

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



## Chronicling subversion

The Cronaca Sovversiva as both seditious rag and  
community paper

Adam Quinn

Adam Quinn

Chronicling subversion

The Cronaca Sovversiva as both seditious rag and community  
paper

30 November 2018

*Radical Americas* Volume 3, Issue 1,

DOI:10.14324/111.444.ra.2018.v3.1.011

Open access CC BY-NC 4.0

[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)

30 November 2018



# Contents

Abstract . . . . .	5
Introduction . . . . .	5
Ebdomadario anarchico: The anarchist weekly . . . . .	12
Conclusion . . . . .	43
Author biographies . . . . .	46
References . . . . .	46



*World: An International Journal for the History of Social Conflict* 1.

- Hoyt, Andrew D.. 'Italian Migration Beyond Atlantic Gate-Way Cities: Mapping Italian Anarchist Miners across the Small Towns of North America.'. *Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Conference of the Midwest World History Association*, Saint Paul, MN, USA September 23–24th 2016.
- Leighten, Patricia. (2014). 'The World Turned Upside Down: Modernism and Anarchist Strategies of Inversion in L'Assiette Au Beurre.'. *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4 (no. 2) : 133.
- Ohmann, Richard M.. (1996). *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*. New York: Verso.
- Panaccione, Andrea. (1988). *May Day Celebration*. Padua: Marsilio.
- Schiavina, Raffaele. 'Autobiographical Notes by Raffaele Schiavina Aka Max Sartin.'. Accessed October 7, 2017 <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/9ghxkg>.
- Schipper, Martin P.; Lester, Robert; Kraut, Alan M.; and Porter, Todd Michael (eds.). (1992). *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Series A, Subject Correspondence Files, Microfilm Part 6: The Suppression of Radicals*. Research Collections in American Immigration. Bethesda: University Publications of America.
- Turner, Mark W.. (2010). 'Companions, Supplements, and the Proliferation of Print in the 1830s.'. *Victorian Periodicals Review* July 9 2010 43 (no. 2): 119. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/vpr.0.0116>
- Zimmer, Kenyon. 'American Anarchist Periodical Circulation Data, 1880–1940.'. Accessed October 7, 2017 [https://www.academia.edu/7715169/American\\_Anarchist\\_Periodical\\_Circulation\\_Data\\_1880-1940](https://www.academia.edu/7715169/American_Anarchist_Periodical_Circulation_Data_1880-1940).

## Abstract

The *Cronaca Sovversiva* (Subversive Chronicle) was an anarchist newspaper, known today for the views of editor Luigi Galleani, whose ideas are associated with multiple bombings carried out in the United States throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the First Red Scare and the executed anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. A broad reading of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, which focusses on more than its connections to controversy, violence and repression, reveals how a periodical produced by a wide range of artists, writers and activists became central to how many Italian immigrants understood and engaged with industrial capitalism. This paper argues that the *Cronaca Sovversiva* built an audience over time by incorporating a wide range of perspectives, addressing local and global issues and linking readers with other forms of literature as well as community events and projects. Diverse works of radical literature, art and announcements in the periodical, set within the predictable, repetitious framework of a weekly community paper, allowed a germinating militant movement to develop throughout and outside the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s pages.

**Keywords:** anarchism, propaganda, Italian Americans, newspapers, radicalism, Periodical Studies

## Introduction

In June 1917, Salvatore Zumpano, the owner of an Italian-language bookstore in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, was arrested on suspicion of advocating anarchy.<sup>1</sup> Authorities had discov-

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin P. Schipper, Robert Lester, Alan M. Kraut and Todd Michael Porter, eds., *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Series A, Subject Correspondence Files, Microfilm Part 6: The Suppression of Radicals* (Research Collections in American Immigration. Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1992), Reel 5.

ered that Zumpano was a subscriber to the *Cronaca Sovversiva* ('Subversive Chronicle' or, as investigators in Zumpano's case called the periodical in one memo, 'an anarchistic newspaper published in Lynn, Mass., the name of which may be "Italian Anarchist"') after they raided the newspaper's office.<sup>2</sup> Zumpano's lawyers argued that the *Cronaca* was a popular publication within the Italian community, so Zumpano naturally stocked it alongside a wide array of works the public had an interest in. His legal defense cited the extensive list of publications seized from his store by authorities, which included not only the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, but also the Bible, *Les Misérables* and novels by Jules Verne.<sup>3</sup>

Zumpano was one of many who were arrested for connections to the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, which one federal agent described as 'the most rabid, seditious, and anarchistic sheet ever published in this country'.<sup>4</sup> While exact figures for arrests made specifically in connection to the *Cronaca Sovversiva* may not be available, there are numerous individual cases on record and it was noted as a focus of federal investigations. For example, Commissioner-General of Immigration Anthony Caminetti noted that Andrea Ciafola, an admitted anarchist and contributor to the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, was one of 'a large number of Italians, alleged to be anarchists, whom the investigations by [the Department of Justice] had indicated were more or less actively connected with the anarchistic paper *Cronaca Sovversiva*'.<sup>5</sup> In June 1917, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was

<sup>2</sup> *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Part 6: The Suppression of Radicals*, Reel 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Part 6: The Suppression of Radicals*, Reel 5.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew D. Hoyt, 'Methods for Tracing Radical Networks: Mapping the Print Culture and Propagandists of the Sovversivi,' in *Without Borders or Limits: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Anarchist Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 85.

<sup>5</sup> US House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *I.W.W. Deportation Cases* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1920), 52.

- Durante, Francesco; Viscusi, Robert; Periconi, James J.. (2014). *Italoamericana: The Literature of the Great Migration, 1880–1943*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferguson, Kathy E.. (2014). 'Anarchist Printers and Presses: Material Circuits of Politics'. *Political Theory* August 2014 42 (no. 4): 391. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0090591714531420>
- Ferguson, Kathy E.. (2014). 'Assemblages of Anarchists: Political Aesthetics in Mother Earth'. *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* February 21 2014 4 (no. 2): 171.
- Gage, Beverly. (2010). *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror*. Reprint edition New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gurianova, Nina. (2014). 'Revolution Is Creativity: Some Aspects of Moscow Anarchist Periodicals in the Context of Avant-Garde Aesthetics (1917–1918)'. *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4 (no. 2) : 245.
- Hammill, Faye; Hjartarson, Paul; McGregor, Hannah. (2015). 'Magazines and/as Media: The Aesthetics and Politics of Serial Form – Introduction'. *ESC: English Studies in Canada* March 1 2015 41 (no. 1): 1. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/esc.2015.0006>
- Heller, Paul. (2013). 'Luigi Galleani and the Anarchists of Barre'. *Times Argus*, November 23 2013 <http://web.archive.org/web/20131123195856/http://www.timesargus.com:80/article/20100430/THISJUSTIN/100429957>.
- Heller, Paul. (2014). *More Granite City Tales: Writings on the History of Barre, Vermont*. Barre: Copy World.
- Hoyt, Andrew D.. (2015). 'Active Centers, Creative Elements, and Bridging Nodes: Applying the Vocabulary of Network Theory to Radical History'. *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 9 (no. 1): 37. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.14321/jstuardi.9.1.0037>
- Hoyt, Andrew D.. (2014). 'Hidden Histories and Material Culture: The Provenance of an Anarchist Pamphlet'. *Zapruder*

## Author biographies

Adam Quinn holds a B.A. in History and Social Theory from Hampshire College and an M.A. in History from the University of Vermont. His undergraduate thesis focussed on how local contexts in Vermont shaped the anarchist politics of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*. His master's thesis examined the First Red Scare in the United States, arguing that it resulted from longer-term, interrelated projects of exclusion, antiradicalism and public morals. He has also written on anarchism and global history, as well as antiradicalism's relationship with discourses surrounding gender and the family.

## References

- Antliff, Allan. (2013). 'Introduction: Anarchism's Modernisms.'. *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4 (no. 2): iii.
- Ardis, Ann. (2008). 'Staging the Public Sphere: Magazine Dialogism and the Prosthetics of Authorship at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.'. *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*. Ann, Ardis, Patrick, Collier Collier (eds.), London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 30.
- Avrich, Paul. 'Review of Luigi Galleani's "The End of Anarchism?"'. Accessed October 7, 2017 <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/paul-avrich-review-of-luigi-galleani-s-the-end-of-anarchism>.
- Bencivenni, Marcella. (2011). *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890–1940*. New York: NYU Press.
- Dolgoft, Sam. (2013). *Bakunin on Anarchy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

temporarily prohibited and its offices were raided by Bureau of Investigation agents.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after the *Cronaca Sovversiva* offices were raided, *The New York Times* reported that its editors 'Luigi Galleanunni' (Luigi Galleani) and 'Raffaelli Schinini' (Raffaele Schiavina), along several others associated with the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, would be deported for their connections to the periodical.<sup>7</sup> Although Galleani and Schiavina were eventually released after paying a fine, the periodical was permanently outlawed in July 1918, and in 1919 Galleani and at least eight others associated with the periodical were arrested and deported.<sup>8</sup>

As illustrated by Zumpano's case and the US government's actions against the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, this was a periodical which was infamous to some, unknown to most and still not entirely out of place in an otherwise general interest Italian-language bookstore. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* was paradoxically both notorious and obscure. Association with the periodical could often be grounds for arrest and even deportation, but, as with Zumpano's investigators, many authorities involved in antiradical investigations did not even know the name of the paper, never mind its contents. Government documents included translations of some *Cronaca Sovversiva* articles, providing a useful, if cursory, overview of articles on militarism, patriotism and religion from the periodical's later years. However, these translations remained incomplete and largely unseen, and to the English-speaking world, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was defined primarily by its seditious reputation.

---

<sup>6</sup> Francesco Durante, Robert Viscusi and James J. Periconi, *Italoamericana: The Literature of the Great Migration, 1880–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 615.

<sup>7</sup> 'Anarchists Lose Appeal – New England Group of Italian Reds Will Be Deported,' *The New York Times*, June 5, 1917.

<sup>8</sup> Durante, Viscusi and Periconi, *Italoamericana: The Literature of the Great Migration, 1880–1943*, 615.

This fragmentary understanding of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* has persisted in historical scholarship. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* has primarily been studied for its connections with particularly controversial anarchists (like Luigi Galleani, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti) and events (such as bombing campaigns in the late 1910s).<sup>9</sup> In a study of another American anarchist periodical from the same period, *Mother Earth*, Kathy Ferguson wrote, 'My goal is to examine the journal's literary and artistic productions...for traces of politically explosive material'.<sup>10</sup> Ferguson's examination for 'traces of politically explosive material' is also an apt description of how the *Cronaca Sovversiva* has been treated in historical literature, as scholars seek to understand revolutionary fervour alongside the more literally explosive acts of violence associated with the paper. This focus on the politically explosive is also descriptive of studies on other radical periodicals, which often, naturally, focus on the specific content that makes a periodical 'radical', from experimental aesthetics to revolutionary rhetoric. But what might we gain from looking at not only the politically explosive material, but also the seemingly inert material (such as repetitive, weekly content that did not necessarily look like propaganda)? Why did thousands of people read a periodical known today only for its connections to actual explosions? While seeking articles in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* calling for assassination and insurrection, what have scholars overlooked in the rest of its pages?

Central to the question of what has been overlooked due to a focus on the politically explosive is *who* has been overlooked.

---

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Paul Avrich's *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* and Beverly Gage's *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror*, cited below as well, which examine the *Cronaca Sovversiva* in regards to its connections to the anarchist bombings of the late 1910s and the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s.

<sup>10</sup> Kathy Ferguson, 'Assemblages of Anarchists: Political Aesthetics in *Mother Earth*,' *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4, no. 2 (2013): 173.

grants. Studying this radical periodical holistically, rather than focussing only on articles calling for violence or Galleani's own contributions, reveals a multifaceted periodical that offered so much more than one propagandist's rhetoric. These multitudes of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* enabled its more explosive material to be heard and acted upon. Ultimately, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was not merely Galleani's mouthpiece, but a literary space where radical counterculture, Italian immigrant culture, anarchist philosophy and insurrectionary propaganda became interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Histories of periodicals sometimes centre either on a famed editor or, especially in the case of radical periodicals, on articles that may have influenced events outside of its pages, such as protests, uprisings, violence, revolt and repression. In the case of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, studies are typically framed around its calls for violence and its suppression by the US government. While questions surrounding such violence and suppression are worth exploring, this more selective and directed methodology has limited how we understand the periodical itself, the wider social movements it influenced and was shaped by, and even the events and people that many set out to understand to begin with. Rather than being a constant, monotonous call for violent uprising, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* used its seriality to provide an up-to-date and dynamic stream of news, artwork and advertisements for other forms of literature to build a counterculture and political network. In turn, it gained a wider audience for calls to action than a lone pamphlet may have had been able to achieve, explaining how it ended up on the shelves of even a general interest Italian bookstore like Salvatore Zumpano's. The *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s seemingly inert material was key to providing an audience and purpose to its politically explosive content. These anarchists advanced a politics of plurality and diversity by embracing these virtues not just in their organising, but in their literary forms.



Russian revolution'.<sup>89</sup> This study of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* has shown that the same virtues of plurality, diversity and eclecticism gave way to a periodical that wove the traditional and the experimental together.

Ann Ardis and Robert Scholes emphasised how studies of modernism, and of modern periodicals in particular, have 'privileged abstraction and formal experimentation' and, in the process, overlooked the wide-ranging approaches that periodicals have taken to portray and engage with modernity.<sup>90</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva* used a familiar and repetitive weekly newspaper format, which would not be considered experimental by most measures. This traditional format, however, provided a framework within which different aesthetic and rhetorical approaches were carried out from page to page and issue to issue. A plurality of art forms in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* were printed alongside what Ardis might characterise as a 'retro-Victorian, austere, visual "seriousness"' that became associated with other modernist periodicals into the 1920s.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* featured reporting, community networking and advertising, which often exhibited a similar tone of seriousness, all alongside the violent, propagandising and emotionally-charged rhetoric for which it is known. What appeared as a community paper in one section of a page helped provide an attentive audience for what appeared as a 'seditious sheet' in the next.

Although there may be many cases where the idea of a one-man paper may be useful and applicable, here the spectre of Galleani and Galleanist violence has worked to eclipse a broader story of intellectual exchange, radical print culture and political resistance among thousands of networked immi-

---

<sup>89</sup> Nina Gurianova, 'Revolution Is Creativity: Some Aspects of Moscow Anarchist Periodicals in the Context of Avant-Garde Aesthetics (1917–1918),' *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4, no. 2 (2014): 269.

<sup>90</sup> Ardis, *Staging the Public Sphere*, 35.

<sup>91</sup> Ardis, *Staging the Public Sphere*, 35.

The *Cronaca Sovversiva* has been widely described in historical literature as a mouthpiece for the insurrectionary anarchist Luigi Galleani. This framing of the *Cronaca* is ubiquitous, but is perhaps best captured by Marcella Bencivenni's description:

Newspapers typically expressed the life and ideas of distinct radical groups, unions, or communities, but a large number were 'one-man papers', the enterprise of single individuals, who usually supported themselves with their writing, supplemented by lecturing and organising...[One] example is *Cronaca Sovversiva*, which reflected almost entirely the ideas and program of its editor, the anti-organisational anarchist Luigi Galleani.<sup>11</sup>

Echoing Bencivenni's sentiment, Paul Avrich described the *Cronaca Sovversiva* as 'the mouthpiece for [Galleani's] incendiary doctrines'.<sup>12</sup> This consensus has been woven into the broader narrative of anarchism and terrorism in the United States. In her study of anarchist terrorism, Beverly Gage wrote that Galleani, 'began to publish *Cronaca Sovversiva*... in the pages of [which] Galleani echoed [Johann] Most's unyielding animosity to the state and to amassers of private property'.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Gage continued, Sacco and Vanzetti 'subscribed to *Cronaca*, and with it to Galleani's brand of class warfare and propaganda by deed'.<sup>14</sup> There may be some truth to the presentation of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* as Galleani's violent scripture and its readers as his 'disciples',<sup>15</sup> but is this the entire truth?

---

<sup>11</sup> Marcella Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890–1940*, 71.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Avrich, Review of Luigi Galleani's 'The End of Anarchism?' in *Black Rose* #10 (Winter 1983).

<sup>13</sup> Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded*, 220.

<sup>15</sup> Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded*, 244.

Since the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was published in Italian, Anglophone historians tend to rely on working either from very selectively chosen articles to translate themselves or from previously translated passages, most often found in government archives such as the records of the Bureau of Immigration and the Bureau of Investigation (which, of course, tend to focus on particularly controversial excerpts). This paper analyses the *Cronaca Sovversiva* using original translations (unless otherwise noted) of a recently digitised run of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* from the Library of Congress. A microfilm run of the periodical from the University of Pittsburgh was also consulted, which is generally very similar to the Library of Congress's version, but is more complete, as it includes the 1920 and 1933 issues. Archival records on the *Cronaca Sovversiva* are mostly limited to investigative documents from the government, such as the Records of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, where Salvatore Zumpano's case is detailed. The practical limitations imposed by the paper's foreign language and repression has exacerbated the tendency of historians to focus on controversial people and events surrounding a radical periodical, which can be studied effectively from government documents. This approach is understandable and has produced invaluable scholarship on the subjects of 'Galleanist' anarchism and political violence. However, it has also left many gaps in how we understand the thousands of pages comprising the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, as most scholarship has only focussed on Galleani and the question of violence.

This article seeks to address some of these gaps by analysing the periodical itself. First, it describes the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s repeated form and contents. Although often studied for its 'radicalism' as in extremism, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* fits multiple conceptualisations of radical. It involved radical analyses which sought to get to the root of modern social issues, and it involved networks of readers and contributors who were part of radical social movements which sought

could be noted as the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s last. Or, perhaps its succession by *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* and other publications in the wake of repression means that it never had a definitively final issue of its own.

## Conclusion

In his introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* on 'Anarchism's Modernisms', Allan Antliff wrote, 'anarchism's localised epistemologies are complemented by modernisms that are self-reflexive and generative because the strength of their political efficacy depends on their capacity to realise new forms of knowledge and activism through aesthetic experimentation'.<sup>87</sup> Most articles in the 'Anarchism's Modernisms' issue explored the experimental approach that each individual editor and artist employed to effectively advance their radical political ambitions within their respective periodical. For example, Patricia Leighton explored how modernist artists Kees Van Dongen and Juan Gris employed abstract aesthetics in political cartoons in *L'assiette au beurre* to both challenge the assumptions of academic art and form coded critiques of the social order.<sup>88</sup> Other articles in the issue took analysed multiple periodicals as part of a larger movement, such as Nina Gourianova's study of avant-garde aesthetics in Moscow anarchist publications. Gourianova argued that anarchism's position as an 'open and mutable doctrine' was central to the 'plurality, diversity, and eclecticism of Russian avant-garde aesthetics in the era of the

---

<sup>87</sup> Allan Antliff, 'Introduction: Anarchism's Modernisms,' *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4 (2013): iii.

<sup>88</sup> Patricia Leighton, 'The World Turned Upside Down: Modernism and Anarchist Strategies of Inversion in *L'Assiette Au Beurre*,' *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4, no. 2 (2014): 133–70.

radical periodicals as being led by a single editor can sometimes limit our analyses of these periodicals, the people who produced them, the movements they shaped and the movements that were created within their pages.

Future studies of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* might analyse the changing roles of different authors, artists, editors and other contributors over time, providing further insight into the lives and work behind the periodical, as well as the changes these contributors introduced to the periodical over time. Furthermore, to analyse the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s diverse offerings, this study used scattered selections from throughout the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s run. While this hopefully showed the value in analysing aspects of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* that might not be directly related to violence, future studies might examine specific periods, moments or themes in the periodical more closely than was possible here.

Part of future efforts to study the *Cronaca Sovversiva* might also look toward the roles that its various contributors played in the periodical's later years and beyond. James Mussell points to the phrase 'in our last' (as in 'in our last issue') as representative of the tendency of periodicals to look backward as they move forward.<sup>86</sup> As discussed earlier, this plays a clear role in the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, as repetition and succession become central to the process of how the radical periodical built an audience, introduced them to radical ideas and linked them with diverse sets of cultural productions and political activities. However, Mussell also pointed to a third meaning of 'in our last' in a periodical: finality. The *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s eventual illegality, its multiple revivals in Washington, DC, Turin, Italy and (after Galleani's death) in New Britain, Connecticut, and the role *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* played as spiritual successor suggest ways in which radical periodicals' finality were uniquely shaped by repression and resistance. Several issues

---

<sup>86</sup> Mussell, *In Our Last*, 351.

to address these issues. As a weekly radical periodical that was not aligned with any single leftist party, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was well-positioned to deliver diverse, informative and compelling weekly news and feature articles that could shape many Italian immigrants' intellectual and political lives. Moreover, advertisements, a mail-order library, letters to the editor and reports from different readers and affinity groups helped transform the periodical from a collection of articles into a hub for a radical political network.

Approaching the periodical with a distant reading by 'assembling the different components – articles, advertisements, illustrations, letters to the editor – into an unpredictable, idiosyncratic and ultimately unstable whole' reveals that the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was much more than Luigi Galleani's mouthpiece.<sup>16</sup> Instead, it was a large, multifaceted project undertaken by multiple writers, artists, activists and even other editors besides Galleani. Its periodical form was inherently heterogeneous, involving continuously changing authors, editors and artists who contributed individual pieces whose meanings became transformed by the weekly collage of which they had become a part. Further complicating the issue of authorship and editorship, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* fit Ann Ardis' description of modern periodicals which featured 'more anonymous, more collaborative, less coherent, and more deliberately performative author environments' in a literary environment where anonymity was already the dominant form.<sup>17</sup> Many articles and illustrations in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* were unsigned or signed only with initials or pseudonyms

---

<sup>16</sup> Faye Hammill, Paul Hjartarson, and Hannah McGregor, 'Magazines and/as Media: The Aesthetics and Politics of Serial Form,' *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 41, no. 1 (1 March 2015): 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Ardis, 'Staging the Public Sphere: Magazine Dialogism and the Prosthetics of Authorship at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,' in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, ed. Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 42; For a discussion of anonymity, also see Griffin, Robert J., ed., *The Faces of*

and some authors used several pseudonyms in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* alone. Although this precludes making definitive statements on the quality and quantity of contributions each individual made to the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, this article's distant reading points to a breadth of perspectives and contributors throughout its pages.

The patchwork community behind the *Cronaca Sovversiva* produced what became a staple publication of the Italian left in America, not only through the fiery propaganda for which it became infamous, but also through the regular space the periodical provided for readers to learn about current events, network, debate revolutionary ideas and strategies, promote events and protests and foster an immigrant counterculture. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* used its seriality to build an audience over time, connect them with other forms of radical cultural production and introduce them to different, sometimes deeply controversial ideas. Ultimately, much of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* had little to do with Galleani, but the periodical's broader appeal as an Italian-language resource for news, leftist analysis and community provided him with a sizable and engaged audience when his ideas were featured in the paper. Therefore, its role as a pluralistic, community-oriented paper enabled the *Cronaca Sovversiva* to also become the notorious, seditious paper it is known as.

## **Ebdomadario anarchico: The anarchist weekly**

The *Cronaca Sovversiva* was first published in 1903 in Barre, Vermont, then in Lynn, Massachusetts from 1912 to 1919.<sup>18</sup>

---

*Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> The reason for the move to Lynn, Massachusetts is not clear from the periodical itself, but according to historian and *Cronaca* translator Robert

involved in or affected by, World War I.<sup>84</sup> Inspired by this periodical as a subscriber, Schiavina was able to easily participate in the letters of its back pages before he became deeply involved in its production. Later, Schiavina played a significant role in publishing *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, widely considered the successor to the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, which was published from 1922 to 1971.<sup>85</sup>

While Schiavina is overlooked in part because he joined the *Cronaca Sovversiva* later, others are overlooked because they remain entirely outside of the narrative of violence and repression of the late-1910s. For example, Antonio Cavalazzi, writing under the pseudonym Ursus, is overlooked in part because he passed away before the period of interest for those studying the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s connections to violence. Cavalazzi had perhaps a greater output of *Cronaca Sovversiva* articles than Galleani in the early years of the periodical (and he also contributed to both the Bakunin and Bresci special issues described above). However, Cavalazzi's death in 1915 puts his work before the period of interest for most scholars interested in either the anarchist bombings or the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti. Cavalazzi, who moved to Vermont and then to Massachusetts to work on the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, is worth further consideration in future studies. There are many more like Cavalazzi who were very involved in the periodical but whose contributions have gone unremarked by historians.

Luigi Galleani's role in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was far from minimal, but he was a single piece within a larger ensemble that enabled his ideas to take root in Italian immigrant communities. Although there is a breadth of space for additional research on the many people involved in the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, it is at least clear from this brief study that approaching

---

<sup>84</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, November 20, 1915.

<sup>85</sup> It is, of course, entirely possible that Schiavina's role in *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* has been similarly overstated.

Similarly overlooked is one of the periodical's later editors. In 1916, Raffaele Schiavina, who was not much older than the periodical itself, became the administrator of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*. In his autobiography, Schiavina writes about his early encounters with the *Cronaca Sovversiva* after taking out a subscription:

The war in Europe was just beginning at the time and there was widespread revulsion at the horrors being perpetrated. I had occasion to hear a few talks given by Galleani and to make the acquaintances of persons of my own age living in the Boston area. In April 1916, with all of the zeal of the convert, I accepted the post of administrator with *Cronaca Sovversiva*. Towards the end of 1915 I had even made so bold as to send an article to that weekly paper and it had been published, albeit completely revamped by the editors.<sup>83</sup>

Schiavina's story of his conversion to anarchism and involvement with the *Cronaca Sovversiva* includes a few minor but telling details, including its connections to Italian immigrant culture, the importance of its consistently critical stance on World War I and even the plural 'editors'. These details all point to a *Cronaca Sovversiva* that was deeply entrenched in Italian immigrant counterculture. Schiavina's case also reveals how studying the many faces behind radical periodicals can help us better understand how these texts shaped readers and movements. Schiavina, a once-dispassionate socialist, found the *Cronaca Sovversiva* to be essential to comprehending and responding to the horrors of World War I. The first time Schiavina sent anything with his name on it to the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, he submitted a letter for a column titled 'From the Trenches and Hearths' where readers sent in letters from those

<sup>83</sup> Schiavina, *Autobiographical Notes*.

Shortly after its founding in 1903, the US Department of State contacted the governor of Vermont, warning him about the 'revolutionary and anarchistic' periodical.<sup>19</sup> The governor then instructed the state attorney to 'take action as the laws warrant and if the laws justify to suppress the sheet'.<sup>20</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s embattled beginnings would grow further into the 1910s, as the paper became a target of repression in the aftermath of anarchist-associated bombings in the late 1910s. After its offices were raided and it was banned from the mail by the US government, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was published in Washington, DC (according to the location listed in the ni; though some of the literature says these issues were actually printed in Providence, Rhode Island) as well as Turin, Italy in 1919 and 1920, respectively.<sup>21</sup> Apart from a single-issue revival in 1933 published in New Britain, Connecticut, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* ceased production in 1920. It was succeeded by the 1922–71, New York City-based periodical *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*. *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* was edited by Raffaele Schiavina throughout most of its lengthy run, initially building off the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s format, audience and contributors.

In his distinctively romantic style, Luigi Galleani wrote that the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was 'a rag of paper that live[d] on crusts and bits of bread, with the support of pennies of five thousand beggars'.<sup>22</sup> Despite Galleani's somewhat poetic description of the *Cronaca*'s funding and readership, the circulation of

---

D'Attilio, the intent was to move the paper closer to larger activist communities. See Andrew D. Hoyt, 'Methods for Tracing Radical Networks: Mapping the Print Culture and Propagandists of the Sovversivi,' in *Without Border or Limits: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Anarchist Studies*, ed. Jorell A. Meléndez Badillo and Nathan J. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, June 2013), 75–106.

<sup>19</sup> '(Barre, VT),' *Barre Daily Times*, August 26, 1903.

<sup>20</sup> *Barre Daily Times*, August 26, 1903.

<sup>21</sup> Durante, Viscusi and Periconi, *Italoamericana: The Literature of the Great Migration, 1880–1943*, 615

<sup>22</sup> Paul Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background*, 51.

five thousand is corroborated by other sources.<sup>23</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva* was among the most widely read of the various Italian anarchist periodicals based in the United States, with a peak circulation of five thousand,<sup>24</sup> largely concentrated in the US Northeast, but with readers across the Americas and Europe, from major metropolitan centers to small mining towns and camps where Italian immigrants worked and moved between.<sup>25</sup> As one article signed by ‘Tropie’ put it, the paper advocated for a blend of anarchism, ‘having only one rule for the unlimited freedom of all’ and communism, where ‘everyone should receive according to their needs.’<sup>26</sup> Its pages contained economic and political theory, radical history, current events, reports from its readership and advertisements for books, lectures and festivals. To many Italian radicals, the paper was a medium through which they could connect to rigorous intellectual discourse, a vibrant immigrant counterculture and an organised network of radicals.

Of course, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* had to build this audience over time, gaining new subscribers and providing current subscribers with the content and form that they had grown to expect. In an essay on the role of continuity, succession and finality in periodicals, James Mussell argued that ‘Serial publication is a negotiation between sameness and difference.’<sup>27</sup> Sameness

---

<sup>23</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, ‘American Anarchist Periodical Circulation Data, 1880–1940,’ [https://www.academia.edu/7715169/American\\_Anarchist\\_Periodical\\_Circulation\\_Data\\_1880-1940](https://www.academia.edu/7715169/American_Anarchist_Periodical_Circulation_Data_1880-1940).

<sup>24</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, ‘American Anarchist Periodical Circulation Data, 1880–1940,’ [https://www.academia.edu/7715169/American\\_Anarchist\\_Periodical\\_Circulation\\_Data\\_1880-1940](https://www.academia.edu/7715169/American_Anarchist_Periodical_Circulation_Data_1880-1940).

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Hoyt, ‘Italian Migration Beyond Atlantic Gate-Way Cities: Mapping Italian Anarchist Miners across the Small Towns of North America.’ Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Conference of the Midwest World History Association, Metropolitan State University, Saint Paul, MN, USA, September 23–24th 2016.

<sup>26</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, May 6, 1905.

<sup>27</sup> James Mussell. ‘Repetition: Or, “In Our Last”,’ *Victorian Periodicals Review* 48, no. 3 (2015): 355.

for the periodical. Moreover, Abate’s full name was listed as the publisher, and his initials placed under illustrations and articles, even during periods in which Galleani was openly writing in the *Cronaca Sovversiva*.

It seems likely that Abate was as radical and militant as any other anarchist of Vermont. As historian Andrew Hoyt argued, ‘Galleani and Abate are usually understood as of unequal historical importance – a charismatic leader and a follower...[However,] Carlo Abate...linked the *Cronaca*...to the migrant community by building and maintaining strong bonds to two different network communities which would otherwise only be connected through weak ties.’<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the respect the community had for Abate and his community projects, such as Abate’s local Drawing School, are not contradictory to the idea of him being a militant anarchist; instead, they highlight how anarchists and the *Cronaca Sovversiva* gained legitimacy and respect among workers through community projects. As Hoyt continued, ‘Abate’s life in Barre contrasts with the usual depiction of Galleanisti as rabid ideologues...he was a painter and schoolteacher, a community organiser, not bomb thrower or terrorist. Understanding the deep bonds Abate built with the Italian stonecutters in Vermont adds to our appreciation of the deep roots anarchists established in their local communities.’<sup>82</sup> Carlo Abate, more than being a trustworthy figure who could help conceal the identity of Galleani, was an important part of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* and the local anarchist community. Through his artwork, community activism and, at least according to the *Cronaca Sovversiva* itself, his position as publisher, Abate connected the militant philosophies within the *Cronaca* to the everyday lives and culture of Italian immigrant workers.

---

<sup>81</sup> Andrew D. Hoyt, ‘Active Centers, Creative Elements, and Bridging Nodes: Applying the Vocabulary of Network Theory to Radical History,’ *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 9 (2015): 32–58.

<sup>82</sup> Hoyt, *Active Centers, Creative Elements*, 32–58.

in turn, allowed Galleani's own propaganda (and even calls to violence) to reach a larger regular audience.

In his discussion of succession in periodicals, Mussell wrote that, in order for one issue to assert differences from preceding issues, 'the editor must introduce enough difference to move the magazine on but not so much that it becomes, in effect, another publication entirely'.<sup>79</sup> To achieve this difference, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* had more than one editor (in contrast to Mussell's hypothetical phrasing of 'the editor') and a diverse array of contributors who shaped the periodical's direction. Behind the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s heterogeneous content was a similarly heterogeneous network of editors, writers, artists and activists. Many of the people behind the *Cronaca Sovversiva* did not lead well-documented lives (and many even participated in the periodical anonymously), but it is worth considering some of those besides Galleani who helped create the content within the periodical and build the network behind it.

The first person to be listed as the publisher or editor of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was Carlo Abate, whose name first appears on top of the 12 September 1903 issue. Abate was a respected artist in Barre, Vermont and is often either overlooked in historical literature or framed as a pacifist philosophical anarchist who was only a financial backer of the *Cronaca*. For example, one article on Galleani and the anarchists of Barre claimed that Abate's name was merely 'listed as the publisher of the *Cronaca*...[as] a ruse to conceal the identity of Galleani, who was still wanted by the police for his radical activities in New Jersey'.<sup>80</sup> However, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* had many other editors listed throughout its lifespan and many highly politicised articles in the periodical are signed 'C.A.', just as Abate's propagandistic artwork is autographed, so he may have even written

<sup>79</sup> James Mussell, Repetition: Or, 'In Our Last,' 351.

<sup>80</sup> Paul Heller, 'Luigi Galleani and the Anarchists of Barre,' *Times Argus*, accessed October 6, 2017, <http://web.archive.org/web/20150829230705/http://www.timesargus.com/article/20100430/THISJUSTIN/100429957>.

in serial publications fulfills a contract with readers concerning what they have demonstrated they want to read, while difference allows interest to be maintained over time by making new issues distinguishable from previous ones.

The idea of reproducing the familiar alongside successive differences was not only descriptive of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* as a serial publication, but also integral to its anarchist philosophy. In a defense of anarchist principles and strategies, Galleani argued that, 'progress means a continuous succession of phenomena in which energy manifests itself at each stage of evolution with an ever-growing variety and intensity'.<sup>28</sup> Anarchist-communism, he argued, 'reproduces all the traits of the preceding phases, adding a new trait non-existent in preceding phases, and will be the embryo of a new trait appearing in all subsequent stages'.<sup>29</sup> Propaganda, disagreement and even repetition were also central to this evolutionary process, as he continued to argue that political 'disagreements...will lead [anarchists] under the sharp spur of experience and necessity to find the appropriate way, the way to revolution, whose initial phase must be the individual act of rebellion, inseparable from propaganda, from the mental preparation which understands it, integrates it, leading to larger and more frequent repetitions through which collective insurrections flow into the social revolution'.<sup>30</sup> The role of repetition and succession (or difference and evolution) in Galleani's revolutionary vision echoes Mussell's observations about the periodical form. This could explain why Galleani embraced serial publication in general, but, regardless, the idea of repetition and succession certainly spoke to anarchism's experimental, spontaneous and evolutionary ethos.

<sup>28</sup> Luigi Galleani, *The End of Anarchism?* trans. M. Sartin and R. D'Attilio, (Orkney: Cienfuegos Press.,1982), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/luigi-galleani-the-end-of-anarchism>.

<sup>29</sup> Luigi Galleani, *The End of Anarchism?*

<sup>30</sup> Luigi Galleani, *The End of Anarchism?*

In addition to its general parallels with Mussell's description of periodicals as a genre, this anarchist philosophy was also especially representative of the form and content of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* used the repetition of typeface, layouts and tone (what Mussell called 'formal features') to form continuity and a recognisable identity between issues, while it also emphatically embraced the seriality of the periodical medium.<sup>31</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva* not only presented a variety of opinions and topics throughout its text, but also utilised special formats and shifting aesthetics within its pages and provided readers with avenues to engage outside the periodical (such as ads for pamphlets, events and meetings, and a continuously updated selection in its mail-order library).

Although scholars are trained, as Mussell wrote, 'to focus on the singular and the exceptional rather than the repetitive and generic', we may gain new insights into periodicals by doing the inverse. In the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s case, this could be understood as past studies focusing on the exceptional calls to violence, leaving a gap in understanding the periodical's typical, week-to-week format and content.<sup>32</sup> Considering the role that repetition and gradual succession play in periodicals in general and in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* in particular, it is worth examining the repetitious and changing features of this anarchist weekly.

A typical issue of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* consisted of four pages, with a few exceptions (for example, the special 'Against the War, Against the Peace' and Umberto I issues discussed below were each eight pages long; even rarer were two-page issues, as on 28 January 1905, and 12-page issues, as on 14 March 1908).<sup>33</sup> Early issues were mostly unembellished and

---

<sup>31</sup> James Mussell, 'Elemental Forms: The Newspaper as Popular Genre in the Nineteenth Century,' *Media History* 20, no. 1 (2014): 4–20.

<sup>32</sup> Mussell, *In Our Last*, 355.

<sup>33</sup> Issues, in order of mention: *Cronaca Sovversiva*, March 18, 1916, June 29, 1907, January 28, 1905, March 14, 1908.

outside of texts, but not entirely separate from the literary world. For example, Schiavina wrote in his autobiography that, before becoming an editor of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, 'During summer 1914, at an Italian-American picnic, I made the acquaintance of a man considerably older than me who told me that he was an anarchist and offered me, to read, a book [by Kropotkin] that he said that he had enjoyed reading'.<sup>77</sup> After becoming interested in anarchism through this book, Schiavina recalled that he 'went on reading what he lent me and took out a subscription to *Cronaca Sovversiva* which, in a very short space of time, had become essential reading for me'.<sup>78</sup> Schiavina's account displays how public events like picnics allowed participants to exchange printed literature in person. The *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s promotion of events like this were mutually beneficial; its advertisements brought more attendees to events who, in turn, introduced other attendees to anarchist books and periodicals.

Enabling readers to access a wide spectrum of radical texts and other cultural and political activities helped the *Cronaca Sovversiva* grow into an intellectual hub of Italian-language anarchism. By incorporating literature and activities across a broad but radical ideological spectrum, rather than being bound to a single political organisation as many socialist and syndicalist papers were, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was well-positioned to reach a wide-ranging set of politically engaged readers in Italian immigrant communities. Rather than being merely a vessel for one editor's own viewpoints, the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s heterogeneous offerings helps to explain how the paper resonated with so many. This fostered a broader intellectual community for Italian immigrants and,

---

<sup>77</sup> Raffaele Schiavina, 'Autobiographical Notes by Raffaele Schiavina aka Max Sartin,' Kate Sharpley Library, <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/ngf2s6>.

<sup>78</sup> Schiavina, *Autobiographical Notes*.



and helped define the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, booklet collections like this from the *Cronaca Sovversiva* ensured longevity and totality for some of the periodical's most ambitious projects, escaping the fleeting nature of a weekly periodical and allowing some writings to join a broader canon of books on anarchist philosophy.

The *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s interplay with other forms of print culture was a part of a larger trend in periodicals linking readers with other forms of texts. These supplementary texts augmented the idea of succession in the periodical, not only providing readers with new kinds of content outside of the periodical's page, but, as Mark W. Turner described, interrupting the weekly temporal uniformity of the serial publication.<sup>76</sup> These also provided a wider geographical distribution to texts that may have otherwise been fairly inaccessible. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* offered readers access to Italian-language radical texts which would have been unavailable in most towns, allowing, for example, a coal miner in Colorado to purchase and read an Italian translation of Marx. Moreover, Italian-language bookstores that stocked the *Cronaca Sovversiva* (like Salvatore Zumpano's discussed in the introduction) transitively provided customers with access to this larger body of radical literature.

This relationship with other forms of counterculture extended beyond linking readers with other texts. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* also advertised art prints, such as portraits of figures like the collectivist anarchist philosopher Mikhail Bakunin and the Paris Commune revolutionary Louise Michele, speaking tours by various anarchists, regional or international conferences of radicals and events hosted by radicals such as picnics, festivals, operas and fundraisers. These provided readers with avenues into a broader counterculture that was

---

<sup>76</sup> Mark W. Turner, 'Companions, Supplements, and the Proliferation of Print in the 1830s,' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 43, no. 2 (9 July 2010): 119–32.

consisted of a plain text nameplate, four columns of text and few, if any, illustrations. Starting on 4 January 1905, each issue typically consisted of four or five columns on each page, with an illustrated nameplate, along with more varied type and more illustrations throughout the periodical (this change likely resulted from new typographical equipment, which was purchased with \$355 raised from reader donations).<sup>34</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva* never deviated too much from these formal features, but within this general format it introduced a variety of aesthetics and perspectives over time.

The most visible repeated feature was the nameplate at the top of the first page of each issue. This was joined by an imprint which included a slogan and administrative information such as the editor, address and, in the periodical's later years, legal disclaimers about translations of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* being submitted to the US Post Office for inspection. The nameplate varied across the life of the periodical, beginning with the simple, plain font mentioned above, but also using different illustrations encompassing a variety of artistic styles. These varying nameplates are worth closer consideration, especially as they are representative of the mix of artistic styles used throughout the *Cronaca Sovversiva*.

The most repeated illustration used in the nameplate was of a muscled man holding chained hands up, with torches in the background along with Italian-language text reading 'Anarchist Weekly of Revolutionary Propaganda' and Latin text reading 'That fortune may leave the proud and return to the wretched'. The image of the man lifting his chains points to a general state of oppression alongside a struggle for liberation. The generic, almost universal symbolism here allows this nameplate to fit well with almost any issue of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, setting a tone for both its analyses of contemporary capitalism and its visions for a revolutionary

---

<sup>34</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, January 28, 1905.

future. This nameplate was illustrated by Carlo Abate, an artist and publisher for the *Cronaca Sovversiva*. It displays Abate's signature style, in which the labour involved in metal or wood engravings are highlighted through rough linework that echoes the appearance of a hand-drawn sketch, along with 'Cronaca Sovversiva' type that looks as though it was painted with a brush. Historian Andrew Hoyt noted that, through this aesthetic approach, Abate 'wanted his hand to be seen' in his artwork, while Kathy Ferguson frames this as a refusal to mimic photographic processes which hide the labour behind images.<sup>35</sup>

Another common nameplate featured the same Italian and Latin slogans, but with an illustration involving the much cleaner lines and naturalistic imagery of art nouveau, showing three women under trees reach out into shining light. This work, signed A. Rizzi, is a stark stylistic contrast to Abate's nameplate. It echoes earlier artwork from the English-language anarchist monthly *Mother Earth*, in which the cover art for the first six issues featured a naked man and woman with their arms outstretched toward a sunrise under a similarly drawn tree. This cover art has been characterised as a gesture toward a new, Edenic world, inviting readers to imagine the dawn of a beautiful utopia.<sup>36</sup> Rizzi's nameplate, with the same subject matter of a beautiful dawn, serves a similar purpose. However, unlike both the *Mother Earth* cover art and Abate's nameplate, the bold lines of Rizzi's nameplate evoke art nouveau poster art rather than an engraving, joined by a characteristically art nouveau typeface. Here, neither the toil of the subject of breaking chains nor the labour of the artist is made visible; instead, the image focusses only on the

---

<sup>35</sup> Kathy Ferguson, 'Anarchist Printers and Presses: Material Circuits of Politics,' *Political Theory* 41 (2014): 391–414.

<sup>36</sup> Kathy Ferguson, *Assemblages of Anarchists*, 178–9.

'The End of Anarchism?' was an interrogative response to Francesco Saverio Merlino's anti-anarchist article, 'The End of Anarchism'. Although it started out as a polemic, Galleani's 'The End of Anarchism?' soon became a comprehensive exposition of his own anarchist philosophy. Historian Paul Avrich summarised the piece well, describing it as<sup>74</sup>

Galleani's most fully realised work...[and] a vigorous defense of communist anarchism against socialism and reform, preaching the virtues of spontaneity and variety, of autonomy and independence, of self-determination and direct action, in a world of increasing standardisation and conformity.<sup>75</sup>

By arguing against a broad point about anarchism's lack of relevance and vitality, Galleani articulated the many ways in which he believed anarchism to be not only philosophically sound, but also pertinent to the issues of the times and the needs of a revolutionary future. Fitting for his insurrectionary philosophy, what began as a spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment response to one article became Galleani's most lasting contribution to the anarchist canon (*The End of Anarchism?* is also Galleani's only major work available in English in book form). Although Galleani's 'virtues of spontaneity and variety' corresponded well to the serial form

---

<sup>74</sup> Paul Avrich says in his review of *The End of Anarchism?* that the work was completed in 1925, when additional parts of it were published in the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s spiritual successor, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, then published in booklet form. Avrich does not mention a booklet version of *The End of Anarchism?* being distributed in the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s time, so, without a copy of both editions, it is uncertain if the version sold through the *Cronaca* was complete, intended as a work-in-progress, or completed later as Avrich suggests.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Avrich, Review of Luigi Galleani's 'The End of Anarchism?', <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/paul-avrich-review-of-luigi-galleani-s-the-end-of-anarchism>.

including additional anarchist-communist texts, works by philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner, plays and novels, and even portraits and postcards. Notably, the library also offered texts from authors whom Luigi Galleani had significant disagreements with and even wrote polemics against, such as Errico Malatesta, Karl Marx and Francesco Saverio Merlino, an anarchist-turned-socialist who Galleani famously criticised in ‘The End of Anarchism?’.

Moreover, the library section offered serialised features from (or special issues of) the *Cronaca Sovversiva* consolidated into the form of pamphlets and booklets. These included ‘Against the War, Against the Peace, For the Revolution!’, which was a special issue on World War I, including timely articles criticising nationalism, militarism and pacifism; ‘Face to Face with the Enemy’, which celebrated propaganda by deed as well as famous anarchist assassins and martyrs; and ‘The End of Anarchism?’. These booklets and special issues were also advertised throughout the rest of the periodical. For example, Figure 4 shows various advertisements, including varying artwork, typography and layouts that the *Cronaca Sovversiva* featured for ‘Face to Face with the Enemy’ and other works that had previously been published as a special issue or as a series of articles.



**Figure 4** Advertisements featured in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* for a variety of projects, left to right: a booklet of ‘Faccia a Faccia Col Nemico’, the journal *Pane e Liberta*, Clemente Duval’s autobiography and a booklet of Sébastien Faure’s ‘Twelve Proofs of God’s Inexistence’.

idea of stimulating a general sense of beauty and imagination in the reader.

A third regularly used nameplate used the same slogans but featured images of workers reading a copy of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* (recursively featuring their own image in its nameplate) with a woman in the background carrying a torch and axe gliding above an industrial cityscape. This was the first illustrated nameplate used in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* and it would periodically reappear throughout the periodical’s run. This nameplate, signed with the letter ‘E’ in the bottom left, blended many styles and art movements of the time, with a realist portrayal of workers and the industrial city intertwined with the naturalistic and symbolic tendencies noted in the other nameplates described above.

In addition to these repeated nameplate, special nameplates were also created for specific issues, such as the top panel in Figure 1 which commemorated the Haymarket martyrs (variations of this nameplate were used for May issues for May Day or November issues on Haymarket).<sup>37</sup> This nameplate, created by Carlo Abate, is more realistic than his chained man illustration, consisting of detailed portraits of the Haymarket martyrs. Other special nameplates exhibited an even wider variety of artistic styles, including photographs of stonework. These repeated but varying nameplates, aesthetically divergent and featuring different artists, echoed the balance of repetition and heterogeneity in the text itself and in the other artwork featured throughout the periodical.

After the nameplate, the first two to three pages usually consisted of feature articles. Although the organisation and presentation of the periodical varied throughout its run, it commonly began with international news, history and analysis (e.g., cov-

<sup>37</sup> All Photos Courtesy of the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers Site*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2012271201/>.

erage of the Mexican Revolution, developments in the French syndicalist movement or analysis of US policies in Latin America, which the *Cronaca Sovversiva* considered to be imperialistic). This international coverage was preceded in many issues with a graphic of a man with a sickle, labelled 'Subversive Notes of the Two Hemispheres' (see Figure 2, which shows different illustrations by Carlo Abate which marked the beginning of a section).<sup>38</sup> This section provided readers with news on revolutionary movements and anarchist perspectives on more general current events, with deeper and more sympathetic coverage of radicalism than generally available in the mainstream press. These notes varied in scope, topic and depth, with examples including over a page of coverage on a Vermont granite workers' strike,<sup>39</sup> periodic updates on the 'social war in Colorado' (known today as the Ludlow massacre)<sup>40</sup> and snippets on international news such as updates on World War I.<sup>41</sup> Although the paper was openly a work of propaganda, these articles were carefully researched and placed value on journalistic integrity. For example, the 17 November 1917 issue began with a note on how news about the Russian Revolution would be postponed due to the 'uncertain and contradictory reports' coming in.<sup>42</sup> Placing news and reports at the beginning of the periodical set a realist tone for the propaganda, allowing theoretical and even polemical articles thereafter feel reliable and grounded. In short, these subversive notes helped the *Cronaca*

---

<sup>38</sup> While this format occurred hundreds of times throughout the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s run, for one example, see the July 8, 1911 issue. At times, this section was instead labeled with a plain text headline reading 'Subversive Notes,' or, especially in earlier issues, not labeled at all.

<sup>39</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva* (Lynn, MA), June 5, 1915.

<sup>40</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, April 25, 1914, May 23, 1914.

<sup>41</sup> The war is discussed often throughout the *Cronaca Sovversiva*; for one example, see the May 19, 1917 issue, which begins with an analysis of the US entering the war.

<sup>42</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, November 17, 1917.

Circolo di Studi Sociali' and later titled 'Biblioteca *Cronaca Sovversiva*'. As the original name implies, the library began as a project of the Circolo di Studi Sociali, a radical study and propaganda group which, along with the Gruppo Autonomo di East Boston in the paper's later years, was largely responsible for publishing and distributing the *Cronaca Sovversiva* itself and many of the publications sold through the paper.<sup>72</sup> The Circolo predated the *Cronaca Sovversiva* and operated a physical library in Barre, the Biblioteca Popolare, until it burned down in 1904. The selection of books and pamphlets distributed through the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s own mail-order Biblioteca was wide-ranging, and usually cost between five cents and \$1.25. In its first appearance, the library consisted of a comprehensive collection of seminal anarchist-communist texts in Italian, including works by Peter Kropotkin, Johann Most, Pietro Gori and Élisée Reclus. The Biblioteca del Circolo di Studi Sociali was joined in the early issues of the periodical by the Libreria Sociologica di Paterson, NJ, which broadened the offerings to include works by social critics including Thomas More, Émile Zola and Guglielmo Ferrero.<sup>73</sup> However, the Biblioteca del Circolo di Studi Sociali soon expanded to offer a breadth of Italian-language books on radical philosophy,

---

<sup>72</sup> For further discussion of the interplay between the *Cronaca Sovversiva* and pamphlets published by the groups behind it, see Andrew D. Hoyt, 'Hidden Histories and Material Culture: The Provenance of an Anarchist Pamphlet,' *Zapruder World: An International Journal for the History of Social Conflict* 1 (2014).

<sup>73</sup> See for example, the July 25, 1903 issue of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*. Note that, while a 'biblioteca' and a 'libreria' would commonly be translated as a 'library' and a 'bookstore' respectively, in the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s case both involved buying, not borrowing, the writings. The Libreria Sociologica di Paterson, NJ and the Biblioteca del Circolo di Studi Sociali were separate projects which existed together on the page, with the former, of course, based in Paterson, New Jersey, and the latter in Barre, Vermont. The Libreria Sociologica di Paterson, NJ offered books, while the Biblioteca del Circolo di Studi Sociali primarily offered booklets. Later, the Biblioteca 'Cronaca Sovversiva' offered both.

themselves’, in a subtle advertisement eventually joined by the not-so-subtle correction, ‘On page 15, row 10, instead of “Weigh 200 grams of nitroglycerin...” you must read and correct to “Weigh 1200 grams of nitroglycerin...”’<sup>70</sup> Bomb-making instructions were, of course, unusual for a periodical with thousands of subscribers. This points to the unique roles that difference and progression played in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* as a periodical which aimed to help bring about a revolution. The different content provided in supplemental materials like ‘La Salute è in Voi’ were not merely a means to avoid repetition to maintain reader interest over time, but helped avoid criminal charges, translate some readers’ radical ideas into action and not alienate other readers.

‘La Salute è in Voi’ is also indicative of how the *Cronaca Sovversiva* used a mixture consisting not only of different headlines, articles and artwork, but also separate texts, to provide both persuasive power to its radical message and evasiveness and plausible deniability to authorities. As Ann Ardis writes of the internal dialogics of the NAACP-associated periodical *Crisis*, a collage approach was used to create ‘meanings that are not explicitly spelled out in any one of the component parts but instead are “suggested by their conjunction”’.<sup>71</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva* coupled news and analysis on the problems of industrial capitalism with histories of strikes and assassinations, supplemented with calls for meetings of activists and even materials with bomb-making instructions.

Many books and pamphlets, including ‘La Salute è in Voi’, were also sold through a mail-order library listed at the end of the paper each week. The library section of the paper started with the fourth issue and was originally titled ‘Biblioteca del

<sup>70</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, July 19, 1908.

<sup>71</sup> Ann Ardis discussing Anne E. Carroll’s work on *Crisis* in Ardis, *Staging the Public Sphere*, 36. See also Carroll, Anne Elizabeth, *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

*Sovversiva* to intimately shape readers’ understandings of the ever-changing Progressive Era world.



Figure 1 Repeated nameplates of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*.



Figure 2 Artwork marking the beginning of regular *Cronaca Sovversiva* sections.

Following this coverage of subversion throughout the world, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* typically featured discussions of political vision, revolutionary strategy and history. Sometimes these features took the form of one-off articles and sometimes appeared in series that would go on for weeks. From week to week, readers could expect content on topics ranging from philosophical articles on religion, freedom and society to

discussions on revolutionary strategy. Specific examples of articles include French anarchist Clément Duval's translated autobiography,<sup>43</sup> an anonymous article making an 'anarchist statement' on 'individuals consuming according to their needs' as a 'prime necessity of life'<sup>44</sup> and a history of the Paris Commune.<sup>45</sup>

Rather than only representing the opinions of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s editors, these varied articles provided a diverse set of viewpoints representing different political positions. Many of the articles were written by regular contributors to the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, such as Luigi Galleani and Raffaele Schiavina, but most were anonymous or initialled, written by a plethora of authors with lesser-known names or written by authors outside of the Italian anarchist movement. These included writers from different strains of anarchism (e.g., Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, Max Stirner and Emma Goldman) as well as writers outside of the anarchist milieu altogether (e.g., Karl Marx, Emile Zola and Friedrich Nietzsche).

The featured articles in the first two pages would also sometimes take on a special theme for one or more issues of the paper. For example, each year around 1 May (Primo Maggio or May Day) and 11 November (the anniversary of the execution of several anarchists for the Haymarket affair), the *Cronaca Sovversiva* would have issues dedicated to discussing general strikes, the Haymarket affair and Primo Maggio. The 14 November 1908 issue included articles, a special nameplate and illustrations focussed on the Haymarket martyrs. The middle of the front page even featured an image of a handwritten letter from Albert Parsons, one of the Haymarket martyrs, to his children, dated two days before his 11 November 1887 execution.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, June 5, 1915.

<sup>44</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, February 24, 1906.

<sup>45</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, March 16, 1918.

the address of Rabelais Presse in New York City.<sup>65</sup> In another issue, the selections included 11 operas by anarchist Pietro Gori, shipped from Spezia, Italy and a book by Peter Kropotkin shipped from Geneva, Switzerland.<sup>66</sup> This section also advertised other anarchist periodicals, such as *The Blast* and *Mother Earth*, including information on each issue's contents and where to send money for a subscription.<sup>67</sup>

Outside of the 'Tra Libri Riviste e Giornali' section, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* would sometimes feature advertisements with their own space, type and, sometimes, artwork. For example, some issues of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* included recurring space to showcase annual radical almanacs such as *The Revolutionary Almanac* and the *Cronaca*'s own almanac, *L'Almanacco Sovversivo*.<sup>68</sup> These almanacs served as small radical encyclopaedias, including calendars listing noteworthy dates in radical history, illustrations for different months and historical figures, and essays by different authors on history and theory. In other issues, advertisement space was used for publications such as a translation by Antonio Cavalazzi of secularist anarchist Sébastien Faure's 'Twelve Proofs of God's Inexistence' (one copy for 10 cents or, if the buyer wanted to distribute it further, 12 copies for a dollar) and an annual subscription to *The Blast*.<sup>69</sup>

Notably, one advertisement that would reappear periodically was for 'La Salute è in Voi', a 25-cent bomb-making manual. 'La Salute è in Voi' was described in the paper as 'An indispensable pamphlet for all comrades who love to educate

---

<sup>65</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, February 14, 1914.

<sup>66</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, March 23, 1912.

<sup>67</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, October 23, 1909

<sup>68</sup> See for example, the April 28 through May 12, 1906 issues of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, which featured a large ad for *L'Almanacco Sovversivo*, with each week featuring a different example page from the almanac itself in the center of the *Cronaca*'s third page.

<sup>69</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, January 29, 1916.

In 1911, one ad agency defined advertising as, 'literature which compels Action...[and] changes the mind of millions at will'.<sup>63</sup> If we are to understand advertising as a form of communication which seeks to change consciousness to compel action, then its relationship with propaganda goes beyond revenue generation.<sup>64</sup> Rather than selling ad space for commercial products, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* adapted advertising practices of the time to expand its ability to inform, persuade and keep readers' attention focussed on topics in the line of anti-capitalism, revolution and anarchism. Advertisements and announcements for booklets, other periodicals, public speeches, concerts, plays, festivals and conferences allowed the *Cronaca Sovversiva* to serve as a hub around which Italian immigrant counterculture coalesced.

To this end, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* had a dedicated section for radical literature advertisements. This section, titled 'Tra Libri Riviste e Giornali' ('Between Books and Newspapers'), consisted of brief advertisements for other radical periodicals as well as booklets. The *Cronaca Sovversiva* also had its own mail-order library (described below), but 'Tra Libri Riviste e Giornali' was separate, with its own selection of works provided by a wide variety of publishers and sold through different addresses. For example, the 14 February 1914 issue advertised 'Madri d'Italia!' ('Mothers of Italy!') by Mentana (Luigi Galleani), which was an anti-war pamphlet first published in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* itself; 'Gli Anarchico e Cio' Che Vogliono' ('The Anarchists and What They Want') by the Gruppo Autonomo di East Boston; and the *1914 Revolutionary Almanac*. While the first two of these listed an East Boston P.O. box for those who wanted to order a copy (distinct from the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s own Lynn address), the latter advertised

---

<sup>63</sup> Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 109.

<sup>64</sup> Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 109.

As with these 11 November issues, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* would devote several special issues per year to an entire week focussed on one thinker, event or idea associated with the date. For example, on the 31st anniversary of collectivist anarchist Mikhail Bakunin's death, the *Cronaca* ran an issue devoted to exploring his 'life, thought, and work'.<sup>46</sup> Although this issue was entirely devoted to one historical figure, it still approached its subject through a diverse set of authors and angles. The coverage of Bakunin included contributions from authors including Swiss internationalist James Guillaume, Vermont anarchist and stoneworker Antonio Cavalazzi, Italian socialist Filippo Turati, Bakunin's close ally Carlo Cafiero, Russian collectivist Alexander Herzen, Peter Kropotkin, Luigi Galleani and Bakunin himself. Articles in the issue discussed Bakunin's involvement in the First International, his debates with Marx and his ideas on the state and revolution. Some of these articles were decades' old works translated into Italian and others were written for the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, allowing the discussion of Bakunin to be both comprehensive and current. The special issue could therefore be kept by readers as a valuable reference on Bakunin (in fact, several articles within the issue would later be included in edited collections on Bakunin, such as Guillaume's biography of Bakunin in Sam Dolgoff's *Bakunin on Anarchy*),<sup>47</sup> and parts of it were republished on later anniversaries of Bakunin's death.<sup>48</sup>

The *Cronaca Sovversiva* would regularly follow this format on many anniversaries; repetition coexisted with succession as the periodical built a pattern for issues that stood out from the typical weekly format. For example, the end of the Bakunin issue above included a note reading, 'Subscribe for a special illustrated issue of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* that comes out on

---

<sup>46</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, June 29, 1907.

<sup>47</sup> Sam Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 22.

<sup>48</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, June 30, 1916.

29 July [1907], the seventh anniversary of Umberto I's execution'.<sup>49</sup> Umberto I was the King of Italy, until he was assassinated by New Jersey-based anarchist Gaetano Bresci in 1900. Bresci sought revenge after Umberto I awarded a medal of decoration to a general who ordered a massacre in Milan in 1898. The special issue on this subject, double the length of a typical issue, discussed Umberto I, Gaetano Bresci and Bresci's death at the hands of the Italian government. It then continued to discuss other martyrs and their respective periods of repression in Russia, France, America and Spain. Writings in the issue included selections by Galleani, Francesco Saverio Merlino,<sup>50</sup> one 'Effabo Saramelli' of Navacchio, Italy, Antonio Cavalazzi (signing three articles with three different variations on his name and pseudonym) and many more. It also included posthumous writings or last words from figures such as French anarchists Ravachol and Auguste Vaillant and Italian anarchist Sante Caserio (who killed the French president in retaliation for the execution of Vaillant and Émile Henry). Among the 16 illustrations in the special issue were an illustration by French artist René Georges Hermann-Paul of Bresci being hanged in his cell by police, a photograph or drawing accompanying the narrative of each country's repressive regimes, a portrait by Carlo Abate of Russian socialist Sophia Perovskaya (who was hanged for the assassination of Alexander II) and uncredited illustrations, including a portrait of Caserio.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the diverse subjects, the artwork in this issue encompassed a wide range of themes and styles. Figure 3 highlights the diverse set of artistic styles used in the issue, from art nouveau imagery

---

<sup>49</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, June 29, 1907.

<sup>50</sup> This was weeks after Merlino's disavowal of anarchism, but weeks before Galleani's response to Merlino, *The End of Anarchism?*, discussed below.

<sup>51</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, July 27, 1907 [Note: Despite the wording of the advertisement for this issue quoted above, the issue came out on July 27, not on the exact seventh anniversary of Umberto I's July 29 assassination.]

Similarly, sections such as 'Barre e Dintorni' ('Barre and its Surroundings') and 'Cronaca Locale' ('Local Chronicle') allowed the groups behind the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s publication to publish quick notes on local activities and news from the areas surrounding Barre or Lynn, with a similar breadth of topics including libertarian festivals, radical speeches and community projects in the local area. Not only did this allow readers to interact with the *Cronaca* on a more concrete level, but it also allowed anarchists to quickly develop and spread ideas for local political activities. Although the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was not a formal union or party, these sections allowed readers to obtain support from, communicate and organise with strangers hundreds of miles away.

At the turn of the century, advertising was a booming industry, witnessing a 128 per cent increase from 1890 to 1904.<sup>60</sup> Some of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s peers were a part of this trend, featuring commercial, general interest advertisements. For example, the New York-based syndicalist weekly *Il Proletario* advertised for a variety of goods and services, including national brands like cigars as well as doctors, restaurants and an Italian-English vocabulary book.<sup>61</sup> *Il Proletario*'s ads filled a niche for its Italian immigrant audience, generating revenue for the periodical itself and, potentially, for the organisations with which it was associated, such as the Italian Socialist Federation and the Industrial Workers of the World. *The Blast*, an Anglophone bimonthly anarchist paper, included similar commercial advertisements for goods and services, though it focussed on more exclusively local offerings, such as a suitcase store, a dentist and a boxing rink.<sup>62</sup> The *Cronaca Sovversiva*, however, took a different approach to advertising.

---

<sup>60</sup> Richard M. Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 83.

<sup>61</sup> These examples are all from the October 18, 1914 issue of *Il Proletario*.

<sup>62</sup> *The Blast*, February 5 1916.



announcements of, for example, the above opera house performance, news on fundraisers for the *Cronaca Sovversiva* itself or requests to other readers.<sup>56</sup> One week, these bulletins included a request from a newly formed ‘Circolo di Studi di Sociali’ in Panama, Illinois for regular copies of different ‘subversive newspapers’ for them to discuss.<sup>57</sup> In another issue, bulletins ranged from procedural announcements such as that of a New Jersey group returning money some readers sent them for a special periodical issue on the Paris Commune (they did not receive enough funds to produce the issue) to a statement of solidarity with those involved in the Lawrence Textile Strike, including an announced 10-dollar donation to the Lawrence IWW.<sup>58</sup> Alongside the Bulletin, Subversive Notes would include reports on strike activity, festivals, operas and local cases of state repression, allowing readers to learn from one another and support others in need. The Subversive Notes were often more personal, but indicated readers shared a cause of spreading revolutionary propaganda. These were framed like brief articles, with readers presenting their own contributions to further the periodical’s mission of revolutionary propaganda. One letter, signed G. Sanchini of New Britain, Connecticut, noted the harsh daily work of propaganda, but ended on a positive note: ‘Let us persist with the same enthusiasm in our mission, which consists of impressing on the minds of the workers the spirit of rebellion against the existing order.’<sup>59</sup> After the Bulletin and Subversive Notes came a section titled Small Mail or Communications, which usually consisted of one to three sentences from each reader, allowing for more spontaneous debates, communications and light-hearted correspondence.

<sup>56</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, January 27, 1917.

<sup>57</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, December 19, 1908.

<sup>58</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, March 23, 1912.

<sup>59</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, September 15, 1915.

to Abate’s hand-engraved work to a photograph with a decorative, illustrated frame. The issue ended with a table of over 70 regicides between 1801 and 1907 and an essay by Souvarine on the ‘struggle for the ideal’ experienced by figures from philosopher and astronomer Giordano Bruno (who was burned at the stake in 1600) to anarchist martyrs such as Bresci, Caserio and Czolgosz.<sup>52</sup> Bringing together figures with different ideologies across history, all around the themes of resistance and martyrdom, was a fitting end for the special issue, itself a bricolage of art and writing condemning repression and celebrating regicide.



**Figure 3** Artwork of varied styles included in the 29 July 1907 special issue on Gaetano Bresci, an anarchist who assassinated King Umberto I of Italy.

Whether they discussed a philosopher like Bakunin or an assassin like Bresci, these biographical and historical issues were reflective and informative, bringing dozens of sources together to explore a topic from many angles to achieve greater nuance and detail than a single article would have provided. As with the rest of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, these special issues took manifold approaches to speak to certain themes, each article and piece of art saying more together than they would have on their own. Like the diverse features in regular issues, these comprehensive special issues enabled the periodical to become a reliable source of Italian-language information, not

<sup>52</sup> This may be the pseudonym of Giosuè Imperato if it is the same as the Souvarine that appeared in Paterson, NJ’s anarchist periodical, *L’era Nuova*. Souvarine was the name of an anarchist character in Émile Zola’s novel *Germinial*, so it’s also possible that someone else chose the same pseudonym. Andrea Panaccione, *May Day Celebration*, 82.

just on the ideas of one propagandist, but on a swath of radical thinkers, historical figures and political ideas.

When current events called for it, the paper would also devote a special issue to particularly controversial or exciting news. For example, after the execution of anarchist and educator Francisco Ferrer by the Spanish government, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* ran a full issue on his life and death, adjusting to allow space for exhaustive coverage of the provocative news (aside from half a page of back matter, the entire issue was focussed solely on Ferrer).<sup>53</sup> Exemplifying the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s ability to use thorough reporting as propaganda, the issue on Ferrer included details on his 'assassination' at the hands of the 'Spanish Inquisition' (a similar inversion to the 'execution' of Umberto I quoted above), a biography of Ferrer and a description of some of his educational philosophy and contributions, a list of names of those involved either directly in his death or in the prison where he was executed, graphic descriptions of torture methods used at the prison (including illustrations of testicular contortion and a torture helmet), an incisive critique of the Spanish state and church, and a call for mass protests and a general strike.

Backing up incendiary rhetoric with level-headed reports and philosophy, the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s articles could have easily instilled a passionate – and informed – radicalism within each reader. However, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* was more than a collection of anarchist thought to be consumed in a one-way relationship between writer and reader. The back matter of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, even if it appeared to be more mundane, allowed these individual readers to become a part of a growing social movement. The end of each regular issue of the *Cronaca Sovversiva* would consist of letters to the editor, reports from affiliated groups, calls to action, advertisements and a selection of mail-order texts in a library section. These sections illustrate

---

<sup>53</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, October 23, 1909.

the periodical's role in Italian radical communities and they are worth closer consideration.

A variety of recurring letters to the editor sections, such as a Bulletin, Subversive Notes and Small Mail, allowed readers to write in (either anonymously or with their names, pseudonyms or group names) with announcements/requests, political activity reports and general letters to the editor, respectively. The length of these letters sections varied from week to week, occupying between just a quarter of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*'s last page to spanning both the third and fourth pages. These sections included correspondence from, in order of frequency, many towns throughout the US Northeast, major cities and industrial centres throughout the US, and major cities in Canada, Europe and Africa. Other Italian-language radical weeklies in the region such as *Il Proletario* and *La Questione Sociale* included letters to the editor from many of the same cities. Each of these periodical's letters tended to cover different topics from different readers, with the exception of general announcements, which covered many of the same topics but with differing details. For example, the 10 January 1914 issue of *Il Proletario* included an unsigned letter noting a 31 January performance of an 'anticlerical drama' (Paolo Giacometti's 'La Morte Civile') at Barre, Vermont's opera house to benefit striking workers in Carrara, Italy.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, this same play is not mentioned in the *Cronaca Sovversiva* until two weeks later, in a letter signed V. D'Erasmus that included additional details (such as the costs of stall versus gallery seating) and listed a performance date of 24 January.<sup>55</sup>

Although the names of its letters sections changed over time, the *Cronaca Sovversiva* typically labelled announcements like this under the Bulletin section. There, groups and individuals wrote to the *Cronaca Sovversiva* to make general

---

<sup>54</sup> *Il Proletario*, January 10, 1914.

<sup>55</sup> *Cronaca Sovversiva*, January 24, 1914.