

fact that “it can serve equally as a foundation for poverty alleviation and social justice, and as a means of state control through the better monitoring of citizens and exclusion of non-citizens” (p. 277).

The latter approach seems to open up better perspectives for research. By bringing both elements together, scholars can address the fluidity and duality of registration systems to investigate a range of issues, including: (a) how they are affected by changing political regimes and ideologies; (b) how they operate at different scales (local, national, global) and among conflicting interests; and (c) how each registration system operates differently in relation to different groups of population – which, in turn, it also contributes to defining.

From this perspective, the fundamental contribution of this volume is not so much in the establishment of a *new* research field – as its editors seem to believe – but in the broad and dynamic methodological frame it offers for a long-term, global, and comparative study that places research on registration firmly at the crossroad of various disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives.

Moreover, the relevance of the discussion about registration goes far beyond historiography, and directly affects our understanding of present developments. The chapters in the fourth part of the volume (“Registration, Recognition, and Human Rights”) in particular explore recent experience related to civic registration: Uruguay’s 1934 Children’s Code (Anne-Emanuelle Birn), the interwar international campaigns for children’s rights (Dominique Marshall), post-apartheid South Africa (Francie Lund), and Africa as a whole (James Ferguson). The editors have perhaps made a choice here to focus on South American and African children’s rights; in their own introduction, however, they make a broader point, reminding us of the potential dangers of the “extraordinary conjuncture in the history of identity registration” we live in (p. 29), at the crossroads of post-9/11 expansion of registration technology, the application of computerized searchable database information systems, and the “emerging trend of commercial supply and delivery of these systems to states” (p. 29). This is a concern that many will share, and one that again shows the intrinsically double nature of registration, inseparably made up of control drives and empowerment potentials.

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TURCATO, DAVIDE. *Making Sense of Anarchism. Errico Malatesta’s Experiments with Revolution, 1889–1900*. Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke [etc.] 2012. 275 pp. £60.00. doi:10.1017/S0020859013000539

Filling an undeniable historiographic gap, Davide Turcato has produced a meticulous and engrossing English-language biography of Errico Malatesta and, at the same time, a thought-provoking reassessment of the nature of classical anarchism (both as a movement and an ideology) and its historiographic avatars. His book has a two-tier focus. It examines a brief stretch of Malatesta’s long militant career: the critical and formative years 1889–1900, which represented a heyday for the Italian and international movement. In addition, through the erudite use of interpretive sociology and a determined, cogent central argument, the monograph also delivers an ambitious re-examination of late nineteenth-century anarchism, with contemporary ramifications. As the volume’s title suggests, it goes some way towards “making sense of anarchism”, weighing and

debunking the main ways in which historians and the ever-elusive public opinion have attempted to do so.

Measuring the full implications of the transnational turn in anarchist studies and embedding it in a comprehensive analysis of anarchism, *Making Sense of Anarchism* follows up on Turcato's landmark article "Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement, 1885–1915" (*International Review of Social History*, 53 (2007), pp. 407–444), which captured and formulated authoritatively the ongoing shift towards transnational approaches as the dominant paradigm in anarchist historiography. Turcato's stated aim is to show that anarchism can be made sense of and interpreted as "a sensible and rational strategy of action" (p. 1) in contrast with the emphasis on "cyclicality, discontinuity, spontaneism, lack of organisation, incoherence, and futile violence as the key traits of anarchism" (p. 12) which tends to inform historical accounts, including sympathetic ones. This revision challenges a number of assumptions, usually stemming from and confirming the implicit belief that anarchists "were losers and necessarily so" (p. 1): these range from Eric Hobsbawm's inescapable depiction of anarchists as "primitive rebels", to less damning assessments, which have emphasized the relevance of anarchism, stressed its very rich cultural or militant legacy or its counter-cultural status.

In positive terms, Turcato advocates a "charitable interpretation" of anarchism, deciphering "individual behaviour patterns as meaningfully as possible, with irrationality as the last resort" (p. 8). Through his analysis of Malatesta's decade, Turcato highlights a triple continuity: over time (against traditional interpretations which stress the cyclical nature of anarchism, whereas the transnational angle brings to light the pursuit of activities in seemingly dead times); space (through the filter of transnationalism, which evidences the underlying coherence of the movement); and in thought (Turcato notes that Malatesta's core concerns, such as voluntarism, the people, and the interaction between conscious minorities and the masses were set by the early 1880s, largely as a result of his experience with the First International).

On a biographical, factual level, the quality and deftness of the book is striking; even with an eleven-year focus, following the whereabouts of Malatesta, one of the most prolific, mobile and elusive figures of the pre-war movement, is no small feat, especially as opacity is built into the movement, as Turcato repeatedly notes. He establishes a clear chronology, without speculating unduly about the uncertain moments of his subject's activism. The limited time span allows for a very detailed reconstruction of Malatesta's life and plenty of micro-analyses which skilfully link the individual narrative and the wider argument underpinning it, local events and the general dynamics of anarchism. Malatesta provides excellent insights into the theoretical foundations of anarchism and its historiographic treatment, starting at the time of the First International and the controversies with Marxism (a difficult question, handled compellingly), through to the transnational nature of anarchism, the role of anarchist networks, propaganda by the deed, strikes and trade unions, the concept of association, and the formulation in the 1920s of "anarchist gradualism", a key tenet which belies dominant narratives of anarchist impossibilism and utopianism.

Nonetheless, Malatesta's engagement with these concerns and activities does not necessarily make him a perfect representative for the movement as a whole – a limitation to Turcato's argument, which problematically equates his subject with anarchism as a whole, while conceding that the overall impression of anarchist irrationality is "consistent with the empirical evidence" (p. 246). He very convincingly highlights the coherence and rationality of Malatesta's militant career – a case easily applicable to other prominent anarchist figures; however, this is more problematic for the movement as a whole, insofar as it can be clearly delineated.

The imputed features which Turcato takes great pains to detach from anarchism did indeed characterize the stories of many middle-ranking and anonymous militants, not to

mention the propagandists by deed of the 1890s. Discontinuity was an attribute of many anarchists' paths, while the issue of organization remains highly problematic, as instances of "organizational opacity" (p. 246) coexist with a lack of or poor level of organization. It must also be admitted that futile violence was a strand of anarchism during this "heroic" period – albeit a minority one – however unpalatable to us and to the more committed companions. While Malatesta's extensive reflection on the relationship between conscious minorities and masses is a key theme of the book, the full implications of this dialectic for the movement's functioning and its perception might have been explored further, although the overall conclusion – the rationality and purposefulness of anarchism against superficial impressions of irrationality and spontaneity – is, of course, valid when it comes to the most dedicated adherents.

The biography is well-informed and intelligent, offering bold insights which go beyond the period under consideration, such as the claim that "the anarchist philosophy has breathed new life into the Internet" (p. 48), as the latter has made its own the age-old anarchist tenets of decentralized communication and coordination. It is also to Turcato's credit that he does not overstate the impact of the transnational turn and the subsequent revival and rehabilitation of anarchist studies, in which his own influence has been significant. Indeed, recent historiography has really brought to the fore some of the key points made here, for instance the complexities of anarchist transnational organization and its rich and evolving strategic reflection and pragmatism. One may infer from the book that Turcato would argue that this rehabilitation should not have been needed to begin with, since anarchism has consistently been dismissed, downplayed, or sneered at as a result of methodological errors and ideological biases.

His tone can be slightly polemical, even with regard to rather dated interpretations of anarchism, although one may argue that these remain dominant, despite recent historiographic developments which do take as premises the organizational opacity, transnational nature, and overall rationality of anarchism. Given the very long shadows cast by George Woodcock's questionable and romanticized interpretations or Hobsbawm's contempt for millenarian movements, it is understandable that Turcato would seek to counter their claims, often quite cuttingly; however, descriptions taken from contemporary issues of *The Times*, one of the most reliable mouthpieces of the British conservative establishment, seem like a facile contradictor to pick. What else other than crude anti-anarchist stereotypes would one expect from such a source?

Overall, however, Turcato is right in his timely defence of anarchism, and one shouldn't be too optimistic regarding the public and academic impact of recent anarchist and syndicalist historiography. Highly distorted representations of anarchism do continue to flourish, first and foremost in the media and public opinion, but also in academe – see, for instance, Timothy Messer-Kruse's recent book, *The Haymarket Conspiracy* (Urbana, IL [etc.], 2012). Many of those who write about anarchism, even sympathetically, may be guilty of revelling in its quirks and delving at some point into the "repertoire of anarchist irrationalism" (p. 96), often unwittingly. This book is very successful in reviewing and conceptualizing these pitfalls, suggesting an alternative theoretical framework and radically different perspectives, backed by extensive knowledge of primary sources and secondary literature in at least three different languages, whilst retracing a pivotal decade in the life of one of anarchism's most wanted.

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