

Anarchism and Transnational Networks in North and South America

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REVIEW ESSAY / NOTE CRITIQUE

Anarchism and Transnational Networks in North and South America

Pietro Di Paola

Marcella Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890–1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2011)

Geoffroy de Laforcade and Kirwin Shaffer, eds., *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015)

Travis Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals: Italian Anarchists in Canada and the U.S., 1915–1940* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015)

Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015)

THE TRANSNATIONAL TURN IN LABOUR and migration studies has produced stimulating developments in the history of the anarchist and radical movements in the North and South Americas and has raised a considerable number of methodological and epistemological challenges, most of which are dealt with, or emerge, in Marcella Bencivenni, Travis Tomchuk and Kenyon Zimmer's works and in the collection of essays edited by Geoffroy de Laforcade, and Kirwin Shaffer.¹

1. For more on these historiographical developments see Constance Bantman and Bert Altena, eds., *Reassessing the Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2015); David Berry and Constance Bantman, eds., *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010). Davide Turcato, "Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement, 1885–1915," *International Review of Social History* 52, 3 (2007): 407–444.

A fundamental feature brought to light by transnational studies is the significance of the networks that cosmopolitan anarchist communities established across national borders and the role that political and economic migration played in their creation. At the same time, recent studies have challenged the view of an anarchist movement that radiated from Europe to other continents and have emphasized the role of native-born militants in the emergence and shaping of libertarian and radical movements in colonial and postcolonial countries.² These questions are central themes in Zimmer's and Tomchuk's monographs and in the essays collected by de Laforcade and Shaffer. In their works, Zimmer and Tomchuk discuss the impact of socio-economic conditions in the United States on Italian migrants and question whether militancy emerged as a reaction to harsh living conditions for migrants or if it was instead due to forms of politicization experienced before migration. The contributions presented in *In Defiance of Boundaries* show how the relationships between domestic and foreign anarchist movements in Latin America were also extremely variegated. Northern Peruvian anarchists not only engaged in class struggle but identified race as an equally significant aspect in their fight against capitalist exploitation in the sugar enclaves. They "appealed to and opened spaces in their movement for the region's Afro-Peruvians, Mestizos, *Zambos*, Asians and Indigenous inhabitants."³ On the contrary, the Panama Canal zone investigated by Shaffer "was entirely an immigrant anarchist endeavour in which anarchists operated as a completely foreign entity within a neocolonial context."⁴ An ulterior significant issue that has emerged in the studies on the transnational anarchist movement is the interconnection and interdependence between local experiences across national boundaries. This is a fundamental theme in most of the contributions presented in *In Defiance of Boundaries*, which deals with the relationship between local experiences in Latin America and how they were linked with other experiences across continents, and Tomchuk and Zimmer have also structured their research around specific places and towns that hosted organizational centres of anarchist groups in North America and Canada, bringing to light many similarities and differences between these areas of anarchist militancy.

2. Steven Hirsch and Lucien Van der Walt, eds., *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005).

3. Steven J. Hirsch, "Anarchist Visions of Race and Space in Northern Perú, 1898–1922," in Geoffroy de Laforcade and Kirwin Shaffer, eds., *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 275.

4. Kirwin Shaffer, "Panama Red: Anarchist Politics and Transnational Networks in the Panama Canal Zone, 1904–1913," in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 49.

Another key element in the investigation of transnational networks, which all these works have considered and analyzed, is the anarchist press. Newspapers served as organizational tools, propaganda vehicles, and cultural mediums. In an investigation into the organization, circulation, and themes developed by the Italian *sovversivi* radical press in the United States, Bencivenni notes that “newspapers represented the primary medium of communication” and provided an “essential transnational network of regular contacts and information for radical leaders, organizers and workers.”⁵ A thorough review of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) press in Latin America allows Anton Rosenthal to argue that this organization “was an international movement within syndicalism” that influenced workers across borders from Spain to Australia, and “a key instrument in the propagation of its ideas was a decentralized but well connected press in small and large cities throughout Latin America ... that was linked in a variety of ways to its predecessors in the United States and Australia.”⁶ It is therefore not surprising that one of the reasons behind the periodization chosen by Tomchuk for his examination of the transnational Italian anarchist movement in the United States – 1915 to 1940 – is that it matches the publication years of two rival newspapers that were key to the dissemination of anarchist activity and propaganda: the anarcho-syndicalist *Il Martello* and the anti-organizationalist *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*.⁷ Newspapers were also fundamental in the creation and diffusion of a radical counterculture transmitted between anarchist communities across continents. This counterculture not only contributed to keeping these communities together by creating and reinvigorating a shared identity, but also often informed militants’ political activities. In his investigation of cultural politics and Cuban anarchism, Shaffer emphasizes the role of the cultural struggle undertaken by the anarchists for shaping a new anarchist-defined Cuba in the decades after the independence. Shaffer argues that the anarchist movement should be looked at more as a “social movement” and less as part of the labour movement because “studies that focus on the culture of anarchism provide a more rounded view of the anarchists, their relationships, and their missions than traditional approaches that look at anarchists mostly as one segment of the labour movement involved in strikes and other labour actions.”⁸

5. Marcella Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890–1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 68.

6. Anton Rosenthal, “Moving between the Global and the Local: The Industrial Workers of the World and Their Press in Latin America,” in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 89.

7. Travis Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals: Italian Anarchists in Canada and the U.S.: 1915–1940* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

8. Kirwin Shaffer, “Rebel Soul: Cultural Politics and Cuban Anarchism, 1890s–1920s,” in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 158.

Marcella Bencivenni has demonstrated the fruitfulness of the cultural approach through her exhaustive and innovative analysis of Italian radical culture in the United States. Her monograph *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture* offers a significant contribution to the history of radicalism and Italian migration in the United States. Bencivenni moves from the study of political organizations and activism which has characterized the works over the last decade that rediscovered the significance of radicalism among Italian migrants in the US, to the cultural realm of the Italian American left.⁹ She argues that the *sovversivi* (the subversives) – socialists, anarchists, revolutionary syndicalists, anti-fascists, and communists – although politically divided and mutually hostile, shared common cultural traditions and ethical values. Through the investigation of the *sovversivi's* cultural production, the monograph aims to discover how Italian immigrants expressed their political beliefs and the ways in which this oppositional culture informed and sustained their activities.

Bencivenni's book is structured thematically in seven chapters. The first introduces the reader to Italian American radicalism from the emergence of class consciousness and the development of anarchist and socialist movements in post-unification Italy to their transplantation to the US through mass migration and the propaganda of political refugees. It then moves to the development of later organizations such as the Italian Socialist Federation and the Italian Labour Unions and, after World War I, the anti-Fascist movement and the Communist Party. The second chapter provides an overview of the social and cultural world of the *sovversivi*. It surveys the various institutions and leisure activities that were an integral part of their radical milieu and daily life: educational and social centres, clubs, evening schools, *Università Popolari*, dances, concerts, picnics, and ritual commemorations such as Labour Day or the anniversary of the Paris Commune. All these cultural venues were important for disseminating ideas and political messages among sympathizers outside of the workplace, while reinforcing solidarity and identity among militants.

The subsequent five chapters are the core of Bencivenni's research. Three of them focus on the press, on stage and theatre, and on literary works respectively. The last two chapters concentrate on individuals; investigating the life and the poetry of Arturo Giovannitti, one of the most charismatic figures of Italian American radicalism, and the powerful anti-Fascist satirical cartoons of labour organizer and artist Fort Velona. In addition to these main characters, Bencivenni's extensive research provides a vivid account of the richness

9. Philip V. Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer, eds., *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Michael Miller Topp, *Those Without a Country: The Political Culture of Italian American Syndicalists* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

and variety of the *sovversivi's* cultural production and resurrects the lives of several lesser-known radical writers and poets. Her examination of the “red” theatrical groups (*filodrammatiche*) and the subversive stage is particularly fascinating and innovative. Italian subversives across the world produced an impressive quantity of theatrical plays. Despite the widespread diffusion of amateur theatrical societies and the massive number of productions written by Italian American radical immigrants, the *filodrammatiche* and their performances have never been properly studied. As Bencivenni underlines, the “radical component of the Italian American stage has been completely ignored.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, in the United States as in the rest of the world, a great many of the scripts from these plays have been lost. Traces of titles and plot outlines emerge from social event programs or spies’ reports; other details are provided by occasional reviews in the radical press. Bencivenni’s analysis of this repertoire and its main themes – which mirrored those expressed in the *sovversivi* press: anti-clericalism, anti-nationalism, anti-militarism, social justice, and emancipation – together with a detailed investigation of the work of some playwrights, allows her to reveal how the *sovversivi* “used culture, literary traditions and their Italian heritage to bring their political message to the immigrant masses.”¹¹ Bencivenni analyses in detail the works of four authors – Riccardo Cordiferro, Arturo Giovannitti, Alberico Molinari, and Michele (Ludovico) Caminita – to explore how radical migrants addressed social and political issues. Cordiferro was a prolific writer concerned with the moral and political education of Italian workers. His plays foregrounded the immigrant experience and denounced the exploitation of migrants by the Italian bosses and the capitalist system. According to Bencivenni, Cordiferro’s success sprang from his ability to combine familiar traditional Italian values and themes with social criticism and the promotion of class and ethnic interests.¹² Giovannitti, by contrast, was more interested in the psychological investigation of human contradictions, exploring the dehumanizing effects of the brutality of war in his plays, for example. While Giovannitti was influenced by avant-garde authors such as Brecht, Ibsen, and Strindberg, the anarchist Caminita followed in the tradition of Zola’s and Flaubert’s naturalist novels to unveil the immorality and corruption of the bourgeois middle class. Molinari’s historical dramatization of the Haymarket Square events in Chicago and the execution of four anarchists popularized “the history of the Chicago Martyrs” among migrants, promoted unionization and reinforced a radical identity. Theatre also played a significant part in anti-Fascist propaganda during the 1920s and 1930s.

In her discussion of the Italian American radical stage Bencivenni touches upon a significant theme emerging in studies of political exile: the complex,

10. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 102.

11. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 107.

12. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 115.

and at times contradictory, relationship between political refugees and their homeland. The analysis of *sovversivi* plays reveals, for example, the persistence of traditional Italian values such as family and female virtue or the use of Christian symbols and their significance in the construction of an Italian identity. The fact that these plays were written and performed in Italian and that themes, characters, and audiences were Italian poses a number of questions about the kind of relationships that Italian radicals established with the labour movement in their host country. In this regard, a comparison with alternate experiences such as those presented by Zimmer, Tomchuk, and the essays collected by de Laforcade and Shaffer, is particularly productive.

Bencivenni's scrutiny of literary works including short novels and poetry is equally revealing of the *sovversivi* spirit and the aspiration for freedom and equality. Italian American radicals produced a rich artistic and literary culture which remains largely unexplored. Many authors' works were disseminated by radical newspapers and bulletins in the form of serialized novels, short dramas, dialogues, and poetry. The influence of naturalism and social realism (and Émile Zola in particular) and the educational role of literature appear in most of these works. Immigrant life, degradation and hardship, anti-militarism, universal love, solidarity, and unionism were some of the most common subjects. Anti-clericalism and satires of religious bigotry were also popular themes, although subversive authors made considerable use of religious allegories and symbolism.

Although the literary world was male-dominated, Bencivenni highlights some female authors, showing that women, whose contribution often remains "invisible," were not just present but an active part of the subversive movement. The poets Bellalma Forzato-Spezia and Virgilia D'Andrea are two examples. Forzato-Spezia's poems, published in the socialist newspaper *Il Proletario*, stressed the role of education in the struggle for emancipation. D'Andrea, a well-known figure in the anarchist movement of the 1920s and 1930s, merged revolutionary themes with personal and intimate feelings.

For Bencivenni, "the importance of Italian literary radicalism lies exactly in what is usually considered the major limitation of radical literature: the overt political message and social criticism it conveys."¹³ Bencivenni's research demonstrates the richness and importance of Italian immigrant subversive culture in the US. However, any investigation of the flows and transmission of this radical culture among subversives in other countries or the interchange across frontiers and continents does not appear in her research. Moreover, as the monograph highlights the strong connection that the *sovversivi* maintained with their motherland, it would have been interesting to explore to what extent and how these cultural works were received by their comrades in Italy.

In the final chapters of the book, two authors are examined in depth. Bencivenni first rescues from obscurity Arturo Giovannitti, a prolific writer

13. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 153.

and one of the most charismatic leaders of the anarchist movement in the US. Bencivenni offers a vivid biography of the trade unionist militant. She skillfully intertwines his poetry with the most significant periods and events of Giovannitti's political life: his arrival and settlement in New York in 1906, his gradual conversion from religion to socialism prompted by the spectacle of poverty and social inequality in the US, his anti-militarist stance, and his advocacy of revolutionary syndicalism. In 1912, Giovannitti played a prominent role in the organization of 14,000 textile workers in a major strike at Lawrence, Massachusetts, during which Giovannitti and two other militants, Joseph Ettor and Joseph Caruso, were charged with inciting violence and being accessories to the murder of Anna Lo Pizzo, a militant who had been killed on a picket line by an agent provocateur. The arrest of the three militants led to a transnational campaign of protest and solidarity. According to Bencivenni, Giovannitti's best literary phase coincides with the ten months of isolation in prison while he was awaiting trial. Inspired by his jail experience, Giovannitti wrote "his finest and most impassioned poems."¹⁴ For Giovannitti there was no distinction between art and politics. He considered art as a powerful means for advocating social change: political messages were an inherent and essential part of his poetry. As a consequence, when Giovannitti's later works became less effective this was due not to the politicization in itself, but rather to the opposite: Giovannitti's literary writings were less successful once he became politically disillusioned following a series of reverses: the defeat of a major strike in Paterson, New Jersey, the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the apparently irresistible rise of Fascism.

In her last chapter, Bencivenni investigates a strong and fierce opponent of Fascism: the socialist cartoonist Fort Valona. Despite his extensive contributions to the radical press, Valona remains an almost unknown figure. In his dramatic cartoons, he attacked and satirized the Fascist regime from the 1920s until the end of World War II. He denounced Fascist repression, violence, terror, war, and corruption. Valona's satire countered Fascist propaganda in Italian communities abroad which had been extremely successful in its depictions of anti-Fascists as anti-patriotic and un-Italian. Valona followed the development of Fascism, denounced its repressive and totalitarian character and attacked the Vatican and the monarchy for collusion with the regime. Supported by a selection of engaging reproductions of Valona's cartoons, Bencivenni analyzes his subjects and drawing techniques. She identifies four main themes in his works: Mussolini's dictatorship, Fascist demagoguery, corruption, and imperialism. To demystify the myth of Mussolini and the glorification of the Duce, Valona used the same techniques used by Fascist propaganda in representations of Mussolini, to great effect. For example, Valona emphasized the Duce's virility and masculinity as a means of revealing

14. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 174.

his savagery and brutality. The visual analysis of Valona's cartoons offers a considerable and original insight into anti-Fascist culture and politics.

Bencivenni's groundbreaking work raises a number of questions. Her monograph covers a long chronological framework spanning from the 1890s to the emergence of Fascism and the outbreak of World War II. Although the author touches on the issue, her investigation does not address how the production of this counterculture changed over the years in relation to profound transformations in the political context or how this culture was transmitted across different generations. Bencivenni's decision to look at the *sovversivi* as a whole means that dissimilarities, which can be equally significant, have been overlooked. If the *sovversivi* culture was a product of their ideas but also shaped and informed their political actions, it would have been beneficial to look at cultural differences between the various groups, or point to some of them at least. This is not to restate the traditional divisions on the left, but to reinforce the significance of studying its cultural production and "the reciprocal interaction between cultural values and political ideologies."¹⁵ A significant point emerging from Bencivenni's research is the strong links that radical migrants maintained with their motherland. The book provides many examples of the ways in which the *sovversivi* were influenced by their cultural and political connections to Italy. However, cultural exchanges were multidirectional: newspapers, one of the main means of the production and dissemination of subversive culture, were distributed from the US to Italy and across the Atlantic. The flow of information, finance, and cultural production was incessant. Moreover, as noted in the book, between 1900 and 1920 half of Italian migrants repatriated.¹⁶ Therefore, it would be equally significant to understand how the cultural production of Italian American subversives reverberated in Italy and the mutual influences between subversives in the US and those in the motherland. Similarly, there is the issue of cultural exchange with subversives of other nationalities, a point that the book does not properly address. The predominant use of the Italian language, which Bencivenni notes several times, underlines the fact that the subversives targeted an Italian-speaking audience. Nevertheless, contacts between different national groups besides ritual annual celebrations were not unusual, as emerges in Zimmer's book; for example, during transnational campaigns such as those in support of Ettore Giovannitti, against the execution of Francisco Ferrer, or in support of Sacco and Vanzetti. Cultural and political messages were also transmitted through the use of a "universal" language such as music, which played a significant role at many of the social events organized by the *sovversivi*. One should not underestimate the role of translations, from and into Italian, an area that is completely unexplored. It is well-known that some more "political" works, such as Malatesta's dialogues *Fra Contadini* and *Al Caff *, have been

15. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 223.

16. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture*, 19.

translated into dozens of different languages. It would be of great interest to consider translations of other forms of cultural production, for example Pietro Gori's plays, which were also staged by non-Italian speaking anarchists. Given this, one wonders if the world of the Italian subversives was as self-contained as it may appear from reading Bencivenni's book.

However, even if Bencivenni focuses exclusively on Italian American radicals, her work represents an invaluable asset for studies in transnational radicalism – both methodologically and for its content. The institutions, leisure activities, and the counterculture that Bencivenni has examined also developed in cosmopolitan communities of radical migrants in other countries. Indeed, this oppositional culture was the main glue holding together the radical networks that migrants and exiles established across continents. By reading this monograph, scholars working on the transnational history of labour movements will find numerous and useful elements for comparison, as well as inspiration for further areas of enquiry.

Italian radicals are also the focus of two other works that explore the role of migration to the US in the development of the anarchist movement: Kenyon Zimmer's *Immigrants Against the State* and Travis Tomchuk's *Transnational Radicals*.¹⁷

Immigrants Against the State engages with the most recent developments of transnationalism in the study of the anarchist movement. Zimmer offers a detailed and extremely well-informed account of the Yiddish and Italian anarchist movements in the US from the second half of the 19th century to the end of World War II. Italians and Eastern European Jews were two of the largest national migrant groups in the US and formed two of the strongest sectors of the US anarchist movement. This book, as its author states, “explores the history of anarchism from the perspective of migration history.”¹⁸ In this way, Zimmer places under discussion a long-lasting paradigm in the history of the anarchist movement in the US. Traditionally, the anarchist movement in the US has been divided between a “domestic” tradition – mainly represented by individualist anarchists (Josiah Warren, Benjamin Tucker) – and a more combative and militant side imported by European migrants and political refugees.¹⁹ Without undervaluing the role that anarchist refugees played in shaping the movement, Zimmer argues that the majority of anarchist militants were migrants who became politicized only after their arrival in the United States as a response to the harshness of their lives: “American conditions rather than European ones produced the American anarchist movement.”²⁰

17. Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals*.

18. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 2.

19. George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 428; Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 496–503.

20. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 2.

The book focuses on three anarchist strongholds and their transnational connections. It intends not to be comparative; “but an entangled and interethnic history of mutual influences and multilateral connections.”²¹ The first half of the book traces different paths to immigrant radicalization and investigates how anarchism took distinctive forms in each of the locations considered: in New York, focusing on Jewish anarchists; in Paterson, a stronghold of Italian anarchists; and in San Francisco where a more cosmopolitan anarchist community materialized. In the second half, the stories of these three anarchist centres are linked together by an examination of militants’ reactions to national and international events.

The chapter on New York offers a fascinating overview of the rise of the Yiddish anarchist movement and, at the same time, engages with a number of topical issues in relation to the transnational social history of anarchism. Zimmer examines the cultural and ideological roots of the movement. Jewish immigrants to the US came from Russia, Romania, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire; a large number had already been involved in Eastern European radical circles. However, according to Zimmer, Jewish radicalism “was, by and large, American-made.”²² Radical Jews in New York were deeply influenced by the neighbouring German anarchist community, particularly by its newspaper *Freiheit* and its editor, the charismatic and powerful orator Johann Most. The Haymarket affair and the conviction of the Chicago anarchists had a great emotional and political impact which led to the organization of the first exclusively Jewish group in the US or beyond, the Pioneers of Liberty, in October 1866. The role of German anarchist refugees in contributing to the emergence of the Jewish anarchist movement is paradigmatic of the significance of exile in shaping the anarchist movement across continents. Moreover, the fact that most Yiddish anarchist materials circulating in the US at the end of the 19th century were produced in London, the “spiritual centre” of Jewish anarchism, underlines the importance of trans-local and transnational networks. The chapter also deals with two other complex and fascinating questions: religion and Jewish identity. Zimmer investigates the anti-religious activism of the anarchists and their attempt to develop alternative and competing ideas of Jewishness and replace “religious bonds with ideological ones.”²³ Zimmer highlights another limit and substantial paradox of the movement, which links language, culture, and cosmopolitanism. The Yiddish anarchist movement was constrained by the geographical limits of the Jewish settlement and by the Yiddish language. Yiddish anarchists could build relations outside the Jewish ghetto only by abandoning their language, but that would have shattered the cultural and institutional base of their movement.

21. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 3.

22. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 19.

23. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 26.

The second chapter reconstructs the history of the Italian anarchist community in Paterson, New Jersey, showing the interrelation between economic and political migration. The great majority of migrants came from Northern Italy and were employed as wool and silk weavers. The fact that most of them came from Piedmont and in particular from the industrial textile town of Biella, prompts reflection on the relevance of combining trans-local and transnational perspectives. Family and chain economic migration were interwoven with political exile. The first Italian anarchists who reached Paterson were either looking for new labour opportunities or escaping persecution. They established transoceanic circuits that facilitated migration from other regions of Italy. Zimmer's investigation underlines the significance of newspapers, such as *La Cronaca Sovversiva*, in the creation of transnational networks. It is notable that most of the first editors of the newspaper – Agresti, Gori, Milano, and Malatesta – came from London, another nodal point in the anarchist movement's transnational networks. The chapter deals with the deep internal divisions of the movement and the harsh confrontations between the organizationalists and anti-organizationalists (a division that was not confined to Paterson or the US) and their contrasting views on the role of organization and violence in the revolutionary movement. As in the chapter on the Yiddish anarchist movement, Zimmer pays close attention to the cultural production of the anarchists and its role not only in disseminating radical ideas but also in creating a sense of common identity in a fragmented community. Zimmer's analysis of the anarchists' approach to questions of race and nationality, an issue that is attracting increasing attention in transnational studies of anarchism, is of particular interest. Unlike the experience in Egypt, where Italian anarchists apparently maintained a "Western" colonialist attitude towards the native population,²⁴ Italian anarchists in Paterson denounced the racial discrimination of Blacks and other minorities, "extolled the virtues of Native Americans, Asians, Africans, Arabs, Jews, and all the races of 'colours,'" and promoted the concept of "race as an arbitrary concept and historical notion" against the concept of race as "a notion of natural science."²⁵

The composition of the anarchist movement in San Francisco that hosted the "most diverse and cosmopolitan local anarchist movement in the country" was more multifaceted.²⁶ A pan-ethnic movement composed of Italian, French, and Spanish-speaking anarchists established links with Asian, Russian, and Eastern European revolutionary groups. The variety of the movement is reflected in the high number of newspapers published in several languages. One point to emphasize, in comparison with the experience in other localities, is the publication of multi-language newspapers such as *Cogito Ergo Sum*,

24. Costantino Paonessa, "Anarchici e colonialismo. Gli anarchici italiani in Egitto (1860–1914)," *Studi Storici* 2, (2017).

25. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 72.

26. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 88.

which published material in French, Spanish, and Italian, or *Kakumei* where resources appeared in Japanese and English. The cosmopolitan nature of the movement in San Francisco was enriched by the presence of Japanese, Indian, and Yiddish-speaking organizations. This cosmopolitanism emerged because there was no dominant racial or national group and the city's diversity and mixed neighbourhoods "meant that multiethnic alliances were both easy to forge and necessary to sustain radical activity."²⁷ However, one wonders if these are the sole or sufficient reasons for the emerging of a radical community in which cosmopolitanism became an everyday practice. There is some debate about the extent to which the various national anarchist groups abroad mingled and collaborated or if "nationality" remained at the core of the structure of anarchist refugee communities.²⁸ It would have been stimulating to have some more engagement and discussion of the reasons for the emergence of such a cosmopolitan radical community and its dynamics, to contrast and compare it with other locations where this interrelatedness between different national groups did not take place.

The second half of the book deals more directly with transnational campaigns and the impact of international events on the Italian and Jewish anarchist movements: World War I, the Russian Revolution, the Red Scare, and the wave of persecutions. As with previous chapters, these pages are full of valuable information and detail which enlighten about the mechanisms and the transnational nature of the anarchist movement. Zimmer investigates the links and contributions that anarchists from the US gave to the movement in other parts of the world: in Russia at the beginning of the 19th century and in Japan, to the anti-colonial movements, and to the Mexican revolution. As was the case in Europe, the outbreak of World War I also caused deep division within the movement in the United States. After the brief illusion sparked by the Russian Revolution, anarchists faced worsening state repression during the Red Scare, which led to a number of deportations, including that of prominent figures like Alexander Berkman, Luigi Galleani, and Emma Goldman. These factors led to a period of crisis in the 1920s; Italian and Yiddish anarchists faced competition from the emerging Communist Party and Zionism and, moreover, Italian anarchists faced the growing threat of Fascism. Zimmer ends his book focusing on the Spanish Civil War, which gave an impetus of activism to the anarchist movement throughout the US. Anarchist organizations joined in the United Libertarian Organizations (ULO) and dedicated themselves to sending funds and supplies to support the efforts of their comrades in the Spanish *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo – Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (CNT-FAI). The semi-monthly newspaper of the ULO, *Spanish Revolution*, became one of the most popular English language anarchist papers in US

27. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 88.

28. Constance Bantman, "Internationalism without an International? Cross-Channel Anarchist Networks, 1880–1914," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 84, 4 (2006): 961–981.

history. However, these efforts crumbled after the Communists took control of the Spanish Republic in 1937 and “between the May Days and Franco’s final victory in early 1939, anarchism in America collapsed as a mass movement.”²⁹

In his introduction, Zimmer defines anarchism as a “movement *in* movement” which was, at the same time, composed of overlapping groups and networks: a “movement of movements.”³⁰ This definition reveals the challenges inherent in studying anarchism from a transnational perspective. Zimmer’s book is based on extensive and detailed archival research which provides substantial information on biographical details, publications, and anarchist activities, and his work outlines the significance of recent developments in transnational studies of the anarchist movement. However, at the same time, it is an example of the problematics and the methodological difficulties of this approach. The author does not find a way to cut the innumerable threads from the US: to underline the transnational links of the movement, he follows the personal trajectories of militants and their involvement in political activities outside the US: in the Makhnovist movement during the Russian Civil War, in the Mexican and Spanish revolutions. But this is not always necessary or helpful. At times the amount of detail can be overwhelming. Particularly in the second half, the book lacks coherence and focus and the reader can easily lose a sense of the historical context as the author shifts suddenly from one geographical area and chronological period to another. Nevertheless, Zimmer’s meticulous research and fascinating reconstruction of Jewish and Italian anarchist communities makes a valuable and long-lasting contribution to the transnational history of the anarchist movement in the United States.

Another publication that reconstructs the history of Italian anarchists in the US is Travis Tomchuk’s monograph *Transnational Radicals*. Tomchuk focuses his investigation on six cities in Canada and the US: Sault Sainte Marie, Toronto, Windsor, Detroit, Newark and New York. Tomchuk emphasizes that the presence of anarchists in Canada was limited to small groups which, if considered within Canadian national boundaries, would appear historically insignificant. However, this perspective changes completely once it is recognized that “these small groups based in Canada were part of a much larger transnational movement.”³¹ Tomchuk’s research is based on a good variety of archival sources which include some oral interviews and he explores fascinating and contradictory features of the Italian anarchist movement in the US. The first two chapters are the more descriptive and, to some extent, less original; the first provides a broad synthesis of anarchist ideas and an overview of the development of the anarchist movement in Italy from unification in 1861 to the rise of Fascism in 1922. The chapter covers a long and historically intense period; therefore, it is necessarily generic and, at times, inaccurate. Similarly,

29. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 204.

30. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 2.

31. Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals*, 2.

in the overview of the history of Italian anarchists, the author defines Carlo Cafiero and Emilio Covelli as “anti-organizationalist,”³² which is questionable. Later in the book the same definition is used to describe Luigi Fabbri and Luigi Bertoni who can hardly be defined as anti-organizationalists.³³ Anarcho-Communist organizationalists were one of the most influential strains of the anarchist movement in Italy, though this is not mentioned in the chapter’s conclusion and it is also debatable to argue that “individualism had an insignificant presence” in Italy.³⁴ Overall, we may consider whether, in the general economy of the book, this chapter was necessary. The second chapter is more relevant because it provides an overview of migration patterns from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries and addresses the impact of living conditions in the US, including racial discrimination, on the politicization of migrants. The author provides some interesting details on the regional provenance of economic and political migrants and their motivations for leaving Italy. In the following chapter, Tomchuk engages directly with the experience of the anarchists in the US, offering a review of anarchist cultural production and, in particular, of two newspapers, the anarcho-syndicalist *Il Martello* and the anti-organizationalist *L’Adunata dei Refrattari*. This chapter offers valuable information about their composition, the different ways in which they were distributed, their circulation and the main themes addressed in their pages. *L’Adunata dei Refrattari* privileged international news, while *Il Martello* placed greater emphasis on local reporting. It would have been interesting to have more detail on the reasons for these differences and how they may have been related to differing ideologies and militant activities performed by the two groups. The author underlines that the back pages were usually dedicated to advertising social and cultural events around the US and publishing lists of subscriptions and donations from readers. The lists of subscribers provided their names, the locations they lived in, the amount of money they sent – offering a good deal of useful information regarding the networks established by the newspapers. This source could have been exploited more thoroughly in order to provide a detailed geographical map of the distribution and networks of *Il Martello* and *L’Adunata dei Refrattari* inside and outside the US. In the chapter on anarchist identity formation an engagement with the question of gender, the ideas of anarchist motherhood, and the debate on mothers’ roles in the political education of children is interesting. As also emerges in Bencivenni’s and Zimmer’s work, Tomchuk emphasizes the male-dominated nature of the Italian anarchist movement and the difficulties for women to find space in the movement. Women’s militancy was often confined to domestic roles: motherhood and the education of children was considered a potentially revolutionary role in forging a new generation of anarchists and fighting patriarchy. The fact

32. Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals*, 45.

33. Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals*, 86.

34. Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals*, 21.

that women were “invisible”³⁵ even to their male comrades does not mean that they were not present or they did not exert any influence. Tomchuk dedicates some pages to Virgilia D’Andrea, a notable exception to this male dominance. Hopefully, more research will release rank-and-file anarchist women from their invisibility. Another interesting point investigated in the chapter is the complex and multifaceted question of racial, local, and national identity and how the experience as migrants may have led many militants to “discover their ‘Italianness.’”³⁶ The links that militants abroad maintained with the motherland and the significance of a “national identity” for militants who professed internationalism are indeed central issues in the studies of the transnational movement of anarchism.³⁷ In this regard it would be fascinating to explore how the anarchists elaborated and promoted alternative ideas of *Italianità*, for example during colonial enterprises in Libya or in countering the nationalism disseminated by Fascist organizations abroad during the regime.

In the last part of the book, Tomchuk investigates in detail two aspects of the history of the movement. The fifth chapter is dedicated to the disputes between the two main figures in the Italian anarchist movement of the 1920s and 1930s in the US, the anti-organizationalist Luigi Galleani and the anarcho-syndicalist Carlo Tresca, editors of the two most important anarchist newspapers in the US: *L’Adunata dei Refrattari* and *Il Martello*. Tomchuk reconstructs the life and activities of these two major figures and the controversies and polemics that emerged between the groups they led, underlining – in contrast with Pernicone – that militants were not necessarily dogmatic and that individual militancy could be much more fluid and anarchists on both sides more willing to collaborate with others, for example in anti-Fascist activities.³⁸ The other detailed investigation is the struggle against the deportation of two militants, Attilio Bortolotti and Agostina Confalonieri, in 1939. The reconstruction of their arrest and the campaign to stop their deportation to Fascist Italy is particularly helpful in understanding the dynamics of transnational connections, and the trajectories and strategies individual militants took to clandestinely enter the United States with the help of anarchists both in Canada and in Europe. The book reflects its original form as a doctoral dissertation and would have benefited from some more thoughtful revision of its structure and also from some careful proofreading of the names of Italian localities. Despite some shortcomings, Tomchuk’s monograph offers a helpful contribution to the history of Italian anarchism and to the studies of the anarchist movement in Canada and the United States.

35. See also Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution*, 139–175.

36. Tomchuk, *Transnational Radicals*, 108.

37. Pietro Di Paola, “The Game of the Goose’ Italian Anarchism: Transnational, National or Local Perspective?” in Bantman and Alena, *Reassessing the Transnational Turn*, 118–138.

38. See Nunzio Pernicone, *Carlo Tresca. Portrait of a Rebel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

The thirteen essays collected by Geoffroy de Laforcade and Kirwin Shaffer in *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History*, which includes an epilogue by José Moya, show the current vitality of studies on radicalism in the Americas.³⁹

One of the main purposes of this book is to explore how local experiences in South America and the Caribbean were linked and interconnected with others across national boundaries. In this way, while “historians continue to find value in nationally focused studies,” the emergence of subnational and transnational perspectives has greatly expanded our understanding.⁴⁰ Moreover, the contributors are “concerned with the extent to which local, national, transnational solidarities embodied oppositional or countercultural practices and meanings” and how libertarian ideas were put into practice to defend workers and were “resisting – rather than forging – the modern state.”⁴¹ The collection enlarges the geographical focus from traditional areas such as Argentina and Mexico. It offers a view of the movement throughout the continent and, in so doing, highlights its diversities, similarities and interconnectedness. The collection includes studies on Cuba, Puerto Rico, Peru, Panama, Uruguay, Brazil, Costa Rica and Chile. The variety of geographical areas considered parallels the variety of methodological approaches and themes developed in the essays, making this publication particularly rich and inspiring.

The book is divided into three main sections that engage with the most current fields of research in the transnational history of anarchism: networks and international solidarity, cultural and counter-hegemonic movements, identity, and gender. This edited collection addresses other significant issues and investigates the impact of colonialism and postcolonialism on the anarchist movement and the emergence of specific and alternative forms of anarchism outside Europe.

The first section of the book focuses on the organization and structure of transnational networks in the Caribbean area. Evan Daniel explores the links between labour organizations and investigates how anarchist tobacco workers in Havana, Key West and Ybor City were involved in the struggle for Cuban independence against Spain between the 1850s and 1890s. The chapter underlines some significant differences in their relationships with the separatist movement between the anarchists in Florida and those in Cuba, and it underlines how anarchist participation was a consequence of the emergence of anarcho-collectivism in the area but was equally dependent on strategic

39. De Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*.

40. De Laforcade and Shaffer, “Introduction: The Hidden Story Line of Anarchism in Latin American History,” *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 18.

41. De Laforcade and Shaffer, “Introduction,” *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 5.

changes in the separatist movement and its shifting attitude towards the labour movement.⁴²

Kirwin Shaffer's contribution focuses on the Panama Canal Zone between 1904 and 1913. Here, Spanish and other migrant anarchists constructed a network that spread from Cuba to Spain.⁴³ The Panama case offers a number of interesting peculiarities. One of the most significant is that there was not an anarchist movement in the Canal Zone: the anarchist movement was formed exclusively by foreign militants. This affected the nature of their militancy and the extent of their reliance on transnational networks. Aware of the transitory nature of their presence, the militants focused on raising consciousness among the workforce in the Canal Zone. They developed short-term projects with long-term ramifications, such as the establishment of newspapers and printing presses. Another interesting point raised in the chapter is the role that individuals played in the construction of these networks, but also in disrupting them, a not unusual occurrence. This is exemplified by the case of M.D. Rodrigues, who developed the first anarchist periodical in the area but who, because the number of polemics and confrontations that he ignited, also contributed to undermining the anarchist cause. Another interesting point the chapter touches upon is how the anarchists were compelled to deal with the issue of race, since the Spanish, Italians, and Cubans were considered to be semi-white and racially discriminated against.

In reviewing the press of the Industrial Workers of the World, Anton Rosenthal draws a map of the presence and activities of the organization. While the IWW was especially well-rooted in Chile and Mexico, it spread its activities across other areas such as Montevideo, Peru, and Ecuador. The IWW in South America was remarkable "for its breadth" and "its longevity" and for its effectiveness in "creating spaces of resistance to capitalism" and in "promoting alternative forms of social progress." The author underlines IWW links with the anarchist movement, contributions that have "consistently been marginalized or ignored" by the history of anarchism.⁴⁴

In the last contribution of the section, James Baer analyses the links and interconnectedness between the anarchist movements in Argentina and Spain. Many Argentinean militants went to Spain to fight during the Spanish revolution and the civil war. After the defeat of the Republic in 1939, Argentine anarchists were deeply involved in efforts to repatriate compatriots and to help

42. Evan Matthew Daniel, "Cuban Cigar Makers in Havana, Key West, and Ybor City, 1850s–1890s: A Single Universe?" in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 25–47.

43. Shaffer, "Panama Red," 48–71.

44. Anton Rosenthal, "Moving Between the Global and the Local," in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 90. An exception to this are the works by Salvatore Salerno. See Salvatore Salerno, "No God, No Master: Italian Anarchists and the Industrial Workers of the World," in Cannistraro and Meyer, eds., *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism*, 171–188.

refugees escaping from Spain. Baer underlines the close ties between the two movements and how the interaction of militants between the two countries led to mutual influences, with a significant impact on both movements.⁴⁵

The central section of the book, which focuses on labour and culture, offers other innovative and captivating essays. Lars Peterson sheds light on the anarchist movement in Uruguay, focusing on the support that part of the anarchists gave to the reformist populist prime minister, José Battle y Ordóñez, during his re-election campaign. The essay analyzes how “the state colonized anarchism” and how the faction of “*anarcho-batllismo*” developed in 1910 with the aim of supporting and radicalizing labour reforms. The chapter engages with the question of reform and the conundrum that labour movements often faced between immediate limited improvements and systemic revolutionary changes.⁴⁶

In her contribution, Beatriz Ana Loner provides an overview of 50 years of anarchism in Rio Grande do Sul, a region in which anarchist ideas penetrated more strongly and for a longer period than in other parts of Brazil. The significance of the region is amplified by its proximity to the borders of Uruguay and Argentina, which facilitated exchanges and communication with anarchists in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.⁴⁷ Geoffrey de Laforcade provides an illuminating analysis of the 1956–57 shipyard workers’ strike in Buenos Aires. His study unveils the fascinating seat of anarcho-syndicalist ideas and of local and traditional culture in the barrio of La Boca del Riachuelo, and how this rootedness informed the epic struggles of waterfront workers in 1956–57: a struggle that was also “the response of that community to the erosion of its traditional social fabric.”⁴⁸ De Laforcade’s investigation highlights the importance that “spatial localities” had in working-class struggles and, consequently, the significance that transnational influences had on local experiences: “Argentine anarchism translated the practices, language, and modes of identification of a European ideology transmitted by immigrant workers into a novel ‘autochthonous’ discourse of myth and belonging, blending class and popular identities by rooting their militancy in local settings and oppositional movements.”⁴⁹ The question of “national identity” is a central theme in David Diaz-Arias’s

45. James Boer, “The FACA and the FAI: Argentine Anarchists and the Revolution in Spain: 1930–1939,” in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 95–116.

46. Lars Peterson, “From Anarchists to ‘Anarcho-Batllistas’: Populism and Labour Legislation in Uruguay,” in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 117–141.

47. Beatriz Ana Loner, “From Workers’ Militancy to Cultural Action: Brazilian Anarchism in Rio Grande do Sul, 1890s–1940s,” in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 162–184.

48. Geoffrey de Laforcade, “Memories and Temporalities of Anarchist Resistance: Community Traditions, Labor Insurgencies, and Argentine Shipyard Workers, Early 1900s to Late 1950s,” in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 188.

49. De Laforcade, “Memories and Temporalities of Anarchist Resistance,” 211.

contribution which investigates the concepts of nations and nationalism among young intellectuals, anarchist, or anarchist sympathizers in Costa Rica; and how they were unable to develop an alternative view to the construction of a new national identity elaborated by liberal politicians between 1900 and 1914 and therefore lost their radicalism and were subsequently subsumed into the national discourse.⁵⁰

Shawn England focuses on Ricardo Flores Magon and the Mexican Liberal Party during the Mexican revolution. *Magonismo*, the revolutionary philosophy that best articulated Magon's goals, "was a unique synthesis of European anarchist thought and an idealized – or imagined – conceptualization of indigenous cultural patterns of agrarian Mexico."⁵¹ The chapter underlines how the Mexican anarchists developed a strong connection with the rural indigenous population and its struggles for local autonomy. Overall, the chapter re-evaluates the lasting influence of Magon and the Mexican Liberal Party on Mexican politics.

The issue of race in Northern Peru is examined by Steven Hirsch, who reconstructs the ways in which the anarchists there opposed the increasing political influence and power of sugar planters in the first two decades of the 20th century. Through a communication network that linked coastal urban centres with rural towns, the anarchist press attacked planters not only for exploiting the indigenous labour force but also for attempting to exert a total control over social relations and the distribution of resources in their enclaves. In this struggle, the anarchists collaborated with the pro-Indigenous rights movement.⁵²

Raymond Craib's consideration of Casimiro Barrios's expulsion from Chile challenges the myth carefully constructed by the Chilean authorities that political opposition, and particularly anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, was of foreign importation. Indeed, as is the case with many other migrants, at the time of his expulsion Barrios was well rooted in Chilean society.⁵³

The last contribution by Laura Fernández Cordero addresses the issue of gender relations in the anarchist movement and the sexual question. Cordero not only underlines the lack of proper study on pro-emancipation women in the anarchist movement in Argentina but also questions the ways in which the historiography has generally considered the relationship between anarchism

50. David Díaz-Arias, "From Radicals to Heroes of the Republic: Anarchism and National Identity in Costa Rica, 1900-1977," in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 219–242.

51. Shawn England, "Magonismo, the Revolution, and the Anarchist Appropriation of an Imagined Mexican Indigenous Identity," in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 243–260.

52. Hirsch, "Anarchist Visions of Race and Space in Northern Perú" 261–280.

53. Raymond Craib, "Anarchists and Alterity: The Expulsion of Casimiro Barrios from Chile, 1920," in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 281–301.

and the discourse of women's emancipation.⁵⁴ Cordero analyzes, among other newspapers, two major publications issued by anarchist women in Argentina: *La Voz de la Mujer* (1896) and *Nuestra Tribuna* (1922). For Cordero, the sexual question was a central issue in the wider debate on the women question in the anarchist movement. Tensions with male comrades were not exclusively caused by their gender but, more importantly, by their political opinions. Cordero identifies "the sexual question as a central, constitutive dimension of anarchist ideology," on the same level with anti-statism and anti-militarism.⁵⁵

This collection of thirteen essays offers a fascinating overview of the richness and the diversity of the anarchist movement in Latin America. The contributions raise a broad range of questions: on the origins of the anarchist movement outside Europe, on anarchist relationships with independent movements and indigenous populations, and their production of an alternative counterculture, which will inspire further works not just on Latin America.

Together with Bencivenni's, Zimmer's, and Tomchuk's books, this publication bears witness to the vitality of current studies on the anarchist movement in the Americas and beyond. The transnational turn in anarchist studies has produced many original works and has opened new areas of research and new challenges. One of these is to break disciplinary boundaries and make the studies on the anarchist movement more interdisciplinary and open to scholars from other areas. The works reviewed here have stressed the significance of the anarchist press; several studies have appeared on anarchist newspapers and the role they played in the construction of transnational anarchist networks. Confronting and engaging with scholars on media and mainstream print history may open new horizons and different scales of analysis. Equally, the production of a counterculture is a paramount element for a proper understanding of the anarchist and radical movements and there are many areas that remain to be explored within the broader context of cultural studies. Finally, there is the issue of including the history of anarchism in colonial and postcolonial studies, as many of the contributions in the collection edited by de Laforcade and Shaffer prompt us to do.

54. Laura Fernández Cordero, "The Anarchist Wager of Sexual Emancipation in Argentina, 1900-1930," in de Laforcade and Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries*, 302-325.

55. Cordero, "The Anarchist Wager of Sexual Emancipation in Argentina," 322.