not be defined as legally alien, and other criteria had to be employed in order to bolster the argument that they were foreigners.

Adherence to an abstract set of political beliefs apparently did not seem a sufficient basis on which to declare someone foreign, just as it did not seem a sufficient basis on which to accept someone as a member of the nation. U.S. officials and observers therefore sought to distinguish anarchists from “true American citizens” or members of the nation on the basis of ascriptive criteria. Reporters and government authorities began to redefine anarchism according to its alleged physical and behavioral manifestations. They sought to distinguish what they viewed as foreign anarchist bodies from capitalist American bodies. Reports depicted anarchists as dirty, lazy, longhaired, disorderly people who spoke English with foreign accents, if they spoke English at all (e.g., *New York Times*, November 1, 1886:1 and November 18, 1890:5; *Harper's Weekly*, October 9, 1886; *Chicago Tribune*, August 3, 1886:4 and August 8, 1886:14). In other descriptions, anarchists lost any human qualities whatsoever and became “venomous serpents,” “hyenas,” “reptiles” and “tigresses,” among other beasts (e.g., *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 1886:4; *New York Times*, May 5, 1886:4). National newspapers frequently likened anarchists to the devil and associated them with fire and blood (e.g., *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 1886:4; August 7, 1886:1; November 3, 1887:1; *New York Times*, May 5, 1886:1). Anarchists represented a greater threat even than members of other groups excluded from the nation on the basis of race or other ascriptive criteria. The *Chicago Tribune* asserted, “One howling Anarchist is the cause of greater evil in this country than a hundred Chinamen” (May 5, 1886:4).

Through their characterizations of anarchists, government authorities and capitalist reporters redefined what it meant to be foreign in terms of ascriptive traits, such as race

and gender, and behavioral attributes, such as personal hygiene, laziness and alcohol consumption. They not only associated anarchism with foreign bodies, but also sought convincing ways in which to depict the human bodies of individual anarchists as foreign. In other words, they described those bodies in which anarchism seemed to reside as alien, regardless of their legal status. This project took on particular urgency and posed challenges because the vast majority of anarchist bodies were male, European-American bodies that could not be visually distinguished from the bodies of accepted members of the nation.

In this context, one's political persuasion became a naturalized, fixed identity. Anarchism became a bio-physical attribute, a negative, stigmatized possession. By defining anarchists in terms of particular physical and behavioral attributes, U.S. authorities and members of the mainstream press exposed their fear that the invisibility of anarchism rendered those who adhered to it particularly dangerous. The challenges this lack of visual distinctions posed to efforts to categorize people according to their political persuasions raised considerable anxieties among many European-Americans. The ability to conceal one's political views increased the apparent threats anarchists posed, just as the ability to conceal dynamite in one's pocket seemed to render the explosive a greater threat to society. Not only did the invisibility of anarchism make its individual adherents difficult to identify, it also made the process of tracking the transmission of these political beliefs from one person to the next in "mixed" industrial cities more challenging.

In order to counter the threat of invisibility, authorities and reporters sought to render anarchism visible, at least in theory, by characterizing anarchists as physically and behaviorally "other," and thus outside the boundaries of the nation. This tactic served two purposes: first, to transform anarchist political beliefs into an ascriptive, and therefore theoretically, a more easily identifiable trait; and second, to marginalize anarchists by constructing them as racialized and gendered others.

In the following pages, I will briefly discuss three examples of how officials and observers sought to transform anarchism into an ascriptive trait. They include the racialized depiction of anarchists as the new Red savages; the association of anarchists with alcohol consumption; and the portrayal of anarchists as defying conventional gender roles. These examples are intended to illustrate different dimensions of a common process but are by no means exhaustive. All of these associations emphasized the threat of disorder and turbulence that U.S. officials and other observers felt anarchists posed to the U.S. nation and state.

Anarchists as new Reds

Conceptualizing anarchists, socialists and other laborers as foreign by applying the same racialized stereotypes to them that had historically been applied to American

Indians was a well-documented tactic (e.g., Kovel, 1997; Rogin, 1987; Slotkin, 1985). This approach was inspired in part by the fact that the last major Indian wars took place at the same historical moment that the industrialization of U.S. urban centers and the employment of masses of wage laborers were accelerating. Newspapers reported on Indian wars and labor struggles on the same page, referring to members of both groups as Reds (see Slotkin, 1985:494, for analysis of one such example). Due to the ambiguous national status of American Indians, the application of the label “Reds” to anarchists suggested that these opponents of the capitalist wage labor system were both racially other and nationally foreign.

In addition to calling anarchists Reds, the capitalist press repeatedly referred to them as savages, suggesting that anarchists were excluded not only from the nation, but also from the entire realm of civilization. The *New York Times* contrasted the “cowardly savages” who perpetrated the Haymarket bombing with the Chicago police, “the brave men on whom the safety of society rests” (May 6, 1886:4). Similarly, the paper compared the “decent solemnity” that allegedly marked the execution of the Chicago anarchists with the “savage fury” of the bombing for which they were wrongly hanged (November 12, 1887:4). One article declared that the Chicago anarchists were not only a “miserable lot of aliens—the wretched, rotten rubbish cast upon our shores by the political convulsions in distant lands—foreign to us in aspect, feelings, ideas, aims and designs,” but were also “murderous tramps” and “enemies of the human race” (*Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, July 31, 1886:370). The same editorial concluded, “Strangulation and the stamping-out process are the only sure remedies yet found for such insane destroyers of civilization” (p. 370).

The transfer of racialized stereotypes from American Indians to Chicago socialists was illustrated in two articles published in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* one month apart. In the first article, entitled “Our Uneasy Wards,” the newspaper claimed, “the time has come to settle the Indian question” (July 18, 1885:346). Despite “ominous activity” among the Indians, the author implied that they no longer posed a grave threat to the nation and willingly acknowledged that whites had caused many of the problems the Indians faced.² At the same time, the author wrote condescendingly of many Indians being “‘in a starving condition,’ the condition that the Indians are always in,” and suggested that this condition stemmed from a lack of self-control as much as from any government policy or individual actions on the part of white settlers: “Indians are always in want. They are always hungry and always thirsty—especially the latter—and so they are ready to sell anything they have for a moment’s indulgence. Indians just going into battle have been known to sell their muskets for a meal of victuals” (p. 346). The article recommended that the Indian “question” be “settled” by allocating a

2 According to Slotkin (1985:494), articles in *The Nation* expressed similar sentiments.

section of land to each Indian head of family for cultivation under the supervision of “white men, whose knowledge of crop-growing, and whose strong commercial instincts would in time teach the savage to become self-supporting” (p. 346). In other words, the solution to the “Indian problem” lay in incorporating them into a white supremacist, liberal individualist and capitalist way of life.

The newspaper did not extend the paternalistic sympathy it expressed toward the plight of the Indians to the “Chicago Socialists.” Instead, using many of the same stereotypes that had often been applied to American Indians in the past, the newspaper described this new “enemy” as a much greater threat than the Indians themselves:

Chicago Socialists, like others of their class, who are too lazy to work and too vicious to obey laws except under a wholesome fear, are at once too silly and too foolhardy to be at any pains to conceal their real purposes. Cowardly and sneaking like the individual wolf, they become bold and blatant with the bravery of the bully when they assume the proportions of a mob. They demand “bread or blood”—the bread that honest men have earned and on which they have no claim, moral or legal... For this lack of food they seek to make society responsible; it has apparently never dawned on these incendiary, revolutionary, and Nihilistic individuals that the responsibility for properly providing for their own offspring rests on the individual fathers and mothers, and not on the public at large. The grotesque criminality of these would-be robbers of the money that others have earned or saved has never been more forcibly illustrated than by the fact that the same mob that proclaimed through the streets of Chicago the hunger of their offspring only managed to appease their own thirst by the consumption of three hundred kegs of beer. It never occurred to these howlers after “an equal division of property” that the cost of three hundred kegs of beer, invested in the purchase of bread, would appease a good deal of hunger. But one must not look for reason, common-sense, or any other commendable quality, in a Chicago Socialist (*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, August 29, 1885:19).

The characterization of “Chicago Socialists” as “lazy,” “cowardly,” “vicious,” and “incendiary” echoed countless descriptions of American Indians. Many of the attributes this article used to describe Chicago socialists were also commonly applied to other groups deemed non-white, including blacks (see Haney Lopez, 1996).

The newspaper compared both the Indians and the socialists to wolves and emphasized the hunger of both populations, suggesting that this hunger stemmed from impulsiveness and lack of self-discipline and self-control. Yet while the newspaper also acknowledged that whites held considerable responsibility for the plight of the Indians and advocated providing government assistance to the Indian population, it made no such suggestions with regard to the socialists. Instead, this editorialist interpreted the hunger of the socialists as a sign of their immorality and criminality for

which they were personally responsible. The Chicago socialists were “incendiary revolutionaries” who did not deserve assistance from anyone, least of all from the U.S. government. They had replaced the Indians as the new Reds, the new savages, the new heathens, the new “incendiaries,” the new “mob” and the new enemies of private property (*Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, August 29, 1885:19).³

Anarchists as alcoholics

The articles in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* about the Indians and the Chicago socialists also mentioned an additional similarity between the two populations. They implied that the hunger both experienced could be avoided if they spent fewer of their resources on alcohol. The association between anarchism and alcohol consumption was another means frequently employed to distinguish the alleged immorality of anarchists, their supposed lack of self-discipline and reason, and their wild behavior from the morality, rationality and proper behavior attributed to capitalist citizens. At a time when the temperance and prohibition movements received strong popular support for their efforts to preserve moral order in U.S. society, the association with alcohol consumption suggested that the anarchists fell outside the moral and behavioral boundaries of the nation. According to one newspaper article, “Chicago has become the rendezvous for the worst elements of the socialistic, atheistic, alcoholic, European classes” (*Chicago Tribune*, May 7, 1886:2).

Reporters included frequent references to beer drinking in their articles concerning anarchist activities, regardless of the relevance of these references to the main story. One *Chicago Tribune* article concerning the Haymarket trial, for instance, noted sarcastically: “Anarchist Brown swears that ten minutes before the bomb exploded Parsons and his wife were in Zepf’s saloon drinking beer! The whole business, it would seem, was only a beer frolic” (August 7, 1886:1). The author went on to suggest that the anarchists might seek to excuse each step of what he believed was a murderous conspiracy by asserting that they were only drinking beer.

The association of anarchists with alcohol consumption was a means of portraying them as wild, disorderly people whose behavior fell outside the boundaries of acceptability defined by the more refined members of the nation. People who drank beer were more likely to act in uncontrolled, undisciplined and unpredictable ways,

3 The depiction of anarchists and socialists as new Reds and as savages was a widespread phenomenon. In his account of anarchy and anarchists written after the Haymarket bombing, Captain Michael Schaack (1889:207) referred to female anarchists as “squaws” and reported that they were always invited to the anarchist “war dances.”

transgressing the boundaries that defined the sober, settled sociopolitical order. A cartoon of Johann Most, the most infamous anarchist in the United States in the late nineteenth century, depicts him with a beard and frazzled hair, holding a rifle with one outstretched hand and lifting his other fist in the air. Far from standing in a settled pose with his two feet on the ground, it looks as though Most is about to leap into the air. To one side of him a sign reads, "Address by Most, the enemy and terror of capital." On the other side is a large keg of beer (*Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1886:3).

Linking anarchism to alcohol consumption constituted an attempt to emphasize the pathology, lack of reason and lack of self-control among those who adhered to these political beliefs. It also linked anarchists to notions of turbulence and unsanctioned forms of movement. Associating anarchists with alcohol was part of a larger effort to depict anarchism as a threat to the sociopolitical order and anarchists as unfit for membership in the nation.

Anarchists and gender boundaries

A third way in which the mainstream press sought to portray anarchists as possessors of foreign bodies was by depicting them as transgressing gendered boundaries and defying conventional gender roles. One newspaper account, for example, referred to striking women as "shouting Amazons" (*Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1886). In the aftermath of the Haymarket tragedy, the *New York Times* asserted:

The Bohemian women have been taught a lesson. They acted like tigresses on the night of the shooting and the following day. They developed more courage, as well as ferocity and venom, than the men and showed so little of the woman in their words or actions that the police in self-defense were compelled at times to forget the sex of their assailants (May 8, 1886:1)

Similarly, the *Chicago Tribune* commented:

A study of the faces of these German and Bohemian women as they tramped by, with a tread that was almost masculine, brought up thoughts of the exciting part played by women in the French Revolution, and, later in the Commune. Dressed in the deepest black, their stern faces wearing little indication of mourning, large slashes of red ribbon on their breasts, these typical Communists looked more fierce and revengeful than their husbands (November 14, 1887:1).

Reporters sought to discredit Lucy Parsons, one of the most prominent anarchist activists, not only on the basis of her status as a woman, but also by portraying her as an unwomanly woman. They described her as a "tigress," a "rabid, screaming Anarchist,"

and as that “wild, mad Parsons woman” (*Chicago Tribune*, March 11, 1887:1; *New York Times*, March 10, 1887:1). Reporters emphasized that Lucy’s husband, Albert, worked for her in her dress shop, suggesting a reversal of conventional gender roles, and implying that she was overly masculine while he lacked the requisite qualities of manhood (*New York Times*, May 5, 1886:4).

The capitalist press portrayed Lucy Parsons as a proper woman only in her moment of greatest grief, after the state executed her husband in conjunction with the Haymarket trial. Newspaper accounts compared her feminine demeanor in sorrow to her behavior as a “tigress” when she was challenging the political status quo. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, “Woman’s nature had asserted its sway, and the fearless wife of the dead Parsons was absolutely prostrated by the violence of her emotions” (November 12, 1887:2). The newspaper quoted one of Parson’s associates as saying: “I am actually afraid the woman is dying. And this is the female tiger the papers tell us about” (p. 2). The *San Francisco Examiner* contrasted “the conduct of Mrs. Lucy Parsons in preaching anarchy from one end of the country to the other, and in declaring that, although she ‘looked into the hereafter through a noose,’ she would continue to proclaim herself an anarchist,” with the conduct of

the majority of the wives of the anarchists [who] have kept themselves out of the newspapers by very properly attending to the duties of wife and mother.... They have come and gone in a quiet way without flaunting their grievances by expressions of wild vituperation against “the capitalistic system.” They have...been patient sufferers...suppressing all outward signs of resentment...against the authorities (November 13, 1887:13).

These comments equated being a proper woman with being a “patient sufferer” and refraining from openly challenging authority. Only when she was sad and submissive was Lucy Parsons considered a proper and normal woman by the mainstream press. When she asserted herself as a political leader and spokesperson for the anarchist movement, she immediately became transformed into a “tigress.”

Anarchist bodies vs. capitalist bodies

These examples demonstrate a few of the ways in which U.S. officials and press members constructed U.S. anarchists as foreigners by depicting their physical bodies and actions as alien because they transgressed conventional boundaries and failed to conform to sociopolitical prerequisites for membership in the nation. Among other things, they portrayed anarchists as people with inferior racialized and gendered bodies who engaged in immoral, disorderly and unreasonable behaviors such as beer drinking and who upset conventional gender roles.

In contrast, capitalist reporters depicted the majority of native-born, U.S. laborers as possessing white, manly, healthy, intelligent and obviously superior bodies.⁴ Perhaps most importantly, they possessed capitalist bodies. According to the *Washington Post*:

The native American is without doubt the highest existent type of manhood. All the circumstances and conditions of his birth and of his training combine to produce in him the best human average of the nineteenth century... There is no chance of anarchical infection among the native masses of the people. The germs of anarchy develop only in the veins of ignorance. The keen intelligence of the American workingman, his quick appreciation of the fundamental principles of all good government, his instinctive apprehension of his own relation to the social system, and above all his knowledge of the cardinal fact that the opportunity for elevation waits always upon the inherent ability to rise—all this insures his contemptuous rejection of anarchical theories as unworthy of the worst that is in him... [I]t is quite impossible to believe that the professional anarchist will ever become an article of home manufacture (May 9, 1886:3).

Anarchism, according to this editorial, was an “infection,” a disease—but one to which the body of the native U.S. workingman was immune. America, it claimed, did not produce the “veins of ignorance” in which anarchism allegedly developed. In this land of opportunity, anarchism would have no opportunity to thrive or to become an “article of home manufacture” (*Washington Post*, May 9, 1886:3).

Conclusion

The depiction of anarchists as people with foreign bodies represented an attempt on the part of mainstream reporters and government officials to translate ideological difference into biological and behavioral traits that separated Americans from anarchists. This intense discursive effort to construct ascriptive boundaries based on political distinctions derived from the fact that the majority of anarchists were legal Americans by birth or naturalization and visibly indistinguishable from other American citizens.

As a result of their invisible “otherness,” anarchists seemed to pose an unusual threat to the dominant sociopolitical order. This perception of threat and the effort to construct boundaries to contain it is a common response to people who look like “one of us” but perceive the world or identify themselves differently. The dominant desire to construct a homogenous citizenry in the late nineteenth-century U.S. constituted not

4 Most accounts depicted the working class as male despite the large number of female laborers.

only a racialized effort, but also an ideological project. One aspect of this project was the effort to redefine who was American in capitalist terms by constructing anarchists, socialists and other non-capitalists as not only political dissidents, but also possessors of un-American, foreign bodies.

References

- Chaplin, Joyce E. (1997). "Natural philosophy and an early racial idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian bodies." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, 1:229-252.
- Comaroff, John. (1995). "The discourse of rights in colonial South Africa: Subjectivity, sovereignty, modernity," in Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (eds.), *Identities, Politics, and Rights* (pp. 193-236). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Faery, Rebecca Blevins. (1999). *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, and Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Haney Lopez, Ian F. (1996). *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hyde, Alan. (1997). *Bodies of Law*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. (2000). *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Kovel, Joel. (1997). *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America*. London & Washington D.C.: Cassell.
- McNally, David. (2001). *Bodies of Meaning: Studies on Language, Labor and Liberation*. Stonybrook, NY: SUNY Press.
- Mohanroam, Radhika. (1999). *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rogin, Michael Paul. (1987). *Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Schaack, Michael J. (1889). *Anarchy and Anarchists*. Chicago, IL: F.J. Schulte.
- Slotkin, Richard. (1985). *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*. New York: Anthenum.
- Turner, Bryan S. (1984). *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. New York: Basil Blackwell.