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Piero Garofalo
 University of New Hampshire
 pg@unh.edu

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The knights errant of anarchy: London and the Italian anarchist diaspora (1880–1917), by Pietro di Paola, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013, 244 pp., £70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-846-31969-3

In *Making Sense of Anarchism (2012)*, Davide Turcato admits that understanding anarchists is a difficult task, but he asserts that transnationalism is the key to a more profound grasp of their historical functioning. Nationalist histories have produced erroneous views of a cyclical rise and fall in anarchist activity, but a transnationalist perspective underscores the continuity of these organisations as they were forced to scatter and regroup across borders. As the first to examine the exiled Italian anarchist community in London, Pietro Di Paola's book is an essential contribution to the study of the transnational history of the anarchist diaspora.

Di Paola is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Media Humanities and Performance at the University of Lincoln. Having previously published related articles in *Anarchist Studies*, *European History Quarterly* and *Società e Storia*, this constitutes his first monograph and the second volume in the Studies in Labour History series from Liverpool University Press, edited by Alan Campbell. The author takes a matter-of-fact approach to detailing the activities of a community living in exile and in poverty, at the margins of mainstream political, social and cultural consciousness, fragmented by internal ideological divisions and subverted by external government forces.

In the introduction to his book, Di Paola offers a clear outline of its direction and specifies the aim of 'contribut[ing] to the historiography of diasporic anarchism by exploring practical and ideological aspects of the Italian anarchists . . . in London, one of the most significant nodes of the transnational anarchist network' (p. 5). The first two chapters reconstruct the circumstances under which London became a preferred location for Italian anarchists escaping repression and exile in Italy beginning in the 1870s. With strong traditions of free access, free trade and the presumption of innocence, England, unlike other European nations, also permitted free entry to religious and political refugees. A colony of Italian anarchist militants was firmly established in London in the 1880s. In the next chapter, Di Paola examines the internal ideological split between the 'organisationalists', led by the towering figure of Errico Malatesta, and the 'anti-organisationalists', headed by Vittorio Pini and Luigi Parmeggiani. The details of this schism highlight the inherent difficulties of sustaining political activism based on extreme individualism and anti-establishmentism. Chapter 4 is a detailed account of the publications, conferences, demonstrations and various initiatives that constituted the basis of anarchist activity in the early

twentieth century. Di Paola details the international impact of publications and periodicals, including *L'Internazionale*, *Lo Sciopero Generale* and *La Rivoluzione Sociale*, and the brief promise of community access to education with the *Università Popolare Internazionale*. Di Paola explains that internal conflict and financial insolvency often thwarted such efforts. The extent to which British and Italian authorities monitored and feared anarchist activities is described in an evocative fifth chapter that is filled with archival material and reports reconstructing the often-prickly communications between the Metropolitan Police, *Polizia Internazionale*, Italian diplomats and their informers. Here Di Paola unmasks double agents and reveals the ouroboros nature of espionage. Chapter 6 explores the crucial role of social spaces, particularly clubs like *Autonomie*, the Rose Street Club and the International Working Men's Society, key instruments of organisation where anarchist communities bolstered networks between refugees of different nationalities and with British radicals. Di Paola explains in the final chapter how the international solidarity of the Italian anarchist movement in London was broken by the events of World War I, which divided exiles into interventionist and anti-interventionist camps.

With the exception of figures like Olivia Rossetti, Helen Rossetti and Emilia Trunzio, the author acknowledges early in his account that exiled Italian activists were almost entirely male. Di Paola explains that women make very few appearances in police records but naturally feature more heavily in social accounts of club evenings where they appear as loose, mannish or dangerous. In an enlightening aside, Di Paola describes how Dora Montefiore's scheduled lecture, 'Why Organised Democracy Must Concentrate at the Present Time on Universal Adult Suffrage' at the International Working Men's Society was cancelled for lack of interest in 1909.

Di Paola's account demonstrates that history can be at least as strange as fiction. In conjuring up this very real nineteenth-century history of *agents provocateurs* and divided loyalties in London, the book evokes G.K. Chesterton's metaphysical novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908). In this fictional account, Gabriel Syme is recruited as a double agent by Scotland Yard to infiltrate an anarchist circle in London, ultimately discovering that it is almost entirely made up of other secret agents. If, as Turcato suggests, common historiographical judgements of irrationality have negatively influenced the study of anarchism, Di Paola's study helps clarify how muddied waters in fact became the *modus operandi* for anarchist organisations. Like Syme, the reader may occasionally struggle to make sense of a tangled web of protagonists and antagonists despite Di Paola's clear prose. Luckily, the author has included a comprehensive bibliography and a helpful addendum with brief biographies of the key figures discussed, including Tito Zanardelli, Errico Malatesta, Francesco Merlino, Pietro Gori, Giovanni Defendi, Carlo Cafiero, Francesco Ginnasi, Antonio Agresti and Luigi Parmeggiani.

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Jennifer Griffiths
 The American University of Rome
 j.griffiths@aur.edu

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