

The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terrorism.

By Beverly Gage.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

400 pages.

On September 16, 1920, a powerful bomb exploded at the corner of Wall and Broad Streets, killing thirty-eight people and leaving hundreds injured. Concealed in a horse-drawn cart, the bomb was detonated a few steps away from the New York Stock Exchange and across the street from J.P. Morgan and Company, the symbolic heart of U.S. financial capitalism. As Beverly Gage reminds us in *The Day Wall Street Exploded*, the blast was the “worst act of terrorism” in U.S. history before the Oklahoma bombing in 1995.

Gage deals with two distinct themes: The first is a detailed reconstruction of the ultimately unsuccessful investigation conducted by local and federal authorities together with private agencies on two continents. The search for those responsible for the bombing came on the heels of the Red Scare of 1919–1920, which led to the arrest of thousands of dissenters and the deportation of hundreds of radical immigrants. Gage argues that the Wall Street explosion was used by government officials, mainstream press, and congressional leaders to confirm the image of all dissenters as dangerous and wild-eyed “terrorists” who used “force and violence” to overthrow the U.S. government. In the second and most interesting part of the book, Gage uses the bombing as the point of departure for outlining an overview of social conflict, class-based radicalism, and official repression in the United States from the 1870s through World War I.

For Gage, the Wall Street bombing represents a prism for an examination of the history of the United States during this period centered on open “class warfare.” In this context, various government agencies and vigilante groups resorted to “legal” and extra-legal violence against workers along with labor and radical movements that emerged in response to the expansion of industrial corporations and to the rise of new financial institutions. Government repression reached its climax with the federal persecution of dissenters during World War I and the Red Scare that followed. In this brutal context, a number of radical movements dedicated to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of an egalitarian order responded with violence and “terrorism,” which included bombings and assassination attempts, as the legitimate response of the disenfranchised, the marginalized, and the oppressed against the overwhelming violence employed by those in power.

In the effort to “rediscover the genuine drama of class conflict in the United States” (8), the author provides a very readable synthesis of a series of famous strikes and bloody confrontations along with an account of the country’s vibrant left-wing political world of the period leading up to the Wall Street bombing. Starting with the Molly Maguires—rooted in the Irish mining communities of eastern Pennsylvania—the book covers the activities of the German-born anarchist leader Johann Most, and the story of the Haymarket affair and its aftermath, along with biographical accounts of Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman (who became famous following his attempt to assassinate Henry Clay Frick), and Big Bill Haywood who supported “self-defense” and “direct action” against capitalism. Sections are also devoted to the role of federal

authorities in the defeat of the Homestead and Pullman strikes, along with employer policies that led to the death of 146 women in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire in 1911, the use of machine guns by Rockefeller guards against strikers and their families in Ludlow, Colorado, three years later, and finally to the federal government's campaign against opponents of World War I.

Students of Italian-American radicalism will be interested in the chapter devoted to Luigi Galleani, the anarchist leader who built a dedicated cohort of supporters among a small group of Italian anarchists in the United States. Following along the lines of Paul Avrich's seminal book, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* (1991), Gage describes how in speeches and in the pages of his *Cronaca Sovversiva* Galleani unapologetically advocated the use of violence as a tool of retaliation against capitalism. Galleani's views influenced a small group of Italian anarchists to engage in scattered violent activities against the symbols of power, a campaign that escalated following his deportation and the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti in the spring of 1920. This insular ethnic radical environment ultimately produced the "galleanista" Mario Buda, the person identified by Avrich as the likely Wall Street bomber.

—FRASER OTTANELLI
University of South Florida

Gangster Priest: The Italian American Cinema of Martin Scorsese.

By Robert Casillo.

Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2007.

600 pages.

Gangster Priest, the first volume to comprehensively address those of Martin Scorsese's films that deal most directly with Italian-American identity, is a timely and essential contribution to Scorsese scholarship. In particular, Robert Casillo accomplishes in-depth readings of some of the director's most well-known feature films, such as *Casino*, *Goodfellas*, *Mean Streets*, *Raging Bull*, and *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* Also of great value is the author's analysis of a fifteen-minute short feature made during Scorsese's college years, the longer documentary *Italianamerican*, and the lesser known mob comedy *It's Not Just You, Murray*. Casillo sets out to rescue these films from a critical abyss that frequently looks toward signs of Italian America in Scorsese's oeuvre in terms of "local colour, as a pretext for personal nostalgia, or as the object of merely anthropological or ethnological interest" (xviii). As Casillo convincingly demonstrates in the preface to the volume, previous studies devoted to one of Hollywood's most prized directors, mostly written by Italian Americans, generally tend to attack or disregard the director for what is seen as a simple equation of Italian American equals gangster. Indeed, the volume's title problematizes this long-lasting, hotly debated stereotype and announces Casillo's main agenda: To look at the complicated intersections between ethnic identity and religious iconography in a mob context in order to better understand psychologies of violence ingrained therein.