

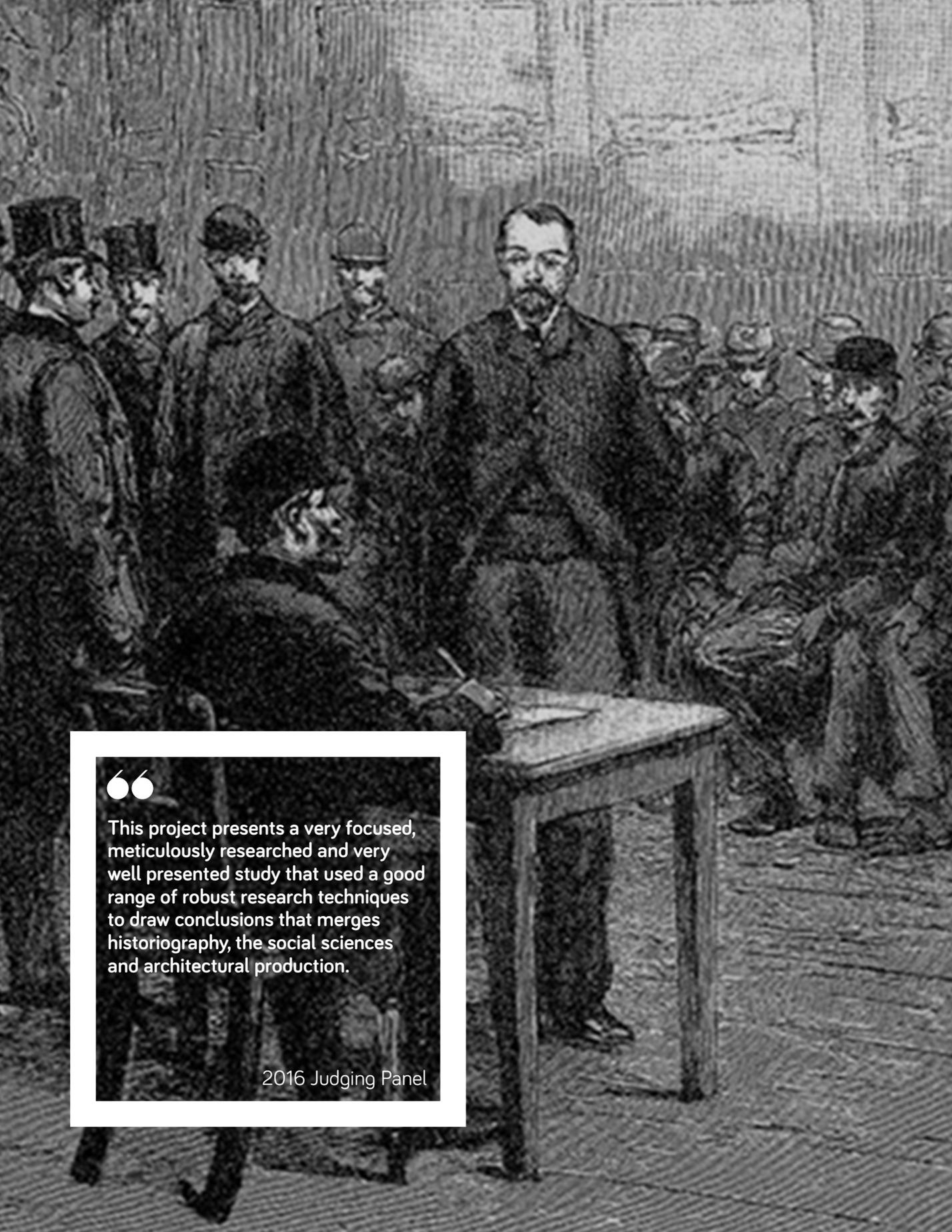


Shortlisted 2016

**History and Theory**

**The Texture of Politics: London's Anarchist Clubs,  
1884 - 1914**

Jonathan Moses, Royal Holloway University London



This project presents a very focused, meticulously researched and very well presented study that used a good range of robust research techniques to draw conclusions that merges historiography, the social sciences and architectural production.

2016 Judging Panel

# The Texture of Politics: London's Anarchist Clubs, 1884 – 1914

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Jonathan Moses

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This research explores the history of London's anarchist clubs in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. It focuses on three prominent examples: the Autonomie Club, at 6 Windmill Street in Fitzrovia, the Berner Street International Working Men's Club, at 40 Berner Street, in Whitechapel, and the Jubilee Street Club, at 165 Jubilee Street, also in Whitechapel. In particular it aims to recover the 'architectural principles' of the clubs, reconstructing their aesthetic choices and exploring their representations, attempting, where possible, to link these to their practical use, organisation, and political ideology. In order to make this case it draws from newspaper etchings, illustrations, reports in the anarchist and mainstream press, court statements, memoirs of key anarchists, letters, oral interviews, building act case files and building plans. It concludes that the clubs – all appropriated buildings subsequently restructured for new use – were marked by the attempt to present an exterior appearance of respectability, which belied an interior tendency towards dereliction and 'deconstruction'. Although it acknowledges the material constraints informing such a style, the paper argues, by way of comparison with other political clubs of its kind and the tracing of anarchist aesthetic influences, that this was not incidental. Instead, it represented a particular political aesthetic, which reflected the influence of the nihilist movement in its antagonism toward bourgeois norms, and which facilitated the democratic, anti-authoritarian principles of anarchist ideology. The paper further explores some of the contradictory features of the clubs' interior design; in their apparent veneration of movement elites, and their ambivalent relationship with gender equality. Overall it aims to show how architectural history can offer an added dimension to the social history of radical politics, and in turn how social history can invest even apparently mundane architectural details with political significance.

## Introduction

Were it not for three key events most Londoners would likely have never heard of the anarchist clubs which existed in their city from the late-19th century until the outbreak of the First World War. The fallouts from an 1888 "Jack the Ripper" murder in the yard of the Berner Street International Working Men's Club (40 Berner Street, Whitechapel), an explosion, in 1894, at Greenwich Park by a card-carrying member of the Autonomie Club (6 Windmill Street, Fitzrovia); and the slaying of three police officers in the 1910

'Houndsditch murders' by alleged frequenters of the Jubilee Street Club (165 Jubilee Street, Whitechapel) meant the clubs found themselves swept up in the anti-anarchist hysteria which characterized the height of the movement's power in Europe. The clubs consequently became subjects of intrigue for a popular press clamouring to connect lurid violence on the continent with the more prosaic realities of Britain's domestic life. These events produced a documentary legacy which serve as photographic snapshots of a

history which might have otherwise faded from view. Yet such glimpses are as equally compromised – overwhelmingly produced in the context of occasions which inevitably cast anarchism in a malign light.

Without the attention such events attracted the historian would likely struggle to say much of consequence about the clubs' existence – otherwise limited to a scattering of diary references, the occasional account in the anarchist press itself, the odd letter and still rarer building plan. Of the reports made by the newly-formed Special Branch, whose targeting of the clubs was consistent and extensive, little now remains.<sup>1</sup> The anarchists themselves – often fulsome in their descriptions of each other, their ideas, and above all, their conflicts – can be remarkably quiet about the environments they went some lengths to fund, create, and organize. Indeed, it could be asked whether much can be said about the 'architecture' of these clubs at all, confined as they were to pre-existing, quotidian buildings only subsequently appropriated for temporary requirements. No club lasted longer than eight years, and aside from small modifications to room sizes, there is little evidence to suggest their structural details were much altered by their occupants.

Yet there is reason to be cautious to accept the "unremarkable" nature of these buildings is as simple as it seems, 'the crystallization of cold reason, necessity and the obvious'<sup>2</sup> – a view which relegates architecture to its "proper" place as background for histories whose importance are "political" only in the formal sense of sectarian disputes and earnest propagandizing. That is not

the view taken here. For if the anarchism of the late-nineteenth century is to be distinguished from its parallels in the socialist and communist movements, it is in their belief that the future world ought to be lived in the present: 'not something only to dream about ... they [social ideas] must be translated into our daily life, here and now; they must shape our relations with our fellow-man.'<sup>3</sup> That such principles lay at the heart of anarchist philosophy should ward against complacency when confronted with the apparently banal, and invite us to heed Robin Evan's rejoinder that it is often the most ordinary things which contain the deepest mysteries.<sup>4</sup> If architecture is addressed only obliquely in the texts which outlined anarchism's concerns in the period, the broader evidence of its aesthetic inclinations couple with its belief in the emancipatory power of authentic social relations to produce a reliable sense of what an anarchist architectural theory might have been if it existed. Hence whilst this essay will consider the context and representation of London's anarchist clubs, it will also try to look beyond them, and consider how the immaterial philosophies which underpinned the movement's politics related to the material texture which enveloped it.

#### **Refuge (Origins, 1871–1904)**

The London anarchist movement was largely a composite of national groupings, of which the strongest were French and German émigrés clustered around Soho and Fitzrovia in the center of London, and mostly, though not exclusively, Jewish immigrants in the East End. It likely numbered about 2,000 members at its height; far

lower than the 8,000 ascribed it by the *Evening News* in 1894.<sup>5</sup> Many were political exiles whose formative experiences had already occurred in their native countries. Routine repression – of which the crushing of the 1871 Paris Commune,

Bismarck's 1878 anti-socialist laws, and nigh constant suppression by the reactionary Tsar Alexander III were the most significant – had led many revolutionaries to seek refuge under Britain's comparatively liberal policies regarding political

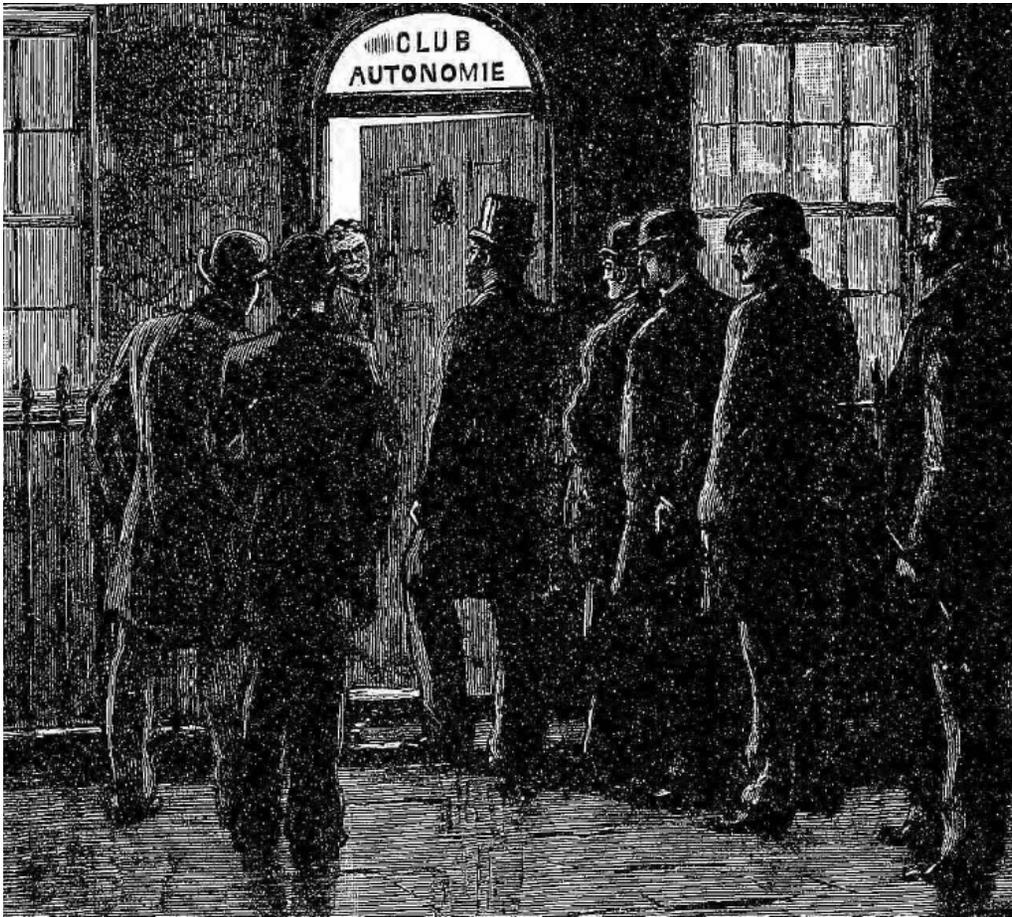


Figure 1  
Facade of the  
Autonomie Club,  
(*The Leeds Times*,  
March 3rd 1894)

asylum. The Russian anarchist encountered by a shocked *Daily Chronicle* journalist in 1911, who 'bears on his body the burns and chain-marks' of his eighteen-month imprisonment in Białystok, was not an exceptional case.<sup>6</sup> Those entering Britain had often endured desperate circumstances before and during their arrival, and, in general did not see it – one of only two relatively 'safe' havens in Europe (along with Switzerland), and by far the more powerful – as a forum for renewed confrontation with authority.<sup>7</sup> The French anarchist, Charles Malato, gave voice to common sentiment in his *Joyeusetés de l'exil* when he exhorted: 'O Albion's big metropolis, of you I shall not speak a bad word because, for three years, you gave me hospitality – if not a joyful one, at least wide and free, without any *concierge* and hardly any police.'<sup>8</sup>

The originating function of the clubs was therefore refuge. It was to 'a little Club instituted by their compatriots in Francis-street, Tottenham Court Road' that twelve beleaguered Communards first went for assistance in 1872, having hiked the entire journey from Dover to London, 'limbs swollen', 'feet blistered... lacerated' following their exile to Britain.<sup>9</sup> Such reports, made at a time when sympathy for refugees from the Paris massacres was still common, give a sense of the strain individuals endured before starting their exile. Whereas later representations in the 1890s would portray the clubs as sites of conspiracy, these earlier accounts suggest a very different rationale for their origins. Describing the aftermath of the 1878 Anti-Socialist Laws in Germany, the anarchist Frank Kitz, himself the child of a

German exile from the 1848 revolutions, recalled how the first club at Rose Street 'was crowded with refugees; our halls at times resembled a railway station, with groups of men, women, and children sitting disconsolately amidst piles of luggage.'<sup>10</sup> Its successor, The Autonomie Club, likewise hosted a soup-kitchen and served as a shelter in times of crisis.<sup>11</sup>

This function remained a central purpose throughout the period. At the opening of the Jubilee Street Club in 1906, Kropotkin, no doubt with a mind to his Russian brethren, emphasized the significance of refuge, not only in practical terms, but also psychologically for foreign revolutionaries:

The hearts of our brothers will be gladdened to know that here in London you have a home where they will be sure of finding a welcome awaiting them if circumstances should force them to leave the land where they are now fighting so nobly for the cause of Liberty.<sup>12</sup>

Kropotkin was not speaking idly. Throughout its existence, Jubilee Street Club would come to offer invaluable support to political refugees. In an interview made in 1985, Nellie Dick (who as a teenager established a Sunday School at the club), recalled how police, with little formal provision for the presence of refugees available, would take those they found in the East End to Jubilee Street to be taken care of: 'We'd find some place for them to live, some place for them to eat and sleep.'<sup>13</sup> In one instance this led to four men staying in Nellie's family flat at one time, sleeping in the large children's bed whilst the family made

do with chairs and a fold-out in the kitchen.<sup>14</sup> As the political context changed however, this benign feature of club life would find increasingly little purchase in how the clubs came to be represented.

#### ***Hostis Humani Generis* (Representations – Autonomie Club, 1894)**

In February 1894 a bomb detonated by accident in Greenwich, killing its courier, the young anarchist Martial Bourdin. The incident ignited a furore of press attention on Britain's anarchist movement, and the discovery of a card confirming Bourdin's membership of the Autonomie Club ensured that the site drew the focus of both newspapers and police. The ensuing raid – the second in two years – generating the most dramatic images that exist of the Autonomie: a multi-panel, encapsulated etching published in *The Graphic* on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1894 [Figs. 4-8]. Alongside a rough sketch of the facade [Fig. 1], and a more thorough treatment in the *Illustrated News* [Fig. 2], these appear to be the only surviving images of the club, and are likely the only ones ever made.

The circumstances of their production inevitably colour how the Autonomie came to be represented. The explosion in Greenwich had occurred only three days after Émile Henry bombed the Café Terminus in Paris, killing one and injuring twenty more in revenge for the execution of Auguste Vaillant – himself responsible for an earlier attack on the French Chamber of Deputies. At his trial, Henry stated that he had 'no respect for [bourgeois] human life, because the bourgeois themselves have absolutely none'.<sup>15</sup> "Propaganda

of the deed" was in high-season on the continent, and despite the mysteries surrounding his death, Bourdin's bomb was sufficient pretext to assume the tactic had spread to Britain as well. Lord Salisbury drew on such reports in his speech to The House of Lords to claim (falsely) that it was 'now known' that the Autonomie had housed the ingredients for Henry's bomb.' In his response Lord Halsbury announced that though he had 'no information as to the offence which these people were supposed to have committed; nor do I know upon what authority the raid of the police was made', he did not believe 'any human being [can] doubt that the Autonomie Club was a club of foreign conspirators with aims that are inhuman, for anarchists are *hostes humani generis*'.<sup>16</sup>

Such rhetoric built a formidable image of the Autonomie Club: not only 'the headquarters... [of London's] dovecoat of anarchists', but where 'all the conspiracies meant to explode on the continent were plotted'. As Charles Malato would ironically note, the coverage was mostly the invention of 'reporters lacking inspiration and happy to speculate on bourgeois terrors for three pennies a line'.<sup>17</sup> Yet the club's architecture created a dilemma for sensation-seeking journalists. As a generic Fitzrovia townhouse in a terraced backstreet, just off London's central artery, the Autonomie signified understated domesticity not insurrectionary laboratory. If anarchists really were '*hostes humani generis*', their choice of club paradoxically placed them, geographically and iconographically, at the heart of British society. 'The Club', noted *The Graphic*, with perhaps the faintest hint of bathos, 'is an ordinary house'.<sup>18</sup>

The club's portrait in *Illustrated London News* [Fig. 2] can be viewed as an attempt to reconcile the problem presented by the building's apparent normality and its alleged aberrance. The field of view is restricted by a circular frame with a dark surround, as though the observer is peering through a spyglass. This was the defining gaze of the imperial explorer, yet turned inward to the metropole, against itself; an estranging gesture which rendered the domestic foreign. Subtle contrast was made with the terrace dwellings flanking the building: the club's facade was drawn slightly darker, giving it a more ominous aspect. Its blinds are mostly closed. Out of one window there is a hint of a face peering out at the figure on the pavement – perhaps a police officer – who is looking upward towards it. That one blind is left open implies the building is only nominally 'closed for business' – the viewer is to presume a hidden life goes on inside.<sup>19</sup> In case we were in doubt, smoke trails from the chimneypot. The Autonomie Club is here gifted suggestive powers: it fluently speaks the language of conspiracy.

The layout of the spread as a whole [Fig. 3] implicitly encouraged the conclusion that the Club was to blame for the events at Greenwich Park. The borders of the image depicting the Autonomie are permeable, overlapping into others of Bourdin's house and workroom. Its juxtaposition to the site of the explosion completes a chain of causation ordered by the sequential numbering of the images: what begins in the Club ends at the bombsite.

Such representations drew on Gothic motifs, popularized in contemporary novels like

Stevenson's 1886 novel, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Indeed, that anarchists came to be viewed through the prism of this literature is evident from sources like Peter Latouche's rather excitable 1908 book *Anarchy! Its Methods and Exponents*, which claimed that 'no black-guard in the gallery of Stevensonian literature glories more in his foul deeds than does the average Anarchist'<sup>20</sup>. Likewise, comparison with Stevenson's description of Hyde's house draws up notable parallels:

a certain sinister block of building... a blind forehead of discoloured wall ... the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. ... It seems scarcely a house ... the windows are always shut but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins.<sup>21</sup>

Such descriptions preloaded the aesthetic vocabulary of the city: the sinister lurks within the everyday, urban terraces are both generic and estranged; signifiers of domesticity jar, distorting as eldritch intimations. This form of representation conveyed not only *what* could be seen of the clubs but also *how* they were seen; a quality peculiar to the illustrated press's use of sketch making which almost invited an expansive interpretation of reality. Once this ideological veneer is peeled away however these sources unwittingly impart quite different motivations to those of their suggestion.

Despite the fearsome reputation conferred upon the Autonomie by Salisbury and others, insiders like Charles Malato dismissed the notion that the Club was a headquarters for terrorist activity: 'the only powder prepared in this dreaded place was vanishing powder ... there was a lot of shouting, but no serious decision was ever made there.'<sup>22</sup> The Autonomie Club's origins suggest that, if anything, its adoption of the club genre was a gesture of cultural accommodation. As Bantman

notes, 'Given the centrality of clubs of all allegiances in Britain's political life, it may also be an effect of cultural mimicry which led the French and international comrades to set up their own clubs at an early date.' In a letter written upon the founding of the International Club at Stephen Mews in 1882 (the Autonomie's precursor), Brocher extolled the merits of the 'beautiful club with all required amenities' - including a billiard table. The club even had a house-cleaner alongside the requisite

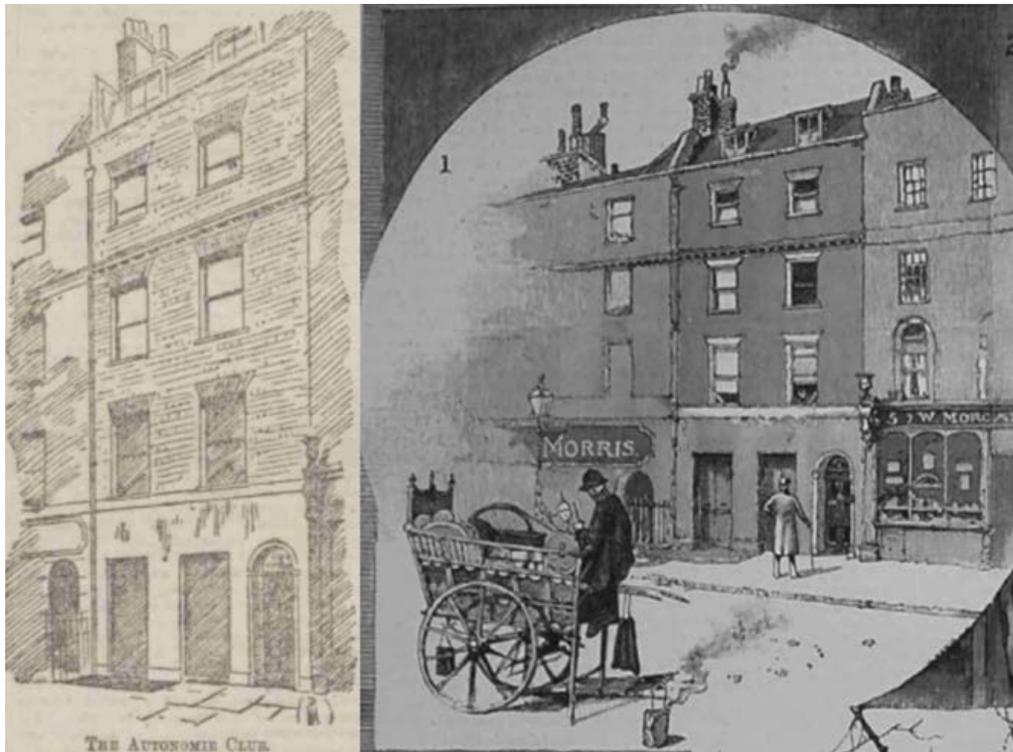
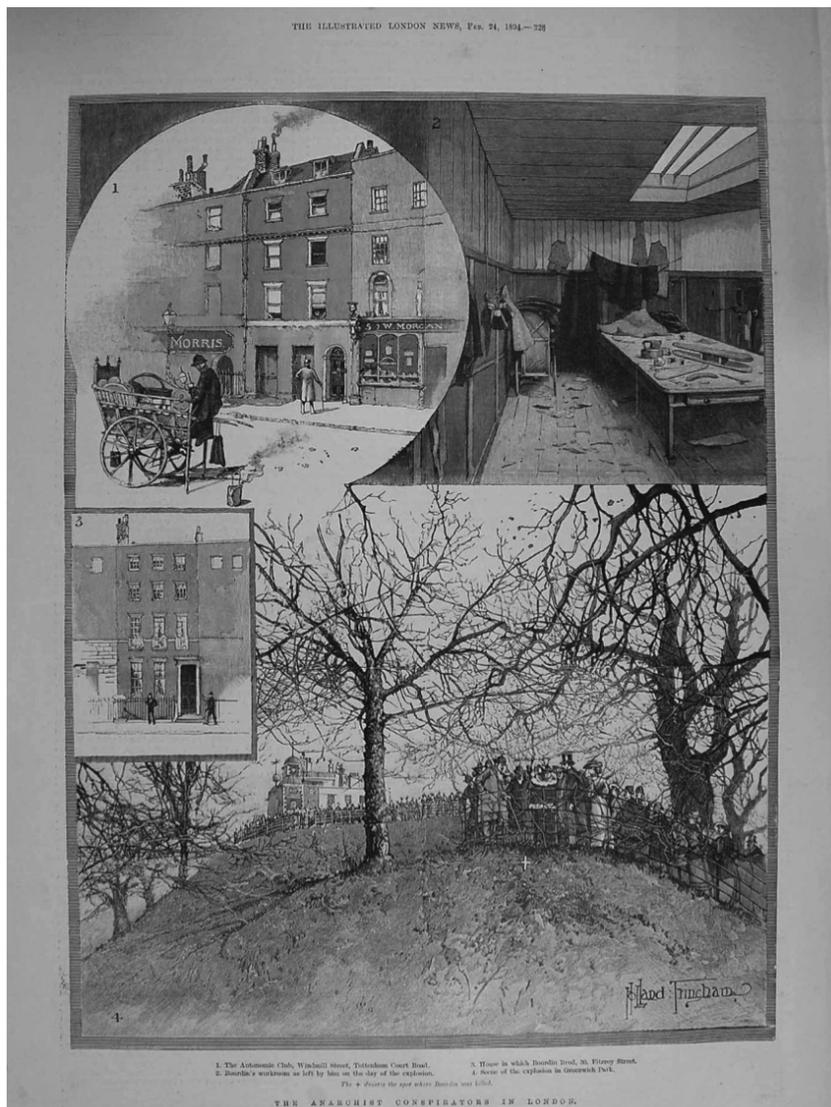


Figure 2  
Facade of the  
Autonomie Club,  
(*Illustrated London  
News*, February 24th  
1894)

Figure 3  
Spread of Autonomie  
Club, Bourdin's  
Workshop, Greenwich  
Park, (*Illustrated  
London News*, February  
24th 1894)



steward.<sup>23</sup> In an image of the club bar [Fig. 4] an attendant (presumably the barkeeper) can be spotted dressed in formal garb: peaked cap, white shirt, tie and vest. Contrary to its depictions, an element of respectability seems inherent to the early self-image of the Fitzrovia clubs, a fact which itself infuriated hostile commenters like W.C. Hart.<sup>24</sup> Anarchists may well have taken an element

of satirical enjoyment in adopting the affectations of St James's grandiloquent clubland. In two surviving images, the words 'Club Autonomie' can be seen etched onto the fanlight above its doorway [Fig 5, Fig 6], asserting both public legitimacy and the hint of parody, between which there was not necessarily a contradiction.



Figure 4  
Interior of the  
Autonomie Club (Bar),  
(*The Graphic*,  
February 24th 1894)

Figure 5  
Hallway of the  
Atonomie Club,  
(*The Graphic*, February  
24th 1894)

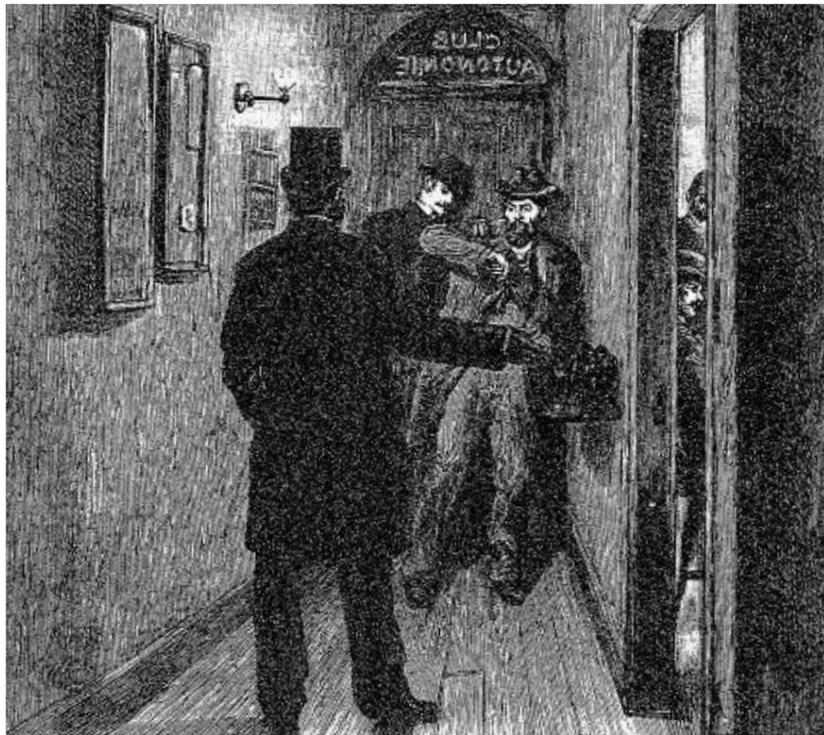
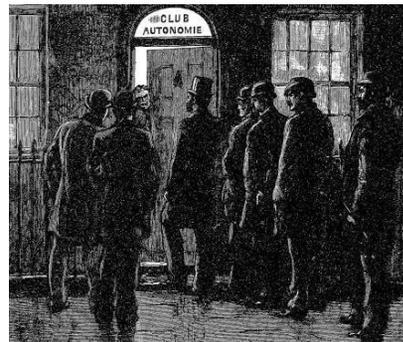


Figure 6  
(left panel) Bourdin  
in Greenwich Park,  
(right panel) Police raid  
the Autonomie Club,  
(*The Graphic*, February  
24th 1894)



### **The East End (Berner Street, 1884–1892)**

Just as Germans, French and Italians dominated the central London anarchist clubs from Soho to Fitzrovia, so the East End was predominantly the province of Jews fleeing the Russian empire. The club at 40 Berner Street in Whitechapel was not exclusively anarchist (though it became so in its final period from 1891–92) but rather harboured most shades of dissident opinion, including social democrats. Nevertheless, along with the Autonomie Club, it was treated by London's anarchists as their other key location in the city. Indeed its organization, function, and to a degree, aesthetics, shared many similarities with its Fitzrovia counterpart. After the body of a “Jack the Ripper” victim, Elizabeth Stride, was discovered in the yard of the Berner Street Club a tribunal took place in which the club was inevitably a central feature of the questioning.<sup>25</sup> According to William Wess, an anarchist member of the club who witnessed, there were about 80 regulars of the Berner Street Club, who paid a small monthly subscription cross-subsidized by wealthier patrons. Although a committee ran the building, and a steward – who lived on site – maintained it, the possession of membership nominally conferred equal power over running of the club. By 1892 at least, the Berner Street Club had no president: a hallmark of anarchist sentiments that democracy ought to be direct rather than representational.

Taken at face value, the Berner Street Club's aesthetics seem unremarkable, even decrepit. ‘A more unlovely place ... could scarcely be conceived’, reported one visiting journalist, adding

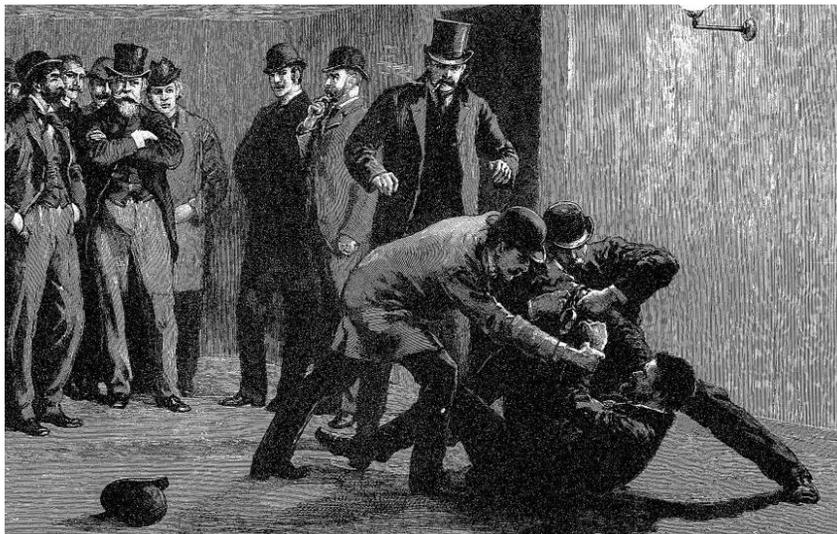
that it ‘wears a most poverty-stricken aspect.’<sup>26</sup> Another ‘did not think there was so much misery, squalor, and absolutely brutish wretchedness in all the world.’<sup>27</sup> The surrounding area received similar accolades.<sup>28</sup> Internally, the furnishings were sparse and simple: plain, backless benches, and Deal wood tables. Portraits were hung on the walls of radical icons like Marx, Proudhon, Lasalle and Louise Michel, alongside political cartoons, and posters: ‘The blood-red banner with its legend of ‘Remember Chicago!’ ... ‘Down with Authority!’ ... Away with Law and Order!’ ... allegorical representations... of the bloated Plutocrat trampled underfoot by the Goddess of Freedom.’<sup>29</sup> Neither visitors nor members had much to say about the building itself – a three-storey, ‘barn like’ wooden construction.<sup>30</sup> Everything of note appears as incidental rather than integral – an improvised architecture of necessity.

Etchings made in 1894 of the police raid on the Autonomie Club [Figs. 4-8] indicate some similarities between the interiors of the two clubs. Bare floorboards and wooden paneling make up the skin of the space, with light adornment offered through political slogans and iconography. The end of Proudhon's famous maxim, “Anarchy is Order”, can be seen in the corner of one frame above a figurative image, and a ribbon pattern is repeated across the wall. Peter Latouche describes the club as a very dingy, badly furnished, ramshackle place: ‘A few rough benches, chairs, and tables was the only accommodation afforded to the regular frequenters or the casual visitor.’<sup>31</sup> Yet whilst the noir shading of the images encourages an appearance of austerity, the Autonomie appears to have

Figure 7  
Interior of the  
Autonomie Club, main  
hall (*The Graphic*,  
February 24th 1894)



Figure 8  
Interior of the  
Autonomie Club,  
(*The Graphic*, February  
24th 1894)



been slightly more sympathetically decorated than Berner Street – brass lamps punctuate the rooms, framed pictures line the entrance hallway. One account suggests that ‘portraits of such heroes as Ravachol and the Fenian, O’Donnell [both notorious for their bombing tactics]’ were hung on the walls.<sup>32</sup> In the bar a particularly ornate lamp sits on the bar-top, crafted into a female figurine – presumably of the goddess Libertas, or her avatar, Marianne, a defining symbol of the French Revolution.

The portraits of movement “elites” on display in both the Autonomie and Berner Street seem a surprising choice for an anarchist club, whose non-hierarchical politics ought to have avoided fetishization of figureheads. Though anarchists stood by non-hierarchical principles in their daily organizing, this was not seen to be in contradiction with the veneration of famous movement figures like Kropotkin, Malatesta and Louise Michel. A distinction was seemingly drawn between formal access to power and an acceptance of informal social authority as the following report in *Freedom* makes particularly stark:

James Blackwell opened the meeting by declaring that in accordance with Anarchist ideas there would be no chairman, nor yet would there be any putting of the conventional resolution, regarded by Anarchists as a useless absurdity. He then announced, what had already been whispered through the room, that Kropotkin was unable to be present through illness. This was an irreparable disappointment, which, however, was lightened by the reading of the following letter...<sup>33</sup>

One plausible argument is that the portraits were paradoxically a method of capturing this individualized social power and communally distributing it, drawing from the authority of these figureheads a collective legitimacy for the movement as a whole. Some differences might also be noted between the Berner Street and the Autonomie clubs. The presence of Marx and Lasalle’s portraits alongside Proudhon’s at the Berner Street may have been a hangover of that club’s earlier days as a more ideologically inclusive venue – a compromise between its socialist and anarchist adherents – whereas the emphasis on executed terrorists like Ravachol and O’Donnell at the Autonomie suggests less conciliatory motivations combining provocation with martyrology. Further explanation might be found in anarchism’s historical immaturity, which, in its anarcho-communist formulation had only recently emerged from the fallout of the Paris Commune a decade earlier (anarchism in general had a longer pedigree, but even this only dated, at least in Europe, to the 1840s). A movement lacking in historical precedents is obliged to make do with what it can; eclectic iconography and perplexing reliance on imagery of figureheads may have been the result. The importance attributed to annual commemorations of the Commune likewise indicates a self-conscious desire to anchor a young ideology within the legitimizing bedrock of history.

#### **Austerity (Radical Clubs in Comparison)**

Austerity was a feature of all the anarchist clubs from 1884 onwards and there were obvious material reasons for it. Taking Berner Street as an

example, the labourers who made up the clientele were heavily exploited sweatshop workers, often in the tailoring industry, with little money to contribute to luxuries. The rent for the club itself was £2 a week, a not-insignificant expense, and any extra resources would have been likely directed to the Yiddish outlet, the *Arbeter Fruint*, with which the club was connected, and which, like other radical publications at the time, existed in a state of near-permanent precarity.<sup>34</sup> Situated in a hostile context where clubs were vulnerable to random, destructive police raids (one such on the Berner Street Club in 1889 left the windows broken, pictures destroyed, and several club members beaten and arrested), there may have been practical concerns about the longevity of anything valuable.<sup>35</sup>

Yet comparison with other radical clubs at the time resists a solely practical account. Buildings like the United Democratic Club, established at 57 Chancery Lane in 1890 as a base for campaigning journalists and lawyers of the left, arrived garlanded with 'furniture which resembles in style that of a West End Club', 'coloured lamps of the newest pattern', 'paintings and statuary' to 'beautify the walls', and was completed with chase tapestry curtains – 'the gift of Mr William Morris'.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the precedent set in 1846 by the new premises of the famous proto-communist German Workers Educational Association offers a further counterpoint in terms of decorative aesthetic:

A large and splendid room ... having a raised roof, decorated with beautiful arabesque

ornaments, composed of graceful scrolls, figures and flowers, associated with medallion portraits of Shakespeare, Schiller, Mozart and Albert Durer. On the centre of one of the walls immediately above the chairman's seat is an extensive view of Hampstead Heath, taken during the last May Day festival of the Association (painted by Messrs. Holm, Pfaender, Clausen and Ens). On one side of this view is a statue of Liberty, and on the other side as statue of Justice. The other sides of the room are decorated with large and beautiful maps, with which, on this occasion, were interwoven wreaths and festoons of laurel and other evergreens. The room was brilliantly illuminated by gas, and extra quantity of which was supplied for the purpose of giving effect to a large and beautiful transparency gratuitously painted by an English member, Charles Keen.<sup>37</sup>

Such examples do not demonstrate widely divergent political *traditions* or necessarily even material circumstance. Instead, anarchist clubs seemed to have consciously opted for an entirely different political aesthetic to its contemporaries. For anarchists, the kind of drapery and fussiness which characterized Victorian life was too readily associated with a bourgeois taste which cloaked in grace the exploitation on which its acquisition was based. Their architectural expressions, like the Liberal-associated Reform Club even went as far as to inscribe the division of labour into its very structure by literally wallpapering the service stairwells and servant quarters workers out of

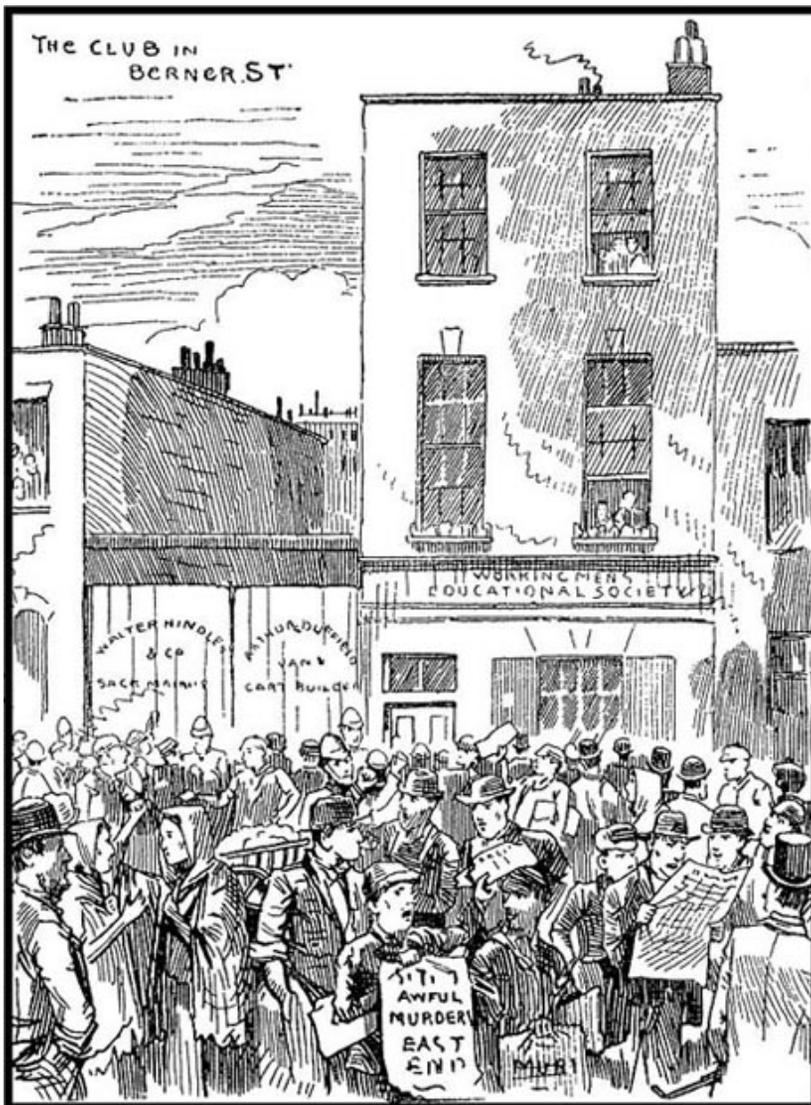


Figure 9  
Exterior of the Berner  
Street Club (*Pictorial  
News*, 6th October  
1888)

view. A desire on the part of anarchists to make a decisive break with the connotations of such an aesthetic is not particularly surprising. If poverty therefore determined the starting point of an austere aesthetic for their clubs, there was an implicit choice in refusing to apologize for, and even venerate it. In so doing, the anarchist clubs represent a reconfiguration occurring in aesthetic sensibility in the late 19th century; one adapted to the crisis-ridden climate of a *fin-de-siècle* climate whose affective motifs were nihilism, decadence, and hatred of artifice.

### **Fragments of an Anarchist Aesthetics ('An end to doll's clothes!')**

The semiotic codes of this sensibility can be traced through the influence of Russian nihilism on the anarchist movement in Britain. Berner Street was alternately known as 'the Nihilist Club', and the term was at times used interchangeably to describe anarchists: for instance, in his 1894 text *The Anarchist Peril*, the French journalist and explorer, Felix Dubois, noted that 'gulf between nihilism and anarchism is not great.'<sup>38</sup> The influence is apparent in anarchist's own accounts. In Kropotkin's memoirs he summarises the disposition of the nihilist movement he encountered in his youth, relating how the typical nihilist cultivated an attitude of intense authenticity such that 'All those forms of outward politeness which are mere hypocrisy were equally repugnant to him, and he assumed a certain external roughness as a protest against the smooth amiability of his fathers.' He continues,

Art was involved in the same sweeping negation. Continual talk about beauty, the ideal, art for art's sake, aesthetics, and the like, so willingly indulged in, — while every object of art was bought with money exacted from starving peasants or from underpaid workers, and the so-called 'worship of the beautiful' was but a mask to cover the most commonplace dissoluteness,—inspired him with disgust, and the criticisms of art which Tolstóy, one of the greatest artists of the century, has now so powerfully formulated, the nihilist expressed in the sweeping assertion, 'A pair of boots is more important than all your Madonnas and all your refined talk about Shakespeare.'

In the search for a life shorn of hypocrisy, nihilists cultivated an anti-aesthetic. The doll's house — paragon of 19<sup>th</sup>-century domestic life — became the metaphorical embodiment of all that nihilism stood against; the image recurring as a figurative symbol in the writings of leading anarchists (and eventually giving Ibsen's 1879 play its title). According to Kropotkin,

The nihilist girl, compelled by her parents to be a doll in a Doll's House, and to marry for property's sake, preferred to abandon her house and her silk dresses. She put on a black woollen dress of the plainest description, cut off her hair'<sup>39</sup>

'An end to frippery, then! An end to dolls' clothes!' <sup>40</sup> enjoined his fellow anarchist geographer, Élisée Reclus 'the artifice of dress and finery

is one that leads most... to the general corruption of society... Nude beauty purifies and ennobles; clothing, insidious and deceptive, degrades and perverts.<sup>41</sup>

Such precepts had a protean quality: just as hatred of 'richly decorated rooms' assumed its corollary in the nihilist girl's black woollen dress, so the destruction of the doll's house could counterform in the asperity of the Berner Street Club. Indeed, when Kropotkin stated that the nihilist 'carried his love of sincerity even into the

minutest details of every-day life ... expressed his opinions in a blunt and terse way, even with a certain affectation of outward roughness' he might easily have applied the same language to the club he frequented in exile.<sup>42</sup>

Although nihilism was predominantly a Russian tendency, common cause could be found in other European movements. *Freedom's* obituary of Ibsen praised his dramatic style exactly for its 'ruthless exposure' of 'false social relationships', whilst an earlier reviewer noted how his plays 'laid bare' the



Figure 10  
Exterior of Berner  
Street Club building

'shams, prejudices and oppressions of social life.'<sup>43</sup> In France, the decadent movement made similar assaults on everything they suspected of artifice. The political ramifications of this were clear to Louise Michel when she lectured at one of their gatherings: 'Anarchists, just like decadents, want the end of the old work ... decadents are creating an anarchy of style.'<sup>44</sup> In the anarchist aesthetic hierarchy, nudity, bareness, negation were elevated into an ideal against which 'frippery' in all its manifestations was counterpoised.

In Britain, too, parallels can be drawn with the domestic socialism urged by Ruskin and Morris (the latter spoke at the Berner Street Club on a number of occasions and his play "*The Tables Turned; or, Nupkins Awakened*" was performed there).<sup>45</sup> Ruskin railed against architectural deceit and material deception, while Morris acclaimed simple, traditional craft production. Although both lacked the asceticism integral to Russian nihilism they shared something of its tenor, investing aesthetics with an almost millenarian significance.<sup>46</sup> It was notable in this regard that graduating students of the Jubilee Street Club's Sunday school were offered booklets by Ruskin as a gift for completing their studies.<sup>47</sup>

To present the world unveiled, to reduce aesthetics to their most elementary form, was to weaponize architecture into something which could prove actively offensive. The spare, wooden tables in the Berner Street Club were not simply considered plain or impoverished by one blustering journalist, but 'repulsively ugly', as though they emanated a monstrous aura, and the club's 'dirty wooden benches', its refusal of 'sanitary

decency', were considered fitting accoutrements for a setting 'wherein is sown the seed of violent methods which threaten the lives and property of the community'.<sup>48</sup>

In the Victorian imagination, sparsity was readily conflated with dirt; dirt with disorder; disorder with revolution. As Adrian Forty notes in *Objects of Desire*, preoccupations with cleanliness arose in the late 19th and early 20th century, in part as a response to the unsettling of the social order as extensions to the franchise and the spread of mass politics threatened the power of traditional elites.<sup>49</sup> It is in this context that anarchism came to be pathologised as a kind of aberrant virus germinating within the body politic. Yet insofar as this representation built an ideology that legitimized anarchism's destruction, this in turn only adding potency to its aesthetic politics which renounced its edicts: if dirt had become disorder, bareness revolution, then simplicity itself could be reimagined as a revolutionary aesthetic.

### **The Politics of Authenticity (Berner Street 1884 – 1892)**

Though inspired by nihilism, this aesthetic politics held affirmative qualities too. The stripped-down style provided an appropriate backdrop for the multi-functional activities of the clubs, which hosted political lectures, dances, music and theatrical productions, as well as education (worthy posters reminding visitors that a 'peninsula is a piece of land almost entirely surrounded by water' must have made an entertainingly awkward contrast with more belligerent political paraphernalia).<sup>50</sup> This indeterminacy was followed through

in the structural adjustments made to the clubs. At Berner Street for instance members 'demolish[ed] the partition between two rooms' in order to form a large, open hall.<sup>51</sup> Likewise the Autonomie Club was 'slightly modified by the creation of an underground hall for its special purpose.'<sup>52</sup> These were practical gestures, but in simplifying space it also liberated it for expanded possibilities. Breaking with the inherited domestic plan was an obvious necessity for its new requirements, and although these buildings lacked the scale and complexity to allow for further alterations, it intuitively moved architecture away from increasingly privatized formations promoted since the 17th century, and for which structural features like the corridor were invented.<sup>53</sup>

The skeletal, zero-point architecture of the clubs could in turn act like an empty stage, inviting constant transformation and facilitating myriad uses. In the same space that the *Evening News* journalist found an aesthetics of terror, another writer for *The Graphic* spoke of 'Everything... attuned to gaiety': the roof-beams 'hung with Chinese lanterns, and ... gas-brackets ... pink with twisted paper.' Instead of the imposing 'chairman's seat' found at the Communist Club, Berner Street had a small wooden platform, allowing for hierarchy without necessitating or institutionalizing it [Fig. 13] - and on this occasion providing a stage 'set in a cheerful representation of a dungeon.'<sup>54</sup> The mutability of the space was further highlighted by the same writer on a return visit: 'Our ball-room has become a lecture-room; benches fill the space where we tread the polka on Sunday nights, and the aged piano has closed its sleepy

lid'. The room's 'war-paint' of propaganda had returned.

These accounts demonstrate the chameleon-like quality of the club's design, and suggest it served as a kind of requisite for its democratic purpose.<sup>55</sup> Yet this did not simply equate to an emptied, sterile space which might be easily accommodated into Victorian notions of cleanliness and order. Through the exposing of original, unadorned wood (the main room 'might have been a hay-loft'), the fabric of the club recorded in palimpsest the suggestions of its uses: 'dirty' wooden benches devoid of the varnish which might countermand stains and abrasions; 'the meandering traces of a watering-pot', still visible on the dust boards of the long lecture-room.<sup>56</sup> New uses did not erase the old, and the old did not proscribe the new - a diachronic arrangement of mutual respect which built on the past without destroying it. Like the demand of the Artists' Federation of the Paris Commune, whose cry was not to 'advocate any particular aesthetic direction, breakthrough or movement', but rather to extend 'the aesthetic dimension into everyday life... [making] art common to all people ... an integral part of the *process* of making', the sensibility of Berner Street looked to impose little, fix nothing, and invite everything, signaling a space in democratic flux which respected past impressions.<sup>57</sup>

#### **Wilderness (1892 - 1906)**

The Berner Street Club did not last. Even from its incepti on it was described by *Freedom* as having to 'undergo a life of utmost severity, flying the flag

of liberty in all sorts of weather.<sup>58</sup> According to *Arbeter Frait* the club closed in 1892 at the behest of a council inspector who ‘warned us that the club was very old, and that it was too dangerous to stay here any longer.’<sup>59</sup> The summary in the LCC Building Act case file however suggests a more targeted motivation:

... that Mr. S. S Markham, District Surveyor, be thanked for his letter calling attention to the erection of an irregular structure at the rear of No. 40 Berner-street, and informed that he should take the necessary proceedings against the owner of such structures under the Metropolitan Building Act, 1856.<sup>60</sup>

This ‘irregular structure’ was likely the printing offices of *Arbeter Frait*, marked in yellow (denoting a wooden structure) on the 1890 Goad Map [Fig. 11], and which had vanished by the time of the next map in 1899 [Fig. 12]. Its mapping on an insurance document suggests prior knowledge of the structure’s condition, though there is no guarantee of communication with the District Surveyor. Nevertheless, it may be that the motivation behind the Surveyor’s letter, in the year following the Walsall bomb plot (in which several anarchists were arrested on suspicion of making explosive devices) and the increased attention it drew to anarchist clubs like Berner Street, was not neutral.

This does not mean the inspector’s statement was false, however. *Freedom’s* hope that ‘new premises, safer and more commodious will soon be taken’, indicates the Club may well have been in

a parlous state.<sup>61</sup> The decision to leave of their own accord, rather than resist or wait for official notice suggests that internal morale was not strong. The arrival in 1891 of a new editor for the *Arbeter* had precipitated a final split between the anarchist and social democratic factions who used the Berner Street Club. According to Rudolf Rocker, Yanovsky brought political sophistication and journalistic verve to the paper, but at the cost of his fractious personality, which exacerbated conflict.<sup>62</sup> These divisions led to a drop in attendance at the club throughout 1892, contributing to its apparent malaise.

The officers of the state were not the only ones with an interest in the closure of the Berner Street Club. It had not ingratiated itself with local neighbours, who had little positive to say about it to the journalists who flocked there following Elizabeth Stride’s murder. ‘I heard a commotion outside, and immediately ran out, thinking that there was another row at the Socialists’ Club close by’, reported Mrs Mortimer at number 36. ‘The club is a nasty place’, stated Mrs. Kentorrich at number 38. Arguments and late-night commotions merged with more prejudiced concerns about the presence of women and girls to encourage local hostilities. Religion was another factor. ‘You see’, explained one man in the gathered crowd:

... the members are ‘bad’ Jews – Jews who don’t hold their religion – and they annoy those who do in order to show contempt for the religion. At the ‘Black Fast’ a week or two ago, for instance, they had a banquet, and ostentatiously ate and drank while we might do neither.<sup>63</sup>

It is not surprising therefore that, despite intentions, no permanent club emerged again in the East End until 1906 – although bases like The Sugar Loaf public house on Hanbury Street provided a home for lectures, and a series of smaller, temporary locations were also used. Their architecture apparently reflected an increasingly beleaguered position, as anarchists became more and more the targets of hostility, and the Jewish population experienced growing xenophobia. A description of one of these temporary clubhouses in 1894 gives a sense of this embattled state:

... a small building, half workshop, half warehouse, with a steep sloping roof, the gable end facing the road. The lower part is entirely boarded up, and tightly nailed-to. There is a large double door on the first floor the entire width of the building, and only the upper part of this is glazed so that it is impossible to look in from without. Nor can the edifice be seen from the streets at the end of the lane in which it stands. There are two small doors, but without either bell or knocker, handle or latch to them.<sup>64</sup>

Though this genre of journalism specialized in its ability to invest mundane details with preternatural significance, it is unlikely the specifics of its appearance were entirely fabricated. In the wilderness years which followed the closure of both Berner Street and the Autonomie the architecture of the anarchist club had become increasingly set against the world; internalizing its hostile representations.

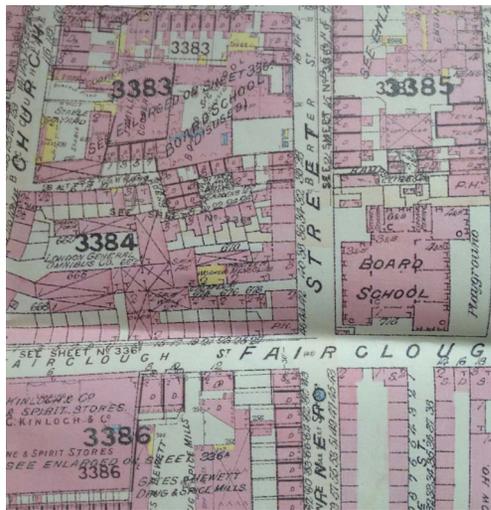


Figure 11  
'Berner Street', Goad Insurance Survey Map, 1890 (40 Berner Street, centre left of image)

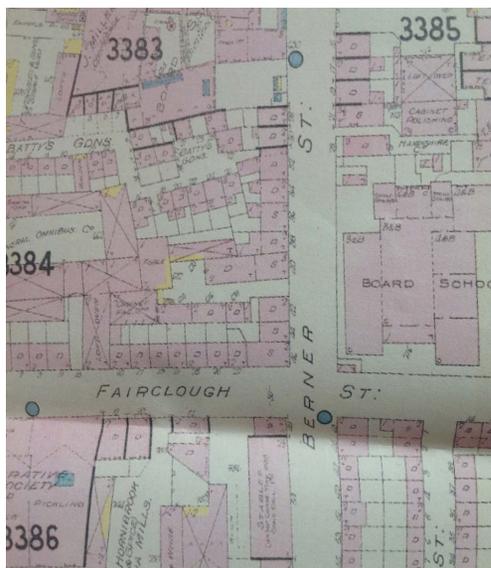


Figure 12  
'Berner Street', Goad Insurance Survey Map, 1899 (40 Berner Street, centre left of image)

Figure 13  
Performance from  
the stage at the  
Berner Street Club,  
(*The Graphic*, February  
24th 1894)



### **New Beginnings (Jubilee Street, 1906 – 1914)**

After this period of instability however, the fortunes of anarchism in the East End – boosted by the influence of talented activists like Rudolf Rocker – steadily revived, and a new, permanent club was founded at 165 Jubilee Street in 1906. Even then, some of the clandestine atmosphere remained – as it appears in official documentation it is as if no club ever existed at this address between 1906 and its closure, due to the outbreak of war, in 1914. Repeated attempts had been made from 1901 to turn the building in Whitechapel – a former Methodist Church, and later Salvation Army Depot [Fig. 14] – into a venue for music and dancing, but they were refused owing to the building's 'unsatisfactory site', being 'enclosed on three sides by buildings'. Its staircase was 'badly constructed', and there were 'many other unsatisfactory features about the premises'. The second attempt in 1904 under new ownership was also refused. Two years later, legal proceedings were being prepared against the owner for 'the unlawful keeping open of the ... premises.'<sup>65</sup> As a result of these legal issues it seems that by 1906 the building had become a burden to whoever owned it, making informal arrangements more appealing. Whilst Fishman suggests the 'proprietor had taken a shine to the group [Arbeter Frint] because of the civilized way they conducted themselves on the premises and was particularly drawn to Rocker's transparent honesty', financial concerns and the inability to use the space legitimately presumably also played their part.<sup>66</sup>

The emerging legal challenge against the building's owner had led to the LCC's Superintendent

Architect visiting the site at the beginning of February 1906, only to be told by a caretaker that 'the hall had been let from the 1st of February to a Jewish Friendly Society who intended using the hall for lectures and educational purposes only.'<sup>67</sup> Under this genial guise, the Jubilee Street Club opened two days later.<sup>68</sup> The existence of a new anarchist club evidently boosted morale for a movement which was struggling to recover from the fractures and repressions of the 1890s. Kropotkin caused a stir at the debut night by ignoring his doctor's orders to arrive at the club and give a public speech. Telegrams of support were received from Malatesta as well as other comrades and anarchist groups from around Britain.

Jubilee Street Club's architecture [Fig. 14] perhaps contributed to the sense of hope. The impressive facade featured large Palladian windows, pediment, columns, and large six-panel doors with carved stone surrounds. Unlike its precursors, the club was not simply subsumed into the street, but stood out as individual site with its own identity. It was a statement of legitimacy which the Autonomie Club could only gesture at, and which made Jubilee Street, as *Freedom's* editor John Turner would put it on the opening night, a 'more sophisticated, and richer endowed, successor' to its predecessor in nearby Berner Street.<sup>69</sup>

Despite Turner's praise, the interior was in a poor state, and there was a disparity between the distinction of the building as it appears in abstract on the plan, and the relative absence of comment it elicited from those who used it. Fermin Rocker – the son of the *Arbeter Frint's* most famous editor, Rudolf Rocker – wrote in his memoirs of

the 'unrelieved monotony of a Jamaica or Jubilee Street', making no exception for the building which housed the club.<sup>70</sup> Although Nellie Dick, then a young attendee, described the club as 'beautiful' in her interview with Andrew Whitehead, this 'was not in the sense of art [that is, appearance]', in fact the building was 'poor... very poorly [trails off]'. Its beauty, for Nellie, was instead found in the atmosphere created at the club, and the experiences it facilitated:

it was such a peaceful place. It was a place that was so friendly and peaceful and quiet... It was a place where we just came in and met people and talked and played chess – those of us who knew how – and had discussions and of course we would have our big meetings there.<sup>71</sup>

Despite being asked repeatedly about the club building by her interviewer, the topic seemed to hold little significance for Nellie. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the length of time that had passed,

Figure 14  
Jubilee Street Club  
facade, (*The Daily  
Telegraph* [Sheffield],  
January 7th 1911)



her initial comments always veer rapidly away from the building and towards the people she encountered there:

There was a library, there was lectures. And there was where I met Kropotkin ... We organized a little group of children in there. And William Wess – I never heard anybody write about him but he was an anarchist and very important and his wife used to come teach us songs, and another one...<sup>72</sup>

It is the people, and the atmosphere, which have retained focus for her. The club was important insofar as it enabled these meetings and possibilities; its significance that of the unassuming host. As with Berner Street and the *Autonomie*, there may have been a certain attraction in the building's shabbiness. For though no recollection has much to say for the beauty of the space, it is equally as striking that they choose not to remark much upon its alleged dereliction, the extent of which is clear from the LCC case file.

There is a sense in Nellie's account of the phenomenological power this conferred, 'very informal and very like a friendly... as if you were meeting at home' as though the destruction of appearances in architecture in some way enabled the destruction of appearances between people.<sup>73</sup> This was unlikely to have been a conscious decision – attempts were apparently made by volunteers to redecorate and renovate the derelict interior before the group fully moved in – but rather something that was not viewed as an obstacle to club life, and which ultimately became a part of it.<sup>74</sup> It expressed in architecture what

the anarchist belief in free love expressed about authentic relations between people: that a relationship sanctioned formally in the terms of the state and the church was a relationship dictated by artifice, stripped of its ability to mutually define and freely grow.<sup>75</sup>

#### **Respectability? (Jubilee Street, 1906–1914)**

Whereas descriptions of the *Autonomie* and Berner Street clubs emphasized (in negative terms) their boisterous character, Nellie's descriptions of Jubilee Street seem to confirm it as a more edifying establishment. A large main hall with first-floor gallery meant it could host up to 800 people. It had a library on the second floor, 'with book shelves built in by the workers, and trestles covered with literature [constituting] a reading room', and ran a Sunday school for children (school songs included Morris's "No Master High or Low"). Lectures had a didactic quality to them, since, as Fermin notes, the audiences tended to be 'very ill educated'. Numerous accounts give testament to Rudolf Rocker's (by then editor of the *Arbeter Frait*) exceptional ability as an orator, and above all as a pedagogue who was able to 'take the most boring subjects and infuse them with life.'<sup>76</sup> As Fishman notes, 'A wide curriculum was offered, open to all, whatever their creed.'<sup>77</sup> This included a wide variety of talks – on sex, hygiene, literature, theatre and music. Dances and recitations provided the main social activities, flouting the legal restrictions curtailing the building's use as a dancehall.

The Jubilee Street Club therefore indicated a desire by Rocker and others to move anarchism

beyond the negative connotations it had acquired, and open itself up to the surrounding community, attempting to look outwards to society rather than serve only as an insular base for the movement. In a departure from previous clubs it was decided not to serve alcoholic drinks, thereby bypassing the obligation to issue membership cards, allowing anybody to come inside.<sup>78</sup> This also made the atmosphere more congenial. Rocker claimed that participation rose considerably as a result, and by removing drunken behaviour, it perhaps went some way to increasing the presence of women – something which, according to Nellie, increased as the years went by. Inclusivity was clearly a point of principle, again strongly reiterated by Nellie: ‘anybody could come to the club. Anybody.’ The fact that the police felt at all willing to escort refugees to the club for assistance (‘that’s a place for you to go. They’ll find a place for you’) suggests that, at least before the Houndsditch killings in 1910, it was successful in portraying a more amenable side to anarchist politics.<sup>79</sup> Colonizing the shell of an old Methodist chapel may have helped in this endeavour; since it presented a recognizable idiom, as yet untainted (unlike Stevenson’s terraces), by the attentions of the new urban Gothic.

Commitment to both openness and amenability could lead to contradictions, however. The club attracted and admitted hot-heads drawn to violent tactics with which Rocker and those around him had little sympathy, and in turn became a magnet for police spies.<sup>80</sup> It was the open-door policy which led to the club becoming embroiled in the Houndsditch murders, since the men

responsible had at one time frequented the club, and were mistakenly assumed by the authorities to be anarchists. In addition, whilst Fishman is not wrong in his assertion that ‘it was an unspoken assumption that all ages and sexes were treated equally, without patronization’, the statement deserves some qualifications.<sup>81</sup> In a pointedly ambiguous remark, Nellie suggested that women at the club ‘were regarded as equal but you know, there is always a difference. You can’t say that they’re equal because they’re not – they’ve never been treated as equal and can’t be treated as equal.’<sup>82</sup> It seems hard to square the claim of total gender equality with the fact that of the volunteers manning the ‘dry’ bar, the women ‘mainly did the cooking’ (though all genders apparently took turns scrubbing floors and serving), whilst men dominated more cerebral activities like lecturing and writing the *Arbeter Frait*.<sup>83</sup> Judging from the reaction of one journalist, who visited the club following the Sidney Street siege, women like Milly Witcop (Rocker’s partner) were perfectly capable of holding their own however, leaving the man ‘hopelessly outraged by this brilliant, extraordinary and dangerous woman.’<sup>84</sup>

The surviving architectural plans of 165 Jubilee Street offer the tantalizing suggestion that innovations were made to the building layout to address these gender divisions. Drawings made in 1904 [Fig 15], and again in 1906 around the time the building was occupied by the anarchists, show a clear separation between the main hall on the ground floor and an adjoining area marked as a kitchen, with a dedicated gas stove for cooking. Yet by the time that a second set of plans were made

in 1910-11 [Fig 16], the kitchen area and communicating bar had vanished, being simplified as an 'open area' for indeterminate use. As outlines for a proposed conversion of the building it is unclear whether these reflected the existing reality or the desired one, but there is some evidence to suggest the former: one of the first of the building works undertaken at the club was the construction of 'a large wooden purpose-built refreshment counter' within the great hall.<sup>85</sup> This would have had two effects: firstly, it rejected a segregation

of space founded on a separation of the public, social environment and the domestic, gendered one, meaning that although women might remain divided from men in their labour, they were at least included by design. Secondly, it would have encouraged sociality, removing extraneous spaces, and increasing inclusivity and collectivity through the promotion of a single central area. The result is a kind of architectural embodiment of Morris's (rather unsatisfactory) gender politics in his utopian novel *News From Nowhere*, where women

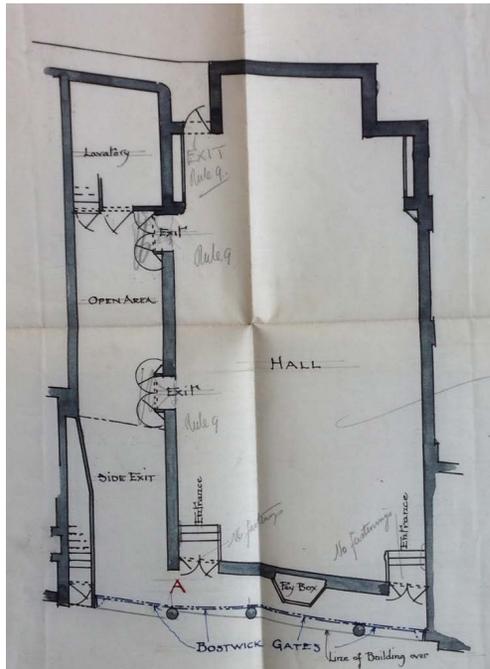
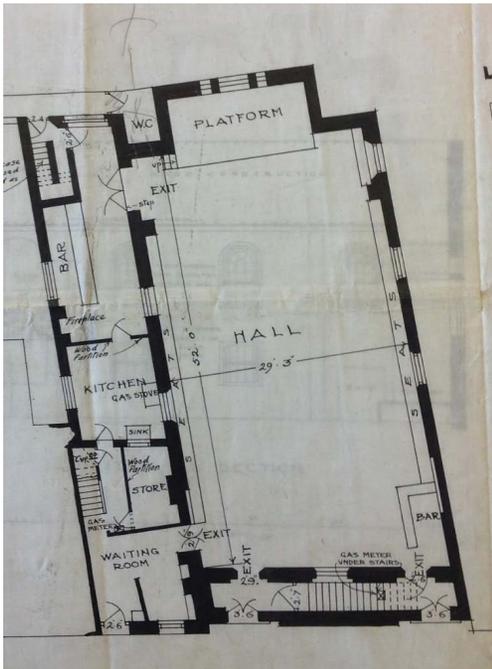


Figure 15  
1904 Plan of the main  
hall of Jubilee Street  
(GLC/AR/BR/19/1361,  
LMA)

Figure 16  
1911 Plan of the main  
hall of Jubilee Street  
(GLC/AR/BR/19/1361,  
LMA)

still broadly undertook domestic tasks, but where the value attributed to them has been ‘equalized’ with other forms of labour; as well as his less problematic desire to bring people together under the embracing eaves of a medieval-style hall.<sup>86</sup> However, other elements of the inherited layout at Jubilee Street remained: a large platform at the front created a more aggressive division between the speaker and the audience than at Berner Street – perhaps a necessary feature for a hall as large as Jubilee Street’s, but a compromise against dreams of social equability.

### Conclusion

The twin blows of the First World War and the Russian Revolution brought an end to anarchism’s relative influence in Britain. The *Arbeter Frint* and Jubilee Street Club were shut down by the authorities in 1915, and its most influential member, Rudolf Rocker, interned in Alexandra Palace as a German alien. Though initiatives like *Freedom* persevered in the post-war climate, the sense of an anarchist ‘movement’ had been broken, surviving only in small pockets such as the Ferrer School at 62 Fieldgate Street.

This essay has sought to burrow past that denouement to reconstruct the lives of London’s anarchist clubs at their height between the late-Victorian period and the outbreak of the war which concluded them. It has sought not just to recover the clubs as they appeared to their opponents, but as they were lived and experienced by the people who made and shaped them. It has tried to account for their aesthetic banality, and at times their small enthusiasms, in the hope of pushing

beyond surface appearances into the symbolic meaning which lay behind them. If in doing this it has had to rely on their opponents a great deal, it has tried to mitigate what it can of their distorting gaze; finding, against their claims, both the desire to belong to society as much as to irrevocably transform it. It has argued that it is this contradiction which animates the clubs, and gives them their peculiar character: one torn between the gestures and pleasures of respectability and the desire to tear its pretensions apart. Above all it has sought to find, in the meandering marks of a water-pot on the dust-board, and the creaking of a decaying stair, the traces of an affirmative politics. For in tearing away the ‘decent drapery of life’ that Edmund Burke felt made ‘power gentle and obedience liberal’, that power might be exposed as a sham; forced to confront its antagonists not on the field of ideology but on the field of authenticity, an arena in which, as Burke prophesied of the French revolution, ‘the defects of our naked, shivering nature’ would inevitably face their reckoning: ‘exploded as a ridiculous, absurd and antiquated fashion.’<sup>87</sup>

## Notes and References

- 1 However, the reports of foreign police services, tailing their citizens in exile, could be more extensive. See: Constance Bantman, *The French Anarchists in London, 1880–1914. Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalisation*, Liverpool Univ. Press (2013)
- 2 Robin Evans, 'Figures, Doors and Passages', in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, Architectural Association (1997), 56
- 3 Rudolf Rucker, *The London Years*, Five Leaves (2004), 8
- 4 Robin Evans, *Translations*, 56
- 5 Matthew James Thomas, *Paths to Utopia: Anarchist Counter-Cultures in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain 1880–1914*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Warwick (1998), 52 / *The Evening News*, 17th December 1894
- 6 *Daily Chronicle*, 10th January 1911
- 7 Switzerland served a similar role, and gave host to a variety of exiles – although was less able to face down threats from more powerful nations like France and Russia, and like Britain became increasingly less open.
- 8 Charles Malato, cited in Constance Bantman, "Almost the only free city in the world: mapping out the French anarchist presence in London, late 1870s–1914". in Kelly D, Cornick M (eds.) *A History of the French in London. Liberty, equality, opportunity*. London: Institute of Historical Research, University of London (2013), 199.
- 9 *London Daily News*, 18th May 1872
- 10 *Freedom*, March 1912 – *Freedom* was published monthly.
- 11 Bantman, *French Anarchists in London* (2013), 56
- 12 Peter Kropotkin, cited in *Freedom*, March 1906
- 13 Nellie Dick, interviewed by Andrew Whitehead, 5 November 1985, Sound Recording, 'Andrew Whitehead Oral History Interviews with Political Radicals', CD 26, British Library Sound Archive C1377
- 14 Nellie Dick, interviewed by Andrew Whitehead, 6th January 1993, Sound Recording, 'Andrew Whitehead Oral History Interviews with Political Radicals', CD 27 + CD 28 British Library Sound Archive C1377 / Nellie also recalls how similar support would be provided by club members for the children of striking dockworkers
- 15 John Merriman 'Was this man the first terrorist in the modern world?' BBC News (Web) 7th October 2009, [Available at: [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8263858.stm/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8263858.stm/) accessed 21st August 2015]
- 16 Hansard: HL Deb 17 July 1894 vol 27 cc117-56 / 'Hostis humani generis' is Latin for enemy of mankind, and originates in laws against pirates and slavers, determining them beyond the protection of any nation's law.
- 17 *The Times*, 17 Feb 1894 / This was Charles Malato's sarcastic impression of the coverage, cited in Bantman, 'Almost the only free city' (2013) 208
- 18 *The Graphic*, 24th February 1894
- 19 The club shut following the police raid, and some newspaper articles suggest it never recovered as members started to avoid it. Whatever the truth, after briefly re-opening later that year, it was subsequently closed for good.
- 20 Peter Latouche, *Anarchy! Its Methods and Exponents*, Everett & Co. (1908), 232
- 21 Robert Louise Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, The Gutenberg Project (1992 Web. [Accessed 1st September, 2015, available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm>]
- 22 Charles Malato, cited in Bantman, *French Anarchists in London* (2013), 123
- 23 Bantman, 'Almost the only free city' (2013), 207
- 24 'Some of the groups, for obvious reasons, adopt a disguise of respectability! [...] The Jewish Anarchist Club in Berner Street, E., was known as the "International Workpeople's Educational Society," and

- was composed of the lowest class of Russian and Polish Jews. The 'Deptford Educational Society,' which met above a shop in New Cross Road, was a group of English Anarchists...' W.C Hart, *Confessions of an Anarchist*, E.G Richards (1906)
- 25 William Wess, 'Inquest of Elizabeth Stride' casebook.org [Web] Available at: casebook.org/official\_documents/inquests/inquest\_stride.html, Accessed 18th July 2015
- 26 *Evening News*, 25th April 1892
- 27 Cited in Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905*, Heinemann Educational Books (1972)
- 28 Described invariably as 'a neighbourhood of evil repute' (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1st October 1888)
- 29 *The Graphic*, August 20th 1892
- 30 'Elizabeth Stride Casebook' casebook.org [Web] Available at: casebook.org/victims/stride.html?, Accessed 18th July 2015
- 31 Peter Latouche, *Anarchy!*, 63
- 32 Alex Butterworth, *The World That Never Was* (2011)
- 33 *Freedom*, December 1890 - the 'anarchist ideal' is perhaps best expressed by the protagonist of John Mackay's novel, *The Anarchists*: 'Do you still remember what a fuss was made at the time we organized the Club wholly according to the communistic principle: without council, without officers, without statutes, without programme, and without fixed compulsory dues? Complete failure through disorder was prophesied, and all other possible things besides. But we are still getting on very nicely, and in our meetings things proceed just as in others where the bell of the president rules - it is always one talking after the other, if he has anything to say.' John Mackay, *The Anarchists: A Picture of Civilization at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, Forgotten Books (2012), 19
- 34 *Freedom*, January 1893
- 35 *Freedom*, March 1889
- 36 *The Evening Telegraph* [Dundee], Saturday April 26, 1890
- 37 *Northern Star*, 1847, cited in Keith Scholey, 'The Communist Club', *Past Tense* (2006)
- 38 Felix Dubois, *The Anarchist Peril*, T. Fisher Unwin (1874), 269-7
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