

Alexander Berkman's Prison Memoirs annotated: an interview

An annotated edition of *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* has just been published by AK Press. Jessica Moran and Barry Pateman who edited it are both part of the Kate Sharpley Library team. We took the chance to ask them a few questions:

KSL: *Prison Memoirs* is a classic, and much reprinted. You've annotated the text to help readers understand 'the radical world that Berkman inhabited'. What else did you hope this edition would do?

[JM] I don't think *Prison Memoirs* has been out of print in the almost 105 years since its original publication in 1912. It's a classic for a reason, there is so much going on in the book, and each reading brings new elements to light. So partly we just wanted people to read it and with the footnotes give readers some help in bringing the book to life. Because the book is now over a hundred years old, many of the contemporary references, are references that a reader then would have understood without any trouble, but 100 years on they may need a little explanation. But also we wanted to highlight for the reader how the radical tradition Berkman was part of and educated himself in, also shaped him, and gave him the strength to survive prison. The other thing we wanted to do is counter some of the idea that this memoir is the complete *factual* truth, we wanted to tell some of the stories behind the story Berkman told.

[BP] Yes. We felt it was important to explore the radical milieu that Berkman was part of but also, and this may seem contradictory, we wanted to encourage people to understand that *Prison Memoirs* isn't necessarily the truth about Berkman or his time in prison. He, himself, was very clear that book was a Memoir and **Not** an Autobiography. It's

understandable really. He had blanked out some of his prison experiences. Years of solitary had left him unsure about the chronology of events (and if they ever happened!!) and I think he felt that a more creative approach (the invention of characters, the crunching of various events into one incident etc) would allow him to convey the reality of his experiences in a more evocative and harrowing way. Time and again we see people quoting *Prison Memoirs* or *Living My Life* as fact. That's an approach we might want to ponder on.

KSL: It's clear from the diary that you print as appendix that writing *Prison Memoirs* cost Berkman two years of huge effort. Can you outline how the idea to write it arose, and what Berkman wanted it to achieve?

[BP] Berkman had been toying with some memoir of his time in prison from early on in his incarceration. The prison journal *Zuchthausblüthen* (Prison Blossoms) that he created with Carl Nold and Henry Bauer contains the odd piece of autobiography and the plan was to create a book from this. Apparently quite a lot of this material was lost for one reason and another. Once out of prison Berkman never found writing particularly easy, especially when writing about his time in the Western Penitentiary. He was helped and encouraged by Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre in the creation of *Prison Memoirs*—de Cleyre especially offered help with Berkman's English and his sense of narrative and structure with regard to the book—but often he didn't want to go back there in his head. He wanted to forget rather than remember. It's actually quite hard to know what Berkman wanted to achieve with his book. His letters and diaries are frustratingly short on that type of information. I think we can presume he wanted to achieve three things. [continues over]



Berkman's Prison Memoirs

Firstly he wanted to deal with the memories and emotions that haunted him. Secondly he wanted to portray the horror and the ineffectiveness of prison experience. All the casual everyday cruelties, all the constant indignities easily destroyed the human spirit. No one deserved to be put through that, no matter what their crime. Even the worst criminal had sparks of humanity that needed to be respected and saved. They were victims, themselves, of an unforgiving economic and cultural system. Thirdly, and perhaps more implicit, was a critique on the narrowness of anarchist discourse. Simply put what did it have to say to these men living in constant degradation? Throughout his life Berkman struggled with the nature of anarchist propaganda and who it should be aimed at. It shaped his approach not just in *Prison Memoirs*, but in all his writing and editorial efforts, including *Mother Earth*, and especially *The Blast*, but also in *Now and Then: The ABC of Communist Anarchism*, etc. All that began during his prison experience.

KSL: It's now over a hundred years since *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* was published. You don't shy away from talking about some of the tensions it highlights in the anarchist movement of the time, such as that between Berkman and Emma Goldman about who anarchists should be talking to. Do you think there's anything here for anarchists of today beyond a warning that the 'good old days' weren't all that different from now?

[JM] Hmm, well I suppose you can say that it's clear there has never been a consensus about the one correct way to "do anarchism" or be an anarchist. Clearly Berkman and Goldman discussed and argued about these ideas for much of their lives. I think that one of the things we may lose sight of when looking back is that what they were arguing about wasn't necessarily the correct way to be an anarchist, or have the correct values, but rather what was the most effective way to bring about anarchy or build the anarchist movement. Neither ever doubted the other's anarchism, but they often disagreed about who was the best audience for their message, who to aim their propaganda toward, and how to build and grow their movement. Certainly that is something for us to keep in mind; the point is to effectively grow an anarchist movement.

KSL: Berkman is traumatised, but not broken or 'reformed' by his time inside. I want to ask one of those impossible 'What if' questions: If he'd been sentenced to seven years rather than 22, how do you think his life would have been different? Would his name be just a historical footnote like his comrades Henry Bauer and Carl Nold, for example?

[JM] Ah, that is impossible! One can't really guess. Though it seems to me (knowing how his life did turn out) that seven years in prison rather than fourteen probably wouldn't have dramatically changed who he

became. Berkman was a man committed to his political beliefs. While he paints himself as a naïve fanatic during his youth, I have to think that the sensitivity he had to the humanity, the pain and suffering of his fellow prisoners, and his commitment to anarchism would have been there regardless. I think two things that the twenty-two year sentence did do to him were to one make him believe that he would or should die in prison, but then when that wasn't possible, much of that time was given over to the exploring the world through reading, and that reading and study helped him develop into the person he was.

KSL: Finally, it seems to me that producing this edition was an epic process. How long did it take, and what were the hardest and most satisfying things about it?

[JM] I don't want to think about how long it took! Certainly from AK Press originally suggesting the project, it has been a few long years, with plenty of other projects happening in the meantime. But we spent a solid year working on the footnotes. The hardest thing was probably figuring out how to get the right effect with our notes. We wanted the notes to act as sign posts for the reader, helping them understand the text without overloading them with more information than necessary, or telling readers what to think or how to interpret passages or events. The art of the footnote can often be much more complex than it looks on the surface. It's pleasing that we were able to include Berkman's diary. The International Institute for Social History digitized Berkman's papers, including his diary a few years ago, and once we realized we had access to it, it seemed necessary to include. There is so much within it about how Berkman wrote and created *Prison Memoirs*, but also about his life, his activities, and his comrades during that period. While it is quite a private and unfinished piece of writing, it's just such a rich resource, especially for those of us who have long thought that Berkman's contribution to anarchism has been under-valued. It's satisfying to have the diary transcribed, annotated, and available to readers.

[BP] Too long. The hardest thing was to do justice to Berkman. You come away from the book realizing what a staunch character the man was. If we can share our appreciation of him and introduce him to new people then I'll be satisfied.

Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist by Alexander Berkman, annotated and introduced by Jessica Moran and Barry Pateman. Published by AK Press, January 2017. ISBN 9781849352529

<https://www.akpress.org/prisonmemoirsofananarchist.html>

Friends and Neighbours: The Labadie Collection, Federico Arcos and Miguel Garcia

The Labadie Collection has recently announced that the Federico Arcos papers are now open. Arcos, after playing his part in the Spanish Revolution and the postwar resistance moved to Canada. There he connected new generations to anarchism and, to them 'became one of our most cherished elders' (David Watson in his tribute to Federico).

One of the items pictured in the announcement was a letter from Federico to Albert Meltzer after the death of Miguel Garcia (two other figures who connected new generations with anarchism as a living tradition). We're pleased to reprint it here.



[Miguel Garcia at Plaza San Felipe Neri by Federico Arcos]

Windsor, Ont. March 19, 1982

Albert Meltzer
London,

Dear companero:

Years have gone by since that day when I spoke to you by phone from Angel Alley[1] and went to meet Miguel for the first time. I was surprised then of seeing how strong he looked and was, for he carried my suitcase on his shoulders from terminal to terminal at the airport; an effort that I could hardly think, yet it seemed so easy for him.

Since then I met him several times, the last one in Barcelona in 1979, where I took some pictures. The one enclosed was taken at the Plaza San Felipe Neri near the cathedral; against those walls were executed

thousand, of our brothers as you can still see the bullet impact in the wallstones.[2] It was then, for both of us, a symbolic moment because in [it] brought back memories and intensified our feelings. It was the feelings of the past struggle ever present in today's battle; something that can hardly be understood by people that have not lived engaged in a fight like our movement carried on in Spain.

Miguel bade me farewell two days later at the Estacion de Francia that was to be the last embrace. Sadness could not express the emotion upon the lost [loss] of our good comrade for not only ourselves are losing some part of our own but the whole mankind is being deprived the efforts of a MAN that fought for the realities of FREEDOM. And even if freedom might not be a reality, as long as there is a man that feels in himself the need to be free the fight for freedom will go on. If we ever could need a symbol, Miguel might be the one to look at. But we do not need one for it should be enough just carry into ourselves the memory of his personality, his batlas [battles], his spirit of solidarity and to keep on fighting... The continuity is on taking over for the ones we lost, that he did. This we have to do...

I was last Nov in Barcelona but Edo [3] told me Miguel was in London. I intended to go there for a couple of days, mainly to have the opportunity to see you; but did not have enough time. Perhaps we will have a chance to meet in the future.

Enclosed is an overseas money order for \$100.00 Canadian. This is a donation from Grupo Libertad for the production of the TRIBUTE TO MIGUEL GARCIA.[4]

Ours is a small group, only three; but we keep together and do what we can.[5]

Well, dear Albert, Sancho Panza as Miguel referred to you, I wish the publishing goes on soon.

And SALUD y LIBERTAD.

Un abrazo[6]

de

Federico Arcos

Credit: Federico Arcos Papers, Joseph A. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan Library

See <https://www.lib.umich.edu/blogs/beyond-reading-room/federico-arcos-papers-now-open>

David Watson's tribute to Federico is at:

www.fifthestate.org/archive/395-winter-2016-50th-anniversary/remembering-federico-arcos/

Notes (and follow-up)

1, location of Freedom Press, London

2, See this photo at

<http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/k6dkmp> and see also <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/37pwc4>

3, Edo: see Luis Andrés Edo : Anarchist activist whose life was dedicated to the 'Idea' and the struggle for liberty by Stuart Christie

Friends and Neighbours: The Labadie Collection, Federico Arcos and Miguel Garcia

<http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/xd26cp>

4, *Miguel Garcia's story*, edited by Albert Meltzer. Miguel Garcia Memorial Committee & Cienfuegos Press, 1982.

5, The other surviving members of Grupo Libertad were Lorenzo Albas (September 5, 1899-March 28, 1993), 94 years old, and Agustina Riberas, (partner of Francisco Riberas) who died aged 99. Both were mentioned in a notice Federico sent to Spain, published in *CNT* No. 58, February 1994: "They are the last vestige of what was the respected Grupo Libertad."

6, An embrace

Philip Ruff writes:

Thanks for sending this – I appreciate it. I never met Arcos but I was aware of him from Miguel and Albert. I might have met him, but was otherwise detained by Her Majesty, when he visited Barcelona in 1979. I last saw Miguel in June 1981, when I was recently out of the nick, and he was trying hard to persuade me to go and live in Barcelona. He couldn't quite understand that the conditions of my release on parole meant that I had to sign-on regularly with a probation officer in Birmingham for two years. Unfortunately he died in the December of the same year. Terrible.

Sorry for not acknowledging receipt of the *Albert memorial* and the Bayer book [*Rebellion in Patagonia*]. I find these days if I don't write straight away I don't write. But I think the Memorial turned out fine. The small format suits it. I like the way the pictures were reproduced. And now I guess we know (from the letter to Albert) that it was Arcos who took the picture of Miguel in front of the wall with bullet strikes in Barcelona that is attributed to Stuart. The only gripe I have is PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE.... don't print anything else in red type on black background – it drives me nuts! Very hard to read.

I'm actually still (slowly) reading Chris Ealham's marvelous book on Peirats.[1] I can't praise it enough – one of the best things I've read for a long time! It's so great to find a history book that is so well written, well researched and absorbing at the same time – and says something intelligent. I think Ealham does a great job of presenting the events and arguments within the Spanish movement clearly and objectively. [...] It really is a great book.

I'd be glad if you do reproduce the Arcos letter about Miguel. Miguel is really one of the unsung heroes of the anarchist movement in Europe (not only Spain). His impact on my generation of anarchist activists was immeasurable.

Chris Ealham writes:

I'm glad some of Fede's archive is now in the Labadie. I believe the bulk of the material went to Valencia.[2]

Please thank Phil Ruff for his kind words about my book. It's always reassuring and inspiring when someone appreciates my work. [...]

As for Fede, I concur with so many who knew him that he was an inspirational guy. What always impressed me and moved me was his drive and energy, his loyalty and his unerring commitment to the past and to the historical memory of the movement to which he dedicated his life.

Extra notes

1 *Living Anarchism: José Peirats and the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalist Movement* (2015)

2, see <http://www.europapress.es/comunitat-valenciana/noticia-cultura-biblioteca-valenciana-aumenta-fondos-exilio-30000-piezas-donacion-federico-arcos-20070609132835.html>

Thanks to Julie Herrada, and David Watson for info on Grupo Libertad



Friends and Neighbours: Freedom Press

Freedom Press have released an update on their fundraising project to, as they put it, "stop Freedom from slowly dissolving in the rain".

"We've got a unique resource in central London to bring back to its best, a building that has been in the hands of the anarchist movement for nearly 50 years providing space and support for innumerable libertarian projects and which today provides a home for many important organisations. We hope you can join us in making it ready for the next few decades!"

Details at:

<https://freedomsgrebuild.wordpress.com/2016/11/29/fundraising-december-update/>

Library News (January 2017)

This issue of the Bulletin is a bit overloaded, so we've dropped the publications list rather than lose the pictures (or a review and just say 'there's so much more on the website'). Let us know what you think: if you don't say we won't know. Meanwhile, the website now has two pieces by D.I. Rublyov: *The Russian Anarchist Movement During the First World War* <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/vhhp52> and "No anarchist should take... part in this wretched and insane war" A Letter by Saul Yanovsky to Marie Goldsmit in 1915

<http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/h70tb1>

The Albert Memorial



The Albert Memorial: The Anarchist Life and Times of Albert Meltzer (2016 edition) [Book review]

I only met Albert Meltzer a couple of times, and then only briefly. But the firm impression was of a man, in many ways quite ordinary, who had led an extraordinary existence, someone amiable and unassuming but deeply, deeply committed, prepared to put his life and his liberty on the line. Someone, also, not concerned with airy attitudes or with the metaphysics of freedom, but always with an eye on the practicalities of political action.

And that's the impression confirmed by this new, expanded edition of *The Albert Memorial*. Not that Albert shied away from theory; his thinking was clear, sharp, and to the point, as the short excerpts from his writings here remind us. At the core of the book is Phil Ruff's thirty page appreciation of his life and work, fascinating and highly readable, and complemented by some great photos and by a cluster of shorter tributes and comments, some added especially for this edition.

But the sheer groundedness of Albert's approach comes through again and again, particularly in the context of the work of the Anarchist Black Cross. It's cheering to read, for instance, his defence of Kropotkin's sometimes derided assertion that, for the actual work done and for their voluntary ethos, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the International Red Cross can be reckoned "supreme examples of the principle of Mutual Aid between mankind," whatever their limitations and whoever their less desirable patrons might happen to be. In the end, the point is to *make a difference*.

Another side to this groundedness was Albert's unerring and consistent opposition to privilege and to careerism – of any style or shade. A darker thread running through the book is the long bitterness generated by the division between him and some of his erstwhile comrades and their followers grouped around the Freedom Press, who in their class detachment remodelled anarchism as literary attitude, perpetual protest, lifestyle choice, cultural diffusion.

Browsing recently through copies of *Now*, George Woodcock's anarcho-literary magazine of the 'forties, I'm struck by just how much, during WW2, a diluted

version of anarchism had become the default posture for whole cadres of bohemians, a theoretical underpinning for a generalised neo-romanticism in British writing. In its own sphere this may have had some value, and at the time it might have seemed like a political advance, but how wise Albert was to warn of what was at stake, and how alert he was to the dangers of careerism.

Inevitably, it all evaporated. Philosophical "anarchism" soon morphed into an existentialist "personalism" – and then worse. In 1946, to take one example, the "Apocalyptic" writer Henry Treece, sitting at the feet of Herbert Read, had confidently proclaimed anarchism as "an antidote to left-wing Audenism as much as to right-wing Squirearchy." By the early fifties, having successfully "ponced off the ideology," as Albert later put it, he was a nostalgic Tory individualist, and very much at home among the squires. Those of us (myself included) who have long since stepped back from activism, and are these days inclined to sample our anarchism on paper, should take note!

"this valuable little book narrates and celebrates a remarkable life, lived with courage, compassion and a consistent concern for the possibilities of revolutionary change."

There is bitterness here too over the appalling attacks on Albert's reputation after his death in 1996, and some of that still makes for uncomfortable reading. But thankfully it's more than offset by the overwhelming warmth of this tribute, which takes us from aid for the Spanish revolution to the Cairo Mutiny of 1946 to *Black Flag* and beyond. In the process we learn that Albert once earned a living (among many other things) as a joke writer, that Emma Goldman was opposed to boxing, and much else of curious interest. But most of all, this valuable little book narrates and celebrates a remarkable life, lived with courage, compassion and a consistent concern for the possibilities of revolutionary change. Hats off to the man!

Richard Warren

The Albert Memorial: The Anarchist Life and Times of Albert Meltzer (7 January 1920–7 May 1996) Second edition (2016) ISBN 9781849352802

<https://www.akpress.org/the-albert-memorial.html>

Photo: Albert at the typewriter, source: Phil Ruff

Homuncula by John Henri Nolette [Book review]

This novel is an intriguing mixture of horror (very much in the style of H.P. Lovecraft) and anarchist ideas and history. I suppose this could be viewed as rather an unlikely partnership but in truth the writer blends them rather effortlessly to produce a remarkably well written, thoughtful, wryly humorous and genuinely frightening narrative. It has taken what is often the obscurity and onanistic discourse within anarchism and presented it in an exciting and readable way.

“if you have any sense
you will never go hiking
again after reading this
novel.”

Through no fault of his own Robert Henry Pearce is an outsider, initially because of his appearance and then by a series of horrific events that change his life and his understanding of who he is forever. Pearce inhabits a world where one's worst nightmares become reality. He will be overcome by a craving for the taste of human brain and will find himself an incubator of creatures he cannot really know or understand. His world will become one of slaughters and brutalities that leave him, and the reader, horrified and shocked. Pearce will, at times, be possessed by remarkable physical powers and gain some insight into what is really happening around him. A man on the move he travels across early twentieth century Massachusetts and New York State pursued by the “law” and the private armies of the rich, taking refuge in the forests and hills as well as in the bustle of cities.

Now, reading this the plot does seem somewhat demented and indeed there are times when Robert struggles with his sanity as he attempts to understand the reality around him – or what he believes that reality to be. As in Lovecraft there are some dense passages of history (in this novel they are carefully crafted and selected) that our narrator wades through in an intellectual attempt to understand who he has become by discovering echoes and similarities of his situation in historical events. Gradually Pearce and the reader become aware that there is much, much more to both history and the present than we once thought there was.

As this quest for learning and struggle for life carry on we see Pearce becoming more and more aware of who and what he is. He will begin to take agency for his actions and see how he, as an individual, develops in reaction to the horrors that

surround him and infiltrate his life. However exhausted and frightened he may be we are aware that he is becoming himself. Throughout the book we sense an individual strength in the narrator that is a reflection of his attempts to own some type of autonomy. He may well be, awfully lonely, terrified, and mentally and emotionally lost at times, yet he continues to struggle for control of himself. Whatever madness he has to confront he still is Robert Pearce and is continually in the process of making himself. As much as anything else we could read this work as a novel about the strength of the individual

His role as an outsider, his command, however frayed, of himself leads naturally to an alignment with the anarchists and their ideas. Their philosophy carries within it a freedom and self respect that he understands and aligns with. When the slaughters begin he becomes a one man army choosing his targets, whenever he can, among those he considers agents of the state, and the cultural and physical oppressors of the working class. He buys a copy of Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* from Bartomeo Vanzetti and takes part in a bombing mission organized by the insurrectionary anarchist communists grouped around Luigi Galleani in their fight back against the American State during World War One – a state that attempts to destroy their individuality and sense of comradeship as forces in the world are trying to destroy his.

The novel succeeds because no matter how complex or unlikely events may seem to the reader, the narrative remains taut and engaging – even if what we engage with is frankly disgusting or horrific. At times there is a wonderful surreal sense of humour at work – it's not everyone who can wander the country highways followed by a large blob they have incubated!!! That said, it is a sense of suppressed terror that dominates the novel. Some passages are explicitly frightening or, at the very least unsettling but this sense of looming horror is somehow always there, leaving the reader edgy and tense. The familiar becomes the frightening – if you have any sense you will never go hiking again after reading this novel.

Read it then for the horror, for the gripping narrative and the atmospheric passages of description. Read it also for a celebration of the individual affirmation of Stirner's phrase from *The Ego and Its Own* – “I am my own only when I am master of myself, instead of being mastered by anything else”. If, by the end of the book, Pearce has not succeeded in being his “own” he never gives up no matter how little he understands the forces of the unknown ranged against him.

Barry Pateman

John Henri Nolette *Homuncula*
Black Powder Press and CAL Press, 2016, \$19.95
available to purchase through Lulu, on-line.

Malatesta

Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's experiments with revolution 1889-1900 by Davide Turcato [Book review]

Malatesta's an interesting figure, a good example of the militant activist and thinker. The fact that he's mobile (so keeps 'disappearing' when historians are writing about anarchism in just one country), involved in insurrections (which means he's careful what he says in print) and more involved in discussions in the anarchist press than producing weighty tomes (which is where most academics look for theory) mean that he's not unknown but rather underestimated.

If you look at the subtitle, you'll see that Turcato's not aiming to write an account of Malatesta's life. Instead, *Making sense of anarchism* covers the evolution of his ideas as they developed in step with his revolutionary activities. This is closely tied up with challenging half-baked accounts of anarchism from its ideological opponents – 'in contrast with marxist historiography, which hastens to toll the bell for anarchism, liberal historiography wishes it a long life as a permanently unsuccessful movement' (p3) – or 'sympathetic' writers that repeat the same stereotypes of irrational, spontaneous action.

Against this, Turcato proposes writing 'charitably' about anarchism: taking account of the fact that we may not know the full story of events, and that to understand the actions of anarchists on their own terms gets us a lot further than to assume they are, by definition, backward or stupid. He also talks about events being 'opaque': a riot is visible because it gets into the papers. The planning that went into it is (and has to be) hidden from sight. 'That an agitation appeared to be carried out by a mob speaks to the popular participation in it; and that the agitation seemed spontaneous speaks to the ability of anarchists to work underground. Neglecting anarchist opacity and limiting one's scope of analysis to what rises to the surface, attempting to simply connect public events, is likely to provide distorted interpretations. [...] The issue with opacity is not to reinterpret available evidence, but to question it and probe beneath the surface, so as to capture complexity and rationality concealed by simple and odd appearances.' (p247-8) This reminded me of the Bristol Radical History Group doing history from below by looking at paintings of the 1831 Bristol riot: 'We suggested that this wasn't chaos at all, the mob had clearly been organised enough to traverse the city, picking targets and dispatching them with precision. [The curator] replied "Well, I suppose it depends on what your definition of chaos is".' [1] Turcato has the facts at his fingertips to demonstrate that, for example, the riot in Rome on the first of May, 1891, was no spontaneous event but organised and part of a 'wider insurrectionary project'. (p88)

Malatesta's ideas evolve during these

'experiments with revolution'. The book is a demolition job on lazy stereotypes about 'those crazy anarchists' so Malatesta's ideas get looked at in depth. And it's complicated, like going from a couple of switches marked 'anarchist/not anarchist' and 'bearded/not bearded' to a whole mixing desk with channels for a huge range of political, tactical and philosophical choices (Malatesta's ideas and tactical and theoretical themes get over a page in the index). As Turcato says: 'Anarchist action could be carried out in many ways: underground or openly; on economic or political ground; autonomously by anarchists or as part of larger agitations with non-anarchist objectives; violently or peacefully; legally or illegally; and in pursuit of immediate partial gains or broader insurrectionary aims. [...] Yet there was unity in all such tactics, which were all inscribed in the space defined by his tactical principles: insurrectionism, coherence with ends, inclusiveness, "going to the people", and anarchist autonomy.' (p245-6)

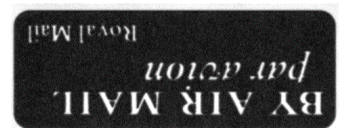
One interesting point Turcato makes is to emphasise the internal coherence of different strands of anarchism. Where it's normal to look at debates, dividing anarchists by where they stand on future economic organisation (collectivist – 'to each according to their labour' or communist – 'to each according to their needs'), he sees it as much more productive to look at tactical differences between anti-organisationists and organisationists. (see p209+).

Not content with that, Turcato also draws attention to similarities between Malatesta's ideas and current thinking in the social sciences. If you want to read up on the history of anarchism, this is a great contribution (both in terms of telling the story behind various revolts, and pointing out the pitfalls of thinking you know it all). I think it's just as valuable for the close attention it pays to anarchist tactics, and it made me feel I had a bit more perspective on disputes I'd been involved with, and parts of the anarchist movement I'd had disagreements with. --

Making Sense of Anarchism is published in paperback by AK Press: ISBN 9781849352314
<https://www.akpress.org/making-sense-of-anarchism.html>

Note

1, '1831 And All That' by Roger Ball:
<http://www.brh.org.uk/site/articles/1831-and-all-that/>



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