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Banal and everyday (inter)nationalism: French and Italian anarchist exiles in London, 1870s–1914

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Abstract

This article explores the anarchists' multilayered theoretical and practical engagement with the concepts and performance of nations, nationalism and national belonging, by applying the frameworks of banal nationalism (understood as an ideology) and everyday nationhood (the daily practices in which nation and nationhood are enacted) as analytical categories, to investigate the Italian and French anarchist exile groups in London between 1870 and 1914. Adopting these theoretical categories proves fruitful in probing the anarchists' perception and enactment of the idea of nation and national belonging, contributing to the literature on the relationship between pre-1914 socialist movements and (inter)nationalism and highlighting the specificity of anarchism therein. Using Fox and Miller-Idriss's four categories of everyday nationhood, we show that while the anarchists explicitly subverted the everyday performance of nationhood, redeploying it along internationalist lines, some forms of attachment to the national did endure and were in fact not always contradictory with anarchist internationalism. Looking at the exilic rituals of this intensely diasporic group thus complicates the simplistic but still pervasive view of a monolithic ideological internationalism and rejection of the national on the part of anarchists.

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KEYWORDS
anarchism, banal nationalism, everyday nationalism, exile, internationalism, London

1 | INTRODUCTION

This article explores the anarchists' multilayered theoretical and practical engagement with the concepts and performance of nations, nationalism and national belonging, by applying the frameworks of banal nationalism (understood as an ideology) and everyday nationhood (the daily practices through which nation and nationhood are enacted) as analytical categories, to investigate the Italian and French anarchist exile groups in London between 1870 and 1914. This exploration fulfils two objectives. Firstly, it contributes to the growing body of scholarship disentangling the complex and at times contradictory relationship that the anarchists entertained with the nation and national belonging, by analysing how they enacted and disseminated their internationalist and cosmopolitan ideas and practices in exile, yet at the same time negotiated, constructed and performed their own national identities in both their militant activities and daily lives. This framework complements the vast body of work exploring anarchist internationalism and antinationalism, through a focus on a local history of banal nationalism within anarchist exile circles. Secondly, the article demonstrates that the anarchists, with their distinctive political imagination of a stateless and borderless world bound by class solidarities, as well as their diasporic presence across all the continents, made a significant contribution to reconceptualising the nation, in particular within the internationalist left. Focusing on the interplay between banal nationalism, everyday nationhood, and the internationalist ideologies and transnational cultural affinities, which bound the Italian and French groups of anarchist exiles in London between 1870s and 1914, we argue that the anarchists enacted an original synthesis through transnational community-building—albeit one which did not fully resolve their competing national and internationalist attachments and was largely defeated by the patriotic surge of 1914. As such, anarchist conceptions, enactments and deconstructions of the nation present an important contribution to the intellectual and social history of nationalism and internationalism on the left, and a further illustration of 'a stimulating puzzle regarding cosmopolitanism: the persistence of national forms of identification in movements that aspire to bypass national affiliations' (Dazey, 2020, 1).

The historical experience of anarchists before the 1914 watershed, when the outbreak of the war initiated a movement of border-closing and outburst of nationalist sentiment within anarchist ranks, therefore offers much to probe regarding both theoretical stances and practical attitudes towards nationalism among some of its fiercest critics. In this period, anarchists were staunchly internationalist in their political outlook and ideals, which were largely shaped by the legacy of the First International as well as the ideas of 1848 and the Paris Commune. Anarchism challenged the very existence of the nation-state; they regarded it as a historical phenomenon and engaged with the analysis of its emergence and developments (Kropotkin, 1896; Rocker, 1933). In a period when the anarchist movement was profoundly transnational in its ideals and organisation—representing 'the world's first and most widespread transnational movement organised from below and without formal political parties' (Moya, 2009, 39), due to the global influence of anarchist ideas and intense mobility of anarchists through labour migration and exile, the experience of displacement and the construction of transnational solidarities were often central to the political and ideological identity of anarchists. This, in turn, makes anarchism a choice testing ground to assess everyday practices of (inter)nationalism. While tensions between internationalism and nationalism ran through all socialist movements, the above characteristics account for the specific ways in which they presented for anarchists.

Exile was especially propitious for enacting the internationalism which was integral to pre-1914 anarchism; to explore cosmopolitan practices in exile as well as their limitations, this article concentrates on the everyday life and the social milieu of these political refugee groups. This 'social milieu' is defined here as threefold: the cosmopolitan milieu among which the exiles tended to settle, the British society to which they were confronted and, especially for Italian exiles, their relationships with the economic migrant community. From all three standpoints, the daily and

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militant sociability of anarchists shows a displacement of the incorporating rituals associated with nationalism from the national to a transnational scale. However, this displacement from the national to the transnational was not complete, and 'everyday nationhood' also appears clearly in the everyday, political and social lives of these groups, which were structured and functioned along national lines. These groups therefore present an interesting case of everyday (inter)nationalism, in tension between internationalism and everyday nationalism.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ANARCHISTS' 'EVERYDAY' NATIONALISM

It is important to avoid any blunt equation of internationalism with a presumed unilateral rejection of identification with the nation on the part of anarchists and to appreciate instead the complexity of their assessment of and practical positioning towards the nation-state. This line of analysis is well established in scholarship, complicating the seeming opposition between identification with the nation/internationalism; as pointed out by Michael Forman (1998), labour internationalism and the allegiance to class never meant a simple abrogation of the nation. Cahm and Fisera (1978–1980) highlight the importance of revolutionary patriotism for some anarchists, while also noting areas of anarchist resistance, for instance, through antimilitarist and anti-patriotic activism. The tensions between nationalism and internationalism have been an important focus of the recent scholarship of anarchism, showing that forms of national belonging were recognised or indeed embraced by anarchists (Ferretti & Gutiérrez, 2019; Kinna, 2021).

A powerful corrective to reductive internationalist narratives comes from the ideological legacies and occasional continuities in personnel of the mid-19th century movements of national emancipation or unification, such as the Italian Risorgimento, the Springtime of the people or the Paris Commune's revolutionary patriotism, which inscribed emancipatory nationalism at the heart of anarchist historical references. The landmark volume edited by Hirsch and Van der Walt (2010) has highlighted the frequent overlap of anticolonialism and anti-imperialism (a key expression of anarchist internationalism) within national liberation movements. Other recent reassessments of anarchist transnationalism have stressed the relative ease with which anarchist internationalism and expressions of individual and collective attachment to the nation (understood as a bottom-up community and detached from state authority) could be reconciled, even in notorious examples such as Peter Kropotkin's injunction for anarchists to join the war effort from 1914 (Adams & Kinna, 2017; Bantman & Altena, 2015; Kinna, 2016). While much has been written about the high politics and theories of the period—including anarchist conceptions of the nation and cosmopolitanism (Levy, 2011)—considerable scope remains to investigate practices and their meanings. Confronting ideology and practice in situ, in exilic, migratory contexts, has been key in evidencing how expressions of cosmopolitanism coexisted with forms of national and linguistic entrenchment in transnational settings. This historiography complicates the narratives of unproblematic internationalist solidarity generated by anarchists in official sources and symbology, for instance, by pointing out the political and linguistic limitations of internationalism (Bantman, 2013; Di Paola, 2013; Zimmer, 2015).

Such complexities highlight the relevance of everyday nationalism (Antonsich & Skey, 2017) and its interrelation with 'banal' nationalism (Billig, 1995) as a framework to disentangle these complex attitudes and recast the growing literature on anarchist transnationalism in the theoretical mould of nationalism studies, through a focus on daily interactions, in so far as these can be documented reliably through the primary sources capturing the lives of exiled anarchists in London. In the exile milieu, individual and collective agencies were intertwined, so that anarchists' everyday lives and construction of elaboration of nationhood can be reconstructed best by combining these two dimensions. Due to the nature of political exile and militants' inclination to secrecy and confidentiality, references to daily life are limited and scattered across a variety of sources: surveillance reports, private correspondences and periodical publications from either the anarchist or the mainstream press.

The French and Italian anarchist groups in London have been extensively studied, yet offer scope for further investigation of daily life and the construction of national/cosmopolitan sensibilities in exile, through a comparative focus and analysis of the interactions between both groups, and by taking into account the historical legacies,

processes of nation-building and imperial identity with which their home nations and refuge confronted them and which remain under-studied, especially from a comparative perspective. Exile, far from being a marginal and anecdotal experience, played a key part in the construction of political movements and sensibilities, including nationalist movements, throughout the 19th century (Aprile & Diaz, 2022; Isabella, 2009). Moreover, their (forced) displacement was likely to exacerbate the national sentiment of these exiles (Aprile, 2010; Gabaccia, 2000; Isabella, 2009), despite their open opposition to the nation-state, thus heightening tensions between the pull of national belonging and internationalist ideology. Third, Italian and French exiles in London found themselves in a city that was de facto international, presenting multiple opportunities in terms of international mingling and internationalist activism.

This investigation points to a dichotomy between the two ways in which the anarchist refugees imagined themselves and constructed their identities: on the one hand, as part of a closed national community of emigrants living in a foreign country and, on the other, as members of a transnational political community advocating internationalism and the abolition of all borders. Anarchists demanded the abolition of frontiers because 'One's country is wherever one is well' (Agresti, 1895). As early as 1883, Louise Michel, soon to become one of the most prominent voices of the London groups, declared: 'I recognize no borders, saying that all humanity has the right to the heritage of humanity' (cited in Maclellan, 2004, 112). However, not all exiles were as internationalised as Agresti and Michel, with respect to their ideological positions and how they enacted them.

Following Antonsich's approach of incorporating 'everyday nationhood' to banal nationalism, this article focuses on the 'everyday', with the view that it better 'serve[s] the purpose of exploring how nationhood can be perceived and activated "from below" ' (Antonsich, 2016, 33), but also as a way of probing the intricate and seemingly contradictory mechanisms whereby the anarchists declined their own allegiances and created an original anarchist synthesis. Indeed, the anarchists were part of the ordinary people who 'think the nation, talk the nation, enact the nation, perform the nation, consume the nation'—but were also among those who 'reject, resist, ignore, and avoid the nation—all in ways that contribute to the reproduction and legitimation—or dismantling and undermining—of national forms of belonging' (Fox & Van Ginderachter, 2018, 546). Fox and Miller-Idriss's framework of everyday nationalism thus underlines the centrality of nationhood for the anarchists (and the ways in which they endeavoured to dismantle its hold), as well as its relevance to understand life in exile (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008); in return, however, the example of the anarchists shows how the performance of the national might coexist with its discursive and/or ideological subversion or reappropriation. Stressing the shift in scholarship towards looking at the construction or rejection of nationhood from below (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, 537), Fox and Miller-Idriss identify four ways in which the nation is produced and reproduced in everyday life: talking the nation (the contextual and evolving discursive construction and legitimation of the nation), choosing the nation (nationhood as implicated in everyday decisions), performing the nation (producing it through the performance of symbolic rituals) and consuming the nation (constructing and manifesting the nation through consumption habits). Examining groups of anarchist exiles offering well-delineated case studies is especially suitable to this approach.

Moreover, the anarchists evolved in a distinct historical context of nation- and empire-building, which brings together 'everyday nationhood' and 'historic nationhood' (Smith, 2008) and interrogates the specific anarchist challenge to these processes and modes of domination. Investigating these specific groups in situ thus addresses some of the reservations advanced by Smith towards Miller-Idriss and Fox's use of 'everyday nationhood', in particular the need 'to place the study of the manifestations of everyday nationhood within both their specific historical and geo-cultural context' (Smith, 2008, 571). Smith also questions the assumption of an undifferentiated 'ordinary people', underlining the importance of breaking it down 'into its constituent parts, be they individuals, or various organised groups of people (e.g. movements, parties), or different interest and status groups (castes, classes, ethnic communities)' (Smith, 2008, 565). The focus on the anarchist exiles does indeed contribute to breaking the 'ordinary people' into its constituent parts.

In addition, this focus engages with the recent theoretical and methodological debate regarding the problematic relationships of the different scales of analysis adopted in the study of nationalism, the macrostructural approach that concentrated on the institutional and organisational context and the 'everyday' aspect of nationalism, focusing

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instead on the micro approach of individual agency (Fox & Van Ginderachter, 2018, 517). In their daily lives, political activities and ideological elaboration, anarchists always kept in mind, implicitly or explicitly, the broader vision of a system based on nation-states; much of their daily agency—through militancy and sociability in particular—was informed by it and by their attempts to subvert it. This case study therefore offers fruitful elements of reflection regarding Antonsich and Hearn's recommendation 'to bridge the apparent divide between "macro" (structure) and "micro" (individual agency) in nationalism studies' (Antonsich & Hearn, 2018, 603).

3 | ANARCHISTS AS CRITICS OF NATIONALISM: TALKING THE NATION

While anarchist attitudes towards the nation have been reassessed as more nuanced or indeed ambivalent than initially thought, their critique of nationalism and its imposition through the state remains an important starting point. The French and Italian exile took place in periods of construction of national territorial and political integration and identity-building (Weber, 1976)—processes in which both everyday and banal nationalism played a major role. Opposition to the nation-state in Italy emerged in reaction to the social and economic failures of national unification. The encounter in Naples between Michael Bakunin, one of the leading figures of the anarchist movement and a contradictor of Karl Marx, and a group of disillusioned Republicans (1865–1867) was crucial for the development of early Italian socialism and its strong anti-state notions (Ravindranathan, 1988). Anarchists were aware of these processes of historical construction and acted as observers and critics of manifestations of banal nationalism in their own countries. The Italian anarchists, for example, abstained from celebrating Giuseppe Garibaldi, the hero of Italian unification, to avoid any conflation with those seeking to 'exploit his grave and his cult' (Anon, 1884). Similarly, in France, the anarchists' political identity was often manifested in strong opposition to all the symbols of the young Third Republic, as well as through a fierce anti-state rhetoric. Many of the anarchists' disappointed hopes and grievances towards the Republic were encapsulated in Emile Pouget's evocation, in which the Republican allegory Marianne was now described as a '*salope*' (whore), in a scathing summary of the betrayal of revolutionary hopes for a social and democratic republic after the downfall of the Second Empire and the Commune, in 1870–1871: 'She did come—but what a bitch. Instead of the Marianne they had dreamt of, the plebs saw a hideous fleecer keeping all their tender strokes for the scavenging toffs' (Pouget, 1898). Such 'Mariannophobic' tropes (Agulhon, 1989, 302) were not specific to the anarchists and ran through the French revolutionary left—but the anarchists' engagement with them was especially pervasive and long-lasting.

Deconstructing and demystifying nationalist rhetoric and patriotism were key aspects of the anarchists' written production, including in London's exile groups. These writings could take the form of satire, such as 'The comedy of feeling' (Anon, 1900), which targeted both nationalism and the hypocrisy of the masters embodied by the owner of an Italian restaurant and his opportunistic display of the Italian flag. More traditional propaganda pieces discussed the nature of the nation-state and national belonging, and their oppressive function (Anon, 1901). These writings exposed patriotism and national identity as constructed and exploited by the ruling classes to reinforce their power, counterpoising them with anarchists' internationalism and cosmopolitan ideas. According to Antonio Agresti, a leading figure among the Italian anarchist refugees in London, patriotism was a historical phenomenon that had served its purpose and was therefore 'coming to an end, merging into the broader concept of humanity'. It remained, but as a means of exploitation in the hands of bourgeoisie to justify colonising wars and to divide workers. In the interest of human fraternity and universal peace, the 'paltry relicts of patriotism' should be 'effaced from the hearth of the workers as one […] would amputate a gangrenous limb from a human body, for to-day patriotism is nought else' (Agresti, 1895). Real patriotism was 'the very natural affection and attachment to the land of birth', 'the biggest love for our birthplace where we have been raised, we have received maternal caresses, where as children we played with other children' (Malatesta, 1911) or 'the fusion of all humanity in a single homeland' (Pietraroja, 1900). The anarchist poet and playwright Pietro Gori, who celebrated internationalist ideas in many of his works, foresaw a time when

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'one will laugh of patriotism as it is understood today by the majority and will understand that the only logic and great nation is the whole human family', 'the immense and glorious motherland of mankind' (Gori, 1915).

Interestingly, except for occasional mentions, such anti-nationalism did not explicitly develop into an elaborate or systematic critique of imperialism in these exile circles, be it of the home or the host country. Before he fled to England, the French anarchist Emile Pouget skewered the civilising rhetoric of British colonialism in India (with a passing dig at French colonialism too): 'India used to be a fine land (…). Since the English have invaded the country, that's all changed, for God's sake! They have thrashed everything, those robbers! (…) And if people complain, the English reply: "So what? We come to civilise you, and you're not happy?" (…) Oh well! It's the same mess as the French in Tonkin' (Pouget, 1890). This theme became far more prominent from the turn of the century, when both Italian and French anarchists took part in the campaigns against repression in Spain, which extended into protests against the imperialist wars over Cuba. During the Boer war, Malatesta censored England's military intervention and colonialism: 'Colonisation is school of corruption, robbery, ferocity; it is harmful to both the colonisers and the colonised and benefits only those who live on other people's sweats and pains' (Malatesta, 1901). The negative effects of colonialism spread among the British working classes, reinforcing nationalism and hostility towards foreigners, so that a victory over the Boers only 'strengthened the obtuse national pride that makes the most miserable English person believe to have the right to command the world' (Malatesta, 1901). Such analyses effectively positioned the anarchists as critics of Britain's own nationalism.

The denunciation of Italian imperialism emerged on the occasion of the ruinous Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1896, although criticisms concentrated mainly on the domestic purposes of the colonial expedition (Agresti, 1896, 150). The condemnation of the colonial war in Libya in 1911 was more elaborate, with the publication of the single issue *La Guerra Tripolina*, which was part of a transnational campaign against the Italian invasion. The publication exposed the economic and imperialist aims of the war under the pretence of a 'civilising mission' and the invasion of Libya as a betrayal of the original and democratic spirit of the Italian Risorgimento and of its heroes.

It could be said that anarchists explicitly aimed to un-make the nation, precisely as it was being constructed. Within Fox and Miller-Idriss's inventory of nation-building initiatives, the disruption of national (and nationalist) military conscription and education stand out as key themes in pre-1914 anarchist doctrine and activism (Bray & Haworth, 2019; Maitron, 1975), which were deployed transnationally. Thus, deserters were prominent in London exile circles (Bantman, 2013), and antimilitarism remained a focus of transnational exchanges until WW1 (Di Paola, 2017a). Internationalist pedagogical ventures were also central to the exiles' activism. This is best exemplified by the creation of the International Anarchist School by Louise Michel, in the cosmopolitan neighbourhood of Fitzrovia, which had an explicitly internationalist agenda (Bantman, 2013) and, later, the creation of the *Università Popolare* (Di Paola, 2013, 105–107). Such educational ventures also tackled the linguistic dimensions of internationalism, with considerable efforts to overcome linguistic barriers, by promoting Esperanto and teaching multiple languages. The publication of the multilingual paper *The General Strike/La Grève Générale/Lo Sciopero Generale*, the setting up of an international publishing house and a Polyglot society with a Polyglot library also aimed to bridge language gaps, as did the translation of major anarchist pamphlets, regularly advertised in the newspapers of all national groups. Anarchist theoretical writings and practical initiatives manifesting antimilitarism as well as libertarian education were consistent, long-term positions, which enacted the theoretical challenge to nationalism through alternative practices pervaded with internationalist meanings and understood by all as such. They provide a clear example of the subversion of 'talking the nation', the first category highlighted by Fox and Miller-Idriss.

4 | PERFORMING THE SUBVERSION OF THE NATION

These views were supplemented by practices that intentionally disrupted the construction of the nation through collective rituals—the third dimension in Fox and Miller-Idriss's framework of everyday nationalism. The use of counter-symbologies subverting the nationalist paraphernalia of the young French Republic was especially salient.

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This included the substitution of the martial national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, with the revolutionary songs *L'Internationale*, *La Carmagnole* and *La Commune*—a striking political message, since singing the *Marseillaise* was a way of declaring oneself to be a republican. The French tricolour flag was replaced with the anarchist black flag, while key dates commemorating the long revolutionary road to the French republic were replaced with an alternative anarchist calendar, in which 18 March (the start of the Paris Commune), May Day (after 1891) and 11 November (the execution of the Chicago 'Martyrs', four anarchists executed in 1887 on dubious charges, most likely in an attempt to stifle labour protest) were the central events, replacing 14 July (the fall of the Bastille).

Rather than serving to reinforce a national community, these symbols were mobilised to reflect and proclaim the anti-nationalist stance of anarchists, and foster and celebrate international solidarity, along class rather than national fault lines, with a strong performative dimension. These dynamics are illustrated by a simple note sent to Louise Michel, the former Communard and prominent anarchist who was such a vocal exponent of anti-nationalism, anti-patriotism and international solidarity, by the anarchist Charles Capt in November, asking her to 'talk a little about the union of the peoples or the international', at the funeral of a German comrade (Capt, 1890): Such invitations and events, which were frequent in the life of the international groups in London, combined a strong spectacular dimension with explicitly internationalist messaging and the actualisation of the cosmopolitan community gathering on these occasions—all of which can be interpreted as an internationalist reorientation of the rituals associated with 'performing the nation'. This represented a creative subversion of symbols of nationhood into an internationalist manifestation and counter-community. Similarly, celebrations held on the key dates of the anarchist commemorative calendar were typical 'incorporating rituals' and community-building practices through which groups transmitted ideals and reproduced memory through performance. These rituals 'bestow[ed] an effective yet disciplined sense of belonging, a sense that one can successfully perform, that one possesses a competence to enact the ritual and may be called upon to ensure its continued specificity in the future' (Edensor, 2002, 83). This idealised international camaraderie pervaded the account of London's anarchist Autonomie Club, published by the British anarchist paper *Freedom*: 'A glance round the large room […] showed Germans and Frenchmen from the Autonomie in conversation with Englishmen from the provinces, Jewish Comrades from Berner Street, laughing and talking with members of the Italian group' (Anon, 1891).

This sense of belonging was reinforced by protests or solidarity campaigns that united the anarchists—often alongside other progressive groups—across the globe, such as the demonstrations against the detention and torture of the Spanish anarchists in the fortress of Montjuich in 1897, in support of the Russian revolution in 1905, or against the execution of Francisco Ferrer in 1909. In 1905, in London, Russian, Jewish, German and English anarchists came in support of the Italians Adolfo Antonelli and Francesco Barberi, sentenced to hard labour for publishing a short article celebrating Gaetano Bresci, the anarchist who killed the King of Italy Humbert I, in the newspaper *L'Insurrezione* (Frosali, 1905a). In 1912, all anarchist groups actively contributed to the mass international campaign to stop Errico Malatesta's deportation from the United Kingdom (Di Paola, 2013, 144–153). These coordinated transnational campaigns and rituals, organised in a very similar way across the globe, created a sense of belonging and reinforced a transnational radical identity among cosmopolitan anarchist groups, including through the joint fight against oppression and affirmation of values that were perceived as universal (Bray, 2019). They both challenged nationalism and affirmed a transnational radical identity developed and disseminated through anarchists' counter-cultural production. This production, in turn, was often heavily shaped by their experiences in exile, as exemplified by the refrain 'The whole word is our fatherland, and a rebel thought remains in our heart' in Gori's song *Stornelli d'esilio*, written in 1895 during his stay in London and the United States (Gori, 1895a). Gori developed this theme in the play *Senza Patria* [Without a country], where he 'demonstrated the limit of state-fostered national identities and argued, instead, for internationalism' (Tomchuk, 2015, 97). *Senza Patria* was widely staged in the anarchist clubs in London and elsewhere (Calvo, 1901).

The anarchists' theoretical and enacted critique of nationalism was primarily addressed to their own country (e.g., the performance during a soirée of the *Royal March*, the national anthem of the Kingdom of Italy, was perceived by the Italian anarchists as a provocation) but might also be levelled at Britain (Virgilio, 1902). Their political imagination,

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alongside the forced displacement from their homeland and their outsider status as migrants living in a foreign country, might have made them especially alert to the many 'unwaved flags or other symbols of nationhood' (Billig, 1995, 58) that surrounded them, turning them into observers and critics of British nationalism, including in its everyday manifestations. Thus, most of the signs that made the nation an unreflective presence in the daily lives of the citizens of their host country, rather than going unnoticed, were a conscious and continuous reminder of the existence and the ideological imposition of the nation but also of their own national identity. Thus, at times, British nationalist symbols were openly challenged. Preparations for celebrating Edward VII's coronation in 1902 were seen as 'symptoms' of the 'great folly' affecting the British people (Anon, 1902a). However, some anarchists were ready to exploit the event by selling bottles of wine with the portrait of the new king on the label, thus paradoxically creating a form of banal nationalism. Malatesta recalled that of all the countries in which he had been, England was the one where his subversive activity had been the less effective, 'due to the fact that the English people are disinclined to anarchist propaganda, and because [he was] a foreigner in a country which is perhaps the most xenophobic country in the world' (Malatesta, 1921).

Although more difficult to trace, these challenges are particularly revealing when occurring outside the obvious context of political propaganda or militancy. Still in the days when the celebrations for King Edward's coronation were supposed to take place (they were postponed because of King's illness), a crowd of Italians outside the Italian church in Clerkenwell greeted the duke and the duchess of Aosta (members of the royal family) shouting: '*Viva il duca d'Aosta*' [Long live the Duke of Aosta], while a group of Italian anarchists mocked them by shouting '*Viva il duca d'arrosto!*' [Long live the roasted duke!]. According to the Italian police, the French anarchist Auguste Bordes was arrested for selling copies of the newspaper *L'Assiette au Beurre* after modifying the illustration on the cover page, drawing King Edward's face onto the bottom of a British soldier, the main figure on the front page (Frosali, 1905b). Sport, one of the main means of 'invit[ing] […] to support the national cause' and one of the national forms of 'flag-waving' (Billig, 1995, 11), was also challenged. In 1908, an anarchist hurled insults at fellow Italian Dorando Pietri (the disqualified winner of the marathon at the 1908 London Olympic games, who was handed a silver cup by Queen Alexandra), at the King of Italy, and all those who had celebrated the athlete (Virgilio, 1908).

By challenging the ideology of the nation-state as the most modern form of power and exploitation, the anarchists were able to identify and deconstruct the nation-state as an abstract concept and denounced not only the modalities whereby it was imposed and preserved but also how this process maintained the power of the ruling classes. The use of counter-symbols and rituals and comedic subversion only sharpened the effectiveness of their critique and effectively re-socialised participants into political counter-communities.

5 | THE 'UNCONSCIOUS REPRODUCTION OF THE NATION': CHOOSING THE NATION

'Choosing the nation' is a key category used by Fox and Miller-Idriss in their analysis of everyday nationalism. The nation is 'not simply the product of macro-structural forces' but also 'the practical accomplishment of ordinary people engaging in routine activities' (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, 537). It focuses on national choices that individuals make, such as 'reading a nationalist newspaper or sending one's child to a minority language school', that 'reinforce nationhood as a salient idiom of belonging' (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, 542). While ideologically and politically challenging the idea of the nation-state, in their daily lives, the anarchists nonetheless contributed to the 'production' of their own nation, which was convergent with anarchist ideals and principles. This can be attributed to their affective and practical position as exiles, which was associated with a romantic nationalist sensibility (Aprile, 2010) and was also, for practical reasons, conducive to national association for the material and practical imperatives of everyday life.

In this 'century of exile', it was common for individuals banished from their homeland to express their love for it; while this may appear counterintuitive for anarchists, it was not perceived as a contradiction. In their inclusive views of nation, the anarchists recognised the existence and the significance of national attachment (Turcato, 2015).

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After leaving England in 1895, Pietro Gori, in an emotional letter to his comrades, described the 'profound feelings felt at the moment of parting from the good Edoardo' and 'the faithful and affectionate Razzia': 'While boarding the steamship you two summarised to me the unforgettable Italian camaraderie. Because you can well say to be cosmopolitan on principle, but feelings have their peremptory laws, precisely because they are natural' (Gori, 1895b). Far more prosaically, while still ferociously criticising France from a distance, Emile Pouget also contrasted his dislike for London with an implicit nostalgia for French cafés: 'I'm in London, a stern city where watering holes are a rare sight' (Anon, 1894a).

This persistence of the national can be observed in daily practices, often because of the needs of material existence. Linguistic practices are a telling illustration. Exiles proclaimed and often demonstrated the importance of linguistic internationalism. For example, the Italian anarchist exile Silvio Corio was the secretary of the British section of the Academia Pro Interlingua, dedicated to the promotion of international auxiliary language. However, most exiles were monolingual, which in turn bounded their interactions. Similarly, what is known regarding anarchist dwellings in London points to nationally focused cohabitation. Most of the exiles were heavily concentrated around Tottenham Court Road and Fitzrovia, in a few 'French streets', such as Charlotte Street. A number of French and Italian anarchists rented rooms from another French anarchist, Ernest Delbecque, at 28–30 Charlotte Street—pointing to a further degree of concentration. Only a few individuals lived away: The communard-turned-anarchist Gustave Brocher was in Camberwell, Louise Michel lived in Streatham and Dulwich, Lucien Pemjean was in Alton (Hampshire), Charles Malato was in Hampstead while Pouget was in Islington.

French and Italian groups were bound by strong linguistic affinities (with French featuring as an anarchist lingua franca); many Italians present in London had travelled via France, where they had also formed links that endured in remigration and frequent back-and-forth trips to Paris. Such links existed at all levels of the exile groups: Prominent activists were known to have a more international sociability (Di Paola, 2013). It was not unusual for Italian and French rank-and-file militants to share accommodation. Police intelligence reported several intimate relationships between Italian anarchists with French women, sometimes with children being born. Very few cases of relationships with women of other nationalities are found in police reports. While these Franco-Italian links point to a degree of openness, they also represent a form of closure and highlight the boundaries imposed by language and a sense of shared national identities.

The Franco-Italian militant Charles Malato bridged both communities, and his exile memoir provides insights into multiple aspects of these everyday interactions, for instance, when recalling an evening of entertainment held at Grafton Hall, in Fitzroy Square, where his own one-act vaudeville *Mariage par la dynamite* was performed, followed by various performances by French and Italian artists: 'A friend of Malatesta's, a genuine artist at Covent Garden and endowed with a superb voice, graciously agreed to perform two separate pieces … of Italian opera' (Malato, 1897, 95–96). He noted that a Spanish performer had been included but failed to turn up and that the audience included some British punters. However, his account hinted at a sense of Latin affinity, which was of the time and humorous, but nonetheless telling: 'The English are punctual, but the French and Latin are no more punctual abroad than they are in their own country' (Malato, 1897, 97). Similarly, Luigi Parmeggiani, the leader of the anti-organisationalist/individualist group *L'Anonimato/La Libera Iniziativa* in the 1890s, had very strong links with France. Under the false name of Louis Mercy, he ended up managing two very well-known antiquarian shops in the centre of Paris and London; in the meantime, he was the chief of a group of burglars and forgers.

According to police reports, the lives of the Italian anarchists in London revolved around the Italian (Clerkenwell, Holborn) and the French quarters, particularly for their political activities and social life. The Italian anarchists' propaganda targeted mainly the Italian population, for the greatest part poor, at times with positive results, to the point of concerning the Italian ambassador. In 1893, the police alerted the president of the *Società Italiana degli operai* of Malatesta and Merlino's intention of 'taking their anarchist preaching in the heart of the society' (Di Paola, 2013, 84). The anarchists persistently tried to organise the numerous Italian waiters and cooks in the restaurants of the capital, a sector in which many of them were also employed. A revealing instance of 'choosing the nation' was the anarchists sending to the newspaper of the Italian colony, the *Londra-Roma*, a letter promoting the establishment of

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an association 'for the improvement and the emancipation of the workers' (Di Paola, 2013, 84). This led to a quarrel with the editor of the newspaper, who had urged the Italian workers not to follow the anarchists in their attempt. One of his arguments mirrored what the Italian authorities had expressed repeatedly: that the mingling of the anarchists with the members of the colony would have aroused British people's suspicions against the Italian workers and hampered their ability to find employment. According to the Italian vice-consul, the association of Italians with anarchism (particularly as a consequence of the terrorist attempts in the 1890s) had been extremely damaging; Italian firms were disregarded, contributions to charities dropped and it was extremely difficult for labourers to find employment (Righetti, 1903, 158). The vice-consul pressed for the opening of a recreational centre to divert young Italians from the 'evil seeds' of the 'iniquitous propaganda' carried out by the anarchists in their clubs (Righetti, 1903, 152). In 1909, Malatesta and other Italian anarchists launched a campaign of open-air propaganda, often obstructed by the British police, in the streets of Clerkenwell, near the Italian Catholic church, the focal point of the Italian community (Frosali, 1909). Living among economic migrants reinforced their criticisms of the nation-state: Migrants were seen as victims of capitalist exploitation but also of the motherland's failure to provide the means of living for its inhabitants. Interaction with migrants and reflections on the socio-economic causes behind the forced displacement of people contributed to the development of Italian anarchists' criticism of the nation-state and the reinforcement of an alternative view of an 'idyllic' national belonging, based on feelings and personal attachment rather than borders. The reinforcement of nationhood also appears in the names that the Italian anarchists gave to some of their organisations. The adjective 'Italian' is not uncommon: In 1905, there were the *Club Italia* and *the Università popolare Italiana*. The anarchist Pacini was the president of the musical association *La Lira Italiana*, which the Italian police described as 'a well-known subversive association' (Frosali, 1905c). Although the discussions and rationale behind the decision of adding the adjective 'Italian' are not documented, even if this choice was done in an instrumental way to attract the members of the economic colony, the unconscious reinforcement of nationhood remains relevant. This can be related to the fact that the 'choice' of the nation raises the question of the legitimacy of being part of it and the need for the anarchists to assert this right, also to counter the suggestion, particularly from the authorities, that they were a foreign body in the community. It is worth noting the different use of the terms adopted in anarchist publications to define national groups. Usually, bills, circulars and leaflets appealing to the general public, for example, the workers, define them according to their nationality ('to the Italian workers'). If, instead, they address anarchist groups, these are identified according to the language spoken ('to the Italian-speaking anarchists').

This was in marked contrast with the French anarchists, who tended to keep apart from the non-anarchist French communities in London, with the result that their political identities as anarchists and exiles were—and are still—perceived as clearly distinct from the growing number of French immigrants in London at the time; only rarely did their sense of 'choosing the nation' extend beyond their own political community. Like their Italian counterparts, the French anarchists were prone to flagging their national/linguistic unity in the names of their militant groupings, be it the *Section de l'Internationale de langue française* set up in 1881, the *Groupe international de langue française* and *Section antipatriotique de langue française* (Bantman, 2013, 35–36). However, their links with the wider French groups present in London at the same time were far more episodic. This period of exile coincided with a period of intense French migration and professional organisation in London (Rapoport, 2013). The pre-war decades saw increased formal organisation, adding to an already strong network of charitable and commercial associations. Nonetheless, archives do not suggest any sustained interaction with these wider French groupings, although several anarchists in great material distress were reported to have been repatriated to France by the charitable *Société Française de Bienfaisance* founded in 1842, which had become a staple of French life in London (Bantman, 2013). Anarchists might also be employed in French institutions, or by French individuals with very different political views—thus, the deserter Louis Lafleur worked at the fashionable Café Royal while Charles Malato was employed as the secretary of another prominent (but not anarchist) exile, Henri Rochefort (Bantman, 2013, 59). There were also overlaps between anarchist exiles and a host of often dubious individuals (petty criminals, procurers) who might have occasionally hovered in anarchist circles and lived in the same deprived areas of central London. The reference to the established and respectable French community could serve as a cover for the anarchists' most incendiary material: The inflammatory

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anarchist paper *L'International* was printed under the title *L'Industrie française à Londres* and as an alleged supplement to the highbrow *Courrier de Londres et de l'Europe* (Bantman, 2013, 77). But despite these individual examples, it is clear that, in London, class-based French and international solidarities and interactions prevailed upon rare (or under-documented) interactions with the broader French-speaking group.

These were important differences between French and Italian anarchists and their interactions with the wider national community, which highlight fundamental differences in the way national and political identities were conceived and expressed in everyday practices. While the French considered their exile abroad as temporary, it seems that the Italian anarchists perceived themselves as migrants, and as part of the Italian 'diaspora'—a perception that continues to inform much of the historiography, whereas transnational Italian anarchism is often perceived through the prisms of the diaspora and migration (Di Paola, 2013; Felici, 2015; Zimmer, 2015). While this perspective is not entirely absent from studies on French anarchist groups outside France (Cordillot, 2009), the history of transnational French anarchism has predominantly been considered in the light of a long tradition of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary political exile, rather than migration.

6 | EXILE AND MIGRATION: CONSUMING THE NATION

'Consuming the nation', the fourth category deployed by Fox and Miller-Idriss, is highly relevant to the exile groups, in so far as it can be documented despite their secrecy and the largely political focus of the informants' reports that provide much of the information available to us. This area is ambiguous, as one where the anarchist subversion of the nation was far less marked, or indeed altogether absent, since anarchists tended to operate within their own national and linguistic networks. The anarchists, while openly challenging the idea of nation, were also part of the 'ordinary people' who 'are not simply uncritical consumers of the nation; they are simultaneously its creative producers through everyday acts of consumption' (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, 550). As examined in the previous section, despite the anarchists' internationalism, for most of them, their horizons remained bounded by linguistic limitations, or simply the ease of falling back on and operating within the exile networks of their own nations. However, the focus on national consumption here is likely to be at least partly the product of an archival bias, since the spies' reports that are the main source to document consumption practices foregrounded engagements within the national community (which their authors were paid to keep a close eye on) and usually stopped paying attention to those who drifted away from national groups, or indeed consumed outside of it. French spies were notorious for their own appalling language skills and lack of understanding of their English surroundings, which in turn means that they were (allegedly) the laughing stock of Scotland Yard and were unable to operate beyond the French milieu (Possien, 1894).

The first practice to be considered under this heading is that of media consumption, which was considered regarded by both insiders and outsiders as a defining trait of anarchist belonging. Most of the London anarchist papers were written in the language of the community in which they originated and which they primarily sought to address. A case in point was *Le Tocsin*, which was entirely written in French, dealt almost exclusively with French politics, and also included two whole pages advertising businesses owned by French anarchists in both London and Paris. This can easily be read as an instance of anarchist parochialism, or at least an implicit recognition of the paper's readership. Similarly, almost the entirety of the newspapers produced by the Italian anarchists were written in Italian. As stated in the circular announcing the forthcoming newspaper *L'Internazionale* in 1901, the publication of a paper in Italian allowed the anarchists in London to contribute to the social struggle in the motherland even from afar. Moreover, in the United Kingdom, they enjoyed more freedom of speech than their comrades in Italy (Di Paola, 2017b). A more structural reason rests in the anarchists' particular sense of national identity and the idea that 'each nationality's movement contributed to a universal cause by fighting against its own government, in a sort of reverse nationalism' (Turcato, 2015, 38).

Another category to consider is consumption habits. The inventory of French-run businesses, with the sole exception of E. Defendi, who sold 'French and Italian products' on Islington High Street, suggests a tendency to consume

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goods and services within the native community in exile. The *épicerie* run by the influential communard Victor Richard on Charlotte Street, which also functioned as a meeting point for French exiles, is the best known example. Such a French focus in everyday life was most likely the result of pre-existing personal connections, linguistic isolation and material solidarity. Homesickness, which has been extensively documented in reference to other exile groups and, more rarely, among anarchists, must also be taken into account (Aprile, 2010; Felici, 2015). Looking at illicit ways of earning a living, even crime networks among the French anarchist groupings were overwhelmingly based within French-speaking circles. Of course, this national tropism in employment strategies is in part an archival bias and is counterposed by many hints at economic links with the host country, from references to prostitution and procuring presumably extending beyond French groups to small businesses such as Henri Bourdin's tailor workshop on Great Titchfield Street (Anon, 1894b) and those employed in British businesses, while Malato and Gustave Brocher worked as tutors for well-to-do families. Food and the sale of national products were also key aspects in the Italian anarchists' daily lives. Both the Defendi family in Islington and Emidio Recchioni, with his renowned Italian delicatessen shop 'King Bomba' in Soho, were very well known among the Italian community. The relevance of Italian food for the anarchists also emerges in several reports by the informer 'Calvo', who, in order to gather information, regularly invited the anarchists for lunch, making his wife cook giant plates of maccheroni. This was another area where the Italian anarchists' links with the broader immigrant community were actively mobilised.

It was not uncommon for militants in financial hardship to turn to the *Società di Beneficenza* run by the Italian consulate for help. The Italian anarchists frequented the friendly societies and clubs of the colony, such as the *Club Cooperativo Italiano* and the *Circolo Mandolinistico*. In 1897, some members of the circle—only four or five according to a dismissive report in the journal of the Italian community—performed 'an International Mandolin March in the moonlight with their waving flags, from Soho Square to Dean Street' (Sponza, 1988, 257). Two anarchists sat on the management committee of the amateur drama society *Circolo Filodrammatico*. The premises of the *Circolo* were also used as a meeting point. In 1912, three anarchist members attended the inauguration of the headquarter of the London's section of the *Società Dante Alighieri*, whose aim was to promote Italian culture and language around the world. Afterward, they discussed with their comrades the possibility of joining the society *en masse* (Frosali, 1912).

The anarchists tried to involve these societies and clubs in their political activities, for example, for the opening of the *Università Popolare Italiana*. About 15 societies of the Italian colony, including the not radical *Banca Popolare* and *Comizio Veterani e Reduci*, joined the project. All the managing positions of the *Università*—secretary, vice-secretary and treasurer—were held by anarchist members. The call for the opening of the *Università popolare* was imbued with references to the Italian national character and culture: Galileo and Dante, a natural inclination to learn, the need to link memories of the birthplace with the new world (Anon, 1902b). In 1912, representatives of the *Dante Alighieri* and the president of the *Club Cooperativo* were invited to the rally organised in support of the Italian trade unionists Ettor and Giovannitti, charged with accessory to murder in the United States. It was also in this milieu that the Italian anarchists openly challenged forms of hot nationalism, so that cultural engagement and consumption were, once more, mobilised to subvert the nation and celebrate those who challenged it along anarchist lines. On New Year's Eve in 1911 at the Club Cooperativo Italiano, a row emerged when three anarchists confronted some members who had toasted to *Tripoli Italiana* by defiantly hailing the anarchist Gaetano Bresci, the killer of the king of Italy in 1900, and the Arab people (Di Paola, 2013).

7 | CONCLUSION: AN ORIGINAL SYNTHESIS? ANARCHISTS AND THE COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINATION

The adoption of theoretical categories from studies on nations and nationalism has proved fruitful in analysing the anarchists' perception and elaboration of the idea of nation and national belonging, problematising how the anarchists theorised and perceived the concepts of nation, national identity and internationalism, and how these concepts informed their ways of life, their ideas, propaganda and political activities, thus complicating the simplistic view of

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a monolithic ideological internationalism. Concurrently, the analysis of French and Italian anarchist exiles in London contributes to the broader interdisciplinary debate on competing loyalties in transnational movements (Dazey, 2020), responding to the need to 'bridg[e] macro and micro approaches to the study of nationalism' and explore individual agency 'in relation to the social organisational context within which individual practices take place' (Antonsich & Hearn, 2018, 595). The anarchist refugees' experiences in London combine both aspects, albeit at times in a contradictory way.

Moreover, it addresses the criticism that research into everyday nationalism 'is largely devoid of the critical charge against nationalism that was originally vehicled by banal nationalism' (Duchesne, 2018: 844). By explicitly articulating or enacting their internationalist ideology, the anarchists opposed the 'universal ideology of nationalism' (Duchesne, 2018) and unveiled and rejected the concealed forms in which the nationalism of the nation-state was expressed and performed. Duchesne underlines how, as an ideology, banal nationalism is so pervasive that it 'imposes a truth that has become the only possible' (Duchesne, 2018, 851) to such an extent that, according to Billig, 'an imagined politics, not based around the imagined nation, is virtually unimaginable. Thus, the so-called national "imaginary" also represents a restriction of political imagination' (Billig, 2017, 319). This, however, was not the case for the anarchists, who envisaged and theorised forms of social coexistence outside the framework of the nation-state, even in their everyday lives. Here is where the category of everyday nationhood, which is concerned with the centrality of individual agency and the way in which 'nationhood is reproduced by ordinary people doing ordinary things' and 'is actively appropriated, manipulated, and enacted as a category of social practice by varied social actors in varied social contexts' (Fox & Van Ginderachter, 2018, 547), is particularly revealing in exploring the complexity of the anarchist exiles' ideas and practices of nationhood.

Although a sense of 'national belonging' and 'national identity'—implicitly or explicitly—permeated the lives of the anarchist refugees in London, they felt themselves in equal measure to be part of a transnational community that they constantly endeavoured to build and reinforce. This was not simply due to the contingent situation of London where, thanks to the liberal policies of political asylum upheld by the British government, one of the largest international communities of anarchists had congregated. The attachment to national belonging remained part of the anarchists' personal emotional world, but it was not exclusive, due to the anarchist cosmopolitan imagination and the anarchists' analysis of the historical development of the nation-state as a way to impose political power and economic exploitation. An essential role was also played by their daily experience, shared in all other centres spread across the world, of being part of a community that transcended national borders. Travelling and visiting other anarchist clusters, in Europe or across oceans, was a common occurrence not only for the leaders but for many of the rank-and-file militants as well. Meeting or hosting comrades coming to the British capital, either for settling or just passing through, was also part of militants' ordinary daily lives and reinforced this perception. Signs and symbols of this banal and everyday (inter)nationalism were present everywhere: in their newspapers through the sections dedicated to the movement in other nations, the lists of subscribers or the *piccola posta* [small mail]; in their correspondence; in the alerts to denounce and reveal the identity of police spies; and in their cultural productions and performances.

The analysis of the London French and Italian anarchists thus shows that an 'imagination' that transcended the 'power' of the nation-state was possible and demonstrates the significance of exploring all their ideologies, allegiances and social practices through the theoretical lens of 'banal' and 'everyday' nationalism.

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