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REVIEWS

Fredy Perlman, *The Machine and its Discontents: A Fredy Perlman Anthology*

London: Theory and Practice and Active Distribution, 2019; 247pp; ISBN 9780995660977

In a contemporary era of discontent across social and political life, and against a backdrop of ever resurgent revolutions, echoes of Fredy Perlman's demand of and for the impossible can be heard. Across the world, people are in uprising against historical and contemporary oppressions that are transforming spaces of resistance, and this anthology proves a timely intervention from our shared pasts to help us see a little more clearly into the possibilities of the future.

In *Anything Can Happen,* Perlman calls for demands for the impossible, rejecting 'common sense' as a fantasy bounding the possibilities of reality through violent myths of power. Social scientists are the legitimisers of these myths, their work affirming what is as all that can be, rather than proclaiming that 'ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE', a declaration which here precedes case studies of revolution from Paris and Yugoslavia. The division between workers and students in the Citroën worker-student committees was where Perlman identified political transformations not as revolutions of daily life, but as transformations of slogans: a lack of action that forecloses the possibility of building alternative spaces and worlds. He contends that when answers are not easy, passivity immobilises radical politics and under difficult circumstances, this anthology foregrounds the absolute necessity of constructing struggles as historical subjects affecting our future.

For Perlman, everyday life under capitalism is constructed as responding to historical and material conditions, whereby people reproduce activities as they eliminate their own Selves. These reproductions are responses to an illusion that 'naturalises' capitalism. When money is made equivalent to life, life is exchanged for survival, but Perlman perhaps lacks an analysis of race, gender and intersectionality in class and revolutionary struggle, whereby alienation, life and labour are imposed or refused differentially. Arguing that living people become *things* ignores the violence of this same process by divorcing it from its historical and material trajectories. The valuing of particular kinds of labour by an assumed working class has been a dangerous factor in the history of white revolutionary thought that ignores the role and effect of difference. When this difference is not

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foregrounded, a critique of capital, labour and land's power and distribution is not only partial, but in opposition to building worldly and collective solidarities.

It is within this system that *egocrats* have proliferated, weaponising their ideologies as Thought, (or truth). In possessing and proclaiming Thought, they move from being mute and powerless to mobilising a community of Egos around this shared truth who survive through totalitarianism whether 'Bolshevik or Nazi cell, a Socialist reading club, or an Anarchist affinity group' (p143). Perlman, in contrast to his earlier position, takes seriously the implications of racism and scapegoating in a world where people are worn out by desperation and pain, losing all desires except not to be deprived of one's self. Might we take seriously Perlman's conditions for revolution that stand in opposition to classical theory that centres dependence, not independence, as the condition for revolution?

The ongoing revival of nationalism of concern in part four is echoed once more in the present, and Perlman pushes that 'nations' of the left or right replaced the role and power of 'empires' as 'a methodology for conducting the empire of capital' (p205). In dangerous times, idealism is not enough, and when ahistoricism threatens to reign, Perlman reminds us of what is at stake under another rule of 'The Terror'. In this reign, truth is less important than the ability for those who desire and demand leadership to use racism and scapegoating of the less powerful to continue the work of capital, extraction and colonialism under a different name. Nationalism's appeal, Perlman contends, uses the same imaginations across the political spectrum to construct auras and potentialities of the nation outside of history.

In the final essay, 'Progress and Nuclear Power', Perlman's thought is expanded into entangled poisonous earthly, human and animal urgencies after the nuclear 'accident' at Three Mile Island nuclear power station in Pennsylvania in 1979, in a critique of progress' deliberate and predictable destruction, enacting slow toxic violence through 'gradual brutalities' (Davies 2019). These slow violences are no accident, when progress depends upon the continual collapse and destruction of indigenous and 'alternative' ways of life in the past, present and future (Povinelli 2018). The worlds and works of the present are not separate from Perlman's, but rather implicated in one another. His accounts and approach to resistance and its development into a worldly, collective and individual endeavour mean this may prove to be an indispensable collection in the years and struggles to come.

Catherine Oliver, University of Cambridge

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 117 22/02/2021 15:12:46

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Dominique F. Miething, *Anarchistische Deutungen der Philosophie Friedrich Nietzsches (1890–1947)*

Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016; 533pp; ISBN 9783848737116

Why would anarchists be inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche, of all philosophers? The famous German moustache wearer despised socialism and preferred a kind of aristocratism over any version of egalitarianism. But he also called for the revaluation of all (traditional) values and declared the death of God. In his work one can find a celebration of individual freedom and a rejection of the restraints society, religion, morality, and the state impose upon people; but this freedom was fit only for the best – the Übermensch – and was thus compatible with the enslavement of most lesser humans.

Nietzsche was by no means an anarchist in the full sense of the word, and condemned anarchism explicitly. Consequently, many anarchists rejected him outright. But many other anarchists actually found something in his writing that resonated with their own anarchist philosophy, propaganda, or activism. As a result, in the last decade, scholars of anarchism have repeatedly looked at Nietzsche's reception in the anarchist movement or even tried to make new sense of his philosophy by weaving it into post-anarchism. One of the best studies published in recent years is Dominique Miething's *Anarchistische Deutungen der Philosophie Friedrich Nietzsches*, focussing on 'anarchist interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy', as its title identifies.

Miething's book stands out because of its comprehensive transnational approach and detailed analysis. After discussing the initial question of whether Nietzsche himself may have been a secret disciple of Max Stirner (he was not, and most anarchist individualists that used Stirner's philosophy hated Nietzsche's), Miething analyses Nietzsche's reception in three countries, each of which gets approximately one hundred pages in the book. For Germany, the focus is on Gustav Landauer, Rudolf Rocker, and Fritz Brupbacher; for the UK it is on Peter Kropotkin, Dora Marsden, and Herbert Read; and for the USA it is on Robert Reitzel, Benjamin Tucker, Emma Goldman, and Randolph Bourne. Miething's detailed analysis of

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 118 22/02/2021 15:12:46

newspapers and other original texts allows him to refute some common misconceptions. It is not true that anarchist reference to Nietzsche is a function of certain anarchist currents (e.g. that social anarchists tend to make more use of Nietzschean concepts than individualists), as some scholars suggest. Rather, anarchists of all kinds tended to use and even quote Nietzsche according to their intellectuality and their ambition to deal with topics not typical of the worker's movement: art, sexuality, psychoanalysis etc. And it is also not true that post-anarchists have introduced anything substantially new when they incorporated Nietzschean ideas into their variants of anarchism, as they themselves assert. Rather, many classical anarchists that learned from Nietzsche had already rejected typical modern ideas, for instance essentialist ontologies. It is just that post-anarchists lack the detailed knowledge of classical anarchist thought that Miething now presents in his book.

Of course a thinker like Nietzsche is difficult to assess and utilise for anarchists, and there were different tactics to tackle him. The most fair-minded was Landauer's approach, combining harsh criticism of Nietzsche's elitism and antihumanism with a positive use of his antinationalism and cultural criticism. Others, like Goldman, appropriated Nietzschean concepts like his aristocratism by anarchising them into the unpolitical idea of intellectual excellence, for instance. A third tactic of anarchist Nietzsche exegesis was to just ignore those aspects of his philosophy that did not fit properly. And finally, some anarchists like Kropotkin rejected Nietzsche entirely, even though Kropotkin (indirectly) was inspired by Nietzsche to adopt a vitalist ethics. With the exception of Landauer, almost all anarchist readings of Nietzsche were quite eclectic and often depended on the propagandistic purposes of the anarchists. This is not uncommon for political utilisations of the famous German thinker in general. When, for example, the Nazis used Nietzsche's 'blond beast' and 'Übermensch' for totalitarian purposes, anarchists turned Nietzsche against them, using his analysis of resentment and his outspoken anti-antisemitism in their antifascist propaganda.

Anarchists and anarchism's scholars today can still make use of Nietzschean concepts like his antipolitics, his antidogmatism, his individual psychology, his criticism of morality and language, and it is not uncommon to reinterpret his will to power or his questioning of identity in an emancipatory, feminist, and anarchist fashion. Miething's book can be an invaluable resource for this. It is structured as a history of ideas (chronologically and by country), but Miething sums up his findings systematically and quite intelligibly – if you can read German, that is. But that is the prerequisite of dealing with Nietzsche, anyway.

Peter Seyferth

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 119 22/02/2021 15:12:46

Daniel Raventós & Julie Wark, *Against Charity*

Edinburgh & Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2018; 294pp; ISBN 9781849353045

I have a friend who stubbornly refuses to tip when we go out to eat. His argument is that our altruistic evaluation of the restaurant service, manifested by the individualised extra payment, not only robs fellow workers of their dignity; it also impedes their labour struggle. 'You don't need my charity', he typically explains to bewildered waiters; 'Get organised!'

My friend's ill-worn and little distorted Joe Hill paraphrase is now much better fleshed out in *Against Charity*, a colourful portrait of the altruistic logic that confirms, then fortifies, social and economic inequalities. Daniel Raventós and Julie Wark herein articulate a simple but imperative argument: charity must give way to material conditions that enable true reciprocity.

The book's opening discussion is promising, eloquently building on Marcel Mauss' seminal gift economy research to declare how charity, given its unequal nature, is not a gift. 'Imposing a gift on someone who can't reciprocate', Raventós and Wark declare, 'is an offence against dignity' (p27). From this intriguing analysis, the authors set out to trace the lineage of charity through art, religion and 'humanitarianism'. Deployed to put charity in the historical dustbin, such a historiography naturally brings a lurking, modernist aftertaste. For example, by interpreting some eclectic bible quotations, Raventós and Wark conclude that, across all Abrahamic religions, 'social inequality is taken for granted, discussion on justice (or human rights) is absent, and property is protected' (p49). Instead of acknowledging subversive undercurrents in these polygonal traditions, well documented in the history of religions, Raventós and Wark dismiss them all (along with most pre-modern thought) as incomplete or countervailing aspects of contemporary human rights.

This archaic-modern dualism informs their distinction between 'charity' and 'the three essential human rights principles of freedom, justice and dignity' (p128). Unfortunately, by *not* interrogating the literature on human rights, its philosophical history, and impact on international policymaking, becomes disturbingly silenced. Differently put, *Against Charity* would have been much sharper if anchored in ongoing research. Take for example the accusation of aid organisations being 'out of touch with local actors and needs' (p99). Better informed by contemporary development studies, the authors could have departed from the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, outlining that development projects are now

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 120 22/02/2021 15:12:47

(ideally) initiated and driven locally, while donor agencies, and NGOs, channel the money. By recognising that tendency, Raventós and Wark could instead have targeted the troubling concentration of governmental power that follows today's paradigm of inter-national aid.

But with all its affective defiance of social inequalities, *Against Charity* obviously suffers from its absent critique of state power. Contrary to what one would expect from an anarchist publisher, Raventós and Wark hastily dismiss small-scale, community-based attempts to establish economic equality; instead they promote state-level basic income, 'with the only condition that recipient must be citizen or accredited resident' (p193). In our time of fortified nationalism, and deadly border politics, nation-state citizenship is hardly some neutral platform for social justice.

The authors also explain that '*Against Charity*' correspondingly means 'For Kindness', the fraternal recognition that 'we are all kin' (p3). Such an urge for reciprocal solidarity would have been much more intriguing, scholarly timely, and ethically challenging, if reflecting upon the meaning of human kind-ness; that is, how *non*-human worlds are (not) incorporated in demands for relational reciprocity. Yet without one single reference to the resourceful studies in human-animal relations, the authors instead pick out a pioneering theorist from this field, Peter Singer, to serve as scholarly antagonist. But Singer's utilitarianism, indeed a most shaky moral philosophy, has had limited influence on the human rights discourse. Rather than unwarranted attacks on utilitarian philosophy, the reader increasingly craves for original, ethnographic studies to detect ideas fuelling benevolent acts of charity.

Nonetheless, Raventós and Wark's informed attack on 'philanthrocapitalism', charged with a rich, cynical wit, convincingly shows how the richest of the rich, supporting charity for tax reduction, moral status, or political influence, likewise keep alarmingly much to themselves. Hopefully just the right policy makers may now realise how rich people's altruism mirrors, and contributes to rather than relives, the sturdy problem of inequality. Raventós and Wark compellingly target the power relation embedded, not only in philanthropy, but in development aid, and in acts of solidarity – in every relation defined by economic inequality.

Perhaps that is what I usually intend to articulate, there at the restaurant. Because my tip-refusing comrade, I must confess, is really myself, embarrassing my charitable friends by not sharing with a fellow worker. In *Against Charity* I have at least found some comforting resonance; entrenched giver-receiver relations cannot be reciprocal.

Markus Lundström, Uppsala University

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 121 22/02/2021 15:12:47

Dani Spinosa, *Anarchists in the Academy: Machines and Free Readers in Experimental Poetry*

Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2018; 254pp; ISBN 9781772123760

The heterogeneous body of contemporary experimental poetry and the political concerns of postanarchism: these are the strands that Dani Spinosa ties together in *Anarchists in the Academy*, through a careful development and deployment of a postanarchist literary theory that questions authorial authority, negotiates the creative possibilities afforded by digital media, and celebrates the freedom of readers. Across four chapters Spinosa offers sixteen case studies of poetic works that, while not always explicitly political, evince a postanarchist sensibility through their commitment to formal experimentation. Spinosa's argument is twofold: that postanarchism can provide the lineaments of an activist reading practice, and that these authors, or the best among them, speak back through poetry that is itself a form of political-literary activism.

Spinosa's chosen poets run from mid-twentieth century 'pre-digital' poets, through to feminists and conceptualists who continue to reshape the relation of author to text and rethink the role of the machine in literary production, to poets writing in the wake of conceptualism who re-engage the reader and destabilise, again, the separation between readers and authors. Each of the four chapters develops a distinctive argument; especially compelling is Spinosa's reading of four feminist poets who, she argues, enact a variant on the experimental poet's disavowal of the authorial self that recognises the risk faced by women writers when doing so, and as such leaves space in the machine-written text for the personal and for emotions. Similarly, through readings of contemporary conceptualist poets, Spinosa advances a critique of conceptualism for its diminishment or neglect of readers' freedom and agency. In particular, the section on Vanessa Place's *Statement of Facts* (2010), a work comprised of narratives appropriated from court documents in rape and sexual abuse cases, provides a compelling delineation of the ethical complexities of such a text. Spinosa acknowledges that *Statement of Facts* 'caused quite a stir in the poetry community' (p124) but declines to participate in any straightforward appraisal of the text or any hand wringing, instead concluding that the text is at heart both sensationalist and desensitising.

These four chapters are bookended by an introduction that outlines Spinosa's postanarchist approach and a conclusion dealing with its broader implications for literary studies in the academy. The postanarchist literary theory that Spinosa

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 122 22/02/2021 15:12:47

introduces is an ambitious attempt to bridge the gap between critical approaches in literary studies and anarchist activist practices. As an activist reading practice, Spinosa is interested not so much in finding overt or concealed anarchist potentialities in the poetry, as in exploring the possibilities that make themselves known in the texts when the postanarchist perspective is brought to bear on them. This perspective reconceptualises textual production as a political phenomenon, with effects that can empower or disempower readers and authors: a work is useful for postanarchist ends if it heightens readerly freedom and less so if it neglects or circumscribes readers' agency to chart their own path through the text. As such, Spinosa argues, the approach is especially well suited to experimental poetry, which is characterised by a determination to allow for a multiplicity of possible readings and experiences of reading.

If Spinosa's postanarchist literary theory breaks new ground, it must be noted that it does so through an idiosyncratic take on its theoretical source material. Breaking with dominant accounts of postanarchism as predominantly an academic phenomenon, Spinosa pays scant attention to foundational theorists like Todd May, Lewis Call and Saul Newman, and instead returns repeatedly to Hakim Bey's account of the temporary autonomous zone (TAZ). Spinosa draws on the TAZ throughout 'as a metaphor for momentary insurgencies in authorship and readership in poetry' (pxviii) and suggests that works by Jackson Mac Low (p12) and Jim Andrews (p166) are themselves in some sense TAZs, or contingent but nonetheless significant postanarchic spaces. It is possible that a fuller engagement with the heterogeneous body of work produced under the postanarchist banner – as well as the influential criticisms and rejoinders to that work – would lead to a different, and perhaps more substantial, postanarchist literary theory.

Nonetheless, *Anarchists in the Academy* is an impressive work, both as an indicator of a new direction at the conjunction of anarchism and literary studies, and on its own terms as an examination of the incipient politics of a body of intriguing texts. Spinosa's book is likely to be of interest for students and scholars of experimental poetry and especially for those interested in the convergence of anarchism and literature, as well as for readers interested in the possibilities of (post)anarchism as a tool for cultural analysis more broadly.

Frankie Hines, University of Westminster

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 123 22/02/2021 15:12:47

Michael Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets, and Bread: The Politics of Anarchist Terrorism Worldwide, 1866-1926*

Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2018; 176pp; ISBN9781476671017

Bombs, Bullets, and Bread: The Politics of Anarchist Terrorism Worldwide, 1866-1926 by Michael Kemp is a collection of biographies and primary source documents that explore the lives, motivations, and actions of 'anarchist terrorists' in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Kemp's primary goal with the book is to provide biographical information on anarchist terrorists to 'create a more complete picture that will allow for a deeper understanding of what, beyond their political beliefs, prompted their attacks' (p2). The book succeeds in that regard; each chapter is a rich, biographical vignette that provides insight into the lives, politics, and motivations of anarchist terrorists in Russia, Italy, Belgium, Germany, France, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and Greece.

Kemp notes that 'anarchist terrorism' is imprecise terminology. He argues late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century anarchist terrorism had more in common with eleventh-century Persian assassinations than the 'televised mass carnage' that 'terrorism' evokes today (p2). Moreover, many of these terrorists did not actually identify as 'anarchists'. For example, the press and some historians labelled Giovanni Passannante an anarchist after he attempted to kill Umberto I of Italy in 1878. But Passannante identified as a socialist republican, and Kemp illustrates his deep involvement with the Italian republican movement leading up to his attempted regicide.

As with Passannante, each chapter provides useful background on the historical contexts and ideologies that spurred people toward violence. Some of those profiled, like Alexander Berkman, Leon Czolgosz, and Ravachol, are already the subject of biographies, academic history books, and journal articles, which Kemp distils and weaves into his global narrative of anarchist terrorism. Others, especially younger people like Martial Bourdin, Anteo Zamboni, and Jean-Baptiste Victor Sipido, left a scant paper trail. Kemp pulls together what little has been published about them to show what we know about their lives and what requires further study.

The end of each chapter includes primary sources such as manifestos, poetry, and prose related to or written by the profiled anarchists. These sources are well selected, ranging from key radical texts like Sergey Nechayev's manifesto 'Catechism of a Revolutionary', to more personal documents like Sante Geronimo Caserio's courtroom statement on his 1894 assassination of the president of

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 124 22/02/2021 15:12:47

France. Notably, one chapter includes a new translation of a 1913 interview with Alexandros Schinas after he assassinated King George I of Greece.

Bombs, Bullets, and Bread would have benefited from a concluding chapter to explain what we gain through reading these cases of anarchist terrorism together. While Kemp makes some passing comparisons, the book's case studies are comprehensively analysed together only in the two-and-a-half-page preface. Kemp makes compelling arguments about each profiled attacker, but we only get cursory glimpses into the author's insights about historiography, revolutionary strategy, and anarchism.

The book could have also been improved by additional and clearer references. For example, one paragraph closely paraphrases Emma Goldman's *Living My Life* without referencing it, repeating Goldman's heard-through-the-grapevine claim that Umberto I's assassin Gaetano Bresci was one of the founders of the New Jersey-based anarchist periodical *La Questione Sociale* (p61). Though Bresci was eventually involved with the publication, he immigrated to the United States in 1897, well after *La Questione Sociale* was founded in 1895 by Pietro Gori, Pedro Esteve, and, by some accounts, Errico Malatesta.

The book's unspecific references to literature also make it unclear whom exactly it is arguing against. Kemp sets out to correct unnamed historians of anarchist terrorism who typically 'have dwelled upon the acts themselves, not the actors' (2). However, in constructing these biographies, the book cites many historians, such as Paul Avrich and Nunzio Pernicone, who wrote detailed accounts of the lives of anarchist terrorists. Rather than turning the canon of anarchist history on its head, one of the book's greatest strengths is its ability to synthesize and build upon previous work to provide brief, analytical biographies.

Bombs, Bullets, and Bread is a valuable resource for readers interested in the history of anarchist terrorism. Its broad geographic scope and inclusion of lesser-known cases make it especially useful as a reference material. Kemp also points to underexplored topics that require further research, such as the lack of a full history of London's anarchist Autonomie Club. The new questions Kemp raises, along with the primary sources collected within the book and the secondary sources cited in the reference list, will hopefully spark further scholarship into the understudied topic of anarchist terrorism.

Adam Quinn, University of Oregon

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 125 22/02/2021 15:12:47

Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*

Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2018; 112pp; ISBN 9781629635682

Silvia Federici's *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women* is an important feminist intervention in the history of Western capitalism that exposes the continuum between historical and contemporary cultures of misogyny. The book is divided into two parts. Part one outlines the growing interest in re-examining European witch-hunting as the phenomenon 'that paved the way for the modern capitalist world' (p12). Part two applies the history of witch-hunting to present-day systemic violence against women. Federici explains how capitalism's war against women began in the sixteenth century, the early Renaissance, with the enactment of enclosure laws that enabled the wholesale destruction of communal property relations. The witch hunts emerged as social elites – landowning gentry, the church, and upwardly mobile bourgeoisie – sought to disempower women and expropriate land by weaponizing Christian mythology to identify women as the potential embodiment of evil. Far from rational, science-lead development, Federici argues that the shift to modern capitalist society required new superstitions and new fears to be instilled in the populace. Accusations of witchcraft was a terror tactic designed to not only destroy women's economic and sexual independence, but also their communal support networks and social contributions as healers, midwives, and merchants. Women, as a result, were victimised by systemic impoverishment and targeted for resisting the destruction of their communal-oriented being. The ramifications spanned economic and social spheres, rippling into the present. Interestingly, Federici even addresses the linguistic influence of the witch-hunts, including the effemininisation of 'gossip', a word that has evolved from its original meaning of female fellowship – to signify disparaging idle chatter.

In the second half of the book Federici reveals witch-hunting is not an isolated historical event: it constitutes a continuum into brutal new forms of violence against women spread by the growth of neoliberal globalisation. The worst atrocities are committed by contemporary patriarchies. They are tantamount to 'feminicide' and intensify at the cultural intersections of racism and capitalist economic restructuring. This manifests as disproportionately racialised murders of women in North America, a rise in 'dowry murders' in India, and the literal resurgence of witch-hunting among evangelists in multiple African nations. Federici's argument is significant and far reaching, but in one instance it is diminished by her application of the label 'Native American' while referencing missing and murdered

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 126 22/02/2021 15:12:47

Indigenous women in Canada. This term is a colonial construct: the correct term, which should be adopted by scholars across Turtle Island, is 'Indigenous'. Secondly, I would caution against assuming hypersexualised images of women are a source of violence against women, as women's self-presentation as a sexual being is not the fundamental problem: the problem is rape-culture, and predatory masculine desire treating women's bodies as a form of property. However, the strengths of this book far outweigh these criticisms. Not only does Federici detail women's resistance to patriarchal oppression, she offers practical solutions to resolve the issues and hold governments, institutions, and movements accountable for the violence. For example, Federici questions why many feminists have not spoken out more loudly against contemporary witch-hunting practices in Africa. She blames a Western rational bias and a tendency towards political correctness that is loathe to portray non-White, non-Western cultures as irrational. As Federici demonstrates, irrationality has very little to do with the issue; the issue is expropriation masquerading as Christian righteousness. Federici's work is uniquely constructive methodological critique of a truly radical cultural theorist.

By identifying the materialist roots of systemic gender crimes and injustices, Federici takes the long view of the feminist struggle and situates it outside of identity politics' representational limitations. She recognises the intersecting injustices visited upon women by patriarchal societies intent on dispossessing women of their homes and community functions in the name of greed and insecurity. This was fostered in the past in the course of mercantile economies' evolution into full-blown capitalism during the early Renaissance and appears again as communities endure neoliberal economic restructuring programs. The social impoverishment of women is an ongoing battle. This book outlines not only the horrors of misogyny, but also present-day strategies of resistance. Most importantly, it offers solutions to contemporary cultural, social, and economic challenges women face at the intersections of capitalism, racism, and patriarchy.

Kimberly Croswell, University of Victoria

Anarchist Studies 29.1.indd 127 22/02/2021 15:12:47