

POSTMORTEM: New Evidence in the Case of Sacco and Vanzetti. By William Young and David E. Kaiser. (University of Massachusetts Press, Cloth, \$20. Paper, \$8.95.) In 1977 David E. Kaiser, now an associate professor of history at Carnegie-Mellon University, struck up a friendship with William Young, a rare book and art dealer who collected documents bearing on the murder trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the two anarchists whose executions in 1927 caused an international furor. Young was preparing a manuscript based on a huge cache of newly released evidence that the Massachusetts State Police had held for nearly 60 years. When Young died of cancer in 1980, Mr. Kaiser went on to complete the work. "Postmortem" is a plodding but persuasive study. Its cumulative effect is to affirm the reputations of "two innocent men" who "most probably were framed for a murder they did not commit." The revelations of state police files, grand jury proceedings and prosecution notebooks, the authors conclude, "show that virtually every piece of evidence against the two men ultimately rested upon falsehoods and fabrications." The case began in broad daylight on April 15, 1920, when a pair of payroll bandits gunned down two employees of a shoe factory in South Braintree, Mass., and made off with \$15,000. Sacco and Vanzetti, Italian immigrants who had been known to dabble in radical politics, were arrested in May. The prosecution did not have a strong case, but the political climate was favorable for a conviction and the district attorney, Frederick Katzmann, was resourceful. Insisting that the defendants were part of a much larger conspiracy, "a gang of anarchists," Katzmann obtained convictions. Sacco and Vanzetti were executed and people have been passionately arguing their guilt or innocence ever since. The fresh evidence here may mute the old controversy, for "the prosecution left a trail" of doctored eyewitness accounts, altered testimony and false ballistics reports. That trail appears to exonerate the victims while convicting the executioners.

— *Richard J. Margolis*