

# VIOLENT ASSEMBLAGES

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This is one of our regular general issues of *New Formations*, featuring the best work that has been submitted to the journal over the past year that falls outside the scope of our scheduled special issues. The title has been chosen because all of the articles deal in some ways with the contingent, precarious, yet systematic effects of forms and experiences of social violence (from the violence threatened by the image of a gun, to the violence endured by planetary ecosystems in the age of the ‘Capitalocene’).

The result is a typically broad and rigorous collection of critical scholarship from across a range of disciplinary fields. Two contributions make significant interventions into the study of contemporary visual art. Bernadette Buckley’s fascinating exploration of imagery of firearms in women’s art sheds crucial light on current and emergent ideas around gender, violence and agency. Buckley shows how, in the hands of women artists, art emerges as that which has the capacity to act within and upon a variety of types of violence(s), revealing and transforming their conditions. Matt Waggoner’s penetrating study of contemporary landscape – with a particular focus on the photography of Jungjin Lee – argues for art’s critical role in responding to the fragility of landscapes and the peoples displaced from them, revealing connections between environment, identity, politics and history.

Two essays on screen media explore complex power dynamics at specific historical moments. Andrea Bonfanti examines the cinematic representation of Chinese and Italian peasant life in two films made at different points in the previous half-century, proposing a schematic understanding of the portrayal of peasants, while sceptically assessing their claims to unmediated authenticity. Dhanveer Singh Brar and Ashwani Sharma undertake a critical analysis of one of the most important British television series of recent times: Steve McQueen’s exploration of Black British cultural history, *Small Axe*. Framing their reading through the rebellions which followed the police shooting to death of Mark Duggan on 4 August 2011, they ask how far this much-lauded series really helps us to understand Black Britain’s radical recent past.

Two further articles make important contributions to themes with which *New Formations* will always be immediately concerned. Rachael Gilmour analyses some key features of the UK’s asylum and immigration regime, examining the government practices of language and translation, and the weaponisation of English as a ‘detention language’. Gilmour introduces the reader to an important activist project, *Refugee Tales*, which seeks to remake English as a welcoming medium, imagining it in ways that are divested

from borders and from practices of bordering. Finally, Florian Cord makes a major intervention into the theorisation of conjunctural analysis, with an extended consideration of the complex relationships between the concepts of 'conjuncture', 'assemblage' and 'totality'. Cord argues persuasively for a complex mediation between Cultural Studies, assemblage theory and actor network theory, holding out the promise of an analytical method capable of engaging with the full political complexity of the 'Capitalocene' epoch.