

Book Reviews

Transnational Radicals: Italian Anarchists in Canada and the U.S. 1915–1940.

By Travis Tomchuck.

Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015.

260 pages.

Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America.

By Kenyon Zimmer.

Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

300 pages.

Kenyon Zimmer's *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* and Travis Tomchuck's *Transnational Radicals: Italian Anarchists in Canada and the U.S. 1915–1940* represent two major contributions to anarchist and immigration history. Kenyon Zimmer provides a detailed history of immigrant Italian and Jewish anarchists in the United States between the 1880s and 1930 and their responses to national and international upheavals. Travis Tomchuck examines Italian anarchists in North America in the interwar period and during the rise of fascism. These works expand our understanding of Italian and Jewish anarchists in Canada and the United States by showing the significant political and cultural force of their networks. Both books capture the entangled local and transnational histories of anarchism and are likely to be essential historical works for years to come.

Zimmer's *Immigrants against the State* provides meticulous research and draws attention to anarchists' radicalization in the United States. The book is divided in two parts. The first half shows migrants' divergent radicalization in New York; Paterson, New Jersey; and San Francisco. The second part chronicles the anarchists' responses to events and movements: the Mexican Revolution; the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917; Italy's worker insurgency of 1919–1920, the Biennio Rosso; the Spanish Civil War; the rise of communism, Zionism, and fascism, as well as the repression of the First Red Scare and the Great Depression in the United States.

In his introduction, Zimmer uses extensive research on anarchist periodical circulation figures and subscription lists to estimate a combined circulation of these radical publications that peaked to almost 120,000 issues around 1910. According to Zimmer, "anarchism would be the dominant radical ideology among Jewish immigrants until the 1890s, among ethnic Russian and Asian immigrants until the 1920s, and among Spanish, Mexican, and Italian immigrants into the 1930s" (4). Zimmer includes evidence from seventy-three anarchist newspapers, in six languages, and from archives on both sides of the

Atlantic to demonstrate that anarchism was a movement of overlapping groups and networks loosely demarcated by characteristics such as location, language, and nationality: "Language and culture was both the most significant source of cohesion or the greatest barrier between different ethno racial groups" (8). While Zimmer describes the cosmopolitan vision of anarchists, his analysis also reveals regional and ethnic sensibilities in tension.

For the two million Eastern European Jews who immigrated to the United States between 1880 and 1924, Yiddish was *the* common experience. Zimmer's first chapter, "Yiddish Is My Homeland," examines the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* and other anarchist publications in order to elucidate how Jewish anarchists embraced *yidishkhayt*, a concept that encapsulated peoplehood, language, and modern secular culture rather than religion, tradition, or homeland. Another distinguishing characteristic of Jewish anarchists, according to Zimmer, was their limited relationships with other ethnic groups and their more frequent interactions with English-speaking radicals. The second chapter, "Senza Patria" (without a homeland), explores the migration of Italian workers to Paterson, New Jersey, in the 1870s and the early 1900s. Despite regional differences, Italian anarchists founded numerous Italian American societies, played a leading role in the 1912 Paterson silk strike, and embedded anarchism in Paterson's immigrant working class. The third chapter, "All Flags Look Alike to Us," describes a multiethnic anarchist movement that adopted a racial category of "Latin" as a "panethnic source of solidarity" in San Francisco (93). San Francisco's police department estimated the presence of more than five hundred anarchists in the multiethnic city in 1908, and Zimmer locates nineteen anarchist newspapers in seven different languages.

Jews in New York, Italians in Paterson, and the Latin anarchist groups in San Francisco neglected gender as a category of oppression. As described by Zimmer, the Industrial Workers of the World embraced universal working-class manhood as a defining identity. Despite the overwhelming activism of women, men monopolized leadership positions in unions and newspapers. Zimmer successfully spells out the strong feminist undercurrent to Paterson's radical subculture that confronted patriarchy within anarchist circles.

The second part of *Immigrants against the State* assesses wars, revolutions, and repression as defining moments for these Italian and Jewish anarchists. Immigrant anarchist communities in the United States were intimately tied to labor and revolutionary struggles in members' countries of origin and forged links to radical networks there. The fourth chapter, "The Whole World Is Our Country," explores the anarchists' anticolonial positions, their participation in the Mexican Revolution, refusal to support either side in World War I, and championing of anarchist periodicals published abroad. The fifth chapter denounces the political repression and the deportations that anarchists

endured. Wartime patriotism and the rise of communism and fascism negatively affected the movement. The final chapter, “No Right to Exist Anywhere on This Earth: Anarchism in Crisis,” provides details on the support members of the movement provided to comrades fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Zimmer discusses the reactions of several major anarchist organizations and newspapers as well as several individuals who took up arms in Spain. After the Spanish Revolution was crushed, anarchists were divided by their responses to communism and fascism, with no “consistent anarchist position” (206). The intense monitoring of individuals during the Cold War debilitated the movement as well. Although Zimmer notes that there were divisive factions and some violent individuals in the movement, he demonstrates that anarchists created and sustained a significant cosmopolitan print culture, provided solidarity, and were active in engaging the working class in trying to address unresolved and incipient concerns of democratic states: their colonial past, class conflicts, and the dangers of nationalism.

Considering that *Immigrants against the State* covers two revolutions in the Hispanic world as key moments in anarchist history, readers may long for more research on Spanish-language newspapers. It is intriguing that Zimmer’s impressive research in numerous periodicals in several languages includes only isolated comments on five Spanish-language newspapers. This limitation aside, Zimmer’s book is an extraordinarily well-documented and stimulating read.

Unlike *Immigrants against the State*, Tomchuk’s *Transnational Radicals* centers on Italian anarchists in Canada, in addition to a few cities in the United States. In his introduction, Tomchuk says that the purpose of the book is to address the lack of historical studies on anarchism in Canada by showing the transnational networks that helped Italian anarchists to settle and take root in six different North American cities: Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto, and Windsor, Canada, and Detroit, Newark, and New York City. In his carefully researched and theorized book, Tomchuk shows the continuity of their radical and print culture in Italy and then in Canada, offering a sophisticated interpretation of the movement’s dynamics with a transnational lens. The book succeeds in its effort with comprehensive research gathered from security files, newspapers, and personal interviews in Canada, Italy, and the United States.

The first chapter, “Anarchism and the Italian Tradition,” outlines anarchism’s main tenets and shows how the Italian context marked the politicization of Italian anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. Although Tomchuk admits that one-third of his study group became radicalized postmigration, he dissents from Zimmer’s claim that “American conditions . . . usually forged migrants into anarchists, rather than European ones” (1). The second chapter, “Migrant Anarchists,” documents the migration of roughly seventy skilled laborers using data from the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome. The files suggest that

anarchists migrated to work abroad, to avoid the draft or the war, and to escape state repression. In the third chapter, Tomchuk devotes substantial coverage to anarchist publications, plays, fiction, and social events. Written in Italian, newspapers maintained and expanded the anarchist transnational movement, and Tomchuk bases his research on two of the most influential anarchist newspapers in North America during the 1920s and 1930s, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* and *Il Martello*, both based in New York City. *Il Martello*'s circulation peaked to 10,500 copies in 1924. Published for almost fifty years, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* circulated around 5,000 copies until 1943 with a peak of 15,000 copies in the 1930s. While *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* covered anarchists' global issues, *Il Martello* placed greater emphasis on local reporting. Both papers included articles on anarchist history and reported news on arrested comrades, and they were involved in direct aid. The last pages of the papers advertised social and cultural events. Each anarchist *circolo* (athenaeum) would perform plays, most often those written by Italian anarchist playwright Pietro Gori, who spoke of the Italian migrant experience.

In the fourth chapter, "Anarchist Identity Formation," Tomchuk demonstrates how class, gender, and ethnicity informed anarchist social identities. There was little chance for upward mobility for Italian anarchist migrants, and the overwhelming majority of them remained working class. He contrasts his findings from *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* and *Il Martello* to recent research on Italian American anarchists. Following Jennifer Guglielmo, who in *Living the Revolution* (2010) has explored the marginalization of women in Italian American anarchist circles, Tomchuk finds a lack of women's voices within the pages of both *L'Adunata* and *Il Martello*. Based on his interviews, the historian notes that women were left out of decision-making processes and were assigned traditional roles such as food preparation for events. In addition, he reviews the gendered challenges that female anarchist leaders such as Virginia D'Andrea, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Emma Goldman endured. In terms of ethnicity, a pan-Italian identity was most visible during the years of antifascist struggle among anarchist newspapers. In the fifth chapter, "Factional Disputes," Tomchuk discusses the lives of two of the most influential Italian anarchist personalities, Luigi Galleani and Carlo Tresca, and the rivalry between their supporters during the 1920s and 1930s. However, another factional dispute in *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* grew in importance in the 1930s—the involvement of anarchists in antifascist fronts. Tomchuk uses a nuanced and transnational approach to such involvement to understand its complexities. His analysis shows that *L'Adunata* was involved in many fundraisers and much activism to avoid deportations, support prisoners, and save people escaping Europe in the early twentieth century.

Theoretically well informed, Kenyon Zimmer's *Immigrants against the State* and Travis Tomchuk's *Transnational Radicals* present detailed analyses of the

political, print, cultural, and transnational networks of anarchist migrants in Canada and the United States. Scholars of labor and radical movements, as well as scholars of trans-Atlantic and migration studies, will find Tomchuk's and Zimmer's works to be finely argued and comprehensive additions to anarchist history.

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389 pages.

According to Max Horkheimer ([1937] 1976), "The facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; they are shaped by human activity" (237). And as Jacques Le Goff (1978) said of cultural products some fifty years later, "No document is innocent." Le Goff charged historians and other scholars to "de-structure" the "montage, conscious or unconscious of the history" and to "analyse the conditions in which these documents-monuments were produced" (46).