

**Ruth Kinna**, *The Government of No One: The Theory and Practice of Anarchism*, London: Pelican, 2019. ISBN: 9780241396551 (cloth); ISBN: 9780141984674 (ebook)

*The Government of No One* offers a fresh and provocative panoptic of enduring issues in anarchist thought and activism. As Kinna writes in her introduction, the book serves at least two immediate aims: i) to discredit the negative myths about anarchism; and ii) to give a sympathetic account of what “thinking like anarchist” has meant for the last 150 years. In pursuing these aims, Kinna also commits to a pluralistic retelling of anarchism, taking caution against “the dangers of constructing an anarchist ‘canon’” (p.9).<sup>1</sup> As she puts it, “anarchism can be read historically both backwards and forwards from its origins and plotted from multiple geographical sites and at different angles” (p.8). Underwriting this position, Kinna’s intention is to “present anarchism as a history of ideas in conversation rather than strictly in context” (p.9). This choice, which is not free from controversy, is considered later in this review.

*The Government of No One* is divided in five, under the broad chapter titles “Traditions”, “Cultures”, “Practices”, “Conditions” and “Prospects”. In addition, a lengthy appendix with “anarchist biographies” is included (p.273-358). Each chapter is abundant in detail and worth engaging with further, yet the thrust of their overarching aims can be summed as: i) to present and challenge foundational stories about anarchism; ii) to discuss anarchist cultural critiques of domination; iii) to review anarchist debates about political practice, including around issues of violence, organization, class and intersectionality; iv) to examine anarchist constitutional designs, utopian thought and re-imaginings of democracy; and v) to engage with anarchism’s prospects by reflecting on its framings of success, social action and sacrifice.

In “Traditions”, Kinna examines the emergence of anarchism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through three events: the 1872 schism of the First International; the 1871 Paris Commune; and the 1886 Haymarket affair. Recounting these events, she focuses on the Marx-Bakunin

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on this agenda see Kinna and Evren (2013).

split, and on the development of a “distinctively anarchist programme” in the years after the Commune (p.19).<sup>2</sup> As she puts it, the anarchist programme called for the abolition of the state, electoral abstentionism, and propaganda by the deed. This programme was particularly motivated by the trauma of the Commune’s brutal suppression which made anarchists wary of “opportunist” republicans. Tackling the Haymarket affair, Kinna recalls the intense debate around the affair, not least the words of condemned anarchists such as Albert Parsons and debates about political violence amongst other anarchist propagandists (p.34-35). This affair, as Kinna notes, jumpstarted a sustained anti-anarchist reaction, shown colourfully in press and sombrelly in law and police action (on this context see also Jun 2011). Emerging from this 1880s anti-anarchist panic, Kinna deconstructs three early constructions of an anarchist canon, namely by Paul Eltzbacher, Michael Schaack and E.V. Zenker (p.42-49). These accounts, she notes, were unsympathetic and quite prejudiced. Prejudice aside, Kinna notes how though they varied in the range of thinkers considered, all placed Proudhon-Bakunin-Kropotkin as the kernel of the canon. This canonical device has endured. By contrast to Eltzbacher, Schaack and Zenker, Kinna endorses the reaction of other anarchists against these canonical tales, emphasising in the process a much wider range of thinkers, arguments, newspapers and social campaigns. There was, in a word, a wealth of anarchisms which canonical accounts foreclosed. Within this intellectual context, Kinna calls for re-historicizing anarchism beyond canonical constrictions.

In “Cultures”, Kinna focuses on anarchist critiques of cultural forms sustaining the “constancy of subjugation” in modern societies, as well exposing “the costs of obedience” and “the risks of self-aggrandisement” (p.56). Starting with Rudolf Rocker’s anti-totalitarian 1937 *Nationalism and Culture*, the chapter moves on to discuss anarchist critiques of law, especially as argued by Sigmund Engländer’s 1873 *The Abolition of the State*. This is an interesting choice as Engländer is a figure foreign to most histories of anarchism. Beyond law, the chapter contrasts Bakunin’s and Tolstoy’s critiques of social hierarchy, through philosophies of anti-theism or non-conformist Christianity. Following this, Kinna engages

---

<sup>2</sup> Kinna’s account of the 1872 rift could have benefited from the recent analysis in Edward Castleton (2017).

with Elisée Reclus's and Voltairine de Cleyre's critiques of conquest and colonialism, especially through Reclus's 1894-1898 articles against European imperialism and de Cleyre's 1914 sharp comments on land dispossession in the Mexican Revolution.<sup>3</sup> After engaging critiques of law, social hierarchy and conquest, the chapter moves onto literatures on anarchizing education and culture at large (p.85). Here Kinna makes special use of three 1960s anglophone anarchists – Colin Ward, Herbert Read and Paul Goodman; with more passing reference to Max Stirner, John Zerzan and anarcho-communists such as Liu Shifu, Errico Malatesta and Kropotkin. Throughout this discussion, Kinna presents anarchists as defending a form “practical socialism” based on direct social action to propagate anarchist morality. Inspiringly, for geographers, the chapter engages Kropotkin's reflection on Alexander von Humboldt's notions of local knowledge (*Heimatkunde*) and global knowledge (*Erdkunde*) (p.107-108). This hints at the significance of Humboldt's *Kosmos* as a source of *political* inspiration for thinkers such as Proudhon, Reclus, Kropotkin and others.

In “Practices”, Kinna engages anarchist debates about how to organize militancy and about class and intersectionality. To begin with, the chapter addresses the controversy around political violence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially by reference to the 1881 London Anarchist Conference and key texts such as John Most's 1885 *The Science of Revolutionary Warfare*. As Kinna conveys, the majority of anarchists in this context spoke *against* political violence on both tactical and moral grounds, even as they rejected categorical condemnations of anarchist assassins given the context of mass brutality against socialist workers. Turning to the “organizational debate”, Kinna discusses the early divergence between Malatesta's or Kropotkin's critiques of individualism and Émile Armand's or Luigi Parmeggiani's defences of rebellious individualism against “bourgeois moral codes” (p.123). Kinna also gestures at how “organizationalists” took varying attitudes to the rise of syndicalism (or trade union activism), and to the ideas of “Platformism” advanced by Makhnovists in the 1920s. Continuing this debate, Kinna sketches how some anarchists took an “evolutionist” stance, whilst other embraced a “revolutionist” attitude. By and large, Kinna represents evolutionists

---

<sup>3</sup> This section speaks well to Federico Ferretti's (2018) *Anarchy and Geography: Reclus and Kropotkin in the UK*, especially Chapter 4.

as defending gradualist social change and evokes “individualist” texts by Benjamin Tucker, Henry Seymour and John Henry Mackay as well as the evolutionist-revolutionist ones by Kropotkin and Reclus. Dovetailing this section, Kinna outlines how the combined crises of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution and the Spanish Civil War re-ignited debates about revolutionary organization and violence. By reference to Domela Nieuwenhuis, Bart de Ligt, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Rudolf Rocker, Kinna shows how many grouped around anti-militarist and anti-totalitarian stances. Such stances, however, seem implicitly positioned as the final act of classical anarchism. Jumping to the 1960s-70s, Kinna points at the renewal of anarchist debates about pacifism, violence and tactical diversity in the context of urban guerrillas and counter-cultural movements. Here, Kinna moves onto short discussions of various “types” of contemporary anarchist activism, distinguished either ideologically and/or tactically. The types considered are “insurrectionary”, “class-struggle”, “post-left”, “social”, “postanarchist” and “small ‘a’ anarchism”. In a fast-paced and evocative succession, Kinna refers to arguments and tensions in each type, as well as to some of its advocates (e.g. the Invisible Committee, Bob Black, Murray Bookchin, the International of Anarchist Federations, the Escapologists, etc).

After this kaleidoscope of anarchisms, Kinna moves onto debates around class and intersectionality as axes of activism. Regarding class, Kinna begins by noting that many classical anarchists, such as Ricardo Flores Magón, were hardly distinguishable from the familiar refrains of Marx and Engels. Yet, others, such as Alexander Berkman, Miss LeCompte and Gustav Landauer, often critiqued Marxist anti-agrarian and *lumpenproletariat* prejudice, and instead advanced more inclusive notions of the oppressed majority. Despite this inheritance, Kinna notes, how post-war groups such as Class War argued for class antagonism and derided feminist and ecological advocacy as a “tell-tale sign of [middle-]class advantage” (p.156). By contrast, Kinna argues that many anarchists “readily adopted the language of intersectionality from the Black feminists who first articulated it” (p.157). Building on interventions by Wayne Price, bell hooks and Ernesto Aguilar, Kinna shows how activists have often sought defer handling of the inevitable tensions in fighting a

plurality of oppressions simultaneously. Taking this further, Kinna focuses on the “complicated relation” between anarchism and feminism (p.166). Here, she discusses how early anarchist women such as de Cleyre and He-Yin Zhen were both critical and supportive of the suffragettes’ campaigns. Beyond this, Kinna discusses more recent provocations, such as Valerie Solanas’s 1967 *SCUM Manifesto*, Ann Hansen’s memoirs of Direct Action, and Madrilenian feminist challenges of “anarcho-machismo”. Summing these multiple examples, Kinna argues that anarchist activism has grown precisely due to its embrace of confrontation and self-critique, spurring “troubling encounters which can also be constructive” (p.176). Such are the fruits of dissent, she seems to say, and they are welcome.

In her fourth chapter, “Conditions”, Kinna engages with peculiar instances of anarchist constitution-writing and, perhaps more familiarly, with anarchist utopianism and conceptions of democracy.<sup>4</sup> In discussing anarchist constitutions, Kinna focuses on two “individualist” examples – David Andrade’s 1888 *An Anarchist Plan of Campaign* and Victor Yarros’s 1887 *Anarchism: Its Aims and Methods* – and on two “communist” cases – the 1926 Makhnovist *Draft Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists* and the 1930s Spanish communes of Teruel. Kinna opens her discussion with Max Nettlau’s curious comments on P.E. de Puydt’s 1860 *Panarchie*, a deterritorialised model of government where each person could subscribe to a chosen political system, without having to shift country of residence (p.177-179). Such a constitutional architecture, Kinna argues, presents a quandary to anarchist thought as it offers freedom to experiment whilst enabling unequal and coercive regimes to continue through subscription. What might by contrast be an anarchist constitutional model? Reflecting on the “individualists” Andrade and Yarros, Kinna underlines how their models were influenced by Benjamin Tucker’s periodical *Liberty* (1881-1908). Their models, Kinna judges, shared some kinship with de Puydt’s in that they critiqued governmental coercion and monopolies, and argued for voluntary anarchist clubs to

---

<sup>4</sup> These seem connected to a Loughborough-Exeter ESRC project, “Anarchy as a Constitutional Principle” (2016-present). See <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/phir/research/projects/anarchy-constitutional-principle/> (see also Kinna et al. 2019). For some of Kinna’s previous engagement with anarchist utopianism, see Kinna and Davis (2014).

be given liberty within limited spaces. Here, the issue of liberation for the masses without conditions for such voluntary organisation was moot. Communist anarchists took a radically different approach. For the Platformists as for Spanish anarchists, constitutional reforms were to happen wholesale, through a form of decentralised bottom-up federalism based on worker committees and municipalities. In this system, collectivisation programs and other radical social reforms would happen piecemeal through local initiative and debate. In parallel to federal structures, anarchist unions would congregate members and expand anarchist values. Unlike de Puydt's vision, this model sought a thorough social conversion to anarchist ethics, even if committing not to achieve such conversions forcefully (contrasting explicitly with Bolshevik politics).

Beyond these constitutions, Kinna engages with anarchist utopianism. As she notes, "many anarchists are wary of the label" (p.203) and see their tradition as one of eminent pragmatism. Others, however, adopt a composite position, seeing themselves as "anti-utopian utopians" (p.204), such as in the cases of Marie-Louise Berneri, Colin Ward or Louisa Bevington. In Bevington's fascinating 1896 *Commonsense Country*, for instance, utopian thinking was engaged through literary play, presenting a communist utopia satirically and with romanticism, whilst holding a mirror to the incoherence of real-world conventions. Often, however, anarchist utopias went beyond literary play. With Kropotkin's 1892 *The Conquest of Bread* as well as his 1898 *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, anarchist utopianism worked "within social science", imagining better societies under existing and emerging global conditions. The interest here was in the imminent *possibility* of such betterment. This resonates intensely with more recent alter-globalist mottos, such as "another world is possible". Beyond Kropotkin, Kinna also devotes extensive attention to Hans Widmer's 1983 *bolo'bolo*, a deep history of society retold in fantastical tones, where a "Work-and-War-Machine" wreaks planetary havoc until being defeated by a network of subversive anti-capitalist communities (i.e. the "bolo'bolo"). Curiously, Widmer's tale closes not at utopian success, but after imagining its collapse. In this manner, Kinna argues, Widmer's fantasist vision shares in Hakim Bey's commitment to transitoriness, as in his

famed “Temporary Autonomous Zones” (p.223). Indeed, one could go further as both authors seem to echo a shared 1980s cultural milieu, cross-fertilized by cyber-punk, new age spiritualism, and the postmodern theories of Situationists, Deleuze and Guattari, and others.

After exploring utopias, Kinna completes this chapter by tackling anarchist arguments for and against democracy. Anarchists, Kinna explains, have long expressed considerable misgivings about liberal democracy on various fronts. First, as summed by the Makhnovists, liberal democratic freedoms are illusory because private property ensures real enjoyment of such liberties remains highly uneven. Second, as argued by George Woodcock in his reading of Proudhon, the principle of representation is perverse as it encourages mass abdication of power and responsibility by the people.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Kinna argues, anarchists have not only attacked democracy – they have also sought to reclaim it. Be it through Noam Chomsky’s critiques of capitalist democracy, Rebecca Solnit’s accounts of the 1990s global justice movements, or Murray Bookchin’s theories of democratic communalism, anarchists have often re-imagined democracy positively. In such imaginings, anarchists have sought institutional and social arrangements that would make democracy live up to its professed ideals of self-government, collective freedom and anti-elitism. Illustrating the richness of these views, Kinna tracks Bookchin’s post-1960s writings on “libertarian municipalism” (p.228-232), and broader debates about the uses of consensus and dissensus in creating democratic conditions.

In her final chapter, “Prospects”, Kinna engages with how anarchists have framed their successes and failures, the conundrums in their ambitions, the politics of an “anarchization” through convergence/disjuncture, and the question of sacrifice. “Anarchism”, Kinna begins, “is sometimes called a colossal disappointment” (p.242), as it has neither ruled nor achieved its grand ideals of social transformation. Such a view, Kinna counters, is wrongheaded. Instead, Kinna proposes that anarchist success ought to be tested against “anarchist norms” becoming “institutionalized”, such as “the eight-hour day, access to contraception, the relaxation of marriage laws or conscientious objection” (p.243). Though

---

<sup>5</sup> There is more to be said of Proudhon’s critiques of “democracy”; see for instance Castleton (2018).



these were not exclusively anarchist achievements, Kinna claims that the jail time and active resistance of anarchist activism must be counted as a critical factor. Within this frame, Kinna sees anarchist successes as brewed from persistence and resilience, despite many setbacks. The staying power of anarchism, Kinna implies, is more than mere survival, as is seen by its many experimentative returns, not least within the recent case of the Kurdish Rojava Cantons, whose innovative self-government and peacebuilding drew much from the writings of Abdullah Öcalan and Murray Bookchin. Notwithstanding this, drawing on James C. Scott Kinna argues that anarchists have often faced a practical and theoretical conundrum: how to “provide the ‘relative equality’ necessary for democracy, [and] ‘mutuality and freedom’ in the absence of the state” (p.247). The quandary here is that abolishing the state may not be desirable, even by anarchist standards. This is even more so, when considering states that have become less coercive and more providential. Countering this view, Kinna deploys arguments by Scott Crow and Noam Chomsky underlining that “the amenities that states provide only mitigate the worst excesses that they perpetuate” through systemic violence and discrimination, and the erosion to freedom of thought (p.248). Adding to this, Kinna rehearses a third response (pace George Woodcock): that state “amenities on offer ... are not provided as a matter of course” (p.250). Instead, welfare and civic provisions represent historical concessions to social movements that “democratized the country” (ibid.). From these responses, Kinna then draws on Percival and Paul Goodman’s 1947 *Communitas* to argue that the “anarchist conundrum” ought not to be about “forcing a political choice between two modes of living – state and anarchy – but about motivating popular political, social and cultural projects within the framework of the state system” (p.253-254). Such a practical form of anarchism is not primarily about substituting state provisions but rather more so about the “anarchization” of social and institutional norms and realities. The “abolition of the state”, in other words, ought to be abandoned as framing device, as no abolition is sought in immediate terms. Instead anarchist prospects lie in fuelling a social transformation that will in turn alter governing institutions.



Engaging with anarchization, Kinna then discusses strategies “through convergence” and “through disjuncture”. Convergence strategies are centred on presenting anarchist norms accessibly and as common-sensical so as to attract a greater constituency to them. To showcase this, Kinna refers to Malatesta’s *Fra Contadini* (1884), Francis Dupuis-Déri’s *Anarchy Explained to My Father* (2014) and Kropotkin’s *An Appeal to the Young* (1880). Disjuncture strategies, in turn, are aestheticized acts of transgression which expose regressive and “internalized social norms” (p.265). Here the examples provided range from Murray Rothbard and Saul Newman’s readings of Étienne de la Boétie’s 1549 *The Politics of Obedience*, as well as the 1960s Angry Brigade communiqués, and Pussy Riot’s performances, amongst others. Though they differ, Kinna stresses that “convergence and disjuncture are preferences rather than alternative responses to the conundrum of anarchist change”; moreover, “there are dangers in both: convergence risks falling into conservatism ... and disjuncture ... [into] vanguardism.” (p.267-268). Concluding anarchism’s prospects, Kinna finishes with four pages on anarchization and sacrifice. By reference to the individualist John Henry Mackay’s 1891 novel *The Anarchists*, Kinna notes how some anarchists have viewed political sacrifice as a form of “being duped” (p.269). Yet others, such as Uchiyama Gudō, saw such sacrifices as “living according to one’s principles” (p.269). Leaning towards the latter, Kinna argues that “if anarchists attempt to deny sacrifice, they risk losing sight of the kinds of changes that anarchy demands” (p.270). Such sacrifices, she specifies, may range from “solidarity action”, such as providing food and shelter and resisting the police, to “relinquishing opportunities for self-enrichment or the desire to consume limitlessly” (p.270-271). Though this is not mentioned, this attitude feels resonant with Extinction Rebellion’s recent arguments (inspired by Gandhian non-violence). Sacrifices such as these, Kinna argues, are concordant with the “plurality of aims” and “unremitting pragmatism” of the anarchist tradition; a tradition that “offers utopian vision and practical proposal in abundance” (p.271).

\* \* \*

Speaking for anarchism is not easy task. As a friend in media studies often reminded me, the contested character of the subject is anecdotally evident in how fought over the anglophone Wikipedia page on anarchism has been – subject to “edit wars” on par with entries on George W. Bush, Global Warming, and Jesus (Yasseri et al. 2014). Though such an anecdote may well point only to an exceptional event caused by doctrinaire editors and vested contributors, it inevitably suggests a fraught field for anyone seeking to speak for anarchism.

Ruth Kinna, however, is not unfamiliar with this challenge. Having studied anarchist politics for almost thirty years, she has also edited the journal *Anarchist Studies* since 2007 and co-convened the Anarchist Studies Network since its foundation in 2011. Furthermore, she has published prolifically around this subject, with noteworthy specialist studies such as *Kropotkin: Reviewing the Classical Anarchist Tradition* (2016) as well as broader introductory books such as *Anarchism: A Beginner’s Guide* (2005). *The Government of No One* takes from this path in some evident ways, not least in terms of the range of examples considered but also in the centrality of Kropotkin’s thought to this story. Beyond this, Kinna also draws on recent works which have sought to broaden accounts of anarchism, such as Arif Dirlik (1991) on Chinese anarchism, Kirwin Shaffer (2019; see also De Laforcade and Shaffer 2015) on Latin American anarchism, amongst others. From this perspective, it is unsurprising to find *The Government of No One* trading on a dense network of references, each operating almost as an Ariadne’s thread out of/into another labyrinth. Every work begins another, and it is certainly the case that Kinna succeeds in providing a pluralist sense of the anarchist tradition, where a wealth of figures still deserve further investigation.

From a critical standpoint, several points are worth considering after reading *The Government of No One*. The foremost issue to my mind relates to Kinna’s choice to present a history of ideas “in conversation” rather than strictly “in context”. A second question relates to the undercurrent dichotomy between anarchist individualists and communists. Thirdly, though much is done here to “blast” anarchist canons, it is arguably the case that more could be done.

Kinna's histories of anarchism, as she puts it, are "read backwards and forwards", "plotted from different geographical sites" and at "different angles" (p.8). Ideas from different times, places and incision points are mobilized into thematic discussions across the anarchist tradition. Such an approach is valuable in using historical resources to think actively about present politics, as well as challenging stultified historiographies with new interpretative angles. For example, Kinna shows how much of Kropotkin's or Goodman's politics may remain useful today, or de Cleyre's and He-Yin Zhen's early critiques of colonialism and gender politics have been unduly forgotten. Despite this, exploring ideas "in conversation" is not without its drawbacks. A first difficulty is simply chronological clarity: in a whirlwind of interventions it is easy to lose track of what was said when. A second issue is that of eroding the distinction between ideas that were *actually* in conversation and ideas that are *put in conversation* for thematic purposes. A third, and perhaps most significant, issue is that the original context of each intervention fades from view, to the benefit of a seemingly transhistorical anarchist identity. By losing the focus of an immediate political context, as well as a cultural milieu and intellectual resources, the precision, richness, messiness and limitedness of individual anarchist interventions risks being somewhat lost.

Perhaps this is simply a matter of choice, yet the value of contextual precision and contingency is to my mind greater than emphasising a certain commensurability between different political texts and actions. It is helpful to present ideas in context because their original and enduring meaning is better understood if one explains the cultural logics behind their design, as well as multiple receptions and reproductions. Kinna is not insensitive to this, as she maintains a measure of contextualism throughout the book, yet perhaps this ought to be greater still. Take for instance Bakunin's pronouncements, whose mythical status often helps them being placed out-of-context. Is there not something lost when his statements are placed as transhistorical and self-evident, rather than in the context of 1840s revolutionary democracy or 1860s Russian socialism? Indeed, most of what he meant is arguably inaccessible without contextualism.<sup>6</sup> Besides providing greater acuity, presenting ideas in

---

<sup>6</sup>For contextualist accounts of Bakunin's work, see Angaut (2005) and Berthier (2008).

context matters, I believe, as this carries a valuable political lesson: that political thought works best when it is attuned to changing contexts. At its best, then, contextualism stresses and encourages conscious and responsive creativity in political imagination. Conversely, at its worst, a stress on context can lead to barren cults of erudition or claims of cultural incommensurability which foreclose, rather than fertilise, a creative relation to political history. Possibly, this corresponds to the trap of “strict context” that Kinna seeks to avoid. Despite this, a history of anarchism through placing “ideas-in-conversation” remains exposed to the dangers of blurring historicist sensibilities and may unhelpfully overplay the coherency of the anarchist tradition.

A second point for critical reflection after reading *The Government of No One* pertains to Kinna’s many returns to the dichotomy between anarchist communists and individualists. This fascinating distinction runs throughout several chapters and is used throughout to probe the range and tension between different anarchist outlooks (e.g. p.46, 122, 128, 147, 201-202, 268-271). Kinna’s Figure 3.1 is particularly thought-provoking in that it suggests an anarchist political compass of sorts, with four spheres divided by variance in support for organization ( $y$  axis) and revolution ( $x$  axis) (p.128; see also p. 147). Within this frame, the individualists referred to include Armand, Tucker and Mackay, whereas “communists” include Kropotkin, Malatesta, Rocker and others. Most figures here correspond to 1890s-1920s debates, and refract a canonical division first set up by Zenker (p.46). The individualists, on this account, grouped around readings of Proudhon and Stirner that defended freedom from state regulation and monopolies, as well as freedom from bourgeois moral conventions, at times with a hedonistic flavour. Individualists, as Kinna notes, were famously maligned by Kropotkin for selfishness and amoralism leading to isolated acts of revolt, which were at best inconsequential and at worse a boon to egoist bourgeois ethics.<sup>7</sup> Provocatively, Kropotkin’s endpoint was to argue that such individualism was incompatible with socialism. Kinna, with some caveats, seems aligned with this judgement. Beyond the 1890s-1920s, Kinna also transports the individualist/communist

<sup>7</sup>Kropotkin’s opposition to individualism has yet to be fully excavated and fleshed out. With regards to Benjamin Tucker, it would be productive to show how this polemic involved opposite readings of Herbert Spencer.

dichotomy into a post-1945 contrast between “social anarchists”, such as Goodman or Bookchin, and “individualists” such as Bob Black or Alfredo Bonanno (p.147). Here Kinna also hints at her communist preference, not least when arguing against the authoritarianism of free-market anarchism (pace Rothbard) or against the anaemic refusal of political sacrifice (pace Mackay).

Undoubtedly, there is much to reflect on from this dichotomy, and it is hard, without the benefit of a deeper knowledge, to suggest a better set of categories. If any criticism can be made here, it is that holding this interpretative dichotomy can hinder more networked readings of anarchist history, where a diversity of opinions is read without a canonical binary at hand, and without holding early thinkers such as Proudhon or Stirner as mainsprings of a continued dissensus. Rather, eschewing such a theoretical binary and an internalist bias, anarchist pluralism may be better explained by emphasising the impact of major “more-than-anarchist” debates – such as those polarised by Herbert Spencer’s politics, the rise of Soviet Marxism, or post-war cultural revolutions. By placing anarchist political history in greater fungibility with changing times, we may gain better understanding of its sophisticated and localised metamorphoses.

A last point to consider is the extent of Kinna’s success in displaying anarchism’s plurality, ranging beyond familiar canonical characters and constructions. To a large extent, *The Government of No One* fulfils this aim compellingly, with fresh and inspiring discussions of lesser-known anarchists such as Parsons, Engländer, de Cleyre, Yarros, Andrade, Shifu or Zhen. Such inclusions encourage a movement against Eurocentric, androcentric, and “great men” mainstream biases, sharing in the same spirit as recent works by Federico Ferretti (2018), Constance Bantman (2013), Kirwin Shaffer (2019; see also De Laforcade and Shaffer 2015), and many others. Beyond this, Kinna also commits to a pluralist account by constantly reminding readers of internal dissensus amongst anarchists.

Yet, despite these efforts, it is arguably the case that Kinna’s historiography does not go far enough in overcoming the bounds, and thus biases, of *anglophone* anarchism. Indeed, most thinkers, groups and theatres of action engaged with remain in the United States of

America, the United Kingdom, and, to a lesser extent, France. Other wellsprings of anarchism in Latin America, the Iberian peninsula, Italy, Germany, and the Indian subcontinent remain relatively absent from discussion, though their significance is passingly recognised. One may argue that a book can't include everything, and Kinna does warn that hers is an illustrative account rather than systematic. Yet, given Kinna's good practice in engaging directly with source materials and texts, and the absence of non-anglophone sources, the barrier of language seems clear here. This is compounded with a lack of secondary anglophone literature on anarchisms from the aforementioned regions. This points to how much collective work remains to be done in studying anarchist history beyond the Western triad of UK-US-France, as well as working on good *translations* of non-English anarchist texts. Having also studied anarchist thinkers, I am keenly aware of this challenge, tangible not least in the fact that the majority of Proudhon's texts remain untranslated; many of Bakunin's writings are mired by controversial editing; and a full anthology of Kropotkin's has yet to be produced. To recognize this is not to disparage past research, which often achieved a lot with very few institutional resources, but rather to invite a present-day generation into the greatness of this task. Kinna's work participates in this direction but cannot bridge the gap of what remains to be done collectively.

All in all, *The Government of No One* is a thought-provoking and worthwhile book, executed masterfully by one of the most knowledgeable scholars on the subject. Within it, Kinna succeeds once again in the difficult task of presenting the plurality of anarchism as well as suggesting the political depth and potential of this tradition. For those inspired by recent works on anarchism and geography, *The Government of No One* will provide a useful set of invitations to return to across various journeys. From each journey, a new picture may be built about the manifold anarchist tradition and the ways in which it has yet to kindle new visions of the past, present and future.

## References

- Angaut J-C (2005) "Liberté et histoire chez Michel Bakounine." Unpublished PhD thesis, Université Nancy
- Bantman C (2013) *The French Anarchists in London, 1880-1914: Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalisation*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press
- Berthier R (2008) *L'Autre Bakounine*. Paris: Cercle d'études libertaires Gaston-Leval
- Castleton E (2017) The origins of "collectivism": Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's contested legacy and the debate about property in the International Workingmen's Association and the League of Peace and Freedom. *Global Intellectual History* 2(2):169-195
- Castleton E (2018) The many revolutions of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. In D Moggach and G Stedman Jones (eds) *The 1848 Revolutions and European Thought* (pp39-69). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- De Laforcade G and Shaffer K (eds) (2015) *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida
- Dirlik A (1991) *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Ferretti F (2018) *Anarchy and Geography: Reclus and Kropotkin in the UK*. London: Routledge
- Jun N (2011) *Anarchism and Political Modernity*. London: Bloomsbury
- Kinna R (2005) *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide*. London: Oneworld
- Kinna R (2016) *Kropotkin: Reviewing the Classical Anarchist Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Kinna R and Davis L (eds) (2014) *Anarchism and Utopianism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Kinna R and Evren S (eds) (2013) *Blasting the Canon*. New York: punctum books



- Kinna R, Prichard A and Swann T (2019) Occupy and the constitution of anarchy. *Global Constitutionalism* 8(2):357-390
- Shaffer K (2019) *Anarchist Cuba: Countercultural Politics in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Oakland: PM Press
- Yasseri T, Spoerri A, Graham M and Kertész J (2014) The most controversial topics in Wikipedia. In P Fichman and N Hara (eds.) *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration* (pp25-48). Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield

*António Ferraz de Oliveira*  
*Whitworth Fellow, Downing College*  
*University of Cambridge*  
*amf61@cam.ac.uk*

*October 2019*