Liberal Eugenics

John Dupré

Nicholas Agar, *Liberal Eugenics: In Defence of Human Enhancement*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004, pp216; £14.99 paperback, £50 cloth.

I was shocked a few years ago to see my occupation described on a conference poster as Director of the Eugenics Centre, University of Exeter.[1] This was quite disturbing: eugenics remains, in most peoples' minds, a dubious project. It is widely associated with perhaps the most morally reprehensible project in human history, the attempt to implement Nazi race theories. Agar's first aim in this book is to rehabilitate this concept.

1. I am actually Director of Egenis, the ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society.

This rehabilitative project is, I think, largely successful. Making better people, despite some obvious problems of interpretation and execution, is not a self-evidently vicious objective. The key resource for distinguishing the eugenics Agar defends from its disastrous past associations is of course the epithet 'liberal'; and the subtitle of the book reminds us that the aim of eugenics is, on the face of it, something of which we might well approve. Past eugenic projects were attempts by states to improve their populations and involved variously appalling coercions of citizens. Liberal eugenics is presented as an increase in choice, something individuals may or may not decide to do in the process of reproduction. Nevertheless there are problems both with the effects of such actions on the children that are their intended beneficiaries and on society that make even this liberalised eugenics morally problematic, and that have led some influential commentators to consider any such technology unacceptable. In this book Agar broadly defends liberal eugenics against these objectors, though not without substantial qualifications.

A natural division of the topic is into two questions, is human enhancement possible and, if so, is it a good thing? Agar pays much less attention to the first question, though he does begin the book with a chapter describing the relevant technologies and a chapter defending a broad optimism about the likelihood that these technologies will be applicable to humans in the fairly near future. The relevant technologies range from conventional selective breeding, of which the notorious 'Nobel prize-winners sperm bank' is an exemplary attempted implementation, to cloning, preimplantation genetic diagnosis, and genetic modification. I have no doubt that Agar is right in thinking that these techniques will be successfully applied to humans within the foreseeable future.

Whether they will make it possible to enhance humans is, however, a somewhat harder question than Agar makes it out to be. Although it is an important strength of the book that genetic determinism is consistently

resisted and, indeed, rightly identified as underlying many of the most influential objections to human enhancement, Agar does not always move far enough from genetic determinism. While no one doubts that there are genetic errors with variously catastrophic effects on human health, and few doubt that the ability to remove these errors in the course of reproduction would, other things being equal, be an unalloyed benefit, genes to enhance are a much more problematic concept. Part of the problem is that we have to agree on what changes would be for the better. As Agar is well aware there are certain changes, for example the replacement of 'gay genes' by 'straight genes' that many people would see as an improvement but many others, including I imagine most readers of this journal, would see as no such thing.

But are there 'gay genes'? Genetic determinism holds that there are and that having one, or perhaps a few, such genes will be sufficient to guarantee that a child will grow up gay. As Agar is well aware, there are no such determining genes. He does think, however, that there are predisposing genes for such features as homosexuality, intelligence, musical talent, and so on. This is interpreted, I think, as meaning that there are (or very likely are) genes that have an intrinsic tendency to produce particular phenotypic states such as homosexuality. Perhaps this is so, but it is not obvious. What behavioural geneticists report are either heritabilities of traits or, sometimes, statistical associations between traits and alleles (variants of a gene). Neither of these licenses an inference to any kind of causal property of any gene, even a propensity to produce an outcome. A gene may, in a particular population, be involved in the ontogenies of more homosexuals than its alleles. But in a different population the reverse might very well be the case. It is very questionable whether any causal tendency is properly attributed to the gene.

A topic that might usefully have been discussed more is a more abstract analogue of genetic determinism, what is sometimes referred to as 'genocentrism'. What's so special about genes, especially if genetic determinism isn't true? I don't think Agar quite escapes genocentrism. At one point he writes, 'eggs and sperm are essentially packages of DNA' (p68). This is the familiar Dawkinsian myth, but certainly eggs are in fact a lot more than that, and an egg without a huge variety of other chemicals, structures, membranes, and so on, would be useless. And changes to many other such features of the egg would change the development of the organism. One thing that is importantly distinctive of the genome is that it has turned out, for a variety of reasons, to be an exceptionally appropriate site for intervention in biological processes. Even if, improbably in my view, genomes prove to be a good place to intervene in the formation of high level psycho-social phenotypic outcomes, we should not let this lead us to an exaggerated view of the role of DNA in producing phenotypes.

Let me turn now to questions about whether we should enhance people if we can. And first I should mention one of the most attractive features of this book; the clearly stated and effectively implemented methodology Agar

uses to address these issues. Much of the book is organised in terms of 'moral images' which we can use to approach biotechnology. These are familiar concepts that can be extended, together with a more or less worked out set of moral intuitions standardly attached to the concepts, to new kinds of biotechnology. The central examples are therapy, nature, and nurture. This structure very helpfully captures most of the influential argument on these topics and provides a good framework for its critical assessment. I can't hope to summarise the details of the arguments reviewed in this main part of the book, but will try to sketch the main areas of discussion.

I noted that the ethical issues divide between effects on children produced, and effects on society as a whole. In the first category it appears that a central difficulty is getting one's metaphysics right: who are the individuals whose interests one may be harming or whose rights one might be violating? Many people ignorant of biology (and a few less easily excused) suppose that a genome constitutes the individual essence of a person, so that to change the genome is to bring into existence a different person. In that case the only thing one can have done to the individual whose genome one altered is to terminate them - a bad thing, to be sure, but outside fundamentalist Christian circles not generally thought such a bad thing to humans as young as a gamete, or even a blastocyst. But this genetic essentialism is indefensible. One good way of defusing it might be to note that most of the genes we carry around with us after birth - about 99 per cent of them, in fact - belong to our commensal microbes. These are crucial for most aspects of our functioning, not least development. But no one supposes that genetically modifying our gut bacteria would produce a new individual. Our nuclear genes are an essential developmental resource, but one of many. Messing with any developmental resource makes us responsible to the organism that develops. Agar gets this basically right, but he makes somewhat heavy weather of it, perhaps because he is not entirely free of residual genocentrism.

The most interesting issues are the social ones. Agar distinguishes two major concerns: that the availability of biological enhancements will lead to a homogenised population, and that it will lead to an increasingly stratified one. These dangers may seem paradoxically opposed, but they are simply enough separated by the question of access. In a society with general access to enhancements, the fear is that everyone will want the same enhancements - taller, smarter, stronger, more beautiful children - leading to an ever more uniform population. Moreover, many of these goods are positional: being tall, say, is not an advantage per se; being relatively taller than other people may be.[2] So it may be that this homogenising process will often produce no benefits even to the enhanced individuals. General access is unlikely, however. Enhancement technologies are, and are likely to remain, expensive and available only to the relatively affluent. Some have seen the development of a two-tier society of the enhanced and the 'natural' as a probable outcome. And of course the enhanced class (or classes - there might be for instance distinct intellectual, athletic, elites) may also be subject to the danger of

2. Agar suggests (p127) that height is also an intrinsic (or, as he says, 'independent') value. Tall people can reach fruit of higher branches of trees, for instance. This seems to me to be a mistake. There is presumably an optimal height that is a balance of many different consequences of being taller and shorter. I doubt whether even a professional fruit picker would want to be thirty feet tall.

homogenisation.

My own guess would be that new biotechnologies will not massively exacerbate the existing inequities between those who do and those who do not have access to modern medical resources. Seriously deleterious genetic conditions may become the prerogative of the poor. This hardly makes the problem morally insignificant, but perhaps it is not morally novel: many diseases are already the prerogative of the poor. Some readers may find much of the argument beside the point, since the real issue is to move away from the economic liberalism that appears to lead inevitably to such vast and growing inequality. If eugenics is liable seriously to accelerate this process, this may well be the only correct reaction, but I doubt whether it is so liable. Whether I'm right depends on whether in addition to the removal of defective genes it becomes possible to engineer people who are smarter, stronger, more long-lived, and so on. This is what I'm sceptical about. But certainly I agree with Agar that it can do no harm to consider the issues and be as well prepared as possible to confront such possibilities if they arise. And regrettable or not, they will probably arise in the context of our current climate of economic liberalism.

Overall this book is clearly written and well argued. Despite the title, it is not a rhetorical defence of enhancement but a well-balanced discussion of the issues. There is much that one could take issue with, but this mainly reflects the interest and perplexities of the subject matter. I would recommend it to anyone interested in exploring this vital set of issues.

Predictive Genetics and Ethnology

Staffan Müller-Wille

Monica Konrad, *Narrating the New Predictive Genetics: Ethics, Ethnography and Science*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (Studies in Society and the Life Sciences, edited by Nikolas Rose and Paul Rabinow), 2005, pp 215; £19.99 paperback, £45.00 hardback.

While empirical methods like participant observation and thick description by now belong to the standard tool kit of social and cultural studies of science, the theoretical tools ethnology has to offer are still reluctantly deployed in this field. This is all the more surprising as one of the central topics of classical ethnology, in both its structuralist and functionalist varieties, was kinship - a topic that clearly reverberates with the science of genetics, the science, that is, that has penetrated social life most profoundly in the course of the twentieth century. Thus Claude Lévi-Strauss drew an explicit analogy between the kinship systems that were the subject of his *Les structures élementaires de la parenté* (1949, p126) and Mendelian genetics. According to Lévi-Strauss both kinship and genetics constitute knowledge domains 'where individual status is interpreted as a function of a simple or complex dichotomy, and where the whole of physical characters of a given subject is treated as the result of combinations of certain elementary characters inherited from the parents'. Although this statement was made more than 50 years ago, there exist hardly any studies exploring the meaning of genetics in the light of kinship. Something similar can be said about insights gained by early social anthropologists like Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (*Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, 1937) into practices of magic and prophecy. Comparative studies attending to their counterparts in modern science, experiment and prediction, are exceedingly rare.

In *Narrating the New Predictive Genetics: Ethics, Ethnography and Science*, Monica Konrad describes this failure to make ethnology relevant for science studies, bioethics, and biopolicy, as due to her own discipline's shortcomings. Beginning 'by way of provocation', she claims 'that social and medical anthropologists generally have not taken the disciplinary lead in initiating a conceptual and methodological agenda to which bioethicists might be roused to respond' (p20). While there have been a few authors who in recent years have sought an anthropologically informed understanding of genetics and its social and ethical implications - Konrad quotes Jeannette Edwards, Kaya Finkler, Sarah Franklin, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn Strathern - her statement is still largely true. It is philosophers, in the first place, who are as yet defining the agenda of bioethics. In the second chapter of her book Konrad explains why this is so. Cultural and social anthropology's uneasy relationship with biology -

culminating in the violent exchanges it had with sociobiology, spearheaded by prominent figures like Marshall Sahlins, Edmund Leach, and Marvin Harris in the late 1970s - has effectively barred any fruitful dialogue between the disciplines. While 'anthropological critiques' of sociobiology were successful, as Konrad believes, in highlighting '[sociobiology's] key omission of considerations of "culture", in particular the ethnocentrism underpinning [its] notions of "natural selection", "inclusive fitness" and "kin selection"', they failed to 'go on to explore the cultural implications of the genetics of sociobiology beyond its potential disciplinary encroachment of anthropology itself' (p44).

Taking a foothold in 'the crowning metaphor underpinning the spatialised methodology of genetic knowledge', namely 'translocation', Konrad announces her ambition to recommend 'social anthropology … as a critical tool for assisting in degrees of critical conversational exchange that can modulate flexibly without loss of perspective between molecular and (ethno) ethical levels' - 'ethnography as a tool for linkage', as she puts it more concisely by borrowing another focal metaphor of genetics (pp57-58). Unfortunately, Konrad's disciplinary jargon, her indulgence in self-reflexivity (one-third of the book is devoted to methodology), and her tendency to conflate the genetic underpinnings of sociobiology with genetics as such (pp109-110, 123), will probably put off the largest part of her intended audience of 'clinical geneticists, health professionals, and bioethicists' (p26). This is a pity, because she has quite a few substantial things to say.

The core of *Narrating the New Predictive Genetics* is provided by a case study, largely based on results from open-ended, semi-structured interviews with individuals from six UK families affected by Huntington's Disease, a monogenic late-onset neuro-degenerative illness for which predictive genetic tests became available in the late 1980s already. The four chapters that present this case study focus on two dimensions of family life affected by predicting Huntington's Disease: (1) the *temporal dimension* of disclosure and prognostication; and (2) the *genealogical dimension* of loyalties and disloyalties among kin. Excerpts from interviews are quoted at length and juxtaposed to relevant findings from anthropological literature 'covering Eastern Uganda, Nigeria, Amazonia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, North India'. The general result from this strategy is rather unsurprising: 'Extrapolating from these translocations', as Konrad puts it in her 'concluding remarks', 'we can carry across to other contexts the observation that terms such as "health", "normality" and "disability" are not objective and universal definitions across time and place. The different cultural meanings attached to notions of pre-emption, prediction and the pre-symptomatic will change and shift over time' (p159). So much for the generalities. It is in some of the more detailed findings of Konrad that the challenge to mainstream bioethics consists.

Temporality. Genetic testing for Huntington's Disease implies an involute temporality. The test, in a single act, diagnoses a present genetic condition, which has no manifest effects on the health of the person tested, and predicts his or her future state of health at the same time, as there is no cure for Huntington's

disease. Diagnosis and prognosis fall 'into each other' (p83). The test-subjects, and also those considering themselves 'at risk' and deliberating undergoing a test, thus become 'pre-symptomatic persons'. Konrad's crucial point about this aspect is, that this is indeed a process of becoming. It takes time for the affected to become 'moral prognosticators' themselves, and to fathom the consequences that the decision to get tested, as well as the test result and its disclosure to others, will have both for one-self and for affected kin. There exists 'a lived "gap" between anticipated diagnosis and embodied prognosis' (p77). Resolving the ethical dilemmas implied by genetic testing can therefore not count on a clear-cut distinction between objective genetic information on the one hand, and an autonomous, rational decision-making process based on that information on the other. The communication of genetic information extends into families, and considerations of kin enter the decision process right from the start (pp84-86). For Konrad, these complexities question the consequentialist reasoning and the principle of the primacy of individual rights that has so far dominated bioethical debates about the 'right (not) to know'. 'Genetic information', as she observes at one stage, 'cannot be simply isomorphic with claims to individual autonomy' (p96), especially when it comes to disclosing or withholding genetic 'truths'. Genetic information is invested with social value in the same degree as other forms of medical knowledge are in 'non-technologically advanced contexts'. A particularly striking example Konrad cites in this respect stems from Murray Last's investigation of contemporary Hausa medical culture. The 'recent decline of "clan secrets" and the related breakdown in Hausa culture of lineages and wider kin groupings' has favoured 'a more "personal" form of secret knowledge, partly … as a cultural means to deflect personalised blame for misfortune events'. The result is an apparent indifference towards sources of medical knowledge and ailments and a related medical pluralism among the Hausa (pp96-98).

Genealogy. In deliberating their decisions about getting tested and disclosing test results to others, as well as in preparing themselves for future scenarios of illness and health, members of families affected by Huntigton's Disease draw up what Konrad calls 'tentative genealogies', in analogy to the 'tentative pregnancies' that mothers undergoing prenatal testing experience according to Barbara Katz Rothman. It is with respect to these genealogies or 'social anatomies of interdependence' (p121) that Konrad makes her most interesting observations. Far from reinforcing heredity ties among those who are consanguine and affined, genetic information is portrayed by her informants as having strongly disruptive effects. 'Siding with like-tested kin involves implicit alliances that may have nothing necessarily to do with notions of "blood" (consanguineal) relatedness … Kin may become "outsiders within"', as Konrad puts it (p123). These disruptive effects of genetic testing are reflected in the '"de-selection" techniques' favoured by some of her informants to achieve an 'evening-up', among siblings in particular. Thus, in one case, a mother of four, whose eldest child was born 'at risk', decided against pre-implantation diagnosis, which would have been available for her

later pregnancies. As she expresses herself, it did not seem fair 'to stop the others getting it if I couldn't do that for Jamie [the first-born] … He is the only one not definitely negative … how can I take him away from the rest of the siblings?' (p132). 'Within families', Konrad summarizes, 'kinship ethics may unfold as anticipatory forms of sibling equivalence, for example, and notions of endebted risk may be morally inflected in terms of relative degrees of (dis)loyalty. Putting these notions to work, or rather, seeing them enacted in practice, may show up how new genetic families appear both to fragment along lines of divisiveness … as well as how they cohere … through novel idioms of inclusiveness' (p145). 'Enhancing predictability in human genomics produces the inescapable irony one may never know in advance quite how any given testee will respond' (p146).

Especially with respect to the latter insightful statement, there is one serious criticism I must level against Konrad's book. In many places she invokes an imaginary personal of 'Western science' (p49), 'Euro-Americans' (p51), 'British people and other English-speaking Westerners' (p99), 'Western genetics' (p123), always associated with an ideology of individualism and objectivism. In one case she even sets up an opposition between 'Westerners [for whom] the process of scientific experimentation is founded typically on the possibility of recursive modification of objective knowledge over time' and 'Huntington's testees [for whom] there is nothing cumulative about these "one-off" highly subjective events of genetic revelation' (p64). The 'Huntington's testees' Konrad speaks about in her book are certainly all Westerners, and it seems questionable, to say the least, that 'recursive modification' can in any way be identified with 'cumulative'. The experimental nature of genetic tests is precisely the reason why it can produce '"one-off" highly subjective events'.

Who or what it is that instantiates 'Westerners', moreover, is never really made explicit. It is only in her concluding remarks, that Konrad associates the 'myth of pre-emptive individualism' with the 'discourse of the "healthy citizen"' endorsed by national health institutions (p151). However, throughout the book, despite the fact that Konrad states to have collected observations from 'sitting in' on genetic counselling sessions and visiting 'DNA laboratories' (pp161–162), the voice of medical practitioners and geneticists is never heard. Most curiously, therefore, Konrad can reach the conclusion, that it is the narratives of her interviewees that 'offer … the opportunity to re-think and re-theorise human genetics as a social critique of Western individualism' (p152). It is human genetics itself that has long since realized this opportunity by disrupting and redefining 'social anatomies of interdependence', for the better and - mostly, I believe - for the worse. One of Konrad's interviewees seems to have a precise sense of this fact, when she invokes personal autonomy against having a prenatal test. 'No', she answers to Konrad's question if she would have undergone prenatal testing if assured of no pressure to have a selective termination, 'that spells looking into other people's life. It's got to be their choice when they're older of whether they want to know.'

Diversity And Adversity

Staffan Müller-Wille

Jenny Reardon, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press (Information Series, edited by Paul Rabinow), pp249; £12.50 paperback, £37.95 hardback.

'What is essential about races is not their state of being, but that of becoming' - thus did the Russian-American population geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky express the difference between traditional, static, typological race concepts and the modern, dynamic, population concept of race in 1937 (*Genetics and the Origin of Species*, pp62-63). Race, as a scientific concept, was changing its epistemic status in the human and the life sciences during the second third of the twentieth century. From being a concept of central explanatory significance, it evolved into a mere contingent phenomenon to be explained by underlying processes of allele distribution. Historians of anthropology like George Stocking, Nancy Stepan, and Elazar Barkan have portrayed this development as the decline of race in science. But that race changed its status does of course not mean that it vanished from the horizon of the human sciences. The statement by Dobzhansky reveals an uncanny ambiguity in this respect. If what is essential about races is their 'state of becoming', rather than 'being', are they not even more amenable to penetrating analysis and intervention, than the imagined 'types' and 'stocks' of traditional physical anthropology ever were? Indeed, the resurgence of explicitly racial categories in genomic research related to ancestry, public health, pharmacology, and forensic science in recent years indicates that this is so, and has raised interest among historians and sociologists of science for the continued history of racial anthropology after World War II.

Jenny Reardon's book *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics* is a contribution to this growing body of literature, and one that will probably outlast many others as a standard reference in the field. The book focuses on the Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP), a project initiated in 1991 by the Italian population geneticist Luca Cavalli-Sforza and Robert Cook-Deegan, policy adviser of James Watson who was director of the Human Genome Project at the time. Chapter 2 charts the 'terrain upon which Diversity Project proponents would attempt to build their initiative' (p32). Reardon argues convincingly that this terrain was far from cleared of problematic questions surrounding the concept of race. Population geneticists had provided new perspectives and tools, like Frank Livingstone who took up Julian Huxley's concept of clines in the 1960s to study human populations as dynamic entities. But not all population geneticists agreed that this emptied

the concept of race of all meaning. While typological or 'static' race concepts were almost unanimously rejected, as witnessed by the *Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences by Physical Anthropologists and Geneticists* published by UNESCO in 1951, some population geneticists, most notably Theodosius Dobzhansky and Leslie C. Dunn, continued to maintain that race could usefully be accommodated with the new population approach. Through a careful conceptual analysis of the debates following upon the UNESCO Statement Reardon reaches an important conclusion: 'There is no such thing as the concept of race; rather there are multiple biological concepts of race … One could be a populationist … and still find race useful, as Dobzhansky did' (p35). Race, as Reardon emphasizes, 'must be treated as a historical object, an object construed differently in different contexts', just like any other object of the sciences (p18).

Against this background Reardon unfolds the somewhat tragic history of the HGDP. Being wary about possible associations of the Human Genome Project with race hygiene and eugenics, organizers of the HGDP initially conceived of it as an antidote against racist discrimination. Studying human genetic diversity on the basis of population genetics would lend itself to undermine 'popular' and 'social' constructions of race by 'reversing … presumptions about a one-to-one correspondence between phenotype and genotype' and pointing out 'that surface differences hid deeper similarities' with respect to genes studied at the molecular level (pp52-55). The initial design of the HGDP clearly reflected these goals. The plan was to study the evolutionary history and population dynamics of humans on the basis of blood and other tissue samples from 50-200 'genetic populations', that is, populations that could be assumed to be relatively isolated, and thus 'representative of the world before the expansion of present dominant groups'. Language was to serve as a guide, and indeed, one of the underlying suppositions of the project was that genetic isolates, in humans, coincide with 'groups defined by ethnicity' (p77). In short, the project set out to study what was otherwise known as 'aboriginal' peoples or ethnic minorities, with a special focus on groups that were in the process of 'vanishing', but 'potentially important for historical genetics'. It is here, as Reardon shows, that the roots become apparent that the HGDP had in post-WWII attempted to redefine racial anthropology as the study of the formation of races (p72).

This Janus-face of the HGDP - renouncing race as a social prejudice, but pursuing a genetic study of race formation - should prove fatal. The HGDP became soon involved in intense conflicts. On the one hand, physical as well as social and cultural anthropologists rejected the geneticists claim to expertise in the study of human diversity, and questioned the role assigned to themselves as mere 'assistants' in the sampling process. The debate, explored in chapter four of the book, culminated in accusations of racism. Another, even more heated debate, began to arise at the interface between the HGDP and its research object. In the summer of 1993, indigenous rights organisations began to raise their concerns with what they dubbed the 'Vampire Project'

and saw as yet another attempt at exploiting indigenous populations. Under this pressure, the project turned to expert bio-ethicists to devise ethical guidelines for acquiring 'group consent' - an ethical category that then became notorious for its problematic status, due to the difficulty to define such groups in a way that would satisfy both scientific and political interests (chapter 5). In what must have been an utterly painful process organisers had to learn that their project, despite its humanitarian agenda, was not welcomed in some corners of the world, often for reasons that were beyond their control. Even attempts at more inclusionary strategies escalated in political turmoil. Although seen and promoted by its proponents as a corrective to a Eurocentric bias in genetics, it remained a battling ground for long-standing issues of discrimination and exclusion. Ironically, the project did end up successfully recruiting the support and participation of African-Americans, a group far removed from the sampling populations it wished to target initially, that is, 'isolated' populations, and specifically, 'vanishing' populations 'of historic interest' (chapter 6).

Reardon's account of the history of the HGDP is enormously rich in historical detail from published sources, reports and declarations, as well as interviews she conducted. Yet she manages to organise that detail to provide a clear sociological analysis of the problems the HGDP encountered. The starting point of her analysis is provided by the co-production approach, according to which 'scientific knowledge and political order come into being together' (p8). It is from this point of view that the history she retells becomes a story of persistent failure. From its very start, the HGDP believed to be able to operate on the basis of a neat distinction of political and scientific aspects of race. Project proponents 'argued that studies of human genetic diversity that employed proper scientific methods should move forward, and those that propagated racism and colonialism should desist' (p76). What they failed to see, however, was 'their entanglement in unresolved disciplinary questions within anthropology about how to study and know the human' (p92); 'the Project's place in much deeper histories of colonialism and North/South relations' (p113); likewise, their 'proposed expansion of informed-consent rights bypassed vital questions about the status of groups as entities in nature and society' (p125); and even their attempts to enlist Native and African American voices for their purposes 'tapped into deep worries about the appropriation of race for projects that in effect drained important resources away from addressing the basic needs of communities' (p155). In all of these cases, problems arose, in Reardon's view, because project organisers tried 'to keep issues conventionally understood as political outside of spaces conventionally thought of as scientific' (p167).

These conclusions also reveal the extent to which Reardon's account is actually written with the benefit of hindsight, and with a certain amount of wiggishness which places the burden of success in communication exclusively on the side of scientists. Historians (and some sociologists) will find that quite unsatisfying. And indeed, as Reardon's last sentences indicate, the story of the

HGDP might be retold in a completely different way, 'not as an anomaly or as a failure that we can prevent from repeating itself, but rather as a project struggling to do the difficult work that will be required by any effort to study human genetic difference' (p167). Reardon has chosen to emphasize the failures in her book, but the materials and the timeline to write a different story are out there now, thanks to her efforts, in a well-written and well-organised account.

Well-born?

Milla Rosenberg

Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003, pp578; £17.99 hardback.

The cultural anthropologist Paul Rabinow once asked whether those who sought to critically assess eugenics were harbouring a kind of 'nostalgia for eugenics'. This criticism, meant only somewhat facetiously, worried about the amount of attention given to critiquing genetic explanations for behaviour. While Rabinow conceded that some attention was not misplaced, he asked that we '… accept the claim that there is a new currency of discourses of genetic determinism present today with the caveat that both the society and the science involved are dramatically different than they were sixty or seventy years ago'.[1] This would help to counter the more 'comfortable' position of a critic who puts forth a sort of 'radiant pessimism'.

1. 'Nostalgia for eugenics', *Contention*, vol. 3, 1 (Fall 1993): 147.

That critique could be levelled at Edwin Black's new book, *War Against the Weak*, which is nothing if not ambitious in its scope and breadth. Is Black's book pessimistic? Yes, at times, devastatingly so. But Black's book is truly an important contribution to scholarship on eugenics, the relationships between power, science and governmentality, and the history of science. With a team of about 50 research assistants, working in four countries, Black found some 50,000 documents related to eugenics. A journalist who has written widely on international politics, Black's research continues but extends his earlier work, *IBM and the Holocaust* (2001), which exposed Nazi use of the company's data-processing technology to classify, expel, segregate, deport, and ultimately kill prisoners in the camps. Among his findings, Black shows that eugenics influenced twenty-seven states to create laws that would lead to the sterilisation of more than 60,000 of its own citizens. For example, after four years of lobbying efforts by Dr Martin Barr, both houses of the legislature in Pennsylvania passed the preposterous 'Act for the Prevention of Idiocy' (p66). Between the years 1905 and 1912, these states appointed 'Boards of Examiners' to determine whether reproduction was 'inadvisable.' In addition, it empowered institutions for mentally ill adults and children to castrate, sterilize, or ligate those deemed 'degenerate' and 'feebleminded'. Secondly, Black tracks how American scientists were aware of and even celebrated Nazi research programs in the 1930s. Thirdly, the Carnegie Institution would fund the building of the Office at Cold Spring Harbor and the Eugenics Record Office (ERO). The Rockefeller Foundation supplied funding for numerous eugenic initiatives, including one in Denmark after a 1929 sterilisation law was passed; fellowships and travel grants were offered for some of its scientists.

It opened an office in Paris. In Germany, Rockefeller money funded the work of psychiatrist Ernst Rüdin, who was published in American eugenic journals. And the foundation also supported the 'anthropological' (read: eugenic) surveys of Eugen Fischer, who led the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics in the early 1930s.

The internationalising of eugenics occurred throughout the 1920s and 30s under various guises: in Belgium, the Belgian Eugenics Society; in Sweden, the State Institute of Race-Biology, and in Switzerland, the Julius Klaus Foundation for Heredity Research, Social Anthropology, and Racial Hygiene all designed lectures and courses that shaped scientific education and often, marital law. Each of them '… developed American-style eugenic movements that echoed the agenda and methodology of the font at Cold Spring Harbor' (p245). Indeed, with Charles Davenport and the powerful 'Expert Eugenics Agent' Harry Laughlin at the helm of a 'Permanent International Commission on Eugenics', the mandates of American elites were more easily exercised. It was Laughlin's testimony before a US Congressional committee on immigration which ensured the passage of quotas against immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

The book traces the role of leading American scientists, foundations, and physicians in supporting eugenics. Black's thesis is that American eugenics was lauded by Adolph Hitler and ultimately spurred the Third Reich's campaign of genocide. This thesis will remain controversial, but Black documents that in the early 1930s, Hitler wrote letters directly to Leon Whitney, president of the American Eugenics Society, and to Madison Grant, an influential leader in American eugenics, thanking them for their works.

Obstacles to research did arise, as some archivists claimed that the records of those manipulated by eugenics '… are somehow protected under doctor-patient confidentiality stretching back fifty to one hundred years. This notion is a sham that only justifies the crime … the people persecuted by eugenics were not patients, they were victims' (pxx). Given new laws surrounding privacy, the question of confidentiality is one that researchers may confront as they go forth in this work.

Black has unearthed so many new findings about eugenics; for example, he notes that after ten years of American eugenic work, Galtonians in England departed from and critiqued the ERO's output (p99-100). Scientists such as David Heron, writing on behalf of the Galton laboratory, viewed '… recent American work which has been welcomed in this country … the teaching of which we hold to be fallacious and indeed dangerous to social welfare' (p100). Davenport went ballistic, writing a point for point critique that defended his reading of Mendelian genetics.

Scholarship on eugenics has increasingly looked beyond the United States to understand the ways that scientific programs were exported as a means to extend bio-power over new domains. In the works of Benno Müller-Hill and Paul Weindling, the aim was to document the use of 'scientific selection' in Nazi scientific research programs and medical experimentation. Stefan

Kuhl tracked the Nazi connection to American racism.[2] Black identifies the Swiss neuroanatomist, psychiatrist and sexologist Auguste Forel as '… a leading disciple of eugenics beginning in 1910' (p42). The point is used in the service of buttressing Black's overall claim that eugenics moved resolutely from America to Europe. But Forel had travelled to the United States as early as the 1890s; while there, he commissioned studies and made crudely racist claims about the differential brain size of whites and blacks, reflecting a scientist trained in phrenology and craniology, and the influential British expatriate H. Stewart Chamberlain approvingly cited his work.[3] Yet these pseudo-sciences hold no place in Black's account. Scientists in Europe had long been implicated in the Continent's colonial encounters. Are there continuities between eugenics and the earlier racial sciences of comparative anatomy? Some historians of science, including William Stanton, and more recently, Londa Schiebinger and Ann Fausto-Sterling, make a good case for a closer appraisal of this question.[4]

Although *War Against the Weak* aims to be comprehensive, one noticeable absence is any discussion of the eugenic targeting of gays and lesbians. Black hints at the possible origins of eugenics in 'the simple concept of charity', but some discussion of the role of sexology in eugenics might have strengthened this work. A lot of writers in this area, including Nicole Hahn Rafter, David Horn, and Jennifer Terry, point to important questions about the rise of eugenics.[5] Black has drawn upon some contemporary work but little in relation to the cultural study of science, technology, and medicine. Other than these few missteps, the text is perhaps most extraordinary for tracking the flow of scientific studies between Germany and America. For nearly every scientist or policymaker, Black is able to draw a connection to other figures in the text, whether they were a student, protégé, or correspondent. The scope of this scholarship is simply remarkable.

An important question, which Diane Paul recently re-raised at the Organization of American Historians conference, is how do we periodise eugenics?[6] For Black, it really begins with Davenport, whose claims he tracks through publications like *Eugenical News*. Although Black does address some of the Reconstruction-era attempts to harness biology for 'betterment', the focus is on the leading eugenecists. Alfred Ploetz, a German physician who travelled to America to study utopian communities in the 1880s, would coin the term *Rassenhygiene (racial hygiene)* in 1895. One of the most disturbing stories unearthed is that of Dr Edwin Katzen-Ellenbogen, a psychologist who emigrated from Poland to the United States in 1905. Soon, the director of the Psychopathological Laboratory at New Jersey's State Village for Epileptics, Katzen-Ellenbogen was viewed as a leader in the field; at one point, he held a lectureship at Harvard. He would be asked by then New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson to draft a law sterilising epileptics and 'defectives'. Black traces how Katzen-Ellenbogen, a charter member of the Eugenics Research Association, would end up first as a prisoner and then a doctor in Buchenwald. The cruel paradox of his position, as a Jew with an

2. Benno Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination By Scientific Selection Of Jews, Gypsies, And Others, Germany 1933-1945*, George Fraser (trans), NY, Oxford UP, 1988; Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, And German Politics Between National Unification And Nazism, 1870-1945*, Cambridge UP, 1989; Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, And German National Socialism*, New York, Oxford UP, 1994.

3. Cited in Chamberlain, footnote, p290, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* [1900], John Lees (trans), New York, John Lane, 1914.

4. William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America,1815-1859*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960; Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, Boston, Beacon, 1993, and 'Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of Hottentot Women in Europe, 1815-1817' in Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla (eds), *Deviant Bodies*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, p19-48.

5. Nicole Hahn Rafter (ed), *White Trash: The Eugenics Family Studies, 1877-1919*, Boston, Northeastern, University Press, 1988; David Horn,

influential Nazi commission, is traced and exposed by Black. The doctor would be complicit in the killing of some patients through neglect or refusal of treatment in the camps. Although tried at Dachau in the summer of 1947, Katzen-Ellenbogen used subterfuge against the American Military Tribunal prosecutors. Initially sentenced to life imprisonment, after an appeal for health reasons, his sentence would be reduced to twelve years.

Given that eugenics was so widely condemned after the horrors of fascism were uncovered, it is fair to ask whether we ought to view eugenics as less of a threat. Black's response to this would be that after World War II, many of the earlier research organisations were renamed under the rubric of 'genetics'. In the insurance industry and DNA identity databanks, which now exist in the United States, England, and Canada, the legacy of eugenics continues to affect people's access to health care and to decent coverage. As Black notes, 'Insurers increasingly consider genetic traits "pre-existing conditions" that should either be excluded or factored into premiums' (p432). While many governments and privacy advocates would like to prohibit the use of genetic testing, insurance companies are arguing that the industry cannot survive without this information. Who loses in this debate? - at least in the US, it is the 40 million who go without any health insurance.

Still, the text does not take a wholly gloomy tone - Black points out that, due to the recent efforts by investigative journalists, '… the governors of Virginia, Oregon, California, North Carolina and South Carolina all publicly apologized to the victims of their states' official persecution' (pxxiii). In April of 2003, after the state of North Carolina's eugenic past became widely known, legislators repealed its involuntary sterilisation law. The work calls for much new research in its wake, including biographies of key figures. I would add that, for instances where physicians, social reformers and legislators applied eugenics, we need careful, close histories of resistances to eugenics.

A model of collaborative scholarship that makes this challenging topic accessible, Black's book will likely become a standard reference for scholars of eugenics across many disciplines.

Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994; and Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. Terry's study makes the point explicit that all of the sterilisation laws passed between the early twentieth century through to 1921 were enacted against 'sexual perverts', with some states listing 'moral degenerates' as candidates for sterilisation (p82).

6. 'Rethinking and Reperiodizing Eugenics: Sexuality, Secrets, and Sterilization, 1930s-1960s',Organization of American Historians Conference, Boston, MA, March 26, 2004.

The Rhetorical Cultures Of Eugenics

Kristin Rencher and Marouf Hasian, Jr

Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp296; £22.99 hardback.

Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005, pp361; £15.95 paperback, £38.95 hardback.

During the last few decades many interdisciplinary scholars have broadened the scholarly lens that is used to study eugenics, so that researchers no longer stay within the confines of scientific texts when they study the nature, scope, and impact of hereditarian arguments. Unlike the vast majority of the early work on eugenics that focused on eugenical 'abuse' of more pristine genetic knowledge, these two excellent books illustrate the heuristic value of studying the circulation of these ideas within the broader rhetorical culture, where myriad communities appropriated and twisted these ideas and applied them in novel contexts.

In *Preaching Eugenics* Christine Rosen illustrates how some Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant leaders sutured together theological and secular claims about the progress of the human race in their critiques of progressive eugenics. This book does more than simply outline the positions of eugenic defenders or protagonists - *Preaching Eugenics* underscores some of the modernist and doctrinal ambiguities that confronted religious figures who had to deal with the challenges and conundrums that came from massive social changes - 'industrialization, urbanization, immigration, world war, economic depression', the Social Gospel and progressivism (184). Rosen's study of archival resources, printed speeches, books and other texts helps her defend her contention that many ministers, priests and rabbis genuinely believed that eugenics could be used as a scientific tool that would increase human happiness.

Chapter one ('Fervent Charity') of Rosen's book illustrates how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American communities were hearing contrasting views on whether acts of charity should be viewed as socially beneficial activities that helped the needy, or whether such acts facilitated the spread of degeneracy. Here the author outlines how eugenics could be viewed as a practical form of social action, which could then be tied to Social Gospel theologies. Rosen is clearly worried about some of the pernicious effects of eugenic thinking, and she comments on how hereditarian claims

could be used in arguments about the degenerative impact of indiscriminate charity. For example, Reverend Oscar Carleton McCulloch circulated studies of 'degenerate families' (like the 'Ishmaelites') and he was convinced that multiple groups of dysgenic families produced several generations of criminals, who were hoarding charitable resources. McCulloch's reports treated poverty as a genetic condition. Rosen describes McCulloch's attitude towards the fictional query 'What would Jesus do?' with a reply stating, 'Rid the world of indiscriminate benevolence' (29). This type of preaching melded together theological and scientific rationales for eugenic regulations, and the author argues that Caleb Saleeby and G. Stanley Hall were just some of the leaders who used permutations of these arguments. Rosen contends that the religious aspects of eugenic thinking helped with the mainstreaming and popularisation of the American Eugenics movement.

Chapters two, three and four of *Preaching Eugenics* outline the early practices of the religious leaders who took to heart the importance of 'applied eugenics'. Chapter two describes how some priests actively discouraged the marriage of those who were considered to be eugenically 'unfit' individuals. At various times health certificates were required before the beginning of marriage ceremonies, and chapter three extends this analysis by showing how the promoters of 'Race Betterment Conferences' tried to educate the masses. Rosen's intriguing discussion of organised contests – such as the 'Better Babies Contest' - shows us how ordinary citizens might have been motivated to learn about eugenics, especially in cases where their babies might be found to be genetically fit.

Rosen's commentary on 'Fitter Families for Future Firesides' reminds us that there have been times when entire families were considered to be eugenically fit. Some groups, including the American Eugenic Society, went so far as to call for competitive sermonizing, where a host of ministers, priests, rabbis, and theology students hoped that they would be awarded the coveted prize money that came with the selection of the best 'Religion and Eugenics' sermon. Chapter four then shows us how these types of educational efforts could transmigrate into discussion of immigration control or other restrictive practices.

Chapter five ('Sterilization, Birth Control, and the Catholic Confrontation with Eugenics') is a study of some of the extreme state measures that were taken in the name of applied eugenics. Debates about mandatory sterilization and birth control were tied to concerns about volition and natural law, and Rosen shows us how many members of the Catholic Church were worried that American legislators were under the sway of the 'modern craze for scientific officialism'. In their efforts to control feeblemindedness, the secular leaders of the state sometimes 'trampled individual rights and ethical boundaries' (147). Catholics such as Thomas Slater 'challenged the hubris of eugenicists' claim that they should be entrusted with determining the human qualities that should and should not exist in future generations' (147), while other commentators complained about the US Supreme Court case of *Buck v. Bell*

(150-151). Rosen complicates our understanding of this period by showing us that it took some time before the majority of Catholics attacked many of these eugenic abuses.

Chapter six takes us back to the trials and tribulations of the late 1920s and 1930s, when some promoters of eugenics had to deal with clarion calls for more economic intervention and radical social improvement. With the economic depression sweeping the nation, many eugenicists found themselves in a host of public debates about social vices and environmentalism, and they had to confront the realities associated with declining membership rolls. Members of American Eugenics Society tried to adapt by changing some of their rhetorical appeals, but Rosen claims that by this period of time eugenics 'seems to have become a disguise for race prejudice, ancestor worship, and caste snobbery' (166).

In *Eugenic Nation*, Alexandra Stern provides readers with convincing historical evidence that eugenic arguments, creeds, and movements were not simply epistemic anomalies whose persuasive powers ended with the demise of Hitler's Nazi Germany or the rising influence of the 'real' genetic sciences. To put it bluntly, this is one of the best books that has ever been written on the ideological power of eugenic positions. Stern does an excellent job of interrogating the traditional 'historical terrain' that is filled with truncated and simplified narratives that marginalize the power of eugenic rhetoric. She shows us how various permutations of eugenic claims could be found in national and international debates about population genetics, colonial health programs, racial hygiene, sterilization projects, marriage counselling, I.Q. tests, child welfare, miscegenation, family planning, and classroom courses. As she notes, most previous studies have been 'East Coast-centric' (5), and she tries to rectify this special problem by widening the lens that we use as we study the discursive power of eugenics as they applied to a host of geopolitical intersectional claims that bring together commentaries on race, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, Professor Stern has a knack for picking out understudied historical topics that should have been investigated years ago.

In the first chapter of *Eugenic Nation*, Stern presents us with a fascinating explanation of how eugenics informed the ways that various colonial and imperial health experts talked and wrote about race betterment in various parts of the world, and the San Francisco of the mid-1910s is used as a geographic anchor point that lets us see how eugenical creeds permeated the ways that many officials, social scientists, and lay persons thought about the hereditarian benefits of American imperialism. Stern crafts some new narratives that shows us just why certain ideas about eugenics could refract and reflect the ways that American colonialists thought about tropical medicine, and we can follow the ways that commentaries about Pacific crops and gold could be tied to such issues as military preparedness, the control of the Philippines, Panama, and Cuba, and the cleansing of San Francisco. Everything from fairs to public health instructions could be used to send out messages about 'American prowess, medical might, and white supremacy' (41).

In chapter two of *Eugenic Nation*, Stern moves us spatially away from the confines of San Francisco so that we can see how eugenic arguments were used in early twentieth century debates about US-Mexican border patrols and the quarantining of the 'other'. While interdisciplinary writers have provided us with literally hundreds of essays on the relationship that exists between race hygiene ideologies and various European restriction acts, this is one of the first nuanced discussions that we have of how eugenics influenced the ways that public officials and politicians have talked about the medical inspection of Mexicans, the pauperisation of Texas, the need for state quarantine laws, the protection of the American family, and the racial dynamics of welfare politics. Here we are presented with illustrations of how a welter of social, cultural, and economic claims about the hereditarian attributes of certain communities could be tied to (ostensibly neutral) factual claims. For example, Stern unpacks some of the discourse that was used by organisations such as the US Public Health Service as various decision-makers used eugenic claims to legitimate border policies. This intriguing chapter covers everything from anti-typhus delousing to commentaries of racial exclusion, and this provides us with novel insights into of the historical origins of anti-Mexican or anti-immigration sentiments.

Chapter's three and four of *Eugenic Nation* transport us back to California, but this time we are following the eugenical rhetorics that were circulated between 1910 and the beginning of World War II. Here we see how 'social' or 'applied' ideas about eugenics could be used to justify the work of those who wanted more surgical sterilization of the unfit, and commendations for the marriage of those with better germplasm. During this period, Californians could go to their local libraries or other public forums and hear about the relationship that supposedly existed between eugenics and birth control, venereal disease, family counselling, sterilization, and marital exams. Moreover, we get to see how 'modern California' was shaped by the ways that various American communities felt about 'agricultural experimentation, nature and wildlife preservation, medical intervention, psychological surveys, municipal and state legislation, and infant and maternal welfare' (84). Here readers get a glimpse about how various eugenical conclusions about marginalized groups could influence their characterisation as slow learners, criminals, deviants, feebleminded, or socially unfit. Stern illustrates how eugenical rationales for sterilizing the dysgenic would circulate for more than a half-century, and lead to the sterilization of thousands of victims. At the same time, the interest in the scientific basis of eugenics was supposed to help the wellborn in California, where various park programs or wilderness projects bolstered the virility and national fitness of those Americans who suffered during the Depression. Stern's Chapter Four, on California's 'landscapes', will be path breaking, in that this chapter provides us with an exemplary model of how to study the historical nexus that existed between the conservation of the environment and the conservation of human genetic worth.

By the time that readers get to the end of chapters five ('Centering

Eugenics on the Family') and six ('Contesting Hereditarianism'), they get an incredible sense of the depth and subtlety of Stern's analysis. Chapter five shows us why Paul Popenoe's eugenical claims about marital counselling and child-rearing might resonate with conservative Californians who were worried about the sanctity of marriage and the maintenance of 'strict sex-gender norms'. Chapter six subtly interrogates the traditional narratives that are told about the rise and demise of certain hereditarian arguments by showing us how overlapping concerns about access to birth control, the sterilization of poor women, and the advent of family planning resources created a host of unanticipated schisms and alliances among various American communities. By the late 1960s and early 1970s there had been a number of repeals of state sterilization statutes, the overturning of marriage bans on 'race-mixing' and so on, but the changes in these policies did not spell the end of eugenic thinking. As Stern points out in her epilogue, commentaries that celebrate the existence of state apologies for past state sterilization campaigns are being circulated at the same time that we hear defences of bans on some types of stem cell research, the importance of 'high-tech eugenics' (p214), the need for restricting certain reproductive rights, and the desirability of using novel genetic techniques.

The early studies of the eugenical movement highlighted the arguments and activities of Francis Galton, Charles Davenport, Madison Grant and Harry Laughlin, but now scholars like Rosen and Stern are inviting us to branch out so that we can see how eugenics operated in many cultural milieus. As Rosen insightfully observes, hindsight can sometimes grant 'groups clarity of purpose and a consistency of thought that they often did not enjoy in fact' (139), and these newer studies are helping us see the diverse - and often inconsistent - social, economic, and political usages of these hereditarian arguments.

Booknotes

Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, MIT Press, 2005, pp316; £25.95 cloth, £12.95 paper.

A decade on from the infamous 'visual culture questionnaire' circulated by the journal *October* (with all its attendant controversies and anxieties), interest in the interdisciplinary field of research known variously as 'visual culture' and 'visual studies' shows little sign of waning. With its own dedicated journals, a burgeoning output of anthologies and monographs and a proliferating curricular presence, the field is continuing to disturb traditional disciplinary boundaries. Yet whilst this work is clearly stimulated by the impact of 'theory' upon research in the humanities, it is far from clear that there exists common agreement on which strategic approaches, methodologies and pedagogical practices to adopt. In the first book-length study to address the emergence and scope of 'visual culture', Dikovitskaya has sought to survey the key publications in a snowballing literature, to gauge the variety of perspectives adopted by practitioners in the field and to engage directly in debates over potential future trajectories. Significantly, she also investigates the institutional situation in which the first courses in 'visual culture' came to be offered in American academies, considering the concrete circumstances that motivate the design and take-up of specific programs.

The basic historical narrative offered here will be familiar: a narrow form of art historical practice concerned primarily with the preservation and transmission of 'elite' valuations and interpretative practices with regard to images ultimately gives way to the more democratic, anthropological notion of visual culture which no longer prioritises the scrutiny of high 'art' over the images from, for example, medical textbooks or popular culture. Are we to conclude, then, that 'visual culture' represents the liquidation and replacement of 'art history', in accordance with a levelling cultural logic in which images are to be consumed without any qualitative consideration whatsoever? It is not difficult to see why there would be reasons to resist such an approach. This study demonstrates that scholars whose work covers the expanded terrain of 'visual culture' have, to their credit, begun to confront such awkward questions directly, and are by no means complacent about the inherent difficulties in circumscribing 'the visual' as a discrete object of study. For her part, Dikovitskaya seems to side with the approach of figures like Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey who see their enterprise, far from abolishing 'art history' and dispensing with the acquisition of disciplinary expertise, as prompting a new, urgent and often very difficult series of questions from which to review and re-orient the discipline. From this angle, 'visual culture' represents an appeal to conceive of a more expansive and

self-critical version of the art historical project (prefigured by elements of the Warburg Institute's project), both supplementing and challenging historically dominant paradigms.

Michael Calderbank

Kevin J.H. Dettmar, *Is Rock Dead?*, London, Routledge, 2006, pp184; £12.99 paperback.

Dettmar thinks the question symptomatic rather than substantial; he doesn't mean seriously to answer it but to ask why so many people keep asking it. *Is Rock Dead?* thus isn't a dumb lament but an oblique analysis of 'what we talk about when we talk about rock', an inquiry into the persistence of morbidity in rock writing and rock music itself. The author is the snappiest kind of academic. Colloquial, breezy, readable, he frequently ends paragraphs with borrowed lyrics, smart summaries and neat put-downs. He has read widely in scholarly and popular rock writing, and conveys much of it lucidly to the reader, situating different authors in their institutional and ideological niches. He also knows a lot of rock music, from Rose Maddox to Limp Bizkit. The book's central case - that 'death' is less a reality than an endlessly generative metaphor for rock, inseparable from its ongoing fecundity - is persuasive. Given all this, the book isn't quite the smash it should be.

For one thing, though short, it's surprisingly prone to digressions off track. A long chapter on the American 1950s ably shows that cultural guardians and trad-pop rivals were keen to announce the demise of rock & roll from early on. But that doesn't quite justify Dettmar's extended history of zombie movies and McCarthyite allegories. To be sure, zombies are 'undead', but they don't really have much to do with the question of rock's death. With another excursion into *Blackboard Jungle* later on, the feeling grows that Dettmar has done a lot of primary research into the 1950s, whose riches he couldn't bring himself to keep out of the book. Elsewhere he takes on individual music writers, casting doubt on their narratives of rock's demise and proposing that they're just lamenting their own baby-boom youth. He's compelling on Lawrence Grossberg, but the attack on Nick Hornby again gets wayward. Dettmar is affronted by Hornby's provocatively blokeish notion that art should be comforting rather than confrontational - but again, Hornby isn't here talking about the death of rock, so Dettmar's aim seems imprecise, the stuff of internet polemic more than sustained monograph.

A larger problem involves terms and categories. Dettmar eloquently justifies the use of the ampersanded 'rock & roll', against other spellings. But he doesn't fully explain what he intends by the term, which for him (as for the most Spinal Tappian rockist) still seems partially defined by its difference from the more bouncily juvenile 'pop'. Perhaps this is a transatlantic or a generational difference. Most music fans I know would happily use 'pop' as what Dettmar calls the 'ecumenical umbrella term for the wide variety of youth musics'. That probably gives them a better chance of avoiding naïve diatribes

about 'selling out' - a version of 'rock-is-dead' that Dettmar repeatedly rejects, but which his conceptual frame still seems to encourage. At the same time, his openness to novelty, and desire to avoid 'death' rhetoric, lets him announce that 'rap is the heir apparent to rock's throne'. But why should the fan of either genre necessarily agree, rather than view the two fields as substantially distinct? We wouldn't tell a 1950s jazz fan that his music survived through Iron Maiden, or announce that the theatre is alive because people are buying novels. Dettmar is an engaging and learned guide, but this brief book doesn't quite give satisfaction.

Joe Brooker

Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004, pp288; £15.95.

There are perhaps two ways of account for affect. The first is to render it, somewhat desperately, to write of the flesh, a 'felt phenomenology' as Barthes has it, where meanings are immediate, *singular*, 'eternally, superbly, outside the sentence' (*The Pleasure of the Text*, p49). Such a project, as Elspeth Probyn reminds us, is to return to the immediacy of experience, to the body's experience, to render a story not of how the body is made to signify through the inscription of culture, but to tell 'the psychosomatic body's stories', of the *rush* of shame, a *pang* of guilt, the *urgency* of desire (*Blush*, p41). To do so is to speak, as Barthes has done, of the 'quiver, thrill or shudder of meaning', of meanings located in the body, that 'vibrate, loosen, disperse, quicken, shine, fold, mutate, delay, slide, separate, that exert pressure, crack, rupture, fissure, are pulverized'.

The second mode, Brennan's, is to theorise - and to theorise exhaustively. Herein is found both the strength and the weakness of *The Transmission of Affect*. On the first count Brennan develops the thesis that other people's affects enter into the flesh directly. Our bodies undergo physical changes in which it is social interaction, in an environment that is shaped by the affective states of others, that shapes biology: affects, as she says, 'are in the air' (p6). This of course profoundly destabilises the modern (western) notion of the bounded self, as well as the priority of the mind over the body. As such, cognition, or mindful terms such as empathy play little role in this account. Affects penetrate directly, and then impinge upon consciousness, through auditory transmission for example, or through olfaction, sight, or touch. To posit such a case is liberating: it recognises the body's way of talking, it recognises other ways of knowing, other ways of meaning. It recognises other ways of being with others. It also marks an attempt to incorporate the biological sciences into the humanities, an attempt which might also lead to new dialogues, with psychology for instance.

To make such a case Brennan takes us on a remarkable polymathic tour; not only of the familiar terrain of psychoanalysis, but also of biochemistry and endocrinology, of clinical science and neurology, of theology and the history

of ideas and much else besides. For this the work holds as much value as it does challenges for the reader. But for the weaknesses, the text constantly evades its object; pheromones are secreted into a vacuum for there are but a few examples of how affects are actually lived and experienced, of their constant presence, of the bodily and intersubjective contexts in which they circulate. In their scientific rigour they seem to be somewhat disembodied. Neither are there examples of our subjective and experiential shifts between the categorical (between emotion, between that which bares the force of cultural recognition: which can be named, taught, organised, forced into signification at the behest of culture) and that which Daniel Stern has aptly termed 'vitality affects': those *forms of feeling* which are constantly with us, the bodily presence which accompanies life experience (*The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, pp54-61). Taken together these may tell us of a pedagogy of affects, or a politics of affect, of why they matter, not only how. At points Brennan comes tantalisingly close when she speaks of *jouissance* as a 'wheezing pleasure' or of the 'wounding smell of sadness' (p44). But this is short lived, much like the celebrated passages in Silvan Tomkins' writing which somehow transmit the affect in question.

I cannot help but feeling that future work on affect will need to negotiate the abstractions of theoretical and of scientific rigour with the language of a felt phenomenology in more nuanced ways: to exemplify, to record the details of experience, to carry this through each analysis as a germ, in Brian Massumi's terms, which will shift the course of analysis and start to grow in ways previously unimagined, but which can only be rendered through an ever finer singularity. This would be to both write (to exemplify) the singularity of affect, but also to account for it through a polymath theoretical analytics. Brennan has surely contributed to this process.

Matt Briggs

Franklin Rosemont and Charles Radcliffe (eds.), *Dancin' in the Streets!: Anarchists, IWW's, Surrealists, Situatonists and Provos in the 1960's*, Chicago, Charles H. Kerr, 2005, 447pp; $25 cloth, $17 paperback.

This collection offers a very welcome reproduction of writings and images from *Rebel Worker* - a mimeographed blast of poetry, revolution, humour and coruscating cultural criticism emerging from Chicago in the mid-late sixties - and *Heatwave*, its short-lived British offshoot. Conventional 'politics' in the early sixties seemed to hold out very little for young people to get excited about. Even the self-proclaimed 'revolutionaries' were conservative in their narrowly dogmatic focus (of one shade or other) and bureaucratic procedures. For the *Rebel Worker* crowd, the really revolutionary discoveries lay elsewhere: in the anarchic comedy of the Marx Brothers or Bugs Bunny, in the blues/jazz of black America, theories from the anarchist and dissident Marxist traditions and, above all, in the Surrealist commitment to a total revolution in everyday life (Franklin and Penelope Rosemont along with other contributors such

as Paul Garon would subsequently found the US section of the Surrealist movement). Since the organisation had its glory years some decades previously and was now kept going by mostly veteran activists, the decision to join up with the IWW ('wobblies') might seem strange. But the young generation saw in its historic emphasis on working class self-emancipation and militant internationalism, a project relevant to their ambitions, and found in the songs of Joe Hill or the writings of T-Bone Slim evidence of a rich vein of creative energy sadly lacking elsewhere.

Rebel Worker would work to restore *enjoyment* as an essential stimulus and goal in the collective project of radical social transformation. Accordingly, one significant characteristic of these publications is a willingness to tackle the cultural 'epiphenomena' disdained by the traditional left, such as the emergence of youth subcultures and emerging trends in rock music (prefiguring, though with a greater degree of direct militant engagement) the interests of contemporary cultural studies. Whilst the Situationists would have had no truck with such Spectacular distractions, the two groupings nevertheless shared a good deal in their critique of capitalist society, and indeed a mutual interest appears to have been shown (Debord reportedly acknowledges to Rosemont his indebtedness to Breton, claiming to have read every word). If the pages of *Rebel Worker* and *Heatwave* do not always possess the sharp theoretical precision of the SI, the excitement and spontaneity with which they positively sing will surely win an audience amongst new generations of young radicals.

Michael Calderbank