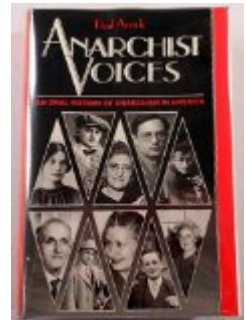


Paul Avrich. *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995. xiii + 574 pp. \$75.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-03412-6.



Reviewed by Charles A. Zappia

Published on H-Ethnic (January, 1996)

Anarchism, generally defined as endorsing the ideal that the state must be replaced by confederations of voluntary associations, has a long history in the United States, dating at least to the 1850s. It had a major impact on the formation of working-class movements prior to the negative public and governmental response following the Haymarket affair. Thereafter, its influence more often was limited to groups of immigrant workers, especially among the Jews and Italians. Anarchist ideals also infiltrated artistic circles in the U.S., even after the fierce government repression of left-wing radicalism that began with American entry into the First World War and continued through the 1920s. Despite its significance, few Americans, including even many professional historians, know much about anarchism, at least once it is divorced from names like Emma Goldman, Nicola Sacco, and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. But American anarchism does have its scholars. Foremost among them is Paul Avrich, Distinguished Professor of History at Queens College and the Graduate School, City University of New York. Avrich, best known for his books *Sacco and Vanzetti* and *The Haymarket Tragedy*, has pro-

duced a new volume of considerable merit, *Anarchist Voices: The Oral History of Anarchism in America*.

Avrich's most recent work is a compilation of 180 interviews he conducted over a period of nearly thirty years. Those interviewed were mostly former anarchists, many of whom professed to having kept the faith, though few were politically active at the time of the interviews (approximately 1963 to 1991). Most of the respondents were foreign-born, Jews and Italians dominating the list, with lesser representation from Spanish, French, German, Russian, and Chinese-born activists. Most had participated in radical activities between the 1880's and the 1930's, and, naturally, most were in their senior years when Avrich interviewed them (in fact, many had died by the date of publication). There are also a number of interviews with relatives and friends of anarchists, most of whom were not themselves politically active.

There is no attempt at comprehensive history, elaborate explanation, or analysis. In his preface, Avrich makes it clear that his intention was to

"...make them [the interviews] available to students and scholars in an accurate and readable form" (xii). Moreover, the questions he asked directed his respondents to reflect upon the personal as much as the political. What kind of people were they? Why had they become anarchists? What did they want, what did they do to try to get it, and how successful do they think they were? Although Avrich provides brief introductions to the text of every interview, he allows his respondents to answer those questions directly. Their responses, largely unedited, fill nearly 500 pages, providing a fascinating panorama of a variety of beliefs and lifestyles.

The book is divided into six sections: "Pioneers," "Emma Goldman," "Sacco and Vanzetti," "Schools and Colonies," "Ethnic Anarchists," and "1920's and After." Part One, "Pioneers," focuses upon the experiences and activities of the earliest American anarchists. In his introduction to Part One, Avrich briefly summarizes the major ideologies that divided the American movement, and links each with its most important European advocate. He quickly skims over the perplexing array of anarchist variants and proselytizers, among them individualist anarchism (Benjamin Tucker), mutualist anarchism (Pierre-Joseph Proudhon), collectivist anarchism (Mikhail Bakunin), communist anarchism (Peter Kropotkin), and syndicalism. In addition, there were the eclectics, like Rudolf Rocker, who drew selectively from several traditions without wholly embracing any one of them. Regarding the earliest American anarchists of note, Avrich writes specifically only about the dramatic Johann Most and the lesser-known but very influential Rudolf Rocker, who lived out his last twenty-five years in the United States. Otherwise, the author focuses on general trends, periodizing the American movement as dominated by revolutionary collectivists in the 1880's, individualists in the 1890's, and communist anarchists after 1900. He notes that anarcho-syndicalists, advocating worker ownership and management of factories, had a

significant base among workers, especially Italian and Jewish immigrants, in industrialized areas of the country.

Given the diversity of opinion and the depth of disagreements among anarchists, the reader will be grateful that Avrich clarifies three common perspectives that united them. American anarchists wanted to abolish the state and destroy the power of most established institutions; they wanted the stateless society to be based upon voluntary cooperation; and, they feared and combated most forms of Marxian socialism, particularly the communist model with its reliance on centralized state authority to carry out the class aims of the proletariat.

The fourteen interviews that comprise Part One connect the fledgling American movement with its European roots, illuminate the American context, and tell us much about what it meant to be an anarchist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Oriole Riche, the daughter of Benjamin Tucker and New England-born Pearl Johnson, remembers that she was born two days too soon for her parents, who had been hoping she would arrive on the anniversary of the Haymarket executions. Oriole grew up in France, not moving permanently to the U.S. until she was in her early thirties. The anarchist circle, in both the U.S. and Europe, was small and closely drawn as she remembers it. At one time or another, she encountered most of the actors in the anarchist drama. Riche's reminiscences also illustrate that the anarchist dream was not passed down often from the first generation to the second. Oriole admits to having never been an anarchist, and claims that even her father had lost faith in the workability of anarchist solutions by the time of his death.

Laurance Labadie, son of Joseph A Labadie, a disciple of Proudhon and Tucker, likewise rejected his father's convictions, though later in life: "What would you think if I told you anarchism is a pipe-dream? But that's exactly what I've come to believe" (16). Alexandra Kropotkin, only child of

one of the icons of anarchism, bemoaned the 1964 presidential election loss of arch-conservative Barry Goldwater.

John J. Most, Jr., elder son of Johann Most, had a different response to the faith of his famous father, though its transference seems to have skipped a generation: "I still share my father's ideas. My son, Johnny Most the sportscaster [for the Boston Celtics] has no interest in anarchism whatever. But my grandchildren are interested, very much so" (19).

What was it like to grow up in fully engaged anarchist households? Oriole Tucker remembers that her father had an answer to everything, and that he delivered his answers with an air of ex cathedra authority. He believed in contractual relations so strongly, that he had his eighteen-year-old daughter sign a statement specifying her share of household expenses. Joseph Labadie talked endlessly of anarchism in front of his son; yet he never sought to convert him, thinking that to do so would compromise his son's freedom. John Most endured taunts of "filthy anarchist" and occasional stonings as a child on New York's Lower East Side. The police harassed the family, once ransacking their apartment. His parents, who never married ("of course"), were not harmonious, sometimes throwing pots and pans at one another in front of their children.

Many of those interviewed recall their memories of important historical events. Beatrice Fetz, daughter of Tuckerites George and Emma Heller Schumm, remembers how as a child she heard much about the Haymarket bombing and its aftermath. Her father visited August Spies in jail, and was assured that neither he nor any of those arrested had anything to do with the affair.

Mary Schwab, the wife of Haymarket defendant Michael Schwab's son, recounts the assurances of her mother-in-law that the Chicago anarchists had no knowledge of who threw the bomb. Grace Umrath, granddaughter of immigrant anarchist publishers and colonists, claims that her

grandfather, when approached by Leon Czolgosz in 1901 and advised of his plan to kill William McKinley, concluded that Czolgosz was a government agent provocateur, a charge not corroborated by later research. Umrath also remembers that most of her family's friends felt that Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, though dealt with unfairly by the courts, nevertheless were guilty of the Preparedness Day bombing, and that Alexander Berkman, who was in San Francisco at the time, may have been involved as well.

Part Two of *Anarchist Voices* consists of fourteen interviews addressing primarily "the personal side" (49) of Emma Goldman. Avrich provides a sensitive biographical sketch as an introduction to the section. The composite portrait of Goldman drawn by those who knew her is both harsh and flattering. For those who revere Goldman's legacy, there is ample support of her image as passionate and brave, brilliant as an orator and propagandist, pioneering in her refusal to embrace the traditional role of woman. However, since most of Avrich's informants focus on the personal rather than the political, Goldman's weaknesses stand out most often. She is described by most as physically unattractive, the responses ranging from "ordinary" to "repulsive," though at least one acquaintance remembered her as "beautiful."

Although the physical appearance of other prominent anarchists, most of them male, does draw comment throughout the interviews, it is Goldman's that captures most attention, with the possible exception of that of another woman, Voltairine de Cleyre. In fact, de Cleyre seems to have served as the reverse image of Goldman for many. Emma Gilbert, for example, is quoted as saying: "My whole understanding of elegance' goes back to Voltairine. . . . She herself had an ascetic kind of beauty. And she smelled very good, like lavender. She wore a dark, long-sleeved dress, and every gesture of hers had a kind of beauty, especially in contrast to Emma Goldman, whom I always found repulsive" (225). One gets the impres-

sion that some found it strange that Emma, heavy-set and homely, craved sex endlessly, and perhaps stranger yet that she seemed never to want for lovers, as though one's perceived physical appearance is the only factor in one's sexual drive and appeal.

Goldman also is described as vain, stubborn, domineering, self-centered, insensitive, and unpleasant, especially when she is compared, as she is so frequently in these interviews, with her long-time comrade Alexander Berkman. Freda Diamond, who as a child was very close to Goldman, noted "It was easier to like Sasha [Berkman] than Emma. Emma treated us like people, not as children. Berkman was gentler. He had a sweet smile. What a wonderful man he was. He treated us with more tenderness" (52). Magda Schoenwetter, who knew Goldman through the Modern School of New York, summed up the sentiments of the majority of those cited in this section of the book when she said: "Sasha was nice to us, but Emma was a pain in the ass" (230).

Still, Goldman's generosity stirred memories as well. Hilda Adel, a member of the Frayhayt Group, four of whom were plaintiffs in the famous Abrams case, recalls being young, broke, pregnant, and desperately in need of an abortion in December, 1919, just as Goldman, Berkman and others were being prepared for their long, forced voyage on the Buford. ". . . Emma called . . . [and] told me what was to be done, whom to see, everything I needed to know. She didn't know me intimately, yet she was concerned about me and determined to help--on the very day that she was thrown out of the country! So those who call her harsh and selfish can't convince me!" (61).

The Sacco and Vanzetti case was certainly the central event for a generation of American anarchists and other radicals as well. Much has been written about the crime of which they were accused, the travesty of justice that was their trial, and how their death-row agony became both a warning to and a rallying point for American im-

migrant workers. Part Three of the work under review takes a somewhat different look at the world of "the good shoemaker and the poor fish-peddler." Avrich presents 39 interviews intended to explore the pre-1920 lives and personalities of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Also, as he has done more comprehensively in an earlier work, Avrich seeks to illuminate the social milieu in which they lived, this time by recording the reminiscences of their comrades and acquaintances. This section presents some of the most compelling testimony to be found anywhere in the volume.

The first interview presented is that of Spencer Sacco, Nicola's grandson, who has recovered much of the family history related to the celebrated case. Spencer really knows his grandfather only through the eyes of his grandmother, Rosina and his father, Dante, since Nicola Sacco was executed before he was born. Rosina, filtered through her grandson's memory, is a remarkable person. She was an atheist of such conviction that she refused to attend even her son's funeral since it was held in church. She, like her husband, was a supporter of direct action who admired both the Italian anarchist responsible for a bombing attempt on A. Mitchell Palmer's life and another she thought responsible for the bloody Wall Street bombing, though Avrich informs us in a footnote that such was not the case. Spencer's family never discussed the case, until schoolmates started teasing him and his brothers, telling them that their grandfather was an executed murdered. Then their father sat them down, and gave them a factual recital, stressing the conviction that their grandfather was not guilty. Afterward, Dante Sacco talked little of the case, though it was a burden he would carry to his grave.

Nicola Sacco is remembered fondly not only by his family, but by his former friends and neighbors as well. All characterize him as quiet, abstemious, polite, and dignified. He was a master shoe factory worker, according to a fellow work-

er. He was visibly and romantically in love with his wife, notes another. Memories of Bartolomeo Vanzetti, likewise, are very positive. He, too, was quiet and gentle, and free of the vices that plagued many of America's poorest workers. He was not a craftsman, like Sacco, but was an untutored poet. Since he had no family to nurture him and insulate him from the larger community, he faced more directly than did Sacco the scorn of older-stock Americans, many of whom he knew to be his intellectual and spiritual inferiors. Yet despite days of hard work and abuse, Vanzetti, as he is portrayed in these pages, was a loving man. Beltrando Brini, who was only six when Vanzetti came to live in his household, and who testified in 1920 that he had been with Vanzetti delivering eels on the days of the Bridgewater robbery, remembers his friend as both a committed radical and the most sensitive and generous of beings. "Vanzetti was anarchism personified.... He loved nature, flowers, the sea with [an] ... unadulterated love.... [He] made me feel proud of myself, something my father never did" (101). Lefevre Brini Wager, Beltrando's sister, notes that Vanzetti "once...gave his boots to a man who didn't have any and had a family" (105).

Those who knew Sacco and/or Vanzetti and who one-half century later still remembered their gentleness and fine characters also knew them as committed anarchists. Moreover, as is clear from the interviews in this section, they were not of the "arm-chair" persuasion. Rather than being simple men who only dreamt of social justice, both Sacco and Vanzetti were committed to the destruction of the existing state by violent means. They, like the vitriolic Luigi Galleani, publisher of *Cronaca Sovversiva*, despised the state, and considered its violent overthrow to be the finest expression of the human spirit. The two were involved in the dynamite plot against A. Mitchell Palmer that cost one of their comrades, Carlo Valdinoci, his life. In the words of Concetta Silvestri, a former Galleanista, "... both of them were militants and were

ready to do whatever was necessary to achieve their idea" (108).

The Italian community in and around Plymouth, Massachusetts, supported Sacco and Vanzetti after their arrests both because of and in spite of their militant anarchism. "The neighbors, mostly devout, conservative people, thought a lot of Vanzetti. He was good to them," recalls Lefevre Brini Wager (105). George T. Kelly, whose grandfather owned the shoe factory in which Sacco worked, says of his family's attitude toward their employee: "They were aware of his radicalism but didn't know what to make of it. They saw him as a good worker, a family man, and a kind person" (100). In addition to the "devout, conservative people," there were many anarchists and other radicals among the Italian immigrants living in Massachusetts. The interviews indicate several important characteristics of that community: anarchists, socialists, and Wobblies were active; there were numerous strikes, many supported with parades and demonstrations; a significant sector of the immigrant population brought with them from Italy radical experiences and traditions; and, agitators like Galleani had an impact on a circle of immigrants far broader than those few who were militantly active. Ralph Piesco claims that "Foggiani had been emigrating to Milford for a long time. Most left for economic reasons. It was a poor province with a history of strikes and peasant disturbances" (98). Jennie Paglia remembers crowds of workers and their children marching down the streets of Needham singing "La Bandiera Rossa" during a 1913 strike (97). Catina Willman, a Sicilian immigrant to Brooklyn, converted to anarchism after hearing just one Galleani oration (111).

The respondents are divided on the enduring controversy over Sacco and Vanzetti's guilt, demonstrating essentially the same divisions as contemporary scholars. Most are convinced that the men were innocent of the crimes for which they were executed; however, some claim that

Sacco was guilty of the shooting, some that he was guilty of the robbery only. According to others, Vanzetti was either completely uninvolved, absent from the scene but possessing prior knowledge that the holdup was about to occur, or on the scene but uninvolved in the shooting. After having read all of the appropriate comments in *Anarchist Voices*, one closes the book without resolving the Sacco and Vanzetti case.

Fifty-four interviews with people who attended anarchist schools and/or lived in anarchist colonies comprise Part Four of the book. In his introduction to the section, Avrigh traces the development of libertarian, or Modern School, education, first elucidated by Francisco Ferrer y Guardia in Spain in the early years of this century. The extensive Ferrer movement in the United States, which persisted until nearly 1960, built child-centered schools that promoted active learning and the development of both manual and intellectual skills. Curricula and programs were flexible, and rigid timetables and codes of discipline were anathema.

The Ferrer school that receives most attention through the interviews is the Modern School of New York, which opened in 1911, moved to Stelton, New Jersey in 1915, and closed during the final months of World War Two. At Stelton, boys and girls in mixed company came and went as they pleased, attending classes when they felt like it, playing when the spirit moved them. There was no set curriculum, and no attempt to coerce or punish. Virtually every person who attended or even visited Stelton discusses its two most important teachers and managers, Alexis and Elizabeth Ferm. "Uncle" and "Aunty," as they are called by most of their former pupils, are universally remembered as dedicated educators. Uncle is the more revered; most recall his kindness and patience, whereas Aunty is depicted as having been harsh and eccentric.

In addition to Stelton, which was as much a colony as a school, this section of the book con-

tains many memories of the anarchist colony at Lake Mohegan, New York, a community that also included a Modern School. There are also interviews with those who lived in anarchist colonies near Tacoma, Washington (Home), and near Saginaw, Michigan (Sunrise). Whereas Stelton and Mohegan were built around their schools on the assumption that a libertarian education would produce adults who could mold non-coercive societies in the future, the Home and Sunrise colonies were more focused on adults living in harmony with nature.

How effective were the Ferrer schools in producing adults who were both educated and anarchist? The results were uneven. Certainly, many of the alumni of the Modern Schools became productive adults, as is evidenced in the biographical sketches sometimes supplied by Avrigh, more often incorporated in the interviews. Most did not remain life-long anarchists, though many remained critical of establishment institutions and values. Regarding the acquisition of specific skills, the results seem to have been less positive.

Magda Schoenwetter, one of the original New York Modern School students who moved with the academy to Stelton, comments: "What everybody is yowling about now - freedom in education - we had then, though I still can't spell or do multiplication" (230). Anna Schwartz, who directed the Stelton school late in its history, points out that there were tensions between desires for freedom and insistence on academic standards, especially for workers who desired better futures for their children. "The community of tailors and dressmakers wanted a free school, but they wanted academics. With the Fermes, there were workshops and printing but not enough academic work for immigrant Jewish workers, who themselves had always yearned for an education and who wanted their children to become educated professionals" (241).

The communal experiments elicited many warm memories, some of them approaching the idyllic. For example, Ray Shadlowsky, a Shelton

alum, remembers the openness of adult-child communication, the excitement of listening to spirited readings of Dickens and Mark Twain while popping corn, her "delirious" happiness. "People," she concludes, "were allowed to develop their own potentialities. You didn't live according to rigid rules but could do what you wanted as long as you didn't interfere with the rights of others" (234).

On the other hand, many of Avrigh's informants remember a host of problems in paradise. Many of the colonists were incapable of doing the kinds of agricultural labor some of the colonies required to survive. The openness of the communes led to their exploitation by a long succession of dilettantes, called "cranks" by one former colonist. Communists warred increasingly with the founding generation of anarchist communards in the 1920's. And, not surprisingly, there were marital and relationship problems and personal feuds that ripped apart some of the communities, especially those that were smaller.

Problems notwithstanding, the memory of anarchist educational and lifestyle experiments retains an aura of excitement, even when filtered through fifty years or more of disappointment. The former communitarians quoted in *Anarchist Voices* were people, many of them workers, who not only developed a critical view of existing society, not only embraced certain models for the transformation of that society, but who struggled to live differently. That struggle, despite its moments of joy and achievement, ultimately failed to change the world. But one cannot leave the pages of this book without admiring those who were convinced that the struggle was worth their efforts.

The first three sections of Avrigh's book provide considerable insight into the German, Jewish, and Italian American anarchist communities. Part Five, "Ethnic Anarchists," broadens the cultural focus a bit to include Russian, Spanish, and Chinese activists. In his section introduction, Avrigh

points out that Italians comprised one of the largest and most radical of the anarchist ethnic groupings. He also maintains that "They did not, however, play a notable part in the organized labor movement, differing in this respect from their Russian and Jewish comrades, who were prominent in the construction and textile unions. Not that the Italians were completely estranged from the unions, but their role was inconsiderable mainly because of their suspicion of formal organizations that might harden into bureaucratic shapes, with their own bosses and officials" (316). This analysis is about the only significant point Avrigh makes in *Anarchist Voices* with which I must register partial disagreement. First of all, I'm not certain why Avrigh specifies "textile" unions, in which Jews were a relatively minor presence, rather than clothing unions, in which Jews constituted the majority through the 1920s. Two pages later, Avrigh does note that Jews (referring to anarchists, I presume) were especially active in the ILGWU and the ACWU. Edwin Fenton established years ago that Italian anarchists were active in the garment trades unions. My own (as yet unpublished) research on the role of Italian unionists in the women's clothing trade in New York City also contradicts the view expressed by Avrigh. Certainly most of the activists who built Local 89, the Italian Dressmakers, ILGWU, into one of the largest union locals in the nation by the mid-1930's were not anarchists in any formal sense. But many of them consistently espoused communist anarchist ideals. Arturo Giovannitti and his Italian Chamber of Labor were well represented at virtually every Italian garment unionist function. Carlo Tresca, despite the fact that he often attacked the leadership of Local 89, remained very popular with the membership, and even dined regularly with Secretary General Luigi Antonini, the leader he attacked most often. The Local 89 activists made common cause with the anarchists in the anti-fascist struggle, especially after the communist-instigated "civil war" within the ILGWU during the mid-and late 1920's. Thus

depending on how one defines the term, I can't agree that Italian anarchists played no "notable" role in the labor movement.

Avrich's comments regarding the significance of Luigi Galleani and his *Cronaca Sovversiva*, and the colorful Carlo Tresca, publisher of *Il Martello*, are much more on the mark. Clearly, Italian anarchists constituted a major force within their immigrant community, and in the anti-fascist movement. Moreover, their activities and propaganda influenced the broader anarchist movement as well, and the comments of many of the forty-one people interviewed in this section substantiate that analysis.

The interviews who were or who recall the Jewish, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese anarchists are most impressive in conveying the vitality of ethnic anarchism prior to the 1930's. Hundreds of periodicals- at least twenty each in Yiddish, German, and Spanish, perhaps seventy in Italian - touted social revolution and individual freedom for several decades. Workers, after difficult days of toil, filled lecture halls and alternative school classrooms to pursue their ideals. Each ethnic grouping of anarchists had its own orchestras and theater groups. Anarchists drew upon national traditions to both entertain and enlighten their comrades and co-nationals.

Joachim Edo remembers Spanish anarchist picnics around Detroit during the days of the Spanish Civil War in which elaborately produced plays presented in traditional style stressed the oppression of contemporary life and the need to end it through revolutionary action (399-400). The "ethnic anarchists," as revealed in the words of Avrich's informants, retained affection for their distinctive cultural traditions, worked hard, and were serious about their ideals while still doing all they could to enjoy the simple pleasures of everyday life.

The concluding section of this long book surveys "The 1920s and After." Avrich explains how phenomena like the decline of immigration, re-

strictive legislation that nearly closed off new migration from southern and eastern Europe, the assimilation of the American-born children of foreign-born anarchists, and the near-hegemony of communism on the Left crippled the anarchist movement in the 1920's and beyond. Nevertheless, many of the twenty people interviewed in this section indicate that anarchism did not vanish entirely from the American scene. In fact, several new periodicals and youth groups sprung to life in the 1920s and 1930s. But by the post-World War Two period, the appeal of anarchism clearly had shifted. It was no longer the most oppressed workers, but more often students and intellectuals who took an interest in anarchism. Avrich concluded by noting that this interest remains strong in our own day. Many of those interviewed continue to warn of the dangers posed by concentrated power. Some emphasize that concentrations of property are dangerous to the well-being of the many.

But more seem to focus on what they consider to be the naturally oppressive role of the state. Louis Genin, who once wrote for several anarchist publications, comments that "I was always against authority, against the state, against organization being imposed on me whether I like it or not. I always shared Jefferson's 'That government is best which governs least,' and also the views of Thoreau and Emerson, the American liberal heritage. So I turned away from socialism and communism and towards anarchism. We had our own liberal tradition right here in America, and a fantastic one! (440)." It may well be that the kinds of sentiments expressed by Genin would more often find agreement today among the anti-government forces dominating the ranks of freshmen Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives, though Avrich makes no such assessment.

The text of the interviews is followed by pages of endnotes, many of them supplying important information and clarification. Avrich's notes are particularly helpful in identifying indi-

viduals, publications, events, and movements mentioned with little or no explication in the interviews. The author also provides an excellent list of anarchist periodicals, both English-language and from the immigrant press. He includes just a sprinkling of foreign publications.

The Selective Bibliography is a fine supplement, helpfully organized to compliment the various parts of the book. The index is complete and very well organized. Many will find it useful in locating information about specific persons, groups, or events, especially given the considerable length of the volume. Last of all, Princeton University Press has produced an attractive book. The font size is small but the print is very clear and readable, something most readers will come to appreciate as they reach page 400 or so.

In summary, Paul Avrich has enriched our understanding of American anarchism with his nicely written and skillfully edited work. Despite some annoying repetition in the introductory paragraphs that precede every respondent's statement, Avrich's writing is crisp. The introductions to each of the major parts of the book demonstrate Avrich's mastery of his field, as he compresses a bewildering array of information about a complex movement into short, readable narratives. The scope of his coverage of American anarchism is breath-taking; in fact, probably a bit daunting to many. Although short selections from the book could be used in college-level survey courses, this volume will be most useful to those who already know much about American radicalism. The lack of a longer, more general introduction to the topic renders the book less useful to non-specialists. But for those who know the territory, *Anarchist Voices* is a most rewarding work of history. It gives texture to a movement too often perceived one-dimensionally; it gives voice to many heretofore unknown actors in an important American drama.

Copyright (c) 1996 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit

educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@H-Net.MSU.EDU.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-ethnic>

Citation: Charles A. Zappia. Review of Avrich, Paul. *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America*. H-Ethnic, H-Net Reviews. January, 1996.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=255>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.