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Raymond Craib

Lxs anarquistas

2023

Craib R. Lxs anarquistas. *Latin American Research Review*.
2023;58(3):717–729. doi:10.1017/lar.2023.27

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This essay reviews the following works:

- Rebellion in Patagonia.** By Osvaldo Bayer. Chico, CA: Edinburgh AK Press, 2016. Pp. 425. \$21.95 paperback. ISBN: 1849352216.
- Anarchism in Latin America.** By Angel J. Cappelletti. Baltimore: AK Press, 2017. Pp. 429. \$20.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781849352826.
- Writing Revolution: Hispanic Anarchism in the United States.** Edited by Christopher J. Castañeda and Montse Feu. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2019. Pp. xvi + 305. \$30.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780252084577.
- 155: Simón Radowitzky.** By Agustín Comotto. Madrid: Nórdica Libros, 2018. Pp. 269. \$46.00 paperback. ISBN: 8417281525.
- Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire and Revolution in the Borderlands.** By Kelly Lytle Hernández. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2022. Pp. 384. \$24.99 hardcover. ISBN: 9781324004370.
- For a Just and Better World: Engendering Anarchism in the Mexican Borderlands, 1900–1938.** By Sonia Hernández. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021. Pp. xxiv + 222. \$28.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780252086106.

El anarquismo y la emancipación de la mujer en Chile, 1890–1927. By Manuel Lagos Mieres. Santiago de Chile: Centro de Estudios Sociales Lombardozzi, 2017. Pp. 436.

Anarchists of the Caribbean: Countercultural Politics and Transnational Networks in the Age of US Expansion. By Kirwin R. Shaffer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xiv + 318. \$49.99 hardcover. ISBN: 9781108489034.

The World in a City: Multiethnic Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles. By David M. Struthers. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2019. Pp. 310. \$28.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780252084256.

For those who learn of anarchism via pop culture, the idea must be confusing. Take the recent HBO offering *The Anarchists*.¹ A six-part documentary undertaken in 2016, it follows the trials and tribulations of a small and fairly motley crew of US expats and fugitives in Acapulco, Mexico, who aspire to a life free of the regulatory state and its laws, taxes, and restrictions. An opening scene involves a group of adults and young children gathered around a beach bonfire screaming “Fuck the State!” and throwing bound regulatory volumes into the flames. We soon learn they have relocated to Acapulco to find personal freedom and to help establish and run what would be billed as the world’s largest anarcho-capitalist annual gathering: Anarchopulco.

Things that begin with book burning do not end well. By the series finale, three of the main protagonists are dead (one shot in his driveway, one from suicide, and one from cirrhosis of the liver); the Bitcoin bonanza that had financed the annual gathering and enriched its attendees had collapsed; the hypercapitalist colonial enclave had fractured, and many of the surviving enthusiasts had dispersed, gone elsewhere to pick up the pieces after an experiment destined to go awry. Viewers, meanwhile, are left with a version of

¹ *The Anarchists*, directed by Todd Schramke (HBO Documentary Films, 2022).

anarchism that would be unrecognizable to most anarchists. This is not a surprise. A political philosophy and approach to social organization that arose simultaneous with other grand isms, anarchism was, and continues to be, misunderstood, misrepresented, and condensed by its critics into a set of often contradictory caricatures: bohemian communities of nihilists, their rebellion culturally innovative but politically impotent, bookended by Friedrich Nietzsche and Johnny Rotten; or a murky underworld of conspiratorial bomb throwers, held together less by bonds of solidarity than by a commitment to violence; or disaffected and disorganized leftists enamored of immediatism and averse to central planning; or, as *The Anarchists* suggests, individualist libertarians who walk in the ideological footsteps of Murray Rothbard and Ayn Rand and fly to Acapulco for an annual festival to celebrate their pale young edginess.²

Such caricatures always have constituted little more than dismissive fictions, but it is telling that they continue to have such staying power given the resurgence in and visibility of anarchist politics over the past three decades. Sometime around 1990, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, anarchism sat up from the cold slab to which it had been consigned after the Spanish Civil War and seized history's undertaker by the wrist. Granted, if those conducting its postmortem had been more attentive, they might have seen it had been breathing all along. In place of organized mass

² Anarcho-capitalism—or what might be termed *market authoritarianism*—has surged in the past decades, not only in the United States and United Kingdom, where it has long had a following, but also in parts of Latin America, where it is increasingly finding acolytes. It is hypercapitalist, hyperindividualist, rooted in individual private property rights, and committed to a “nightwatchman state” (i.e., a state that is limited in the range of its functions to the protection of citizens from direct violence, fraud, and breach of contract). Ayn Rand, Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises are the usual reference points, but see also Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974). For a critique, see G. A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

anarchism—with its roots in nineteenth-century socialism and the Bakuninist wing of the International Workingmen’s Association, which called for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the immediate demise—rather than a Marxist withering—of the state—a small-*a* anarchism persisted, dedicated to antiauthoritarianism in everyday life and attempting, in prefigurative fashion, to practice daily the world it wished to see come to fruition.³ It was the neoliberal counterrevolution of the 1980s, the strictures of the International Monetary Fund, and its theology of austerity that generated the conditions that seeded the ground further for the emergence of a more visibly anarchist-inflected politics in the 1990s and after. Such tendencies coursed through the 1994 Zapatista uprising in southern Mexico, the protests in Oaxaca in 2006, and the “territories in resistance” in other parts of the continent.⁴ They appeared prominently in the Seattle and Quebec protests against the World Trade Organization; in the Common Ground collective that organized care, aid, and sustenance for communities in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina; and in the Occupy movements

³ See in particular Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India’s Liberation Struggle* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011); Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973; Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2018); James Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004); David Graeber, “The New Anarchists,” *New Left Review* 13 (January–February 2002): 61–73. On the history of organized mass anarchism, see Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009).

⁴ Elena Poniatowska and Carlos Monsiváis, eds., *EZLN: Documentos y comunicados*, vol. 1, *1º de enero/8 de agosto de 1994* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1994); Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubačić, *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism, and Radical History* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008); Andrej Grubačić and Denis O’Hearn, *Living at the Margins of Capitalism: Adventures in Exile and Mutual Aid* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); Hilary Klein, *Compañeras: Zapatista Women’s Stories* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2015); Raúl Zibechi, *Territories in Resistance: A Cartography of Latin American Social Movements*, trans. Ramor Ryan (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2012).

when it was the most important political movement on the Left in the Atlantic World and its adherents exercised substantial influence on the political trajectory of their societies and communities. That changed in the 1930s, at least in the Americas. The Great Depression broke the backs of the old, landed oligarchs and created a space for governments more oriented toward mass politics, even if their form varied substantially (from the fascist regime of Urriburu in Argentina to the Popular Front in Chile to the revolutionary populists in Mexico). Combined with the gravitational pull of the Communist Party, such changes dampened the flame of anarchism.²⁹ It never disappeared of course. But it is no coincidence that anarchism now resonates so broadly: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the grinding assault on the regulatory and welfare state (to the degree that commentators frequently speak of a new gilded age of the kind overseen by the old turn-of-the-century oligarchs) has created a social world of the kind in which anarchism first flourished. Anarchism is alive and well and necessary. Just don’t go looking for it at Anarchopolco.

In memory of Linda B. Hall, Distinguished Professor Emeritus and Regents Professor in Arts and Sciences at the University of New Mexico.

²⁹ Cappelletti, *Anarchism in Latin America*, preface.]

with no central committee or party, anarchism was dependent on the self-organization of the committed, and perhaps nowhere was that as manifest as in the print culture.

Shaffer draws from anarchist periodicals and ephemera, US government files, personal memoirs, and anarchist-produced fiction from the era, in the process painting a compelling and dense portrait of a region alive with anticolonial and anarchist agitation. The book deserves to be paired with Benedict Anderson's *Under Three Flags*: whereas Anderson focused largely on the Philippines and Spanish colonialism, Shaffer focuses on the circum-Caribbean and American colonialism post-1898. But joining their two studies is the transnational diasporic anarchist community that fought colonial rule. Havana takes pride of place here as a central node in a vast transnational network, reaching out to New York City, Mexico City, St. Louis, Panama, Tampa, and Los Angeles. In each locale, anarchism took on varied characteristics, responsive to the local realities on the ground, such that anarchist organizing in Panama could look quite distinct to anarchist organizing and composition in, say, Mexico or Cuba.

Shaffer has published extensively on Caribbean anarchism, including monographs on Cuba and Puerto Rico, and *Anarchists of the Caribbean* is a culminating volume. Deeply researched and written with an infectious exuberance, it is an impressive achievement. An unabashed admiration for his protagonists runs through the work. Undoubtedly, as he shows, the movement suffered from internal divisions between individualists and communists, from sectarian ebb and flow, and from conflicts over Kropotkin's support of the allies in the Great War, but these hardly overshadow the remarkable perseverance, power, and commitment of his subjects who sought to create—at great personal risk and sacrifice—a more egalitarian world.

The Caribbean anarchists fade from view in the 1930s. In this, they were unexceptional. All the books reviewed here center on the golden era of anarchism, roughly from the 1870s to the 1930s,

after the economic collapse of 2008.⁵ Anarchist practices and ideals appeared via ideas of *horizontalidad* and *autogestión* during the Argentine economic crisis of 2001, both in the parks and streets of Buenos Aires and in factories across the country.⁶ They were central to the student-led insurgencies in Chile in 2006, 2011, and 2019, and self-identified anarchists such as Melissa Sepúlveda held leadership positions in the important Chilean Student Federation in the 2010s.⁷ Across the Americas and beyond, similar forms of anarchist organizing appeared. The Berlin Wall may have fallen, but history had decidedly not come to an end.

Nor, for that matter, had historiography. The resurgence in the visibility of anarchist politics spurred a renewed interest in the history of anarchism writ large. Before the 1990s, histories of anarchism—whether in English, Spanish, or Portuguese—occupied something of a niche, important but at the margins of dominant political trends.⁸ As Angel Cappelletti (1990, 8) observed in his now-classic *El anarquismo en América Latina*, “many writers of

⁵ See David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009); Scott Crow, *Black Flags and Windmills: Hope, Anarchy, and the Common Ground Collective*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014); Mark Bray, *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2013); Spencer Beswick, “Love and Rage: Revolutionary Anarchism in the Late Twentieth Century” (unpublished ms.).

⁶ Marina Sitrin, ed., *Horizontalidad: Voces del poder popular* (Buenos Aires: Chilavert, 2005).

⁷ See the discussion in Romina Akemi and Javier Sethness-Castro, introduction to Cappelletti, *Anarchism in Latin America*; Felipe del Solar and Andrés Pérez, *Anarquistas: Presencia libertaria en Chile* (Santiago: RIL, 2008), pt. 3; Rubén Andino, *La rebelión estudiantil en Chile: Una generación con voz propia* (Santiago, Chile: Ocean Sur, 2014); Hugo Cristian Fernández, *Irrumpe la capucha: ¿Qué quieren los anarquistas en el Chile de hoy?* (Santiago, Chile: Ocean Sur, 2014).

⁸ A full historiographical accounting would take another essay, but exemplary here is Peter DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902–1927* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), a work that, in its attention to anarcho-syndicalism in Chile, swam against the tide of the historiography at the time. It is telling that about a decade ago it was finally published in translation in Chile to some acclaim.

the social, political, cultural, literary, and philosophical history of the continent either ignore or downplay the important role of anarchism—the result of ignorance or bad faith.” Cappelletti, an Argentine philosopher who had spent his career writing on Greek philosophy and anarchism, was taking aim at Marxist authors, but the sentiment was generally true across the political spectrum. In response, he produced an encyclopedic, country-by-country primer of anarchist history, demonstrating clearly that anarchist politics and practices had remained vibrant and important across the continent throughout the twentieth century despite the gravitational pull of formal political parties. The book, despite its shortcomings (it is constrained by its country-specific approach, there is little on women and gender in the anarchist movement nor on Indigenous anarchism, and it unproblematically situates Western Europe as the origin of anarchist thought) is both an essential starting point for anyone interested in the history of anarchism in Latin America and an artifact of that very history.⁹ Cappelletti died in 1995 so missed the reckoning of accounts: since the publication of his seminal text, the historiography of anarchism has blossomed, including AK Press’s English-language translation of his book.¹⁰

⁹ Romina Akemi and Javier Sethness-Castro’s introduction to the book is an excellent foundation for situating Cappelletti’s book in its historical context.

¹⁰ A full accounting is impossible, but a sampling of works not cited elsewhere here includes Maxine Molyneux, “No God, No Boss, No Husband: Anarchist Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Argentina,” *Latin American Perspectives* (Winter 1986): 119–145; Juan Suriano, *Anarquistas: Cultura y política libertaria en Buenos Aires, 1890–1910* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2001); Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, eds., *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Post-colonial World, 1870–1940*, rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Laura Fernández Cordero, *Amor y anarquismo: Experiencias pioneras que pensaron y ejercieron la libertad sexual* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2017); Clara Lida and Pablo Yankelevich, eds., *Cultura y política del anarquismo en España e Iberoamérica* (Mexico City: Colmex, 2012); José Moya, “The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish Anarchists in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires,” *Jewish History* 18, no. 1 (2004): 19–48; Geofroy de Laforcade and Kirwin Shaffer, *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in*

their suspected anarchist activities and membership in the IWW. Yet only three women were detained, one of whom was Carmen Serrano, whose remarkable history of agitating and organizing Lagos Mieres recovers much in the way Hernández recovers that of Caritina Piña.²⁸ The heavily male archival demographic can be explained in part by the fact that the Chilean IWW was overwhelmingly male in composition, but given how wide the authorities cast their net, it also resulted from the fact that the Chilean elite and their authorities, even when it came to persecution, were as sexist as they were Europhilic.

Magonismo, the IWW, and the Liga de Arrendatarios were all part of a wider anarchist America in the early twentieth century, one that reached from Valparaíso to Vancouver and Buenos Aires to New York City. It also reached from Manila to Havana, as the hemisphere surpassed its continental constraints in unison with empire’s expanding girth. Where empire went, anarchism did also and offered anti-imperial and anticolonial resistance, as Kirwin Shaffer argues in his excellent *Anarchists of the Caribbean*. Empire, along with technologies of transoceanic transportation and the high levels of Spanish migration to Cuba it facilitated, is central to explaining anarchism’s resonance in the Caribbean. In the crucible of empire, anarchism’s inherently internationalist orientation had significant reach. That reach was achieved in part via the work of “celebrity” anarchists and rank-and-file militants alike, and in part via literary work, such as novels and poems, and the anarchist press. Publications helped form not only an imagined community of anarchists across vast stretches but also a very material community, as they proved a primary means for raising funds to support jailed comrades, circulate information, and organize the movement via requests, subscriptions, and the like. As a horizontal movement

²⁸ Ignatus [Manuel Lagos Mieres], *La “agitadora” Carmen Serrano: Experiencias de lucha y subversión cotidiana (Chile, comienzos del siglo XX)* (Santiago: Salamendras Ediciones, 2020).

book not only how central Piña was to the movement but also how profoundly she was excised from subsequent histories.

In the case of Chile, Manuel Lagos Mieres examines the history of the mass of working women closely linked to anarchist politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He identifies how working women intervened on cultural and social grounds. Culturally, they established reading groups, study centers, and other institutions to build feminist solidarity and educate themselves and others; socially, they created both single-sex and mixed unions to organize struggles in the workplace and the Liga de Arrendatarios to organize struggles around housing and the home. Building on a solid secondary literature, including the foundational work of Elizabeth Hutchison, Lagos Mieres also draws from a wide range of primary source material: print publications, literary texts, and congressional debates and proceedings.²⁷ Material from archival sources is less common. This is no fault of the author. Substantial amounts of information on anarchist men can be gleaned from police records, intendency files, and Ministry of the Interior archives, but women appear much less frequently in these records despite their significant presence in the anarchist and labor movements of the era and in the street demonstrations and protests that often brought the cops out. When it came to persecution, the authorities focused their attentions on men. Chile's 1920 "proceso de los subversivos," for example, saw hundreds of men arrested on charges of sedition and/or illicit association for

²⁷ Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900–1930* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). See also Adriana Palomera and Alejandra Pinto, eds., *Mujeres y prensa anarquista en Chile (1897–1931)* (Santiago: Ediciones Espíritu Libertario, 2006); María Angélica Illanes O., *La revolución solidaria: Historia de las sociedades obreras de socorros mutuos (Chile, 1840–1920)* (Santiago: n.p., 1990); and, for broad historiographical introduction, see the dossier introduced by Laura Fernández Cordero, "Anarquismo, género y sexualidad en América del sur," *Historia Política*, Dossier 56 (September 2015), <https://historiapolitica.com/dossiers/anarquismo-y-genero/>.

AK Press has also translated into English Osvaldo Bayer's *La Patagonia rebelde*. One of the great works of twentieth-century history and of historical recuperation of anarchism in the Americas, Bayer's definitive edition—a single volume published in 1980 that condensed five volumes' worth of work—tells the story of an anarcho-syndicalist-led series of strikes in the Patagonian district of Santa Cruz in 1921. This was a region of vast sheep latifundios owned by Chilean, Argentine, British, and US interests and worked largely by a male and Chilean migrant worker population. In such a dual-class social structure, class antagonisms were obvious, and in the wake of World War I and the collapse of the wool economy workers sought improvements in their working conditions and better wages. Organized in part by the Spanish anarchist Antonio Soto and comrades from the port of Río Gallegos, workers went on strike. Hipólito Yrigoyen's government sent Lt. Col. Héctor Varela south to resolve the strike. After extensive investigation, Varela found in favor of the striking workers and drew up a set of agreements to address the workers' concerns. Enraged, landowners breached the accords, provoking a new wave of strikes. Yrigoyen, eager to keep foreign capital content and to crush anything that smacked of revolution, ordered Varela to return, this time with more emphatic orders. Protected with the military armor of "following orders" and modern weaponry of military slaughter, Varela descended on Santa Cruz. A massacre of farm laborers, sheep shearers, hotel and port workers, and organizers ensued, which Bayer documents in vivid and unrelenting detail from extensive documentation, often quoting his sources at length in their own words.

Bayer was not the first to recount the rebellion and massacre in Patagonia, and yet its history rarely appeared, and the names of

Latin American History (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015); Luis Vitale, "Contribución a una historia del anarquismo en América Latina," mimeo (Santiago, Chile: Instituto de Investigación de Movimientos Sociales Pedro Vuskovic, 1998).

its anarchist protagonists—Kurt Wilckens, who would assassinate Varela in the streets of Buenos Aires in revenge; Antonio Soto, the anarchist leader of the strikes; the *gaucho entrerriano* Facón Grande; the German Schulz—and the workers themselves remained unknown, forgotten, “buried in tombs without crosses,” as Bayer titles his short epilogue. The reining history of the Patagonia continued to be told as a story of entrepreneurial pacification at the hands of the Braun-Menéndez family. That pacification was for all intents and purposes genocidal, blood-and-fire, primitive accumulation as the family hired marksmen to hunt Indigenous inhabitants to the brink of extinction, to be replaced with sheep.¹¹ This was the basis of the economy within which rural laborers sought to improve their lot in 1921, an effort soon cast by landowners and their investors—and remembered by Bayer’s own contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s—as an international conspiracy of anarchists intent on “internationalizing the Patagonia.” But Patagonia had long been internationalized by the landowners themselves. In a typically eloquent passage, Bayer writes: “What invites ridicule is the idea, still being peddled today, that the repression seen during the 1921–1922 strike was carried out in defense of our national heritage and against those who, flying the red flag, wanted to ‘internationalize’ Patagonia. Without any need for a red flag, Patagonia was already internationalized—not just by foreign landowners, but also because all of her raw material wealth was sent overseas.”¹²

¹¹ José Luis Alonso Marchante, *Menéndez, rey de la Patagonia* (Santiago: Editorial Catalonia, 2014); Alberto Harambour Ross, *Soberanía fronterizas: Estados y capital en la colonización de Patagonia (Argentina y Chile, 1830–1922)* (Valdivia: Universidad Austral de Chile, 2019); Nathan Norris, “Steam, Ship, and Exile in the Chilean Sea of Islands” (unpublished ms.).

¹² Osvaldo Bayer, *Rebellion in Patagonia*, trans. Paul Sharkey and Joshua Neuhouser (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2016), 33. The original reads: “Lo que sí suena a ridículo es la tesis de los que hoy todavía sostienen que la represión de las huelgas de los peones patagónicos de 1921–1922 se hizo en defensa del patrimonio nacional contra quienes, enarbolando la bandera roja, querían ‘internacionalizar

Villa Cecilia, the reach of her labors was quite remarkable. She followed events unfolding far beyond the bounds of Mexico, let alone Tamaulipas. For example, in her work as an advocate and agitator, she wrote letters to officials as far away as North Carolina to protest the treatment of women mill workers. Her public writing kept readers informed of living and working conditions in New York, Buenos Aires, and Barcelona. As *secretaria* for the Comité Internacional Pro-Presos Sociales, she corresponded with men and women across North America and helped sustain anarcho-syndicalism’s momentum in the face of incessant repression.

Piña may have been exceptional, but she was not an exception. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were an era of significant anarcho-feminist organizing. Anarchists had long critiqued patriarchy as a form of coercive hierarchy linked to capitalism. They railed against marriage as a bourgeois institution, embraced ideas of free love and sexual liberty, and sought to “emancipate women” from the oppressive structures in which they labored. Women workers had long sought to address the double bind of labor in the workplace and in the home, organizing around class and gender emancipation. As anarchist organizing grew, so too did the prominence of women’s voices—Louise Michel, Voltairine de Cleyre, Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, and Belén de Sárraga, among others—and publications, such as *La Voz de la Mujer* (Argentina) and *Las Hijas de Anáhuac* (Mexico), among many others. At the same time “history from below” has slowly unearthed the histories of the mass of women workers who shaped and were shaped by anarchist politics. Hernández’s recuperation of Caritina Piña is an excellent case in point, as she shows throughout her

of French Anarchism, 1854–1939 (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Raymond Craib, “Sedentary Anarchists,” in *Reassessing the Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies*, ed. Bert Altena and Constance Bantman (London: Routledge, 2015); Ivanna Margarucci, “Repensando el anarquismo en América Latina: ¿Del nacionalismo metodológico a un giro transnacional incompleto?” *Prohistoria* 23, no. 34 (2020): 249–280.

oil industry, and a hotbed of labor activism.²⁵ Within the anarcho-syndicalist movement, Piña found a venue within which to organize with and advocate for women. Although her political trajectory paralleled that of the revolutionary state, she found little inspiration in its discourses on morality, gender, and sexuality, all of which were changing in profound ways and yet predictable in how they clung to old paradigms. Thus, while Piña drew on gendered rhetoric in her advocacy of labor rights, she did so in such a way as to radicalize “the idea of the working mother without bowing to the demands of the state” (98). Piña advanced an anarcho-maternalism, what Hernández defines as a form of “maternalistic politics ... that directly challenged the state as the primary guarantor of women’s rights” (20). In effect, anarcho-syndicalist ideas and direct action methods in areas such as Tampico and its environs made space for organizers to push postrevolutionary discourse and practices on gender and labor in a more radical direction.

Piña rarely left her native Tamaulipas, but her influence reached far. In this sense she was a kind of “transnational labor broker,” one of the many sedentary anarchists who was deeply invested in and connected to a particular place but did not fall prey to the place-bound parochialism that limits political solidarity and organizing. Hernández is particularly adept at making sense of how Piña’s transnational network functioned (and thus reminding readers of the importance of thinking and researching transnationally) without sacrificing close attention to the particularities of local places.²⁶ Indeed, while Piña lived her entire adult life in and around

²⁵ For the port of Veracruz during the same era, see Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Streets: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870–1927* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

²⁶ On the importance of thinking in terms of place-based rather than place-bound, see Doreen Massey, “Places and Their Pasts,” *History Workshop Journal* (1995), 182–192. On transnationalism and locality, see Benjamin Johnson and Andrew Graybill, *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). See also, with particular anarchist emphasis, Constance Bantman, *Jean Grave and the Networks*

Bayer corrects other misconceptions. By allowing his historical subjects to speak on their own behalf, he shows just how disingenuous the landowners’ rhetoric could be when they cast anarchists as revolutionary extremists. Even those who identified with the revolutionary anarchism of Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin, such as Soto, sought first and foremost not to make revolution but to pursue reforms that would improve the conditions within which rural and port workers labored. There was no call to seize the means of production, expropriate the landowners, and put them to the guillotine. Indeed, under the initial accords agreed to with Varela, landowners would have been able to pursue their business with little change beyond a modest increase in wages, improvements in housing conditions, and the ability of workers to bring their families south. Anarchist organizers, far from committing to violence, sought to avoid it through repeated efforts at negotiation. They issued receipts to landowners whose properties had been briefly seized to garner further bargaining power. They labored daily to improve the lot of their fellow workers, by and large through legal channels, demanding that the elite live up to their own high-minded rhetoric. The violence they suffered was not, in the end, a result of their revolutionary intransigence. Quite the opposite: it resulted from the arrogance and will to power of the landed oligarchs who had an absolute intolerance for even the slightest whiff of class insolence.

For all the attention commentators devoted to anarchist violence—hearkening back to early twentieth-century fears about propaganda by the deed and terrorism—it was the forces of reaction and defenders of the status quo who supported murderous coup regimes, undermined democratic practices and principles, sustained authoritarians in power, openly espoused racist terror,

la Patagonia.’ Sin necesidad de bandera roja, la Patagonia ya estaba internacionalizada, no solo por el latifundismo extranjero, sino también porque toda su riqueza se llevaba en bruto al exterior.” Bayer, *La Patagonia rebelde*, 5th ed. (1980; Buenos Aires: Booket, 2013), 22.

and repeatedly advocated for violence against perceived personal and national enemies. Reactionary violence radicalized those who sought change via legal channels.¹³ No doubt some anarchists espoused more openly revolutionary methods to achieve revolutionary ends—including the “red council,” which resorted to direct action in Patagonia and broke from Soto and his comrades—but the result of uncritically using the language of radicalism is to mistake cause for effect.

When anarchists resorted to violence, they did so not from an impulse to destroy but as a targeted means to achieve justice and to warn state officials against believing they could repress without reprisal. Propaganda by the deed was rarely something for which most anarchists advocated, but they understood its value in certain instances and refused to simply dismiss it tout court as a tactic.¹⁴ A decade before Kurt Wilckens sought to avenge the workers of Patagonia by assassinating Varela in the streets of Buenos Aires, another avenger—described as shy, reclusive, and unassuming—sought revolutionary justice in the face of state violence. Simón Radowitzky was born in Galicia, now a part of Poland and Ukraine, in 1891. His childhood was filled with violence—anti-Jewish pogroms as well as harassment by the czar’s secret police—and Radowitzky fled to Buenos Aires to live with his uncle, arriving in 1908 with one of the largest migratory waves of modern history. He joined the Federación Obrera Regional Argentina and participated in the May Day demonstrations of 1909 during which numerous comrades were killed at the orders of Police Chief Ramón Falcón. Later that year, on November 14, to be exact, Radowitzky approached Falcón’s carriage and threw a bomb into it. Falcón and his right-hand man both died. Radowitzky was immediately arrested. Saved from execution by the fact that he was

¹³ Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Mark Bray, *The Anarchist Inquisition: Assassins, Activists, and Martyrs in Spain and France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), 10–11.

Ricardo Flores Magón died in a prison cell in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1922. His body was broken, as was the movement he had led for nearly two decades. One might be tempted to narrate such a history in the tragic mode or as a story of a failed utopia. Yet despite the squabbles, the disputes, and the frustrating paeans to purity, *magonismo* was nonetheless, Lytle Hernández insists, an “extraordinary political force” and one that surpassed the history of the brothers who gave the movement its name. More to the point, she makes a compelling case for why the *magonista* movement should be a fundamental part of one’s understanding of US history: “The men and women who built the PLM were ordinary people: migrants, exiles, and citizens; farmworkers, sharecroppers, miners, and intellectuals. Most of all, they were rebels.... In the process of confronting the Díaz regime in Mexico, they rattled the workshop of US empire, challenged the global color line, threatened to unravel the industrialization of the American West, and fueled the rise of policing in the United States. Ultimately, the uprising they incited triggered a demographic revolution, giving birth to what is now the largest non-white population in the United States” (308).

After Ricardo Flores Magón’s death, at least one of his comrades ended up in Tampico, Mexico. He found fruitful grounds for organizing in the port city in the wake of Mexico’s revolution. He also encountered an active and important anarcho-feminist movement, one whose history is powerfully told in Sonia Hernández’s *For a Just and Better World*. Working to “engender anarchism” in the borderlands, Hernández focuses on the Texas-Tamaulipas borderlands and the life and work of labor organizer, feminist, and anarcho-syndicalist Caritina Piña. Born around 1895 (the date is not entirely certain), Piña moved to Tampico in the late 1910s or early 1920s. There she encountered a cosmopolitan port city, a growing

and Mexico. The long arm of state repression via the use of federal agencies—police, investigative units, immigration agents, tax officials, and so forth—reaches far back.

Even the postal service was not immune from manipulation for repressive ends as federal officials illegally opened mail to track the movements and activities of alleged radicals. The US Espionage Act of 1917, which prohibited the circulation of antiwar material in the mail, survived the end of the war and continued as a policing mechanism. Just how dedicated federal agents were to circumventing laws of privacy in the US mail system speaks to the centrality of print culture, letter writing, and communication in the making of *magonista* networks, and more generally anarchist ones. Print culture sat at the heart of anarchist organizing, fundraising, and education, as the essays in Christopher Castañeda's and Montse Feu's collection *Writing Revolution* attest. The fifteen chapters in the volume reveal the efflorescence of anarchist print networks across the Spanish-speaking world. This was perhaps the original zine culture. The sheer volume of print produced by anarchists, but also by republicans and others—for example, Max Nettlau—with whom anarchists frequently shared ideas and opinions, served to weave together a broader, transatlantic, North American and Caribbean imagined community of anarchists. Spanish-speaking anarchists used print networks and materials to help shape life for their Spanish-speaking brethren in the United States. The many “common militants,” as Castañeda and Feu term them, who worked on the side as contributors, reporters, and anarchist stringers provided much of the content for anarchist publications, in the process keeping comrades elsewhere informed of, and linked to, events and processes. In much the same way that print capitalism created imagined national communities in the age of revolutions, so did print anarchism forge a radical, hemispheric Hispanic community in the age of the Mexican Revolution. Like *magonismo*, this Spanish-language anarchist culture shaped and influenced the political and cultural development of the United States.

too young to legally be put to death, he suffered repeated torture at the hands of the authorities and was eventually sentenced to life in prison in the famed and feared prison in Ushuaia.¹⁵ Eventually released after an international campaign, he fought in Spain against the fascists before finding refuge in Mexico—following in the wake of comrades Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge—where he lived his final years as a worker in a toy factory under the alias Raúl Gómez Saavedra until his death in 1956.

Agustín Comotto's beautiful graphic history *155: Simón Radowitzky* is perhaps as close to a biography of Radowitzky as we are likely to get. Radowitzky, arrested at a young age, left little in writing for posterity, in part because he did not want to implicate others or harm the movement. Comotto thus makes occasional imaginative leaps to fill gaps and provide narrative force, and he refers to his own work as a novel, but most of it is rooted in careful research and an adherence to the evidence. His research is impressive, drawing from Agustín Souchy's *Una vida por un ideal*, collections in nearly twenty archives in Europe and the Americas, and secondary literature that helped him reconstruct city life, prison conditions, experiences of isolation, and the like.

The presentation, as well as the research, is stunning and captures the possibilities of the graphic form for the writing of history. The book is over 250 pages, inked almost entirely in black and white, which gives the book a visual tone that is melancholic and, at times, bleak. Moments of violence are punctuated with splashes of red, marking the page like a vivid gash, scarring it much in the way such violence scarred the protagonists' lives. In visual terms, this gives a layer of additional meaning to the traditional colors of anarchists (black and red), emphasizing the bloodletting to which they were too often subject. The result is a book that should be taken

¹⁵ For an excellent history of the Ushuaia penitentiary and its environs, see Ryan C. Edwards, *A Carceral Ecology: Ushuaia and the History of Landscape and Punishment in Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

place alongside some of the classics in anarchist prison writings—Alexander Berkman’s *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* and Victor Serge’s *Men in Prison*—and histories of anarchism.¹⁶

Simultaneous with the activities of the young Radowitzky, another anarchist-inspired movement in northern Mexico and the southwestern United States emerged. Perhaps nowhere has the revitalized interest in the history of anarchism in Latin America become more apparent than in the resurrection of the Flores Magón brothers, Enrique and Ricardo. After nearly a century of posthumous renown but in the shadows of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, themselves worthy subjects of anarchist history, the brothers and primary organizers of the revolutionary movement that bears their name—*magonismo*—have emerged into the revolutionary sunlight. They were never entirely absent of course. In Mexico, Ricardo in particular had been enshrined as part of the revolutionary pantheon, but in such a way as to just sideline him yet again (which may explain why student radicals in 1968 invoked his name—“Was Flores Magón a sellout?”—rather than that of Villa or Zapata in their critique of the Mexican state.)¹⁷ A cursory review of the historiography turns up plenty on *magonismo*, but the scope and size of the literature pales in comparison with that produced on other

¹⁶ Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912; New York: New York Review of Books, 1999; Victor Serge, *Men in Prison* (1930; Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014).

¹⁷ Van der Walt and Schmidt, *Black Flame*, 6.

he transported boxes of books authored by the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin rather than the weapons and matériel they so desperately required. He was an “agitator, not a revolutionary,” Lytle Hernández concludes. Just as troubling were the internecine disputes that destroyed the movement’s momentum. The *magonistas* could be a tendentious bunch, and Flores Magón in particular seemed uncompromising. At times this took on reactionary undertones: despite the important work of women in the movement and the centrality of feminism to its ethos, he accused his former ally, Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza, of being a lesbian so as to politically delegitimize her. The story is at times a depressingly familiar one of personal squabbles, petty disputes, purity tests, and power struggles undermining the possibilities of what a movement could achieve. When the brothers proved unwilling to even consider accommodating themselves to a new government in Mexico after the overthrow of Díaz, Mother Jones offered a sobering assessment: they were “unreasonable fanatics” (293). The redundancy of the phrase makes it all the more devastating.

Yet we should not be surprised. This was after all a movement that felt the full weight of not one, but two, states bearing down upon it. The daily struggle to avoid detection, detention, prison, and execution means the stakes were high, nerves were frayed, and every decision could lead to disaster. Indeed, what drives Lytle Hernández’s narrative is the ongoing game of cat and mouse that characterized *magonista* lives on both sides of the border. Their trajectories took them from Tampico and Tijuana to St. Louis and Los Angeles, and most places in between, as they incessantly moved, a consequence of both peripatetic organizational strategies and the need to stay a step ahead of the government agents in hot pursuit. Agents from various institutions surveilled, harassed, arrested, deported, and persecuted *magonistas*, often through illegal and extrajudicial methods. The book should serve as one more sobering reminder of the illegality and disorder that permeated (and continues to permeate) cultures of law and order in the United States

on fire.²³ Reports of the lynching and immolation soon circulated in Mexico and riots erupted, targeting US businesses and properties. In the midst of this growing agitation, the exiled landowner and political aspirant Francisco Madero called for an uprising against Díaz to begin on November 20, a call the *magonistas* heeded. The rest may be history, but it is rare to find the extrajudicial murder of Rodríguez so clearly linked to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution. More broadly, it is a reminder of just how deeply tied Mexico's revolution was to US empire and race. Some three generations of writing on the Mexican Revolution has argued that the revolution was largely a social revolution driven by internal causes, and Lytle Hernández does not necessarily challenge such an interpretation.²⁴ However, her intervention serves as a powerful argument that what was happening to Mexican and Mexican American populations in the United States dramatically shaped how people in Mexico looked at the Díaz regime—which had long coddled foreign investment and tolerated gringo privileges in the mining and railroad industries as well as their manifest presence in much of the north—and its relationship to the United States. This is a book that should rework how historians of the Mexican Revolution understand its origins and the place of racist violence, foreign investment, and anarchist organizing of migrant and dispossessed workers in that story.

At the same time, *Bad Mexicans* is a cautionary tale of how movements fracture and strain under the weight of large personalities and ideological rigidity. Ricardo Flores Magón could at times be clueless. In the case of the disastrous 1911 occupation of Mexicali, which drew in a wide array of agitators and revolutionaries, Flores Magón had little understanding of what armed insurrection demanded. Despite the immediate needs of his comrades,

²³ See also Monica Muñoz Martínez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

²⁴ The most persuasive analysis still is Alan Knight's two-volume *The Mexican Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

revolutionary figures.¹⁸ And yet the brothers were arguably the intellectual font of the revolution.

Like many anarchists before them, their political activities resulted from frustration and anger with the ruling regime's abandonment of liberal principles. Anarchism was, at some level, an effort to recuperate the more radical aspects of revolutionary liberalism that had been gutted by the oligarchy of capital that replaced the oligarchy of birth in the wake of independence in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ Basic issues such as press censorship and the political longevity of dictator Porfirio Díaz initially spurred the Flores Magón brothers to agitate and organize. Having founded the Mexican Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Mexicano, PLM) in 1900, the brothers and their comrades drafted a program in 1906, stressing the need for political and economic guarantees such as no reelection for the president or for state governors, freedom of speech and of the press, secular compulsory education, eight-hour workdays and a minimum wage, regulation and protection of domestic servants, worker-safety guarantees and the prohibition of child labor, and land redistribution. By the time the country erupted in open revolt and Díaz fled to Paris in 1911, the brothers proved more open about their revolutionary anarchist politics. Their slogan, "Land and Liberty," soon would be adopted by the agrarian Zapatistas, but

¹⁸ Salvador Hernández Padilla, *El magonismo: Historia de una pasión libertaria, 1900–1922* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1984); Colin MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Las ideas políticas de Ricardo Flores Magón* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1977); Ward Albrow, *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992); Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Flores Magón* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2014); Devra Anne Weber, "Wobblies of the Partido Liberal Mexicano: Reenvisioning Internationalist and Transnational Movements through Mexican Lenses," *Pacific Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (May 2016): 188–226.

¹⁹ On oligarchy of birth and oligarchy of capital, see Emilia Viotti da Costa, "Liberalism: Theory and Practice," in *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories*, 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 53–77.

their revolutionary aims also resonated with eclectic radicals and social reformers, urban workers and miners laboring in enclaves.

It had particular appeal in port towns such as Tampico and in northern Mexico and the US Southwest, where capital and mining interests had entrenched themselves. In Los Angeles, for example, the PLM was one of a number of militant organizations capitalists confronted. As David Struthers shows, the PLM and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) exercised substantial influence in the city, and management had to contend with the multiethnic culture of affinity created by the city's working class. Struthers's work is a compelling example of what careful attention to geography can do for historical analysis. The material foundations of Los Angeles; the building of its infrastructure; the spatial dynamics of residency, work, organizing, and cultural and social life—union halls, pool halls, bars, and print shops—all are centerpieces in the analysis as spaces in which multiethnic organizing could take place, alliances forged, and friendships created.²⁰ Such spaces of affinity became the venues in which the workers who built Los Angeles—from Mexico, Hawaii, China, Japan, South Asia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire—could build common cause. Unlike the Los Angeles American Federation of Labor, the organizers and rank and file in Struthers's book, including many affiliated with the PLM and/or the IWW, were ethnically and racially inclusive and their publications were often bi- or multilingual (and, if monolingual, they frequently included translated pieces and international news). The anti-Chinese sentiment of California's early twentieth-century working class is well known, as is the anti-Chinese article in the PLM's 1906 platform, but Struthers

²⁰ For works attentive to the spaces of anarchist practice, see Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014); Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counterrevolution in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010); Raymond Craib, *The Cry of the Renegade: Politics and Poetry in Interwar Chile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

convincingly shows that there also existed a robust history of solidarity in Southern California articulated through the language of internationalism, multilingual publications, and nonsectarian commitments.²¹ The gradual demise of such forms of solidarity and affinity, he suggests, came from the increasing spatial segregation of the city in the 1920s as officials and management consolidated control.

Kelly Lytle Hernández's *Bad Mexicans* is a detailed and original study of the Flores Magón brothers and the *magonista* movement. *Magonismo*, she convincingly shows, was an essential part of US, not solely Mexican or borderlands, history. This would seem obvious in retrospect—after all, the brothers fled to the United States in 1904, and many of the “mineworkers, farmers, and cotton pickers” who supported them lived and labored there—but the movement tends to get folded in to either Mexican revolutionary history or the borderlands at the expense of broader US history. The importance of *Bad Mexicans*, in part, is thus how emphatically it situates its subject as central to US twentieth-century history and its overarching themes of race, rebellion, and repression.²²

The book opens on November 10, 1910, when a posse of white farmers in Texas murdered a local ranch hand, twenty-year old Antonio Rodríguez, whom they accused of murdering a white woman. The farmers built a pyre, doused Rodríguez in kerosene, and set him

²¹ Struthers's work fits nicely into a broader, emerging historiography that recaptures interethnic and international solidarity in spaces and times often cast historically as divisive. See, e.g., Joshua Savala, *Beyond Patriotic Phobias: Connections, Cooperation, and Solidarity in the Peruvian-Chilean Pacific World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022); Joanna Crow, *Itinerant Ideas: Race, Indigeneity, and Cross-Border Encounters in Latin America (1900–1950)* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

²² Akemi and Sethness-Castro's introduction to Cappelletti's *Anarchism in Latin America* notes the importance of the translation of his work for “Latinx anarchists who want to read more about their history” (18).