Operation Adorno

The Challenge of Surrealism: The Correspondence of Theodor W. Adorno and Elisabeth Lenk, ed. and trans. Susan H. Gillespie, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2015. 248 pp., £63.38 hb., £18.16 pb., 978 0 81665 616 5 hb., 978 0 81665 617 2 pb.

At the beginning of a talk on 'Critical Theory and Surreal Practice' Elisabeth Lenk rhetorically asks whether these 'two movements' 'ultimately unleashed the May 68 events?' This is the question and the promise of this newly translated volume of correspondence. Lenk was Theodor Adorno's graduate student between 1962 and 1969, writing a dissertation on André Breton's surrealism (the correspondence concludes with the death of her beloved advisor). More promising than the confrontation between Adorno and surrealism – a subject treated in his brief and brilliant essay 'Surrealism Reconsidered' (1956) retranslated here – is, however, the promise of something more unexpected: a confrontation between Adorno and situationism. Lenk was formally expelled from the surrealist group in Paris for a 'situationist deviation'. At one point she asks Adorno if he is 'familiar with the *Internationale Situationniste*', remarking that it has 'affected me in a way that nothing else has for a long time'. Unfortunately, Adorno doesn't directly engage with the situationist materials she sent him, but situationism is the implicit background of their ongoing exchange.

As it turns out, there is little back and forth on the issue of surrealism (Adorno is reticent to engage on the topic beyond what he wrote in 1956), but the events of May '68 form the dramatic backdrop for their later discussions. Lenk is in the thick of it, both at Nanterre and Paris, and sends reports to Adorno in Frankfurt and elsewhere. Adorno, for his part, found himself in the midst of the June 1967 events in Berlin where he was aggressively challenged by the SDS during a talk on Goethe in Peter Szondi's seminar. He was confronted for his seemingly tepid response to the shooting death of Benno Ohnesorg and lack of support for the jailed student Fritz Teufel. It is this moment between June 1967 and May 1968 that enlivens an otherwise rather routine exchange between advisor and student. And there are some truly awkward moments. Attached to letter 26 Lenk encloses a short essay 'Thoughts on the Relationship between Sade and Fourier' which articulates some of her basic philosophical commitments concerning happiness and desire. 'True happiness,' she writes, 'unknown until now, consists in giving in to the inner, passionate impulses, raising them to principles of action.' Not long after receiving this 'fragment' Adorno declares he has 'never, really never, met a woman whom I consider to be as endowed with genius as you are.' He warns Lenk not to 'ascribe that to my feeling of being in love, to which it merely contributes even more.' He ends the letter by saying he looks 'forward to going away with' her. Lenk does not acknowledge the advance, but it inevitably colours the exchange from that point on.

The book includes a range of material related – some of it rather loosely – to the correspondence, including, as well as Adorno's 'Surrealism Reconsidered', Walter Benjamin's 1929 essay on surrealism, some early surrealist 'readings' co-written by Adorno and Carl Dreyfus, and four essays by Lenk: an afterword to Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, an introduction to the German edition of Charles Fourier's *Theory of the Four Movements and General Destinies*, an introduction to the correspondence, and the 2001 essay 'Critical Theory and Surreal Practice'. The new introduction by Rita Bischof – former student and friend of Lenk – sets an awkward tone for the volume. According to Bischof, Adorno 'clearly misses the point' of surrealism, observing that the 'developing lack of consensus' in the exchange reflects the fact they belong to 'different generations'. (The lack of consensus is apparent in October 1967 when Adorno declares his inability 'to strike any real fire' from Lenk's translation of a Breton poem.) Lenk's generation is part of the contemporary 'surrealist turn', Bischof writes, and cites a wide range of 'new forms of political opposition', including Occupy, Pussy Riot and the 'early' Arab Spring, as instances of the turn. 'When reality is the way it is, surrealism is the only way out', Bischof quotes Lenk as saying. 'This turn was shown by the fact that in post-Mubarak Egypt [Lenk] had succeeded in holding a seminar on sleep', Bischof writes. As an alternative to the 'trap set by revolutionary parties' – a constant hymn of Lenk's writings, a thought foreign to Breton's surrealism

– surrealist dream politics begins to look precisely like the expression of a 'subjectivity that in becoming estranged from the world has become estranged from itself', as Adorno famously observed of surrealism.

As a tactic, surrealist dream imagery – above all Ernst's montages of childhood remnants from the nineteenth century – in splitting itself off from contemporary social reality leaves the world of reification intact. Adorno offers his crushing verdict on surrealism through the words of Hegel in the *Phenomenology*: 'The sole work and deed of universal freedom is thus *death*, a death that has no inner significance or fulfilment.' Like the Enlightenment itself, surrealism, Adorno writes, bears witness to the 'relapse of abstract freedom into the supremacy of objects and thus into mere nature'. Lenk of course resists this criticism but nonetheless affirms, following Benjamin's account of German *Trauerspiel*, a 'vision of naked concreteness', bare facticity 'deserted by God and meaning'. It is hard to square this materialism with the one offered by Hegel. In her brilliant afterword to Aragon's *Paris Peasant* she cites the following from Hegel: 'The Natural holds its place in [the minds of the Greeks] only after undergoing some transformation by Spirit – not immediately.' Perhaps everything in the debate between Lenk and Adorno (it is something of a replay of the Benjamin–Adorno dispute) rests on the status of this transformation. *Paris Peasant* narrates the rediscovery of 'nature in the metropolis'. Aragon shows his readers 'where, in the interstices of the contemporary world, mythical elements reside'. For Adorno, that dialectic could only appear too static, too unmediated, too void of development.

The root of the conflict between Lenk and Adorno centres on opposing accounts of materialism. Lenk affirms 'Breton's particular view of reality [she calls] poetic materialism.' Breton's materialism consists in the 'idea that the body of the word creates the very first sense, the way an inadvertent movement of the human body can bring forth (or come up with) a thought, a rhythm'. Against this view, Adorno notes (rather cryptically) that in 'surrealistic productions the individual associations, in their necessity, are not conveyed starting from the articulated image'. Any work free from the 'crutches of meaning' would require that it is also raised 'above the level of chance'. In other words, surrealist associations risk being merely individual if they are not set within a larger social setting. It is only within a social context that they can do their destructive work. This is Adorno's criterion for surrealist success, to strike the right balance between individual fantasy and social whole. Adorno may have been wrong about that balance in certain works by Ernst and others (say between 1916 and 1924), but it should be clear that Lenk does not engage Adorno on these terms. Lenk offers alternate criteria for surrealist success.

If it is the body that produces the thought, then that thought, as long as it is tied to the body, is not only contingently, but by definition, without meaning. This is the point of Lenk's assertion (in her fragment on Sade and Fourier, but it dominates her thinking as a whole) that 'in the passions the fate of every human being is already foreshadowed'. Lenk cites Jean Gaulmier on this point, 'the number of passions with which a being is equipped at its inception announces the destiny that it is promised.' She goes on to cite Sade: 'It is in our mother's breast that the organs are produced that will render us susceptible to this or that fantasy.' That these affective desires are nonsocial is clear when Sade observes how 'education can do what it will, it no longer changes anything'. There are latent 'energies' that slumber within all of us; it is the task of the social to allow those to flourish and be fulfilled. For Lenk, May '68 is 'a truly Fourier-like state of affairs', one where latent desires are unleashed and satisfied, even if temporarily.

Lenk narrates an encounter with a group of FGÉRI psychiatrists (Federation of Groups for Institutional Study and Research, founded by Félix Guattari). Lenk and her friends had 'just read *Justine*' and were struck by the 'lack of restraint' among the communards. Within this community 'night has been abolished' and she wonders whether 'something new might not be more likely to come from [this] quarter than from those who are brilliantly, smoothly, repeating the old boring commonplaces?' Boring and old, for Lenk, stand in some basic philosophical and political opposition to the shocking and new. After her visit Lenk worries she has begun to write in a 'nomad's language'. Or, rather, she has not 'written a single word', which means she has not 'strayed very far from surrealism'. One begins to see how this improvised mixture of Breton's surrealism, Vaneigem's situationism, Guattari's (nascent) nomadology, and Benjamin's allegory gives rise to a new paradigm of aesthetically charged politics. But it is one largely at odds with her advisor's paradigm.

Lenk's politics are ultimately driven by a vision of ontological *difference*. Surrealism is not the 'search for a common language, but the pleasure that results from the separate, finally communicable awareness of unbridgeable difference'. Following Fourier,

Lenk shows how these differences are founded on individuated desires or passions. These passions, she explains, are the 'real motors of the soul', for they are 'teleological in themselves'. Society channels the passions in various directions but it does not produce them. Desire is primary; it is what orders human communities along their innate axes; it is society's job to solicit every imaginable passion and bring them into new harmonies. Rather than equality, it is the 'most extreme differentiation of passions and characters' that defines a community. 'Every passion, be it the oddest one imaginable, for example, a preference for tough chickens, has its irreplaceable spot in the economy of this universe.' The Benjaminian detail becomes the fetishistic passion: 'The fanatical lover of soft pears is the sworn enemy of the devotee of firm pears. In this passion for the unique, this sensitivity to nuance, the men and women of Fourier's community of the future resemble the aristocratic dandy – a figure that had emerged in his era as a living protest against the banality and mediocrity of the bourgeois lifestyle.' This last point clarifies Lenk's political project. If your problem is the 'banality' of the 'bourgeois lifestyle', then your solution is the 'new'. If your problem is the 'elimination of boredom', then the 'elimination of poverty' could only be a (contingent) by-product of that goal.

Given the 'false social state of the passions' it follows that 'the rich cannot be entirely happy'. Alternately, Lenk shows how under Fourier's new social state 'Kings, clerics, brutes, capitalists, traders and criminals, with all their vices, will all fit harmoniously into the new order. Even bloodthirsty Nero, without any need to change his nature, would have become a useful member of the "harmony," namely, the best of all possible butchers.' It is, one might say, a butchered image of Marx's 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.' But nowhere does Marx imagine that communism would include kings, clerics, capitalists or Neros. Their harmonies are incompatible with the ones that emerge under communism. Then again, Lenk never really imagines that what she is doing *is* Marxist. Lenk is forthright about her opposition to organization as such: 'Odd that people's political perspective is completely irrelevant. For this reason I expect little from the well-meaning little leftist groups (including the SDS) and much from spontaneity.' (Adorno, as she says early on, is really 'an artist' for her.)

The consistency of Lenk's politics of the new emerges in her gloss of Fourier's account of class struggle. Fourier, Lenk writes, 'wants to retain class differences, on account of the differentiations that are necessary for a series'. A politics of the new results in a vision where 'equality and fraternity, even as ideals, are just philosophical nonsense, which – if it should ever be possible to realize them – would only produce mediocrity and deathly boredom'. Against this death-dealing boredom we read about 'new forms of political opposition', 'new ways of thinking', 'new images', 'what counts is only the new thing', 'new meanings', a 'new definition of humanity', and the 'new social movement', the one that caused a 'moderate earthquake in France' (the latter phrase appears in 2001; it is hard to pinpoint the tremor-causing event). Lenk could only take comfort in Adorno's sense that 'capitalism had found within itself the resources for postponing the collapse more or less until the end of time.' This is why she could casually 'consign [Marxist contradiction] to the dustbin of history with other relics of the past'. Any movement worth having 'cannot be planned', Lenk reflects; one doesn't 'need a party of socialist unity, even the most avant-garde one' to 'channel' the experience of the new. Truly understood, Critical Theory was a renovation of the senses, an experiential model. It provided an 'alternative to politics' rather than a form of it. Against a 'culture of consensus and homogeneity', Lenk posits 'real cultural diversity'.

But there are old resources that speak to the (old) politics of the new. They are there in Marx's 1873 response to what he describes as the ongoing 'Indifference to Politics' among social idealists. Because there was little class consciousness at the beginning of the nineteenth century early socialists like Fourier had to 'subscribe to dreams of the *ideal society* of the future and condemn all such attempts at strikes, associations and political movements undertaken by the workers to bring some improvement to their lot'. Marx implies that Fourier would change his mind in a society marked by real class struggle. But it is only a 'bourgeois doctrinaire' who would 'forbid the working class every real method of struggle because all the arms to fight with must be taken from existing society'. It was Breton's dream that truly 'radical [political] propositions get formulated *outside the existing framework*'. In Lenk's words, one must 'escape from the old world' in order to produce the new one. What will the new world look like if its terms are formulated outside the existing framework? It's possible that it might look uncannily like the one we inhabit now.

Todd Cronan

On the menu, but not at the table

Susanne Lettow, ed., *Reproduction, Race, and Gender in Philosophy and the Early Life Sciences*, SUNY Press, Albany NY, 2014. vi + 294 pp., £52.00 hb., £19.95 pb., 978 1 43844 949 4 hb., 978 1 43844 948 7 pb.

This collection contributes to an increasingly important issue in philosophy and the history of ideas, examining the emergence of the interrelated discourses of reproduction, 'race' and gender. How the naturalization of these ideas is to be resisted or overthrown is not examined here, but bringing these discourses to our attention is in itself valuable and helpfully directs us to the relatively recent revival of critical debates around the history of the anthropological question: what is man?

Recent student-led campaigns (especially the Why is My Curriculum White? campaign), ongoing campaigns against racist policing and intergovernmental (and grass roots) debates concerning reparations, all in their different ways connect to the history of this question. While some forms of explicit 'race' and gender discrimination have been successfully challenged, we are far from living in a time in which we can look back at this question in a 'disinterested' manner. This is an illusion, however, that *Reproduction, Race, and Gender in Philosophy and the Early Life Sciences* runs the risk of supporting. The collection would have benefited from an African philosophical contribution because, as one campaigning student recently put it, 'we are too often on the menu but not at the table'.

In his exchange with Robert Bernasconi in *RP* 119, Joseph McCarney argued that 'Our antiracist critique will then end up proving far too much', as a result of which 'the entire canon of Western Philosophy … is likely to stand convicted.' Ironically there are, as McCarney warned, New Right ideologists who would welcome this 'conviction', already toasting Kant's racism whilst claiming him as one of their own. There are also separatist movements that regard Western culture as irredeemably racist. Against both of these related positions there has been a desire to protect Kant from an association with racism and to bracket off his writings on 'race' from his wider work. The only alternative to these opposing extremes is a radical critique in which the ideas of 'race' and 'sex' are considered in the context of their historical emergence. Lettow points out in her Introduction that 'a critical analysis of gender and race discourses has to address the multiplicity of [these] concepts.'

The book draws out this 'multiplicity' in illuminating ways. But it does not look deeply enough at the question of what, if anything, this multiplicity of concepts have in common and it does not critically interrogate the question of the natural biological ideas of 'race' and 'sex' upon which these concepts are based. Work by Robert Bernasconi, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze and Christian Neugebaur on 'race' and by Stella Sandford on 'sex' have sharpened the critical approach in a way that is underexplored in this collection. Following Kwame Anthony Appiah's 1985 argument that 'race' does not exist, the concept is widely regarded today as lacking scientific coherence, having been superseded by molecular biology and population genetics (which show, for example, that there are wider genetic variations between different African populations than there are between African and European populations). But, in addition to the ongoing *political* significance of 'race', Staffan Müller-Wille points, in his essay, to a 'recent resurgence of racial categories in genomics', which makes the interrogation of the origins of the concept of 'race' all the more urgent.

Bernasconi has shown that Kant provided the concept of 'race' with its first stable meaning and Eze's 1995 essay 'The Color of Reason' and Tsenay Serequeberhan's work also re-examined Kant's concept of 'race' and its place in the political economy of the Enlightenment. In his introduction to *Kant and the Concept of Race* (the previous book in the SUNY series in which this volume appears) Jon Mikkel argues that Eze was not sufficiently familiar with Kant's work to notice what Pauline Kleingeld had called 'Kant's second thoughts on race'. This was further attributed to a failure on Eze's part to engage with Kant's reception of Buffon and, in particular, Buffon's rejection of early preformationism. This criticism, however, sidesteps the argument that, although Kant's 'second thoughts' on 'race' were partly rooted in his abandonment of preformationism in favour of Buffonian epigenesis, his was a form of epigenesis ('generic preformation') with a strong pre-formationist base (see Sandford's 'Spontaneous Generation', *RP* 179).

Bernasconi develops this argument in his essay here and demonstrates – through examining the reception of Kant's concept of 'race' in the work of

Girtanner and Schelling – that Kant retained a strong preformationist base at the heart of his ideas of 'race' and reproduction and therefore did not have second thoughts of a kind that could be meaningfully distinguished as non-preformationist. Girtanner's reading of Kant – published in 1796 – was endorsed by Kant himself in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) and so provides researchers with another important textual base from which to interpret Kant's abiding views which combined natural history, the idea of germs (*Keime*) and 'race'.

Bernasconi's essay also discusses the significance of Kant's concept of 'race' in the work of Schelling, who, as Allison Stone argues, sought to move beyond Kant's critical claim that judgements of purposiveness in nature could not be more than merely 'regulative' without leading to dialectical illusion. Schelling developed an account of the way that nature must be independently of how we know it – that is, composed of products whose purposiveness dwells within themselves. If human minds are natural products, then the study of any and all such products should be (re)interpreted in the light of what is known about human minds because, for Schelling, nature prefigures human self-organization. This attempt to go beyond Kant's bifurcation of nature into noumena and phenomena continues along a course already prefigured in the *Critique of Judgment* and, as John H. Zammito argues, leads directly to the high points of German Idealist philosophy.

Schelling's understanding of a polarity of philosophically fundamental forces – *entgegengesetzter Kräfte* – which determine the structure of matter, magnetism, electricity, chemistry and physiology develops in his published works from the 1797 *Ideas For a Philosophy of Nature*, and 1798 *On the World Soul*, through to his 1799 *First Outline of a System of Philosophy of Nature* in which sexual difference – *Geschlechtsverschiedenheit* – becomes the culminating manifestation of this polarity. Male 'production' represents one pole and female 'inhibition' the other. Stone points to the 'enormous influence' of Plato's *Timaeus*, but the critical analysis of the concept of 'sex' is overlooked here in favour of the historical development of Schelling's position. Stone shows that Hegel similarly sexualizes the polarity of 'concept and matter' as nature's fundamental constitutive opposition, which he then characterized as male and female respectively.

As Stone points out, Hegel also developed a 'racial' hierarchy on the basis of this polarity in which the African allegedly remains at the level of matter while the European is alone able to recognize spirit in nature and thereby make history through the self-realization of the concept. Stone shows that while the African and the female are identified with matter in the Hegelian concept/matter distinction, 'sexual' difference is, for Hegel, dynamic whereas 'racial' difference is not. While this is an interesting difference between 'racial' and 'sexual' diversity in Hegel's philosophy, it overlooks the place of the African woman, who, as such, is both dynamic in her 'sexual' difference and yet static in her 'racial' diversity (*Rassenverschiedenheit*). By uniting this difference in a body of experience, the African woman may make a critical contribution to Stone's feminist project of 'creating new bodies of thought, knowledge and practice out of women's sexually specific forms of embodiment'.

Stone explicitly contrasts her feminist project with the work of Peter Hanns Reill, who argues that Romantic *Naturphilosophen* redefined the politics of sexual subordination in the post-revolutionary period, pointing to the Enlightenment's revolutionary transcendence of the gender roles associated with the ancient regime in favour of what Reill argues was a culturally liberating androgyny. For Stone, by contrast, this liberating androgyny was somewhat superficial in so far as the valued characteristics of intellect, activity and productivity remained 'male'. Although women could rise to prominence through the cultivation of these qualities, their symbolic identification as masculine meant that woman as woman remained in negative opposition to man as man.

Reill draws a distinction between late Enlightenment thinkers and the *Naturphilosophen* in order to oppose those who argue that Enlightenment thinkers developed the 'two sex model' that objectified gender inequality. For Reill this criticism ought rather to be aimed at the *Naturphilosophen* Lorenz Oken and Carl Gustav Carus, the latter a professor, physician, gynaecologist and author of the influential textbook *Lehrbuch der Gynakologie* (1820). Reill contrasts these authors with Wilhelm Von Humboldt, who, in Reill's essay, represents the late Enlightenment's valorization of androgyny. Laquer argued that during the eighteenth century this androgynous or 'one sex' model was replaced by a 'two sex' model which highlighted 'sexual dimorphism', restoring gender hierarchies in the post-revolutionary period on the new basis of the emerging life sciences. Whereas Laquer attributes this to Enlightenment thought itself, Reill argues that it was the Romantic *Naturphilosophen* who initiated this move. If, however, feminism is defined by the

challenge it poses to a presumed 'naturality' of male supremacy (as Kate Soper puts it), it is difficult to see how either of these two models of 'sex' could be straightforwardly relied upon to give evidence in support of the feminist cause. The opposing one- and two-sex models and their different interpretations in the context of gender politics must raise the question of the presumed naturalness of the object 'sex' – whichever way it is conceived – and the question of 'sex', as distinct from gender, ought to have been considered.

Lettow agrees with Reill that the restoration of pre-revolutionary hierarchies on the new scientific basis of the life sciences led to the formation of a 'biopolitical gaze', and Florence Vienne's account of investigations into *Urthiere*, primordial or spermatic animals, and the so-called 'reproductive substance', during the period 1749 to 1805 similarly reflects Reill's periodization of the development of the two-sex polarity. Jocelyn Holland, by contrast, looks at the 'romantic discourse on procreation' through an analysis of the relationship between the concepts of *Fortpflanzung* (procreation) and *Zeugung* (generation), which complicate any simple reading of developments in the book's central organizing concept: 'reproduction'. Notions of 'reproduction' (a late-eighteenth-century neologism) were influenced by Abraham Trembley's research (published in 1744) into the freshwater polyp's ability to reproduce dissected parts of its body, and stimulated Buffon's development of the idea of an active power superseding the earlier forms of preformationism, raising the question of what, exactly, could be reproduced – the species, the 'race' or the individual organism? This, in turn, stimulated changes in the understanding of the 'temporalization' of life, which could no longer be thought of as having been created in a divine time in which every individual organism was preformed and encased, one in another, like an infinite series of preformed Russian dolls. Ideas of heredity and developments in the natural history of the species and the 'races' called into question what could be inherited, and from which parent, and all in a period in which distinct disciplinary boundaries were as yet unformed.

In his contribution to this volume, Renato G. Mazzolini (somewhat uncritically) goes through various offerings from racism's menu and argues that colour prejudice was the result of colour-based slavery and that 'social and political classifications of Africans preceded the scientific classifications and the anatomical investigations of skin colour'.

This is not, however, a repetition of Eric Williams's Marxist account of the development of racist ideology from racist relations of production, but, perhaps perversely, an account of its development in relation to the revolutionary resistance to these relations. Mazzolini writes:

> In fact, from a chronological point of view, the idea [of biologically inferior and superior races] gained ground and imposed itself as the majority view, just as the campaigns for abolition of first the slave trade and then slavery got under way, but especially after the revolts in the Caribbean and the enactment, on the July 8, 1801, of the first constitution of St. Domingue.

Leaving aside the question of this 'majority view' (*de jure* slavery had been abolished in the French parliament, after all), Mazzolini turns from the task of interpreting these ideas of black inferiority to what he proposes as a new explanatory model, 'leucocracy', and asks, 'Why did Europeans consider themselves to be superior?' However, without reference to what African people thought, we find here an unwitting repetition of one of racism's characteristic moves – to make the African present, as an object, without any presence as a subject. This form of racism underlies the different models Mazzolini covers, but he misses this shared and characteristic ideological function.

Penelope Deutscher's essay examines Mary Wollstonecraft's use of analogical reasoning in connecting chattel slavery with the plight of middle-class women. Deutscher teases out a certain 'rhetorical profit' won through these analogies and argues that 'Wollstonecraft's expression of antislavery sentiment was consistent with her also supposing the subordination and inferiority of certain classes of humans.' Middle-class European women, Deutscher argues, were simultaneously compared to, and held apart from, those in slavery or the 'servant class', through an 'insinuation of aberration'. Whether this is really as mercenary a gesture as Deutscher suggests will be a question for the reader, who, having studied Sara Figal's fascinating piece, may be inclined to conclude that Wollstonecraft's analogies might more fittingly have been drawn between the ladies of Europe and the 'eroticized' Circassian slaves of the 'oriental' harem.

In their shared confinement to the private sphere these two groups – who were first called 'Caucasian' in this period – were chiefly tasked with producing only one form of that sweetness industrially extracted form the sugar islands: in addition to the varying forms of sexual exploitation the African woman had also to (re)produce more 'slaves' and so, like the working women of Europe, also produced labour power in the form of *proles* – that is, offspring. In this way women remain at the heart of capitalist production, and in a pioneering exercise of consumer power women's groups organized sugar boycotts as well as a range of public awareness campaigns directed against the slave system.

While Wilberforce and the 'Saints' advocated the gradual abolition of slavery – and refused women's signatures on their petitions – Elizabeth Heyricke's *Immediate not Gradual Abolition* and the Peckham Ladies African and Anti-Slavery Society's boycott campaign suggest another reading of the wider feminist influence. 'Ladies Associations' up and down the UK petitioned and actively produced the political strategies that pressured the British Parliament on the question of immediate abolition. Against their identification with 'passive matter', these women – African and European – actively defied the pseudoscientific definitions of what made one fully human. In the post-Hegelian period the status of matter itself was philosophically challenged, but the status of the workers most identified with matter did not automatically undergo a similar change because, in part, as Joan Steigerwald shows, the development of the new science – which Treviranus, the subject of her essay, was one of the first to call 'Biology' – uncritically incorporated much from the earlier debates and, as she concludes, should be read as revealing the problems associated with 'first attempts to articulate a science of Biology in the years around 1800'.

The metaphysician interested in repairing our relations with nature, and each other, will find much in this volume that discusses the pathological dis-ease that still plagues our institutions and hampers our efforts towards sustainable democratic development. Philosophy is still being called to the bar of history to provide its expert evidence. But the question is not whether philosophy *is* racist or sexist, but what philosophy can diagnose about racism and sexism in an effort to be rid of their toxic effects. Judging from the essays in this collection there remains a lot to be said, and more – much more – still to be done.

Christopher Jones-Thompson

Weapons of the geek

Gabrielle Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*, Verso, London and New York, 2014. 464 pp., £16.99 hb., £9.99 pb., 978 1 78168 583 9 hb., 978 1 78168 983 7 pb.

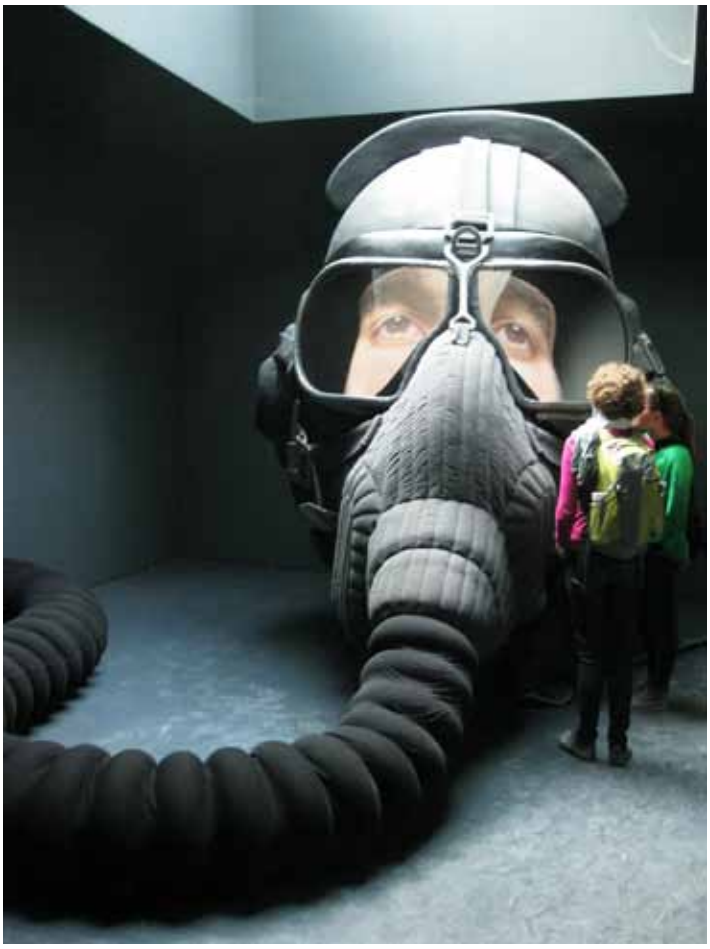
Anonymous: the facelessness of the name itself deflects any definitive inquiry. Yet faceless though it may be, the 'face' of Anonymous is eminently recognisable: a corporate, black-suited figure with tie, head replaced with a question mark. With its first public manifestation in street protests and online videos in 2007, Anonymous adopted the Guy Fawkes mask from the 2006 film *V for Vendetta* – based on David Lloyd and Alan Moore's 1981 comic series that follows the vigilante actions of a lone activist fighting against a dystopic and totalitarian UK. The mask has since become synonymous with Anonymous, as the donning of a symbol that deflects individualism (and facial-recognition software) while proclaiming a collective identity for the many faces of its adherents, in a 'subsumption of individual identity into collective' that Gabrielle Coleman notes is 'unusual for Western culture'. But if 'we are legion', as Anonymous proclaims, who is the 'we' behind the mask, and what are the political aims of this anonymous many?

Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy presents an accomplished feat of academic reportage, blending techniques of immersive anthropology, gonzo journalism and net-critique into an eminently readable yet erudite account of Anonymous from 2007 through 2013. Throughout Coleman provides detailed chat transcripts, capturing something of the play, parry and thrust of Internet dialogue and its semiotics and emoticons of opaque in-jokes, much as any anthropologist would lay out the languages and customs of a culture. Anonymous is difficult to define in terms of the standard sociological categories of 'new social movements', and much of Coleman's anthropological labour consists of delving deeper into a leaderless disorganization that shrouds itself in secrecy, layers itself in disinformation and propaganda, and revels in tricking unsuspecting and gullible media with 'lies, guile, and fabrication'. Her book tells the story of how this anonymous cadre came of age as hacktivists, transforming the tools of trolls and tricksters into a politicized quiver of digital direct-action techniques.

Coleman begins her account with the genesis of Anonymous in the shadow campaigns of Internet trolls and pranksters, particularly 4chan.org's bastion of anything-goes ugliness, the posting channel simply known as /b/. Founded in 2002 by moot, aka Christopher Poole, 4chan is the birthplace of many of the net's most beloved as well as detestable memes, from rainbow cats to hilariously deconstructed motivational posters. At the same time, /b/ is the 'basement of the net', exhibiting a strange and strong sense of free speech; its 'Anonymous' posts nearly always push the boundaries of taste and filth. It is from the default posting identity of the board – 'just another Anonymous' – that Anonymous as a collective online identity was forged.

While keeping the Internet unsafe for naivety and innocence is the upside of trolling pranks, the darker aspects include 'ruin-life campaigns', incorporating tactics such as doxing (revealing personal information, including home addresses, phone numbers, SIN numbers, credit cards, logins and passwords) and SWATting (calling-in militarized response units to violently raid someone's home). Such tactics have been used in the anti-feminist GamerGate campaign that targets female, LGBTQ and trans* videogame developers, journalists and critics. Yet it is from this unlikely and amoral realm that Anonymous arose as an online force with a political agenda that increasingly came to distance itself from the unjust aspects of trolling, precisely because its trickster campaigns also attracted the subversively rebellious.

Coleman suggests that 'the unsavory nature of Anonymous' early trolling activities motivated collectivity as a security feature'. Participants had to want to participate not out of a desire for Internet fame, but out of sheer pleasure in collective action alone. Drawing attention to this nascent political collectivity, Coleman argues for what she calls 'weapons of the geek', contrasting the term to James Scott's 'weapons of the weak' that 'describes the tactics of economically marginalized populations who engage in small-scale illicit acts – such as foot-dragging and vandalism – that don't appear to be political'. Implicit in this argument is that the terrain of the political includes the activities of new social movements in general, and collectivities forged through the Internet in particular; moreover, the net itself constitutes a political domain, as the technical conduit of global communications and economic activity. Thus Anonymous undertakes 'a modality of politics exercised by a class of privileged and visible actors who often lie at the center of economic life'. Yet Coleman argues against generalizations of Anonymous' political engagement as solely determined by technology. In particular, Anonymous cannot be condensed to the



Irina Nakhova, *Green Pavilion* (detail), Russian Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennial, 2015

usual 'hacker ethos' of libertarianism; according to her study, Anonymous 'certainly don't agree on how social change should proceed'. That said, what Anonymous 'all have in common is that their political tools, and to a lesser degree their political sensibilities, emerge from the concrete experiences of their craft'. Thus, the primary political activities of Anonymous have usually focused on 'civil liberties, such as privacy', with tactics probing 'the new possibilities and legal limitations of digital civil disobedience', even as they have soon gone on to tackle much larger and more complex issues.

Though Anonymous draws from the hacker ethos and hacktivism alike, Coleman argues that Anonymous differentiates itself from these two historical precedents, particularly from the politically oriented operations of the 1990s, including Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) and The Yes Men/RTMark. It is tempting to see Anonymous as an extension of 1990s-era hacktivism, and though Coleman charts something of a trajectory from the alterglobalization movement through to Occupy and Anonymous, what she depicts is a somewhat more politically unstable and even undecideable entity. It is in contextualizing Anonymous with regard to its hacktivist and hacker precedents that *Hacker, Hoaxer* could have provided a more thorough genealogy of the online activism that preceded it, particularly because many of the debates that Coleman stages around the political use of Denial of Service (DoS) tactics have been broached previously. For example, Coleman claims that Anonymous was the first group to use *Distributed* Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks for 'political dissent'. This may be technically correct, in so far as Anonymous may have been the first to utilize the prepackaged, widely available 'script kiddy' DDoS programs that block website access for political ends. However, the concept of undertaking a digital blockade came out of two influential texts by Critical Art Ensemble, *The Electronic Disturbance* (1994) and *Electronic Civil Disobedience* (1996), both of which developed the overall strategy of 'tactical media'. Inspired by the writings of CAE, the first politicized usage of website-blocking tactics was by Electronic Disturbance Theater, who released the Zapatista Tactical FloodNet software as a work of 'conceptual art' in 1998. Even if FloodNet's stated purpose was 'the conceptual-artistic spamming of targeted server error logs', FloodNet's technical purpose was to 'reload a targeted web page several times per minute' in an act of 'Electronic Civil Disobedience'. Funded by RTMark.com to support, via online civil disobedience, the Zapatista indigenous movement in Mexico, FloodNet was also actively used in the 1999 ToyWars campaign against dot-com company etoys.com (that sought to 'take over the etoy.com art brand'). Loading FloodNet turns one's Internet browser into a multi-windowed monster that, coupled with other hacktivists doing the same, aims to block the information highway with bits instead of bodies – in much the same manner as a Denial of Service attack, though with technically different means.

The toxic yet politically potent combination of trolls and tricksters was transformed on 15 January 2007, when 'Anonymous' – not an identity but a single instance of the anonymous posting handle – suggested that /b/ 'do something big again' by '"hacking" or "taking down" the official Scientology website'. The Church of Scientology is no small opponent; it is well-funded and notorious for hounding critics and former members with lawsuits. It was thus a perfect target for an anonymous take-down campaign.

Beginning in 2007, Anons attacked Scientology's websites; manifested street-level protests in front of Scientology properties on a global scale; and waged an unrelenting propaganda war on the Internet that leveraged Tom Cruise's increasingly erratic behaviour for dramatic effect. Through Project Chanology, Anonymous established itself on the side of social justice and, significantly for the network, met itself in the flesh, even if masked.

Coleman provides an in-depth account of how Anonymous branched out from this into an increasingly complex series of campaigns, each with its core constituencies, technical methodologies, self-determined limits of illicit activity, and rules of engagement. Although the closed-circle hacker operations of LulzSec and AntiSec would garner the most public (and government) attention, arguably Anonymous reached its political and global apogee as a hacktivist collective with Operation Payback, which sought to avenge government crackdowns on WikiLeaks in 2010, and Operation Tunisia, in which Anons aided Tunisian activists during the state-controlled Internet blockages of the Arab Spring throughout 2010 and 2011.

Even with OpTunisia, Anonymous was already secretly centralizing its operations command. Anonymous' provisional but dedicated command structure harnessed large numbers of chaotic participants towards a unified goal. But, as Coleman suggests, 'maybe Anonymous could have achieved more had it had a leader or a static hierarchy'. At the same time, it is precisely because Anonymous is 'dynamic and fluid' that it remained able to transform and motivate itself from Op to Op. Such diversity of who is going to do what – and who is the who, exactly – also goes for participation in regard to the intersectional identities of Anons. Although Coleman notes that the usual geek stereotypes (along with trolling sexism and homophobia) pervade Anonymous, with Anonymous mirroring 'the structural inequities prevalent across the computer science world', it was OpTunisia, and the involvement of many Middle Eastern Anons, which revealed that 'the stereotype of the typical Anonymous participant – white, middle class, libertarian, and politically naive – is nowhere close to reality'. While it is true that the participation of women among 'law-breaking hackers' is low, Coleman notes that, as in the case of Chelsea Manning, trans* men and women are 'more common than one might imagine'. Likewise, Anonymous might be composed of more women than believed; Coleman points toward research that 'females are more common among trolling communities'. All of which to say is that Anonymous is perhaps more diverse in its participants than might be first suspected, and OpTunisia certainly broadened Anonymous' reach far beyond Western borders.

Besides providing an impressive account of Anonymous, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy* stands as a cogent and passionate defence of freedom of political expression through hacktivism, in which the ludic sense of freedom stands for more than just freedom *from* spying and censure, but offers a freedom *for* anonymous creative and political activity. Anonymous have reminded us of the necessity of the Fool, whose tenuous job it is to mock the King – and of the role of all such fools in the overthrow of nefarious power. In this it stands opposed to the dire and dystopic world of surveillance, in which all symbols are supposed to mean but one thing, and in which there is no play, but only threats. It is from such an improper place that a merry band of pranksters took on the increasingly powerful cabal of nation-state spy agencies and increasingly unaccountable spy corporations, testing the bounds of who can't take the joke, and who really is or isn't in it for the *lulz*.

Tobias C. van Veen

They used dark forces

Simona Forti, *New Demons: Rethinking Power and Evil Today*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2015. 388 pp., £59.00 hb., £20.99pb., 978 0 80478 624 9 hb., 978 0 80479 295 0 pb.

Evil as a concept has always been extraordinarily difficult to deal with in post-theological theoretical contexts. Historicism and pervasive constructivist views of knowledge and value plainly challenge the status of absolute judgements of any kind. And yet in a world that has still to come to grips with the Holocaust, more or less prominent forms of ethnic 'cleansing', and the everyday sexism and racism that disfigure civil societies and undermine life-chances for arbitrary reasons, the ordinary language of disagreement, or even outrage, hardly seems sufficient. Some events really do strike us as wholly reprehensible. And when these things are done willingly and knowingly, we really do find ourselves at a loss for words. We need to intensify our language, even though we are fully aware that the perspective from which we judge is one among many.

Simona Forti confronts these issues with admirable clarity and honesty. She accepts the reality of evil as something that is always with us, even in the quiet times when we think we are minding our own business. What distinguishes her treatment is her insistence that the outrageous things we are likely to want to call evil must actually be set in a wider social context that encourages us not to notice what is going on in front of us. Wilful evasions, quite as much as obvious atrocities, disfigure the ordinary workings of societies. In one sense we are all a part of this, despite what we might see as our innocent preoccupation with our own affairs.

Forti's focus throughout is on evil as a systemic phenomenon. She does not deny or disregard the horror of individual acts of wickedness, but her real interest is in practices embedded in the everyday functioning of societies. In a fine opening chapter, she sets up what she calls the Dostoevsky paradigm, centred on the devastating consequences of nihilism, where individuals lose any sense of the significance of others in their routine dealings with one another. The exposition here is exemplary, displaying sensitivity to Dostoevsky's texts while pursuing wider implications. There is very little point, after all, in arguing with a novelist as if he is trying to make a philosophical point. Dostoevsky's concern is rather to illustrate the consequences of nihilism, in ways that stop us in our tracks. Forti avoids the easy dismissal of Dostoevsky as a misguided theological reactionary, terrified of the modern world and all its works. Instead, she follows him in his depiction of a world in which nothing matters beyond individual self-assertion for its own sake, but goes on to ask if this can be the whole story. How we move on from recognition of meaninglessness is the key to this book.

Forti uses selective accounts of different thinkers (Heidegger, Nietzsche and Freud) to drive her initial case forward. She is specifically concerned to challenge the stark dualism framed by the distinction between good and evil, seeking instead to normalize our encounters with everyday evil. Whether this is strictly to go beyond good and evil, in Nietzsche's sense, is a moot point. Forti recognizes the danger in Nietzsche's use of language, and is happy to work with texts that other commentators have used to highlight his (presumed) dark side. She sees power as a pervasive dimension in any active social engagement. Properly speaking, it can be neither glorified nor deplored. She takes what she needs from Nietzsche, insisting most strongly on his critique of ordinary moral language. We are all agents, irrevocably constrained by complex social practices, but at the same time constraining others by the choices we make. There is no neutral perspective in a social world; nor should we kid ourselves that we retain rectitude and innocence while others are thoroughly compromised. It is not at all clear in Nietzsche how conflicts of value could ever be 'reasonably' or 'rationally' resolved. Forti treats this necessary limitation of our moral language as a virtue. However much Nietzsche's language might be used and abused, it certainly makes it very difficult for us to demonize people who simply happen to disagree with us.

New Demons' perspective on everyday evil is deeply influenced by Foucault's analysis of biopolitics, though Forti always keeps broader arguments in view. Her treatment of Hannah Arendt's infamous account of the 'banality of evil' is instructive in this respect. She has little sympathy for the possibility of a pure (almost Aristotelian) politics that informs Arendt's wider position, but the stress on the myriad commonplace actions that contribute to systemic evil is grist to her mill. The Holocaust, for sure, was an exceptional 'event'. But industrial killers, as Arendt illustrated so powerfully in her account of the Eichmann trial, are thoroughly ordinary folk. They turn up for work on time, cover for the absences of colleagues, do their best to follow the directions of their line managers, and generally try to do their duty as it is presented to them. Yet at no stage do they ask themselves what exactly they are doing. Making trains run on time can only be construed as a virtue if rail transport is contributing to a wider (and defensible) social purpose. Instrumental calculation surely reaches its limit when efficiency is measured in terms of numbers slaughtered. Joe and Josephine railway worker, however, are not encouraged to make that judgement. They are going about their business (logging movements, obeying railway regulations), not formulating policy and objectives. The claim that they are only following orders is obviously hollow, but it is extremely difficult to draw clear lines of moral and legal responsibility. How much did they know? When should they have said enough is enough? What sort of risks should they have been prepared to run? Arendt plainly thought that some actions are so horrible that it would be better to die than perform them. Forti is more understanding. She recognizes that people can be pushed to a limit. How that limit should be understood, however, is deeply problematic.

Arendt's preoccupation is with the thoughtlessness that enables people to drift into social engagements without noting the enormity of what is actually

going on. The disturbing point is that anyone could find themselves in these situations. We must assume that most people, ourselves included, might simply take the line of least resistance, whether through fear, indifference or straightforward embarrassment. Quite why potentially reflective people should abandon their critical resources is a complex question that Arendt barely addresses. Her deep suspicion of sociological explanations of social action leaves her with a tone of moral distaste and little more. She insists that the mark of free agents is to make critical choices and bear the responsibility. When that responsibility is thoughtlessly evaded she is left almost speechless.

It is here that Foucault is used as a corrective. Foucault's genealogical analyses all too easily explain the internalization that transforms potentially active citizens into submissive subjects of government. Governments do not need the coercive apparatus of a totalitarian state to manage the broad terms of discussion in a civil society. Dissent can very easily be made to appear silly or reckless. Chronically vulnerable people (vagrants, ethnic minorities, immigrants) can be presented as a threat, all in the name of quietly managing a civil society day to day. Forti focuses on what she aptly describes as the 'evil of docility' that systematically undermines a sense of personal or group responsibility. The language of biopolitics enables us to switch from orthodox descriptions of welfare systems to the management of obedience almost seamlessly. It also makes it extraordinarily difficult to oppose. Protecting society against threats has always been a primary function of government, but everything depends on precisely how threats are characterized. Biopolitics does not need crude depictions of the enemy within, though such stereotypical portrayals are all too familiar to us. If the project of managing society focuses on consumption, well-being, education and health, all construed in the broadest terms, individuals are left with their own choices, but within an extraordinarily narrow range. Who would complain about the promotion of opportunity and personal fulfilment? The real problem is that we may end up thinking of nothing else.

Forti's fear is that promotion of the self in a directly or indirectly managed civil society actually leads to a promotion of life for its own sake, with all qualitative criteria set aside. She makes sensitive use of Primo Levi's haunting accounts of life in a prison camp, where the drive to survive can lead to victims compromising themselves in abuse of other victims. In one sense this is simply a matter of depicting facts of social and psychological life. In extreme situations individuals will do shocking things. In more mundane situations, they may be contributing to shocking events without realizing it. The thought that patterns of such basic conduct could actually be different drives this book.

Treating evil as a systemic phenomenon, and rejecting the dualism that had encouraged a moralizing approach in earlier discussions, Forti has set an enormous task before us. Socialization portrayed in Foucault's terms is all-pervasive, but so is socialization in more orthodox treatments. When we ask ourselves, in the light of her analysis, how we should respond, options are extremely limited. We can avoid facile moralizing, explore the myriad possibilities available in everyday life to challenge false characterizations of the dynamic of social interaction, and even promote dissent (Foucault-style) as an attempt to open up possibilities without having a clear idea of where our efforts might take us. But these strategies are very limited at the political level. Revealingly, Forti highlights original stoic contributions as a means of making ourselves less vulnerable to social manipulation and control. She has perceptive discussions of the role of East European dissidents in a politics of quiet opposition. This is an oppositional politics within everyone's reach, but it is a never-ending task against systems that will encourage docility.

By its very nature, in large ways and small, evil is always with us as a possibility. Forti's point is that conceptual misrecognition has made the problem of dealing with practical manifestations of evil much more difficult to manage. Conceptual clarity really does help us to lead a better life, at least up to a point. *New Demons* draws on some of the very best examples of European philosophy and literature in this regard. What is most striking is the limited impact that Anglo-American analytical philosophy has made on the topic. This is especially disappointing because Forti's focus on the complexity of judging evil invites the kind of treatment that moral philosophy and legal philosophy have given to the question of responsibility in the analytical tradition. European continental philosophy and analytical philosophy, we should remind ourselves, are not separate disciplines. They have distinctive strengths and weaknesses that can surely be fruitfully combined in tackling this topic. Not the least of the merits of Forti's book is that she offers points of reference which can be profitably pursued in both traditions.

Bruce Haddock

Warning sign

Joan Cocks, *On Sovereignty and Other Political Delusions*, Bloomsbury, London and New York, 2014. ix + 188 pp. £60.00 hb., £18.99 pb., 978 1 78093 353 5 hb., 978 1 78093 354 2 pb.

To Joan Cocks, sovereign freedom is as absurd as what Thomas Hobbes called 'accidents of bread in cheese'. As she writes, 'any subject seeking sovereign freedom – that is, the freedom to act according to its own will without being subjected to the pressure of the wills of other subjects – either will have to fly to a distant star or devote itself to crushing the capacity for free action of others here on earth, thereby becoming vulnerable to their warranted hostility.' Even as Cocks grants that sovereignty is a 'highly complex' concept, she holds to a parsimonious definition that would make Hobbes smile, or at least not frown: 'sovereignty can be summed up here as the power to command and control everything inside a physical space.' As the author notes, by this definition sovereignty is a form of domination that can never totally dominate, producing devastating wreckage along the way. In fact, Cocks works with such a contained definition of sovereignty that the book's fundamental claim can appear tautological. That is to say, since sovereignty is total domination that cannot be achieved, the desire to gain collective freedom in this way is not only futile but is, by definition, an attack on freedom; sovereignty is anti-freedom. But this critique goes only so far because, at base, Cocks's book is not really about sovereignty. In the vast literature on sovereignty the term often serves as a means to work through more fundamental political concerns, and this is what I see occurring in this book. Here, sovereignty serves as a signifier for the extreme price a people is willing to pay and make others pay to gain a form of freedom that is, at best, negatively concerned with non-interference.

Cocks makes her case about the devastating consequences of sovereign longings through the examples of the United States and Israel in chapters 2 and 3, respectively. These two chapters form the bulk of the book, and they are direct criticisms of the US and Israeli state-building projects. With both countries, Cocks sees the symbolic and political importance of 'the same obliterating myth the first settlers bring with them of an empty territory awaiting their arrival and the same self-absorbed dream to make the land, whether conceived of as a bountiful wilderness or a barren desert, productive for themselves'. She analyses two settler colonial projects because the foundation and maintenance of settler states 'can be seen as extreme exemplars of sovereign power retrenchment'. Even more importantly, I suggest, these cases allow the wider argument to serve as a cautionary tale regarding the longings for collective freedom of groups such as Native American nations and the Palestinian people. Cocks's concern here is that in the pursuit of liberation from domination and dispossession these groups might become that which they resist; that is, oppressive, exclusionary collectivities that pursue mastery in the name of freedom. This cautionary imperative is the book's fundamental purpose, and the US and Israeli cases seek to illustrate two sides of the problem driving the author's intervention.

Cocks's second chapter challenges the view that the American founding is an exception to the rule that sovereign power is inherently oppressive. In particular, Cocks looks at how Hannah Arendt 'fails, and why she fails' in *On Revolution* when she 'frames the American Revolution as a refutation of the inescapability of foundational violence'. What Cocks terms a 'politics of erasure' refers here not to the European and American enactment of genocidal violence towards and territorial dispossession of Indigenous nations, but rather to the erasure of the idea of this ever occurring at all, or, if it did, as anything other than a seemingly natural development. Thus, we get Arendt's claim (as Cocks summarizes) that 'when the settlers arrived in the New World, they met no pre-existing order but instead a "state of nature," an "untrod willingness, unlimited by any boundary" and "still uncharted".' In seeking to grasp how Arendt could be so wrong and why in our time 'the imposition of [US] sovereign power over "Indian Country" does not interest every scholar of the founding', Cocks finds answers in the 'long term effects of erasure itself', 'the sheer absence of what was present', 'the memory loss that follows spontaneously from this material absence and cultural chasm', and the ways in which 'national identifications help blind citizens to the sordid "pre-history" of their own states'. In chapter 3, Cocks sheds light on the intense Israeli politics of erasure against Palestinians, exemplified by a quotation from an Israeli bulldozer driver describing 'his part in demolishing 800 homes in the Jenin refugee camp in 2002: "For three days I just erased and erased".' While the point of the US chapter is to undermine the myth of benign sovereign power, the point of the chapter on Israel is to show how the 'desire for liberation from oppression' through

the creation of a sovereign state turns a historically oppressed people into an oppressor.

While I find Cocks's cautionary tale generally persuasive, I am struck by how the book's political argument consistently mobilizes the absence and presence of Indigeneity. To be clear, this book is not primarily about Indigenous people. Still, Cocks finds significant and consistent grounding for her theoretical argument in Indigenous politics, history and world-views. In supporting her case against sovereignty, Cocks utilizes language such as obliteration, erasure, vanquished, absence, and even pre-history to refer to the condition that settler colonial states have imposed upon Indigenous peoples and their lifeways. While on occasion she refers to this as a self-serving myth (e.g. obliterating myths), at other times she threatens to reproduce Indigenous absence, such as referring to the USA 'obliterating Indian America'. The discourse of absence is so woven into the text that a reader could come away with the impression that all Indigenous nations really did vanish. At the same time, Cocks engages Indigeneity as presence when considering ways out of and beyond sovereignty today. In a section on Indigenous Counter-Sovereignty, she compares the views of political theorists Taiaiake Alfred (Mohawk Nation) and Dale Turner (Anishnaabe Nation) about whether Indigenous nations should aspire to sovereignty; Alfred says no, Turner says yes, Cocks sides with Alfred. She ends the chapter by pondering alternatives to the sovereignty model, suggesting that Indigenous ideas such as the 'interdependence of all species and elements of the earth … may be our best ontological starting point' and 'that indigenous perspectives are once again pertinent here'. In the book's conclusion, Cocks names this alternative vision as 'natural freedom', which is premissed upon abandoning the desire for mastery over people and place, developing a sound ecological relationship to the earth, and redistributing resources. On all these accounts, she notes, 'indigenous movements around the globe have been in advance of the rest of us'. This serious attention to Indigeneity speaks to the book's strengths but also raises some concerns.

On top of the fact that the book takes Indigenous people's histories and philosophies to be central to this topic and to the study of politics generally (political scientists, take note!), the strength here is that Cocks indicates the need to abandon or radically reimagine Euro-American (sometimes called Western) norms and practices of governance, socio-economics, and self–other relations. The move to think beyond and in tension with hegemonic Western concepts rather than redeeming them provides the mode for articulating the author's anti-capitalist, anti-statist and anti-colonial commitments. My concern, however, stems from the way in which the author's effort to think outside dominant Euro-American norms by invoking Indigeneity may end up reconstituting these norms to a degree that negatively skews how non-Indigenous people view Indigenous political claims, especially claims to territory. Notably, in illustrating the choices before us – sovereign freedom as a violent absurdity or non-sovereign freedom as natural freedom – the author positions Indigeneity as the embodiment of both the vanishing victim (in the past) and the noble redeemer (in the present) of the damage caused by capitalism and the sovereign state. What we see here is the unintentional reproduction of the familiar Western binary imposed upon Indigenous people; either trapped in the past as tragic victims or consigned in the present to represent a noble and authentic escape from the alienation and ravages of modernity. This then limits the ability of those of us who are not members of and connected to Indigenous communities to better understand Indigenous people's agency, practices, claims and institutions on their terms. This limitation allows those on the non-Indigenous left, in particular, to read Indigenous political futurities as a threat to their own political visions.

For example, early in the text Cocks poses this question:

> Human rights advocates and other progressives condemn the sovereign power of xenophobic majorities and defend the aspirations to sovereign power of vulnerable peoples, but what makes the exclusivism of privileged citizenship a minus in the ledger of democracy, and the exclusivism of penetrated indigeneity a plus?

To be sure, Indigenous nations are not immune to the practice of harsh exclusivism – one need only take a look at the Cherokee Nation's contemporary treatment of descendants of the Cherokee Freedmen to see such condemnable exclusion, and it has been condemned by Indigenous progressives far and wide. However, my concern is how those on the left might read the cautionary tale regarding the sovereign longings of vulnerable peoples to mean that there necessarily would be an imposition of harsh exclusivism over, say, traditional territories that an Indigenous nation claims or reclaims. To be more specific, those on the left who advocate reclaiming the commons as a way to bring about an anti-capitalist and anti-statist

future (note I did not say anti-colonialist) might see Cocks's argument as supporting the idea that an oppressive obstacle to this leftist vision is the effort of Indigenous peoples to reclaim historically stolen territory. The author is not advocating this view in the book; nor do I think she would generally. However, it is not hard to imagine readers, in the name of seemingly universal leftist interests, mobilizing the book's cautionary tale to this end. This returns us to the construction of the absent/present binary, because what can get lost here is the more complex sense of Indigenous practices of collective organization and relationships to land that have carried on for centuries and continue do so. As Cocks notes, most Indigenous philosophies do not view land as alienable property that perpetuates the divide of human beings from other humans and from non-humans. It would be flat out wrong for those on the left who advocate reclaiming the commons to read these Indigenous practices as somehow no longer legitimate on their own terms and thus rendered tyrannical obstacles to a leftist futurity due to the effort of Indigenous nations to make a claim for sovereignty over traditional territories. And yet one can read Cocks's argument to say that the assertion of sovereignty renders them so, as if the expression of one concept that has Euro-American roots in itself erases or fundamentally transforms Indigenous practices that have persisted, if with difficulty, for centuries. I suspect and hope this book will be widely read; it deserves to be. While my concerns derive from elements of the argument, I direct my cautionary note towards how the book's readers will interpret and mobilize Cocks's own cautionary tale.

Kevin Bruyneel

Beating the bounds

Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice: Body, Lawscape, Atmosphere*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2015. 277 pp., £75.00 hb., 978 1 13801 738 2.

Many medieval jurisdictions in England were delineated by an explicitly geographic determination. The law's reach was dictated by the mark left by the plough, where jurisdiction was determined by the area of arable land needed to support a settlement. This explicit connection between law and space was guaranteed in ecclesiastical jurisdictions by the practice of 'beating the bounds'. The perambulation of the borders of a parish, a ritual of both symbolic and material significance, explicitly spatialized the juridical by weaving together a legal authority and the community over which it claimed a power to do justice. As feudal regimes gave way to a nascent modernity, new techniques of judgement and interpretation took

on explicitly textual forms that worked to dissimulate this more ancient connection between law and space. The proliferation of written legal texts, the birth of law reporting, as well as the invention of modern cartographic methods all worked to efface law's material and spatial dimensions. Modern law erased the material and experiential aspect of legal space, with space becoming abstracted and reified, associated with the dry legalisms of 'territory' and 'jurisdiction'. The sensual, lived reality of a law that is both spatial and material, born out of a community's creative engagement with the land, is replaced in late modernity by an abstracted, textual and, supposedly, universal legal discourse.

Critical interventions within legal studies have often remained within the textual mode. Perhaps most prominently, deconstructive strategies have been extensively deployed to expose the instability of legal texts, revealing their phallo-logocentric, political and ideological dimensions. This focus on the legal text – with 'text' understood, following Derrida, to be much more than a question of the written word of statue, judgment or court order – has given way in recent years to a burgeoning interest in law's spatiality. The 'spatial turn' in legal studies – to which this book contributes – explores, through interdisciplinary engagements with geography, urban studies and architecture, the multiple imbrications between bodies, space, materiality and the normative.

Energizingly promiscuous in its range of references – from Spinoza, Deleuze and Harman, to Bernini, Tournier and Mielville – Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos leads us through the shifting planes, assemblages and atmospheres of law's immanent spatiality. Airport toilets, the hills of northern Italy, concert hall seating arrangements, and the hyper-surveilled streets of London are all woven into a provocative theorization of law, space and the possibility of justice. The book's key contribution lies in its development of three interrelated concepts: 'lawscape,' 'atmosphere' and 'spatial justice'.

As you are reading this, you are within the lawscape. For Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, the lawscape is a ubiquitous spatio-legal continuum in which law is embedded into every nook and cranny of our material world. Look around you. The law is everywhere. The coffee mug in your hand, the dress you are wearing, the roof that keeps the rain off, the window that lets a breeze in: these are all legal, through and through. They are produced and guaranteed through a web of contracts, tortuous liabilities, copyright guarantees, health-and-safety precautions, property obligations and more. In the lawscape, law and space are distinct but indissociable, appearing as two aspects of a single continuum. Following Spinoza's parallelism, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos shows that law cannot be without space, and vice versa; the tautology of space/law is the lawscape. The lawscape is not static but always becoming, produced, nurtured and lived out by a plurality of bodies (non-human and otherwise) that continually interfold law and space on a single spatio-legal surface. For most of us, though, the law, whilst present, is often more or less invisible. This play of in/visibility is the lawscape's animating force, never allowing it to fall into stasis. This makes the lawscape material and immanent but always, partly at least, in withdrawal.

The lawscape gets its clearest elaboration as Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos charts his own students' encounters with the notion. Having undertaken some preparatory reading, students are invited to leave campus and walk London's lawscape. With instructions to keep track of changes in mood, bodily movement, as well as smell, touch and perspective, these contemporary *flâneurs* are invited to see themselves as assemblages of body/city/law and are asked to reflect on how they are produced and producing their spatio-legal environment. At the nub of the exercise, and serving as both epigraph and refrain of the book itself, is the Nietzschean apostrophe: 'There is no outside!' Wherever the students seek refuge from the panoply of commands, manipulations, instructions and surveillances, the law reappears in new guises. We cannot escape the lawscape; we reproduce it wherever we go. Whilst evoking an understandable claustrophobia, by making visible this unfolding spatio-legality we open the possibility, and reorientate our understanding, of responsibility. This exercise situates us in the middle of the lawscape, not as detached observer or abstracted legal subject, but as co-producer of law/space, along with a plurality of other bodies: human, linguistic, technological. It is only upon seeing the lawscape *as* lawscape, and recognizing our compromised position in the midst of it, that we can both become responsible legal actors and also open the door to rupture, change and the possibility of justice.

Return to your coffee, the breeze, the dress. Before this talk of lawscapes interrupted things, you were probably fairly content, perhaps even busily engaged and fully immersed in this moment of retreat, reading and reflection. At this moment of immersion the lawscape has completely vanished; it has reached its apogee as non-lawscape. It is at this point,

where the lawscape is utterly dissimulated, that lawscape becomes atmosphere. Atmosphere is generally considered to be a phenomenological problem. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos disagrees. Instead of thinking of atmosphere as appearing *between* subject and object, as for example in Gernot Böhme's work, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos offers a radical reading of atmosphere as an affective ontology of excess. Atmosphere is understood here as the force that binds bodies together; operative at the pre-discursive level of affect, it collapses the subject/object binary on which phenomenological accounts rely. Created through a manipulation of sensual, experiential and symbolic elements, atmospheres partition bodies by making zones of affective control appear natural, spontaneous or necessary. Atmosphere is created through an affective commingling of post-human bodies, neither produced by subjects nor objects but emerging through the becoming-indistinct of these categories.

The normative import of such an account of atmosphere is clear. Emerging as the lawscape vanishes, the atmosphere is normatively effective when bodies police themselves without reference to any explicitly articulated norms. One acts in this or that way simply because *this is what one does in this atmosphere*: in the shopping mall, the protesting crowd, the concert hall, the toilet. In such atmospheres the normative is elided; we forget that lawscaping remains operative. In this moment of full immersion, what hope of resistance or change? What chance of breaching the atmosphere in order to reach an outside to this veritable *Truman Show* of affective control? Here *Spatial Justice* offers consolation in the form of rupture. In rupturing an atmosphere we are able to both return to and reorientate the lawscape. And at this moment of return and reorientation, spatial justice is possible. Such a rupture of atmosphere and lawscape is very much *part of* the spatio-legal continuum on which Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos's argument moves; remember, there is no outside! Following Harman's object-orientated ontology, rupture is described in terms of withdrawal: an ontological reality that inheres in objects themselves, as part of their very *conatus* or mode of becoming. This unfolding withdrawal is what gives the atmosphere plasticity, allowing it to reproduce itself. But such play within the atmosphere also allows for a more radical morphology where bodies withdraw and in so doing are able to reorientate the lawscape. In the moment of withdrawal spatial justice becomes possible as an ongoing process of negotiated bodies in withdrawal. In this vein, justice is not somehow *beyond* law or a regulative Idea to which we might aspire. Justice erupts in a moment replete with normativity, in a plurality of normative possibilities where new spatio-legal arrangements emerge.

This is developed through a range of examples: foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong who withdraw from the hyper-consumerism and oppressive employment regimes of the city to turn public spaces into cascades of picnics, dance and card games every Sunday; the revolutionary moment of withdrawal in Tunisia where crowds cohere behind the call of *dégagé*; a moment of cross-conflict tenderness when a Greek Cypriot caresses the face of a young Turkish settler; and, most extensively, in the book's final chapter, a careful reading of the multiply lawscaped islands of Michel Tournier's novel *Vendredi*. However, though apposite and moving, these examples leave one aspect of the withdrawal they describe somewhat underdeveloped. In each instance, the moment of withdrawal appears to be motivated by something of a Kantian 'as if': to withdraw is to act *as if* we could overthrow the government, *as if* the streets were ours, and so on. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos is not blind to the fictions that inhere within his account of justice, describing all ruptures as both necessary and illusionary. In a world in which there is no outside, such fictions of transcendence seem generative of the inside itself; it is these fictions that give the book's immanence a little breathing space. The importance of fiction and illusion is refracted through both Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos's writing style, which assumes a lilting and poetic mode throughout. For a book so dedicated to the spatiality of space, there is a remarkable diversity of artistic and literary references. The lawscape itself is mediated through novels, students' voices, artworks and memoirs, suggesting that direct access to the spatio-legal plane eludes the author himself. The work done by these various fictions is largely overlooked, and perhaps there is work to be done here in exploring how the consciously false 'as if' and the literary fictions that animate *Spatial Justice* are woven within the materiality of the lawscape.

Law, in the book, takes on an expansive reach. Whilst a double sense of law as *nomos* and *logos* undergirds much of the argument here, throughout 'the law' remains largely unspecified; not this or that law, but 'the law' in general. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos suggests that this avoids essentializing the law and in fact makes the law rather banal. Ultimately, *Spatial Justice* is redemptive of this banal law,

perhaps precisely in 'banalizing' and generalizing it so thoroughly. In being made to appear everywhere, law is extricated from the courtroom and statute and is firmly situated within *the here*, within immanent space brimming with affect, glimmering with the possibility of a material, bodily and fully spatialized justice. If – and perhaps too much hangs on this 'if' – we can withdraw from the atmospheres that shape so much of our lives, law and the task of lawscaping could take on new and liberating dimensions.

Daniel Matthews

Life in the first person plural

John Foster, *After Sustainability: Denial, Hope, Retrieval*, EarthScan/Routledge, Abingdon, 2015. 230 pp., £85.00 hb., £29.99 pb., 978 0 41570 639 1 hb., 978 0 41570 640 7 pb.

In Jonathan Lear's controversial book *Radical Hope* (2008) he presents the native American Crow tribe as finding a successful path to a new hope in the face of despair – in the face, that is, of the seemingly inevitable destruction of their traditional way of life – by facing up with honesty to their circumstances, and finding a radically new basis for their life-to-come, even if this promises to be, in some important respects, an impoverished one. We might profitably see John Foster's new book as undertaking a similar project, albeit on a wider canvas, and closer to home. If Foster essays a radical hope in the face of despair, such despair is, in this instance, over the destruction of *our* traditional way of life, which he suggests is clearly doomed by incipient human-triggered climate change. (He also strongly suggests that much of what has now become our way of life is actually in any case not worth saving.) The hope is that, albeit in an ecologically impoverished world, we will be able to find a new basis for and sense of life, a qualitatively better life even.

No doubt some will suggest that Foster is too 'doomy' with respect to the 'inevitability' of dangerous climate change; that there is still hope that global overheat can somehow be kept to below 2 degrees. And indeed I would be among those who would argue that Foster gives up hope just a little too readily on this point. The grave danger of giving up such hope before one knows that it is truly hopeless is that one is accelerating the very disaster which one would wish to be able to prevent. Certainly, one can know for sure that we *are* doomed to fail if enough of us fail to even try any more to prevent dangerous, runaway climate change. Still, what Foster is really seeking to do is to get us to give up on the complacent assumption that anything resembling the goal of 'sustainable development' is actually compatible with us having more than a remote chance of preserving a recognizable civilized existence for our whole teeming species. His fundamental trope here is one of *honesty*. Do we honestly think that we have a hope of getting a decent international climate agreement – an agreement that actually agreed to do enough to prevent climate chaos – in Paris, any more than we did in Copenhagen? And, more generally, do we honestly think that discourses of 'progressivism' – stories of successive liberations and material gains, without limit – are going to prove adequate as a basis for a world in which we are breaching planetary limits without any sign of being able to stop the process?

Foster argues convincingly that human beings, at least in contemporary globalized civilization, spend far too much time thinking about how things will be in five or ten seconds or minutes or years from now (this last being the kind of 'time horizon' of most 'sustainable development'), and not enough time thinking about and dwelling in the now. Finding a sense of meaning in the present entails, for Foster, retrieving what he calls our 'wildness', our potential for living in appreciation of the actual materiality of our natural lives. The certainty of future climate and Earth despoliation that he foresees leads into *this* radical hope. However, it seems to me that there is a danger inherent in Foster's endeavour to stop us living merely in anticipation of future gratifications and in a manner certain to sink us ever deeper in a quagmire of economic desire and ecological degradation. It is that his targeting of our attention back onto the present might take us even further away from thinking of the deep future. In my view, we ought indeed to spend more of our time focused on the now; but we also ought to escape the appalling short-termism of our culture and spend more of our time focused on 50 years or 500 years or 50,000 years into the future. Thinking on these kinds of timescales is necessary if we are to have a chance not only of emerging through the long emergency that the climate crisis is going to be for us, but also of not dumping our distant descendants in new fires from desperation at easing our condition while in the frying pan. For example, it is the deep future, far beyond what we

can foresee, that needs to be on our minds if we are to think aright the potential downsides of nuclear toxic waste, with its 'sublime' half-lives. The siren call of nuclear power (as an alleged means of powering ourselves with less harm to the climate than is caused by coal) can be answered only if we seek to think the ultra-long term, and to think of the 'ethics' of dumping our wastes on distant descendants who may have no idea of the hazards they pose or no way of coping with these.

Foster argues that 'progressivism' is a sublimation of our inability to come to terms with our own mortality. Knowing that we will die, but frightened at fully acknowledging this, we flee into the fantasy of life after death as that fantasy is most easily realized in a secularized world: in the thought that things will be better for our children. But, again, I worry that Foster may be depriving us of one of the tools we most desperately need to avert a still worse ravaging of the future than is already inevitable. We ought indeed to jettison the charade of 'sustainable development', the Promethean ideology of growthism, and the jaded homilies of progressivism; but certainly *not* to abandon our utterly social and temporal character. We are mammals, we are primates; we are nothing without the community of which we are a part and the next generation which collectively we make possible and actual.

The problem with the central argument of *After Sustainability* lies, then, I think, in Foster's individualism. Foster wants us to come to terms with our 'finitude'; but, actually, it is unhelpful for us to insist that 'we' are finite. *As individuals* this may be so, but to focus on this at the expense of more collective concerns is itself a distinctive facet of our culture, quite different from what most preceding cultures have thought. Foster thinks that our individual nature and inability to come to terms with our individual mortality without investing ourselves overly in a materially 'better' future – a pursuit that rips us away from the present and dooms us to destroy the very planet on whose ecology we utterly depend – is well-nigh insurmountable. I disagree: I think that these are contingent features of what we might call the soul of Enlightenment Man, or even the soul of neoliberalism, not (as Foster claims them to be) metaphysical constants. Here, as so often, metaphysics is the shadow cast by a grammar that is less than eternal.

This point comes to a head just over halfway through the book, where Foster writes that 'I cannot really think of myself as fully an organism-belonging-in-an-environment. I cannot do so, because to think third-personally that JF is an organism so situated involves leaving out the essentially indexical or first-personal fact that *this organism is me*.' By my lights, the wrong move here is the implicit assumption that the only options are to think of myself first-personally or to think third-personally. What is missing is the first-person plural. It *does* make sense to think of us essentially as an 'us', and of this intergenerational community essentially as belonging-in-an-environment. The first-person plural has an open-endedness to the broader ecological community and ever into the future: in that sense, it is not well understood as finite. This is what gives the lie to the political philosophy of liberalism, just as it does to the philosopher's temptation to eternalize the process and products of his own self-reflection. The historicism of meliorism and progressivism can then be replaced by a more reasonable goal, a goal that we should preserve in the face of potential (or likely) self-imposed climatic devastation: the goal of making things indefinitely as good as we can for us all (even if that be worse than things currently are), given the circumstances we inherit. This is the alternative to the grasping ego that Foster bewails but self-confessedly cannot entirely overcome.

Only at the very end of the book does Foster take a few steps in this direction, when he speaks of what we need to re-find in ourselves being not just our 'wild' 'dark' individuality but (with a nod to the 'Dark Mountain' current of thought associated with Paul Kingsnorth) '"dark" *community*'. But this would have been my starting point rather than conclusion. In the true sense of the word, it is sociality, it is human (and more-than-just-human) community – inter-being – that is in-dividual. Like bonobo chimpanzees, we are primates who have never been 'individuals'. Our being 'individuals' is *itself* the master illusion that has helped propel us so far down the path of ecological devastation. Nonetheless, Foster's is, for all its philosophical and political limitations, an original and rare attempt at an honest recounting of our ecosophic predicament, and has the courage to really say what we are doing to our world and ourselves. If it sounds a death knell for the wish-fulfilment fantasy of 'sustainability', what comes next is terrifying, but also perhaps hopeful.

Rupert Read