

# Book Review

---

**Góes Jr., Plínio de**, editor. *The Luso-Anarchist Reader: The Origins of Anarchism in Portugal and Brazil*. Information Age, 2017.

*The Luso-Anarchist Reader: The Origins of Anarchism in Portugal and Brazil* is a wonderfully edited and translated collection of early twenty-first-century anarchist writing previously unavailable in English. Plínio de Góes, Jr., a professor of Portuguese studies and a lawyer, has done a great service in translating, compiling, and contextualizing these important works.

Góes opens the book with a short “Introduction to the Reader” and a longer “Introductory Essay.” The short introduction notes the increased interest in anarchism since the “alter-globalization” and Occupy movements in the early twenty-first century and sets out the book’s purpose. “It is particularly important,” he writes, “that gaps are filled in order to provide a stronger foundation upon which research and activism can be built” (xi). Beyond just filling gaps, the book shows how the insights and experiences of these early twentieth-century Lusophone writers are relevant to issues of justice and freedom in the present.

The introductory essay that follows is one of the book’s highlights. A clear and thoughtful history of key anarchist ideas and personages from early twentieth-century Portugal and Brazil, the essay is itself worth picking up the book up for. Opening with a history of Luso-anarchism, the analytically crisp essay offers fascinating historical details. One example is the correspondence between the emperor of Brazil (just before his overthrow in 1889) with the Italian anarchist, Giovanni Rossi. The emperor offered Rossi land in southern Brazil to build an experimental anarchist community, which Rossi founded, even after the emperor fell (8).

After the Introduction’s historical sections, Góes explores the ideological strands and influences of various early twentieth-century forms of anarchism (16-23). This section too is a pleasure to read. Especially interesting is Góes’s discussion of Maria Lacerda de Moura—“the most influential female anarchist

in Brazil” (20)—and her critiques of influential male anarchists (21). Like Emma Goldman (20), Moura embraced an individualist and feminist anarchism that applied the “anti-authoritarian principle of anarchism [...] to social as well as government institutions” (21).

The Introduction runs through the biography of some of the Luso-anarchists included in the book and describes the fierce repression that anarchists faced in both Portugal and Brazil from the 1920s onward, as the Lusophone variant of fascism known as *integralismo* gained strength. Here too, Góes gives us many historical details of interest. In 1920s Brazil, many anarchists were shipped to the Clevlândia Concentration Camp, on the country’s northern border, where hundreds died of illness (27). Many Portuguese anarchists were sent to Portuguese colonies in Africa (28). Later in the book, Góes provides sections of the exile narrative of one of those Portuguese anarchists, Mário Castelhana (145-58).

At times in the Introductory essay, Góes risks overstating the influence of anarchism. For example, an excellent section highlights the ability of anarchists to build solidarity across racial lines. Góes turns to the United States, where, “even in this cauldron of extreme racial strife and division [...] anarchism was able to build bridges.” He discusses a strike among workers described in historical documents as “Portuguese negros—most likely Cape Verdean immigrants” (6)—that was organized by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). However, the IWW was not an exclusively anarchist organization, so it would have been nice to have a fuller explanation of how anarchism was the key principle involved in this attempt “to build solidarity amidst diversity” (7).

The compiled writings include not only sections of theoretical texts and manifestos, but also examples of historical writing, drama, poetry, literary stories, journalism, and letters. These writing samples are divided into three sections. Although the first section is principally focused on the cruelty and inequality of the societies in which the anarchists wrote, it also shows forms of resistance, solidarity, and political organization. For example, the section includes two pieces by the great Afro-Brazilian journalist and novelist, Lima Barreto, that indict a violently unequal Brazilian society. But, as Góes notes in the introductory essay, “when the Afro-Brazilian writer Lima Barreto rises to defend anarchist European immigrant workers against the charge that they are unworthy elements which should be deported from Brazil, we see solidarity

breaking down barriers” (xii). The section also includes a 1931 piece chronicling the history of syndicalism in Portugal by anarcho-syndicalist, Manuel Joaquim de Sousa.

The heart of the book, for this reader, is the long middle second section of compiled writings, “The Theoretical Structure of Luso-Anarchism.” Here we get sophisticated polemics and literary works by the influential Portugal-born, Brazil-based anarchist, Neno Vasco, who wrote plays and short stories because he believed, as Góes notes, that “change had to occur through intervention in the culture” (20). The section also includes poetry and theoretical writing by the Portuguese anarchist, Ângelo Jorge, as well as a fierce 1932 polemic by Brazilian anarchist-feminist, Maria Lacerda de Moura, “Love Each Other [...] and Don’t Breed.” Many of Moura’s scathing arguments feel very current. For example, she critiques the celebration as “victories of feminism” such advances as women “occupying positions of note in whichever governmental agency, traveling alone, studying in universities” by arguing, “while women content themselves with these victories, their true emancipation is put off to the side” (108). This sounds much like twenty-first-century left-feminist critiques of the “lean-in” feminism that has become an important part of corporate public relations.

The final section of anarchist writings chronicles the repression of anarchists, including Mário Castelhana’s narrative of exile from Portugal and brief letters by José Maria Fernandes Varella to his “companion,” as Varella was dying in a Brazilian concentration camp.

The translation of the texts is clean and elegant, though with only 119 pages of actual writings by the anarchist authors (43-162), I did hope for more. The writings by the authors are interspersed with very helpful editor’s notes, contextualizing and explaining historical, theoretical, and linguistic details. Overall, this is an excellent book, and it will be a crucial resource for activists, students, and scholars.

**Sean T. Mitchell**

*Rutgers University, Newark*