

## REVIEWS

Agustín Comotto, *The Weight of the Stars: The Life of Anarchist Octavio Alberola*, translated by Paul Sharkey

Chico: AK Press, 2022; 348pp; ISBN 9781849354080

This book follows the trajectory of one of the most remarkable figures of the international anarchist movement after the Spanish Civil War, Octavio Alberola. Born in 1928 in Minorca to an anarchist family, he witnessed the revolution and the civil war as a child, subsequently fleeing to exile in Mexico. Active in Mexico City's libertarian student movement in the 1950s, he moved to Europe and thrust himself into the anti-Franco struggle. Alberola and his comrades animated the Defensa Interior groups and their offshoots in the 1960s. They carried out a string of non-lethal bomb attacks and kidnappings that put the anarchist movement back on the scene. The Spanish Transition disappointed Alberola and his comrades, but it did not dent their fighting spirit. Alberola is still involved in different social movements up to this day.

Agustín Comotto has written an engaging book about Alberola – one that lies halfway between biography and autobiography, as it includes long passages of the informal interviews he conducted with the veteran anarchist. These passages are interspersed with perceptive analyses of the historical context. Comotto, however, refrains from drawing major conclusions, limiting himself to transmitting Alberola's account and providing context. Alberola's own narrative, in turn, is largely descriptive and, overall, it did not strike me as particularly profound.

The reader, however, can draw some important observations from his story. His life serves as a window into different overlapping realities: Spanish anarchist exile, the anti-Franco struggle, and, more generally, the revolutionary phase of the long 1960s and their painful aftermath. Spanish anarchist exiles became sharply divided between the established leadership of the National Confederation of Labour in Toulouse, with a passive, conservative attitude, and a more combative tendency around a younger generation supported by some older radicals such as Cipriano Mera and Juan García Oliver, who were re-energised by the example of Defensa Interior. While the struggle of Alberola and his comrades was heroic, it was also quixotic. The background to Alberola's

account is the inexorable displacement of the anarchist movement by the Spanish Communist Party and other competing forces that came to dominate the anti-Franco struggle. The militant tactics of the handful of youngsters in fact reveal the incapacity, or unwillingness, of many anarchists to embark on the long-term task of building trade unions, strengthening their press, training cadres, and leading social protest, endeavours that were less dazzling than throwing bombs, but were more rewarding politically, as the communist example reveals.

The Spanish anarchist movement in the 1960s was propelled by the revolutionary wave of the epoch. Its partial re-emergence in these years owed to the relative exhaustion of Stalinism and the Soviet model, which also provided fertile ground to dissident Marxists. Events outside Europe, namely the anti-colonial struggles, the Cuban and Chinese Revolutions, and the Vietnam War were all important sources of renewal for the left, including for its libertarian strand. The spirit of 1968 created new opportunities for revolutionary movements. But that window of opportunity shut quickly, as shown by Alberola's trajectory. In the 1970s, many movements veered towards the armed struggle or reverted to cultural activism, two themes that feature in the book, as does the repressive response of the state, which cracked down viciously on dissident movements. Alberola was persecuted by the Mexican, Spanish, Belgian, Italian, and French states. This was an epoch of defeat. The lack of popular roots, the scarcity of cadres, and an idealism that was not matched by organisation meant that the revolutionary forces unleashed in 1968 came crashing down as social agitation began to ebb.

A further point of interest of the book regards the subjective dimension of revolutionary struggle. Alberola devotes long passages to how politics shaped his personal life. The decision to fight for revolution in Europe leaving two families behind in Mexico can be seen as a sacrifice for a cause greater than the individual. But, on a personal level, it also had painful consequences for his private sphere that Alberola never seems to acknowledge, simply providing a generic anarchist denunciation of the family to explain off his choices.

The *Weight of the Stars* offers a sobering account of almost a century of anarchist activism, albeit one that is never without hope. Most importantly, for scholars of anarchism the book is an excellent guide through the evolution of Spanish and international anarchism as it tried to navigate exile, revolution, and counterrevolution and to redefine its identity against other leftist competitors.

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Jacques Lesage de La Haye, *The Abolition of Prison*, translated by Scott Branson

Chico: AK Press, 2021; 128pp; ISBN 9781849354219

With a meticulous balance between the personal and the philosophical, Jacques Lesage de La Haye provides a condemnation of the prison as an institution of unjustifiable and fruitless brutality in his work *The Abolition of Prison*, translated into English by Scott Branson from the original *L'Abolition de la Prison* (2019). Not just a work that condemns, Lesage de La Haye likewise provides a working history of prison-alternatives grounded in indigenous understandings of community-based reconciliation between victim and victimiser. The reader need not be afraid of being unfamiliar with the lines of argumentation, as Lesage de La Haye conveys his thoughts clearly and succinctly – perhaps a result of his thirty or so years of experience discussing prison abolitionism on his radio show *Ras les murs* on Radio Libertaire. He uses his own experiences within the French prison system, having spent eleven years incarcerated, to explain in simple terms how the prison operates as a senseless and needlessly anti-communal system. Those already familiar with prison abolition arguments will find the book a refresher on the canon of great works of prison abolition – as the book is filled with quotes from Angela Davis, Peter Kropotkin, Dominique Vernier, Loïc Wacquant, and the like. The book's consistent use of meaningful references interspersed with plainly written arguments and personal experience proves useful both for those already familiar with prison abolitionism and novices looking to understand the key arguments as to why the prison must be abolished.

Lesage de La Haye argues that the prison not only fails to reform, but that it also further produces and reinforces the structural inequalities that lead to incarceration. His argument centres around his belief that prison is not an instrument of reconciliation or rehabilitation, but rather one of state-sanctioned vengeance which only masquerades as justice. He positions the carceral apparatus not as standalone cruelty, but rather as one result of accumulated systemic injustices. He argues that the very concept of vengeful justice must be replaced with reconciliation. Far from arguing in the abstract, he illustrates his points with statistical information on recidivism rates in France and examples of indigenous cultures practicing communal reconciliation with far better results, paying particular attention to the indigenous Mexican villages of Guerrero who successfully abolished the state's prison system. The more

academic argument is immediately followed – a pattern prevalent throughout the work – with an account of his militant work helping recently-released young people live in his home while adjusting to life outside of the institution and how this drastically decreased their recidivism rate. The consistent juxtaposition of well-researched political arguments and brief stories from his nearly six-decade long struggle make for compelling reading. More than that, however, it encapsulates the true strength of anarchist thought wherein powerful ideas of freedom are grounded in the real-world experience of those professing them.

A particularly successful example of this combination of experience and anarchist thought concerns Lesage de La Haye's view of sexual deprivation being a fundamental punishment of the prison present throughout the book, but most developed in the chapter 'Sex and Prison'. He argues that deprivation of intimacy as a means of punishment has disastrous long-term emotional effects for the incarcerated. He did his PhD dissertation on the subject while still in prison. In this way, his robust theoretical knowledge is coupled with his personal experiences once again to great effect.

The book ends with a transcript of Lesage de La Haye and his wife being interviewed for an issue of the antifascist, anarchist zine *Barricata* in 2004. This section alone warrants reading the book. In the interview, they recount their view of the developing struggle against the prison in France both personally and philosophically, interspersing references to the idea of the Lacanian 'lack' alongside mentions of Lesage de La Haye's promiscuity after leaving the prison as he tried to make up for his 'eleven and a half years of frustration' (p108).

This is a book that should be read by anyone interested in the prison struggle – militant or not. The book shines, however, in its plain-written argumentative tone coupled with Lesage de La Haye's actual experience. His timely argument against vengeful justice in favour of communal reconciliation are provoking in and of themselves, but, being written from the often-intimate perspective of someone who has spent their entire life battling the prison, they do more than provoke. They serve as an example of what a life spent in anarchist solidarity with those unjustly locked away can look like, both in terms of militancy and scholarship.

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Giovanna Gioli and Hamish Kallin (eds), *Thinking as Anarchists: Selected Writings from Volontà*

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023; 293pp; ISBN 9781474483148

In the mid-1980s, I was winding up my time working on the *Open Road* anarchist news journal, published out of Vancouver, Canada, from 1976 to 1990, with a peak circulation of around 20,000. Through my association with *Open Road*, I was able to meet with Rosella Di Leo and Amedeo Bertolo when they travelled through Vancouver in the early 1980s. I was familiar with their work on the much more theoretical Italian anarchist journal, *Volontà*, which *Open Road* regularly received. Although I knew a bit of Spanish, I didn't read Italian, so about all that I could understand were the titles of the articles but not the specific content. It certainly looked interesting.

Being regarded as the more intellectually oriented member of the *Open Road* editorial collective, when a manuscript of English translations of articles from *Volontà* arrived at the office in 1986, someone let me know. It was entitled, 'Thinking as Anarchists: selected writings from *Volontà*', and bore the imprint of the Centro Studi Libertari in Milan.

I jumped at the chance finally to be able to read some of the material that had been published in *Volontà* in the early to mid-1980s, which I had seen but had been unable to understand. I was not disappointed. Here was a collection of essays that engaged with contemporary political theory, critical anthropology and radical philosophy at a level of sophistication that was largely lacking in English language anarchist publications at the time.

There were some English-speaking anarchists who were discussing the radical ideas of people like the anthropologist Pierre Clastres and Cornelius Castoriadis's post-*Socialisme ou Barbarie* writings, in which he had developed his concept of the social imaginary, but nothing like the essays in the 'Thinking as Anarchists' manuscript. To me, the manuscript was a revelation.

The manuscript had a short type-written introduction (not included in the now published book), in which the unidentified editors stated that the purpose of the collection was 'to allow English-speaking readers to discover something' about contemporary anarchist theory in Europe that was 'more or less unknown outside of the French and Italian-speaking areas.' It was clear that the editors had hoped that one of the English language publications that received a copy of the manuscript would publish it in book form to make the essays it contained accessible to an English-speaking audience. Unfortunately, *Open Road* was not a

book publisher and lacked the material and financial resources to undertake such a task. For some reason, none of the English language anarchist book publishers around at that time chose to publish the manuscript.

I was very disappointed that the manuscript failed to find a publisher. I thought it important that these writings should be made available to English-speaking readers. When I began putting together my anthology of anarchist writings from ancient China to the twentieth-first century, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, published in three volumes by Black Rose Books between 2005 and 2012, I made a point of including material by all of the contributors to the 'Thinking as Anarchists' manuscript.

Although I used only one of the essays in the manuscript, Rosella Di Leo's 'The Source of the Nile: In Search of the Origins of Male Domination', I also included other, mostly more recent, articles by the remaining contributors: Amadeo Bertolo, Eduardo Columbo, Lucino Lanza, and Nico Berti. It was the 'Thinking as Anarchists' manuscript that introduced me to their writings and led to their inclusion in my *Anarchism* anthology some two decades later.

Imagine my surprise when it was announced in 2023 that the 'Thinking as Anarchists' manuscript was finally going to be published in book form by Edinburgh University Press. The book version contains all the original manuscript essays, plus four more essays from the 1980s and 1990s, including a piece by Tomás Ibañez, who was not included in the original manuscript, and an essay by Francesco Codello, specifically written for the book, on *Volontà* and its crucial role in rejuvenating anarchist thought.

The book version has been meticulously edited and annotated by Giovanna Gioli and Hamish Kallin, who have also retranslated much of the original manuscript so that the translations 'are substantially closer to the originals' (pix). It was Kallin who rediscovered the original manuscript in an independent left bookshop in Edinburgh in 2014. A few years later he met up with Giovanna Gioli, who immediately recognised the manuscript's significance. From there, the two of them got in touch with the authors, and began the process of preparing the manuscript, and the additional material, for publication.

The book itself is very well produced, with both colour and black and white photographs and illustrations interspersed among the texts. The editors tie the distribution of the original manuscript to the international anarchist 'gathering' in Venice in 1984. The manuscript was a way of continuing the discussions at the 1984 gathering, where some of the essays in the book were originally

presented, by making them available to English-speaking readers who, like me, lacked any facility with the Italian language.

The Venice gathering was an impressive affair, attended by 3,000 anarchists from all over the world, including such luminaries as Murray Bookchin, Colin Ward, Marianne Enckell, Ruben Prieto, Tomás Ibañez, and, it would appear, all the contributors to this volume. Some of the other presentations at the gathering were published in French in a series of short books by the Atelier de Creation Libertaire in 1985, around the themes of liberty, the state, anarcho-syndicalism and revolution.

In English, there was a special issue of *Black Rose* on the gathering, with personal accounts by various attendees, including Bookchin and Bob D'Attilio. The only book in English was a coffee table picture book, *Another Venice*, published by Black Rose Books in Montreal, which did not contain any of the essays presented at the gathering that have been included in *Thinking as Anarchists*, nor any of the essays in the four volumes of material published by Atelier de Creation Libertaire in France. To finally see the essays in the 'Thinking as Anarchists' manuscript, plus the additional material, published in book form is as wonderful as it was unexpected.

Despite some of the material having been written some forty years ago, it holds up remarkably well, and retains much of its relevance today. One of the recurrent themes in the essays is the relationship between power and domination, and the need to create an anarchist conception of power without domination, and therefore a positive anarchist conception of politics without the state. This is particularly the focus of the papers by Tomás Ibañez, Eduardo Colombo, Nico Berti, Rosella Di Leo's 'The Search for the Nile,' and Amadeo Bertolo's 'Power, Authority, Domination'. To say that this remains a major point of contention among contemporary anarchists would be an understatement.

There are two essays by Luciano Lanza, the first on 'the economy as a product of domination' (p118). The second is on utopia and economics, and how to create an economy, as well as a politics, without domination, based on voluntary agreements that create and maintain reciprocal relationships of freedom and equality. This is followed by Bertolo's essay on utopia and the anarchist imaginary, in which he argues that imagination, conceived as the activity of imagining, rather than 'the *consumption* of images', is necessary for there to be any prospect of radical social change; '[i]ndividual and collective rebellion' becomes 'possible only if *one conceives it as possible*' (p150). That is why opponents of anarchism, from the left and right, have always denounced it as being hopelessly utopian.

The editors have written an excellent introduction that situates the essays in their historical context but also demonstrates their continuing relevance. The 1984 Venice gathering, and the material presented there, have sometimes been portrayed as a turning point in the development of a ‘new anarchism’. The editors suggest instead that the gathering, and these contemporaneous essays, constitute ‘a bridge between’ an ‘old’ anarchism and an allegedly ‘new’ anarchism that ‘negates the notion of any neat division along those lines’ (p26). Anyone interested in contemporary anarchist theory would be well advised to read this book.

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### Steve J. Shone, *Dangerous Anarchist Strikers*

Leiden: Brill, 2024; 396pp; ISBN 9789004688759

Over the course of the past decade Steve Shone has proven himself a prolific if desperately under-appreciated contributor to the ever-increasing body of scholarship on the history of anarchism. His previous efforts on this score – including *Lysander Spooner: American Anarchist* (2010), *American Anarchism* (2013), and *Women of Liberty* (2019) – have consistently impressed me in their immense clarity, depth, and scholarly rigor. I am not at all surprised to find these same virtues on vivid display in his most recent offering, *Dangerous Anarchist Strikers*.

What does surprise (and frankly *perplex*) me is the regrettable extent to which Shone’s work has tended to be overlooked, even as demonstrably weaker contributions receive disproportionate levels of attention and praise. Shone himself gestures at a possible explanation in the introduction to *Dangerous Anarchist Strikers*:

[M]any students of ‘anarchism’ [who] have attempted to define their topic ... have focused their understanding mainly on a group of European thinkers no longer alive ... In some cases this attitude, which for the sake of argument might be called ‘Anarchism Limited’, has led to its advocates dismissing other, quite similar thinkers, including those, for example, who lived in North or South America or Australasia as not being anarchists at all (p2).



There is no question that the attitude Shone describes has coloured a great deal of scholarship produced since 2010 – a result, I suspect, of the profound impact of works like Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt's *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (2009) – nor that this attitude has played a significant role in fuelling criticism of Shone and other scholars like Peter Marshall and Shawn Wilbur who adopt a similarly ecumenical approach to their subject matter. It is highly plausible that the recent trend of sidelining such approaches explains the regrettable tendency to overlook Shone and others who remain committed to using them.

Although I hasten to emphasise my deep sympathy with several of the concerns that motivate writers like van der Walt, many of the scholarly manoeuvres made in response to these concerns thus far strike me as suspect, not least because they have tended to produce outcomes at least as problematic as the methodologies they propose to supplant. Certainly, there are treatments of anarchism that are rightly faulted for excessive ecumenism, particularly when this is a consequence of faulty methodology, but the same is not infrequently true of the opposite tendency. Attempts to radically circumscribe anarchism can be and often are guilty of the very same scholarly sins they impute to Shone and his ilk.

Shone, for his part, is aware of this dynamic and does an admirable job of addressing it in his introduction. To hideously mix metaphors, he clearly understands the pitfalls of staking an overly large tent no less than of radically circling the wagons, seeking instead to maintain the important if desperately under-theorised distinction between the *anarchist* and the *anarchistic*. Given what Shone says in the quote cited above, one might expect him to invoke this distinction for the usual purpose of contrasting anarchist individualists (like Spooner) with anarchist socialists. Instead, we are met with something far more interesting and not a little ironic.

Alongside figures whose social anarchist *bona fides* are scarcely in doubt (Virginia Bolten, Kotoku Shushiu), Shone provides rich, detailed portraits of three additional labour militants (Helen Armstrong, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Tom Barker), all of whom, at one point or another, were committed antiauthoritarian socialists who nonetheless shied from explicitly identifying as 'anarchists'. I describe this move as ironic because many of those who would criticise Shone for placing individualists like Tucker, Spooner, and Stirner alongside self-identified social anarchists have no qualms whatsoever with placing the latter alongside revolutionary syndicalists like Armstrong, Gurley Flynn, and Barker. (If you don't believe me, just read *Black Flame*!) This makes clear that

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explicit identification as an anarchist is not a consistently maintained standard of credibility *even among those who insist on its importance*.

No one can reasonably deny that there are important theoretical and historical distinctions to be drawn between individualists and socialists, no less than between self-identified anarchists in the labour movement and various syndicalist militants who consciously or unconsciously avoided the anarchist label. More often than not, however, such distinctions are invoked precisely in order to downplay their significance, on the one hand, or else to artificially limit the scope of inquiry, on the other. All of this tends to bring more heat than light when it comes to understanding the history (both political *and* intellectual) of anarchism. Shone recognises this far better than most. Far from seeking to reduce anarchism to anything and everything antiauthoritarian – including libertarian currents in the syndicalist movement – his foremost aim is to investigate the various ways that anarchist(ic) ideas show up in otherwise disparate contexts (including, but not limited to, explicitly self-identified anarchist ones) as well as how they shape political thought and action therein. *Dangerous Anarchist Thinkers* is a master class in this approach, one I heartily recommend to all readers of this publication.

*Nathan Jun, John Carroll University*

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Clara Schildknecht, *Hardi, compagnons ! Masculinités et virilité anarchistes à la Belle Époque*

Paris: Libertalia, 2023; 245pp; ISBN 9782377292707

This book by Clara Schildknecht offers a history of anarchist masculinities at the turn of the twentieth century. She explores how the anarchist movement defines masculinity and promotes a particular way of being a man, revealing the persistent paradox between emancipatory rhetoric and virilist practices.

The first part of *Hardi, compagnons !* explores the different systems of anarchist masculinity, using the typology developed by sociologist Raewyn Connell to classify masculinities as hegemonic, subordinate, complicit or marginalised. Clara Schildknecht argues that there are different norms governing masculinity among the anarchists. On one hand, the anarcho-syndicalists valued a working-class masculinity, symbolised by the figure of the striking worker, courageous in the struggle, free and autonomous, engaging in intellectual activity but still a little

saucy. On the other hand, individualists rather valued a vagabond masculinity which was embodied by those who had broken free from the chains of salaried employment to live a liberated life, renounced superfluous needs to take care of their bodies, and who practised a sporting activity to develop their muscles.

The interest of this first part is to show that the discourse on masculinity was linked to the evolution of anarchists' forms of political action, concerning, for instance, the use of weapons, strike action, individual violence, street fights, etc. A certain way of being an anarchist developed and became valued in militant circles: a virile attitude, expressed for example through toughness and uncompromising behaviour in court, specific dress and hair codes, and a rigorous way of life. These virilist ideas were dominant in the anarchist movement because of the quasi-monopoly of men over the production of discourse, primarily in the anarchist press, as editors and contributors, and in the printed word in general. This results in writings that were expressly addressed to men, and where women only appeared as partners or potential conquests. The author quotes an explicit extract from the April 1904 issue of *Le Libertaire*: 'It is to our [male] comrades readers that we address ourselves, asking them with an insistence that they will understand to encourage their [female] companions to read the newspaper that they find good for themselves'.<sup>1</sup> Although Schildknecht recognises that some anarchists attempted to overturn these gender norms, especially on the individualist side of anarchism, through, for example, ideas of sexual freedom, free love and co-education, the author concludes that this did not prevent the reproduction of inequalities. The persistence of a sexual division of domestic and militant work, described in the autobiographies of anarchist women, in particular that of Rirette Maîtrejean, attests to this.

The second part of the book, which could have been more detailed, focuses on the relational nature of masculinity, meaning its construction in response to the conceptions of femininity shared by anarchists (already hinted at in the first part). Anarchist discourses on femininity were characterised by a three-fold representation of women as mothers, lovers and prostitutes. Schildknecht is particularly interested in the social role assigned to women by anarchists: educating children for the revolution, a role she analyses as a heavy responsibility inscribed in the sexual division of social roles. The book ends with a portrait of some of the anarchist women whose actions transgressed gender norms including Louise Michel, Léonie Fournival (known as Rolande), Louise Réville and Henriette Roussel. This is also the case for sisters Anna and Armandine Mahé, whose free love practice was mocked and ridiculed. These anarchists too were

constantly characterised by their ‘feminine nature’, softening their transgressions through references to their kindness, devotion and gentleness.

Finally, this book offers an opportunity to revisit this important historical period for the anarchist movement, during which it was a predominant revolutionary force, from a gender studies perspective. Clara Schildknecht demonstrates that current debates about militant virilism are in fact grounded in the long history of the masculine norms promoted by anarchists.

*Sidonie Verhaeghe, CERAPS, Université de Lille*

## NOTES

1. In the French original: ‘C’est à nos camarades lecteurs que nous nous adressons leur demandant avec une instance qu’ils comprendront de faire lire à leur compagne le journal qu’ils trouvent bon pour eux’.

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Susana Sueiro Seoane, *El anarquista errante: La aventura transatlántica del tipógrafo Pedro Esteve (1865–1925)*

Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2024; 702pp; ISBN 9788418752827

This book rests on a seeming paradox. It deals with a *personaje escurridizo* (an elusive character), whose name is often misspelled or, when correctly spelled, makes him mistaken for a better-known namesake anarchist. ‘He did not have an overflowing temperament, nor did he excel in extraordinary ability or virtue. He was not particularly original’ (p19). A five-page article is the only academic work devoted to him. Yet this book is seven hundred pages long.

The paradox is easily dispelled. Pedro Esteve was no minor figure. Certainly, he was not part of the elite of anarchist writers to whom people turn for a first approach to anarchism. However, he was one of those militants who constituted the movement’s backbone, by devoting their entire lives to its press and day-to-day organisation, and were as indispensable as the great writers. Most importantly, as Susana Sueiro Seoane explains in the introduction, ‘this is not only the story of Pedro Esteve, but the story of a network of individuals’ (p14), a ‘collectivist account of a social movement’ (p25).

That network of individuals was indeed very wide, as Esteve’s life spanned two continents and several countries, and his contacts spread even wider in

Europe and the Americas. He was born in Spain, where he soon learned the typographer's trade and became a leading figure in the influential anarchist periodical *El Productor*. In 1892 he emigrated to the United States. He was active in New York and New Jersey among workers of four linguistic groups – Spanish, Italian, English, and French – in Florida among Tampa tobacco workers, and in Cuba during the years of the independence struggle.

The author's reference to 'a network of individuals' tellingly points to her historiographical approach. As she explains, she considers anarchists as an 'enlightened vanguard' (p14) whose intentional action mattered, as historical events were 'in part the responsibility of decisions by specific individuals whose actions had an impact'. At the same time, she acknowledges that 'these individuals are part of a wider social and cultural reality' and expresses her equal interest in 'history from below' (p25).

The book is a rich tapestry, in which four strands are simultaneously spun: Esteve's life story; the events of the anarchist movement; the theoretical and tactical anarchist debates; and the biographies of those 'nodes' in the anarchist network. The immigrants' and workers' conditions may constitute a fifth strand. Thus, the book's twelve chapters take us through such topics as the Haymarket affair, the First of May beginnings, the Cambios Nuevos bombing, the magnicides of Sante Caserio, Michele Angiolillo, Gaetano Bresci, and Leon Czolgosz; the debates on collectivism and communism, on organisation, on propaganda by the deed, on the Cuban question; and the life conditions and struggles of cigar makers in Tampa and silk weavers in Paterson. All along, as key anarchist figures are mentioned, their detailed biographies are provided. The book's value is augmented by a rich iconography that ranges from anarchist portraits and images of their publications to the anarchists' representation in the mainstream press and scenes of social and workplace life.

Throughout the book Sueiro Seoane deals with anarchists with sensitivity and insight, which greatly benefits from her focus on the transnational dimension of their movement. In the introduction, she states that she does not feel either liking or disliking for her subjects, but rather 'empathy, which is not the same as liking, because understanding is not the same as forgiving' (p26). The historian who tries to understand a world that is no longer her own, she argues, 'must be aware of the gap between that world and her own' (p27). Yet I must say that my favourite section of the book is the biography of Esteve's wife, Maria Roda, where the author, notwithstanding her asserted methodological detachment, obliquely argues with Paterson male anarchists about their poor understanding of the female condition.

Weaving together the different strands mentioned above is a challenging task and sometimes those strands stand in each other's way: Esteve's life story gets diluted, shifts in time and space occur, and the insertion of long biographical sketches may disrupt the main narrative. For example, Esteve's move from Cuba to Tampa in 1894 opens a chapter on tobacco workers in Tampa and post-colonial Cuba up to 1902. The next chapter shifts the focus to Spain, discussing the periodical *El Corsario* and providing a long biography of its editor, Vicente García, up to 1902. Then we deal with the 1896 Cambios Nuevos bombing and the ensuing Montjuich persecutions, up to 1903. Here we gather that Esteve is now back at the helm of *El Despertar* in Brooklyn. The information about his return from Tampa to New York was confined to a couple of easy-to-miss lines two chapters before.

The book ends with the year 1902, which does not bear a particular significance for the anarchist movement. The founding of the Industrial Workers of the World, mentioned by the author, does not carry sufficient weight. The remaining twenty-three years of Esteve's life, which were even more eventful than those covered in the book, are briefly summarised in an 'Epilogue'. It is especially disappointing that there is not even a mention of Esteve's debate with Kropotkin in 1914, when, along with Malatesta, he stood up to reassert anarchist anti-militarism and 'save the future' – to use Malatesta's expression – in one of the most dramatic crucibles of the anarchist movement. Ironically, if the paradox that seven hundred pages are excessive for a minor figure could be readily dismissed, in the end the opposite and more substantial paradox looms up, that seven hundred pages did not suffice to do full justice to the moral and political stature of the anarchist typographer Pedro Esteve. Still this book goes a long way in that direction and in providing that 'collectivist account of a social movement' pursued by its author.

Davide Turcato