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Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright. 2013. *Beyond the fragments: feminism and the making of socialism* (3rd edition). London: Merlin. (324 pp; £14.95)

Reviewed by **Laurence Cox**

Introduction

Beyond the fragments is one of those books that many activists cite as playing a role in their own biographies. I came across it in the mid-1990s, as a young organiser developing conversations and networks between different social movements in Ireland, in the overlap between European Green parties' vanishing self-understanding as movement alliances and the first inklings of the Zapatista-inspired networking processes that would shortly lead to the "movement of movements". We take our ideas and inspiration where we can find them, but read them critically, for what they can offer our own struggles and our own problems.

One of the liberating aspects of *Beyond the fragments* was that it embodied this kind of politics of knowledge. Rather than presenting a closed, seamless analysis with an agreed set of propositions which readers were implicitly encouraged to sign up to – the book as party conference motion – readers found themselves involved in a conversation between three activists who had come from different left organisations, with a range of related but not identical experiences in women's, trade union and community organising. The open space created by this approach allowed readers to relate to the book as a conversation between their peers which they could join in.

This fitted with the picture presented by the book itself: rejecting the top-down political practice of Social Democracy, Trotskyism and orthodox Communism, it re-situated the authors, and activists in such parties, as participants in a wider conversation among a broader *movement*. That conversation was never liberal in form; it was always geared to practice and informed by a close discussion of specific experiences, but open to the possibility of making alliances between struggles without passing everything through the filter of organisational leaderships.

The book also embodied these experiences in its history: first published in 1979 by the Newcastle Socialist Centre and the Islington Community Press, two such examples of local, non-sectarian alliances between activists, it was taken up by Merlin Press, translated into several languages and fed into the development of what became known as socialist feminism, in the brief period before neoliberalism's assault on socialism and its very selective alliance with elements of the feminist agenda reduced the space for that position to one of academic theory[1]. Now, after the experiences of the "movement of movements" and the

[1] In slightly different ways, parallel projects such as eco-socialism or anti-capitalist strategies within the GLBTQ movement were to be squeezed out of the space of political possibility, at least within western Europe.

new anti-austerity struggles, the book has been republished with substantial reflective essays by the three authors – each in the meantime widely respected as engaged thinkers by people from many different political spaces – looking back on the 1979 text, reflecting on its political context and the onslaught that was to come, and discussing the relevance of the questions raised by the book for today's movements.

What remains?

In her new piece, Sheila Rowbotham observes that

> it has to be recognised that the women's liberation movement of the 1970s was part of a broader radicalisation. We had lived through a stormy decade of conflicts in workplaces and communities. In Ireland people were engaged in armed struggle. We had marched on massive trade union demonstrations, supported picket lines and learned from men and women on strike and in occupations. Then there were burgeoning movements against racism, around gay liberation. While our main focus in the decade before 1979 had been the women's movement this did not mean we had been enclosed within it. (pp. 13-14)

In some ways, as all three authors note, we are returning to this kind of situation of movements and struggles overlapping with and informing each other – much to the discomfiture of NGO and trade union leaderships, celebrity activists and academic empire-builders whose local power is built on keeping "their" issue and "their" audience separate from others. To say this, though, is easier than to think through what it means; and much of *Beyond the fragments* then and now is about the three-way relationship between women's struggles, working-class campaigns and political organisations large and small.

Reflecting on this question, Hilary Wainwright writes that

> a more useful metaphor is to understand [political organisations] as part of a constellation – or, more mundanely perhaps, 'network' – of activities, sharing common values, involving all kinds of patterns of mutual influence, each autonomous but interrelated in different ways. Several further implications and questions follow. It becomes obvious that different ways of organising and different forms of democracy suit different purposes...
>
> Moreover, people sharing the values of this multiplicity of organisation and eager to be part of a process of social transformation will have different possibilities and inclinations to participate. A useful concept to capture a necessarily flexible approach to participation is 'an ecology of participation'. (p. 56)

Again, and relevant to *Interface* as well as her own example of *Red Pepper,*

> Rather than thinking in terms of unification versus fragmentation, I would emphasise a recognition of the necessity of diverse sources of power, and the need therefore to devise organisational forms for different purposes and contexts... This in turn points to the importance, as one piece in the organisational jigsaw puzzle, of a purposeful infrastructure to strengthen these flows of communication, cohesion and common political direction, with all the mutual learning that this involves. We all have to be activists and reflective observers at the same time. (61)

As she has explored in more detail elsewhere, Wainwright outlines the politics of knowledge involved in movement struggles, explorations of the possibility of a socialised economy and the possibility of "reclaiming the state" from below, as well as the vexed question of political parties in the process of transformation. She discusses the disappointments of previous attempts at movement parties such as *die Grünen* and *Rifondazione comunista* (p. 50) while arguing that political parties and an engagement with state power are nevertheless necessary, making particular reference to *Syriza* in Greece.

Part of the difficulty – and this is not to dismiss the strength of what she is saying – is that because of the centrality of the state to what we could call "common sense" popular politics (ideas shaped by nostalgia for the welfare state, national-developmentalism or state socialism) and the accumulation not only of power and financial resources but also of cultural prestige in the parliamentary arena and associated media, academic and NGO spheres, *effective* political parties tend to massively distort movement action.

Much like military strategies, they tend to wind up meaning that popular struggles put most, if not all, of their eggs in the state-centric basket, with the risks not only of generalising the cost of defeat in this arena but of the familiar ambiguous victory in which supposedly progressive parties wind up implementing neoliberal politics with the backing of movement forces who have invested too heavily in the party game to admit their mistake. "Good sense", perhaps, would suggest a greater detachment from the fascination of the state and its Meaning – but of the many extraordinary experiments in Latin America over the past decade, few have managed to escape this logic entirely[2].

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[2] Conversely, the evident need of many left intellectuals to have a Good Party to point to in Latin America is extraordinary, and has led to the reproduction of many mistakes for which there is no excuse. Its broader rhetorical context is the jump from an abstract question as to whether A Party or engagement with The State is necessary, to commitment to a particular body which is supposed to fill this role – independent of any serious assessment as to whether the broader movement situation makes this remotely realistic or whether the organisation in question is capable of living up to its billing. A bit more attention to popular movements, and a bit less neediness in the search for the Modern Prince (Charming), would be a valuable step towards the hard-headed realism about power which such intellectuals regularly claim for themselves. The absence of such projection in *Beyond the fragments* is part of its political maturity.

One reason for this fascination, perhaps, has been the way in which neoliberalism has narrowed our imagination for what is possible and leads us to seek Meaning in a space which will not get us laughed at. Rowbotham again:

> In the 1960s and '70s, inspired by movements against imperialism, people of colour, women and gays imagined a politics of 'liberation' which went beyond rights, or access to resources. 'Liberation' suggested a transformation not simply of the circumstances of daily life but of being and relating. Instead of an individualism of selfishness and greed, there was to be self-definition and expression, instead of competition, association, trust and co-operation. This is the future I still envisage and want to help bring about. But I have to take a deeper breath before admitting to it. (p.25)

This sense of historical change and the contrast between what could then be taken for granted and what has, now, to be painfully rebuilt is powerful in Lynne Segal's new essay:

> When I turn back to that paradoxical moment, 1979... I know I am returning to another world. It is strange to revisit those times, when we were able to take so much for granted about commitments to direct democracy, equality and the need to develop and share the skills and imagination of everyone... The bottom line was the prefigurative politics that expressed our belief in mutual aid and the sharing of talent and resources (p. 93)

Segal's contribution is deeply reflective, situating her libertarian left commitments in the late 1960s counter culture and their enrichment through the challenges she faced as a single mother in 1970s London, noting both the gains made by feminism in the decades which followed and the cost of growing class divisions to women and ethnic minorities in particular. Making the links between 1979 and Occupy, she is at once supportive, enthused and aware of complexities and difficulties to come:

> Drawing especially upon the impact of feminism, the problem as we saw it back then was how to facilitate more dialogue and co-operation between the different organized left groups and diverse activist movements to build coalitions solid enough to confront the triumph of the right under Margaret Thatcher. In so many ways we seem back in that moment again, except that the obstacles we face have grown formidably. (p. 66)

Returning *beyond the fragments*

If ever a movement embodied William Morris's comments about the ambiguity of popular struggle, it was surely second-wave feminism:

> "I pondered all these things, and how [people] fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other [people] have to fight for what they meant under another name..."

What liberal feminist, in 1960, could have predicted that so many legal barriers to gender equality could fall, that so many educational changes could be brought about, and that economic inequality would remain so marked, while patriarchal forms of popular culture would experience such a revival? What radical feminist in the same period could have imagined the bulk of their movement turned into service provision in state-supported work on rape and domestic violence, with so many battles won around contraception, divorce and (albeit still contested) abortion – and that rape culture could be so aggressive and so public at the same time, while women's control over their own bodies in childbirth would remain such a marginal issue? What Marxist feminist could have conceived that women's role in paid labour could undergo such a transformation and yet the cultural power of marriage and family remain so strong?

In all these cases, the genre which seeks to identify first causes, locate strategic issues and propose theoretical analyses dates quickly, and for a simple reason: it relies on the exclusion of the richer complexities of present-day struggle, and substitutes individual analysis for collective practice. Similar gestures had long been dominant in statist left politics, and the original essays challenge these from many directions, rejecting not only social democratic technocracy and the de facto conservatism of British Communism but equally the self-proclaimed wisdom of Trotskyist leaderships – above all, the *practice* of domination by small male elites, the silencing of dissent, the instrumental approach to movements and the dismissal of popular experience. Then as now, the book's openness, conversational tone and refusal of the seamless analysis inviting either submission or departure are very welcome:

> every form of subordination suppresses vital understandings which can only be fully achieved and communicated through the liberation of the oppressed group itself. No 'vanguard' organization can truly anticipate these understandings...
>
> If a revolutionary movement is to be truly able to encourage, develop and guide the self-activity and the organized power of the oppressed then it must be able to learn from and contribute to these understandings... To a very large extent socialist politics should derive and at times, has derived, its main content from these understandings. (Wainwright in 1979; p. 113)

Unlike many classics from its time which remain on reading lists, the original *Beyond the fragments* does not focus on structural analysis, hypothesised genealogies of patriarchy or polemics directed at other feminists. Instead it presents us with the question of how we can learn from each other's struggles: how feminists, community activists, radical trade unionists and others had

learned to organise; how this contrasted with the logics of social democracy and Leninism; and how a conversation between these experiences of popular self-organisation might look.

This practical emphasis, of course, takes it away from the format preferred by the university, today far and away the single largest institutions socialising people into explicitly feminist identities; however, it takes it into the heart of actual organising. Segal's 1979 essay closes, appropriately, with a statement of problems for movement practice:

> First, the relationship between feminism and personal politics, and left groups and the general political situation. Secondly, the relation between local organizing and national organizing, and how this relates to the conflict between libertarians and feminists and the traditional left in the current situation. Thirdly, how we move on to a perspective for building socialism which can incorporate both feminist politics and the new ideas and ways of organizing which have emerged over the last ten years. (p. 279)

That some of these might now seem like dead issues at first glance of course reflects the extent to which we have become institutionalised or – to put it more harshly – succumbed to the neo-liberal logic of fragmentation in which we find quick, dismissive answers to the big questions and invest ever more heavily in our own special areas of interest and our own "niche markets".

The original essays in *Beyond the fragments*, written at the end of a decade of women's, gay / lesbian, migrant and working-class struggles and campaigns over issues such as nuclear power and the Vietnam war, show the extent to which these different movements were then intertwined, learning from one another, exploring similar issues and registering similar ambiguities and contradictions – an experience which found shape in formations such as socialist feminism, eco-socialism, black feminism, and other attempts to rethink and reformulate the hard-won knowledge of popular struggles in ways that brought together something at least of a shared analysis of causation and structure as well as some parallel directions in struggle, organisation and goals.

Those moments were broken apart, not only by neoliberalism but also by empire-building strategies on the part of organisational leaderships, movement intellectuals trying to create space in the academy and celebrity authors converting movement into commodity. We have spent much of the last fifteen years or so trying to piece the fragments together one more time: more cautiously perhaps, aware of the long history of mutual distrust and origin myths which sanctify our specific identities (including, it should be said, socialist ones) as against others.

As we have done so, we have found ourselves reclaiming, recycling and reusing much of that earlier movement knowledge in our own contexts, talking through forms of structural and historical analysis which do not privilege a single struggle, exploring alliance- and network-based strategies for change and

discussing forms of social organisation which would not rest on exploitation and oppression in any dimension, and trying to go further:

> You need changes now in how people can experience relationships in which we can both express our power and struggle against domination in all its forms. A socialist movement must help us find a way to meet person to person – an inward as well as an external equality. It must be a place where we can really learn from one another without deference or resentment…
>
> This means a conscious legitimation within the theory and practice of socialism of all those aspects of our experience which are so easily denied because they go against the grain of how we learn to feel and think in capitalism. All those feelings of love and creativity, imagination and wisdom which are negated, jostled and bruised within the relationships which dominate in capitalism are nonetheless there, our gifts to the new life. (Rowbotham in 1979; p. 232/9

This is there, too, in both sets of essays in this book: the authors share, in different ways, the experiences, choices, mistakes and learning which underlie and give rise to particular formulations, strategies and problems – and in so doing enable the reader, too, to position themselves as another such activist, struggling with the problems they encounter and trying at the same time to go beyond them.

In the wake of the "movement of movements", the alliance-building experiences of Latin America and the broad popular participation in anti-austerity movements in Europe, the new *Beyond the fragments* offers precious resources, calm voices grounded in experience and the long perspective of present-day activists reflecting on past struggles. It will be a valuable contribution to "the movement" – which will be feminist, and anti-capitalist, and many other things too, if it is to change the world.

About the review author

Laurence Cox has been involved in movement networking for two decades in several different organisational forms. He co-edits *Interface* and collaborated on vol. 3 no 2, "Feminism, women's movements and women in movement". He co-directs an MA programme bringing activists from different movements together, and has recently co-edited *Marxism and social movements* and *Understanding European movements*. He can be contacted at laurence.cox AT nuim.ie

Interface: *a journal for and about social movements* *Book reviews*
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Shigematsu, Setsu. 2012. *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (272 pp.)

Reviewed by **Julia Schuster**

Setsu Shigematsu's multi-sided background in Feminist and Gender Studies as well as in Asian/Japanese and Asian American Studies is duly reflected in her book *Scream from the Shadows*. In this work, Shigematsu offers a transdisciplinary analysis of *ūman ribu* (phonetical for "women lib"), a radical Japanese woman's liberation movement that emerged in the 1970s. Using a wide range of methods, she explores the movement's history, ideology and political situatedness. The result is an impressive account of a women's movement and its complexities.

The author draws on an astounding wealth of information. In preparation of this book, Shigematsu analysed a large body of literature published by members of *ūman ribu*, the New Left, the media (both mainstream and alternative) and academia. Over a period of ten years, she conducted intensive fieldwork that included interviews and discussions with more than twenty *ūman ribu* activists and intellectuals. She also participated in several events of the movement and maintained correspondence with core activists over an extended amount of time. Shigematsu's personal engagement with the material is one of the books' strengths but the author acknowledges that her analyses lack distance from the subject. Seemingly to counteract this alleged flaw, she adopts an unnecessarily dry language. However, this 'lack', in fact, enriches her book because it draws the reader in the midst of *ūman ribu's* internal and external conflicts.

Scream from the Shadows addresses a broad range of readers. For those already familiar with *ūman ribu*, the book provides information that other sources—such as the documentary *30 Years of Sisterhood* (Yamagami and Seyama 2004)—do not offer. Shigematsu's work is rich with anecdotes about, and reflections on the personalities of prominent *ūman ribu* members and their ideologies. Thus, it allows nuanced insights into the complex motivations of this movement and its members. For readers without prior knowledge about Japan's women's liberation, the book embeds its analyses in a historical account of Japan's political environment after World War II. It situates the development of *ūman ribu* within the context of the U.S. Occupation, uprising student protests of the 1960s and the influence of the United Red Army (URA). The author takes much care to explain these historical links and repeatedly clarifies their reflections in *ūman ribu*'s ideology. Occasionally, these explanations become repetitive for those who read the book cover to cover but they are helpful for more selective readers.

Using the *ūman ribu* movement as a case study, the book sets out to address broader questions regarding the ability of feminism to theorise the engagement of women in violence against other women, children and men. Shigematsu positions her research within academic debates about the relationship between

the empowerment of women and female violence. She identifies manifestations of this relationship, for example, among female heads of states and leaders in the military who become responsible for the planning and execution of violence. The book argues that feminist theories so far have failed to adequately explain women's contradicting roles as both victims and perpetrators of violence. In *Scream from the Shadows,* Shigematsu attempts to unpack this complex matter by exploring the ethics of violence proposed by *ūman ribu* that locate violence in the female body and the feminine subject. She asks which lessons contemporary feminist theory—across its broad spectrum from liberal to postcolonial—can learn from the experiences of this movement in order to fill gaps in conceptualizing and understanding violence by women.

The book is divided into three sections. Part one addresses genealogies and political origins of *ūman ribu*. Shigematsu explains in these first two chapters how a number of women, frustrated with patriarchal power structures of New Left student activism and disappointed by the acceptance of conservative family values in traditional women's organizations, formed initial activist groups in 1970. The second part of the book offers an explanation of *ūman ribu's* complex ideology and introduces the iconic member Tanaka Mitsu. The third part is devoted to an in-depth analysis of *ūman ribu'*s relation to violence. However, the core ideas found in this section are also woven through the narrative of the entire book. In an epilogue, Shigematsu elaborates on the 'lessons from the legacy' of this radical movement.

Shigematsu's work provides much insight to how *ūman ribu* was different to most other women's liberation movements at the time. It was not an identity-politics based movement that aimed to enhance the lives of all women. It despised many of the traditional approaches of other women's organizations that promoted the notion of being a 'good wife and wise mother'. It also had no interest in expanding as a movement or creating a centralized nationwide network. Individual groups of *ūman ribu* operated in a self-determined way and there was no official leader to unite the movement. However, Tanaka Mitsu caused much conflict within this setting. As the unofficial leader of a movement that rejected leadership, she was a torn personality. She enjoyed guiding other women but detested their dependence on her. At the same time, many activists admired Tanaka but strongly disliked her dominance.

Ūman ribu used the terminology of *onna* as a starting point for its social critique. *Onna* is a term for 'woman' that holds negatively sexualized connotations. Most *ūman ribu* activists identified with this term, interpreting its meaning to encompass both women's roles as victims of, and accomplices to domination. The liberation of sex, eros and *onna* were crucial for *ūman ribu*'s anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics. The women criticised the presence of the state in the lives of individuals and the effect of this presence on women's bodies and sexuality. For instance, *ūman ribu* strongly opposed any state regulation of abortion and other issues of reproductive health. Thus, unlike many other fractions of women's liberation, *ūman ribu* did not fight for abortion rights because such a law implied yet another interference of

authorities with women's bodies. Similarly, it was not a goal of the movement to achieve equality between women and men on an individual level. Instead, its fight against sex-discrimination was aimed at state authorities and ideologies that structured social relations and tied women's lives to children and homes.

As the central theme of the book, Shigematsu puts much emphasis on explaining *ūman ribu's* take on violence. The movement heavily opposed male-centred forms of student activism in the New Left, where violence was idealised to such an extent that male members of different groups fought and killed each other only to prove their political commitment. But *ūman ribu* women did not condemn all perpetrators of violence. For instance, they were supportive of women imprisoned for killing their own children and who consequently faced much social stigmatization. While *ūman ribu* did not promote the killing of children, it acknowledged the social pressures that led those women to do so. For *ūman ribu,* the killing of children by their own mothers reflected the embodied violation of motherhood and the potential of violence within mothers and *onna*.

After 1972, when the two leaders of the URA ordered to torture and/or execute 12 of its own members—including an eight months pregnant woman—many *ūman ribu* members voiced support for Nagata Hiroko, the female URA leader. While the media depicted Nagata as an inhuman evil witch, it described the male head of the URA, Mori Tsuneo, as a political leader whose plans went astray. *Ūman ribu* women interpreted this difference as a manifestation of sex-discrimination through the authorities. Moreover, they understood the URA tragedy as a result of the much despised masculinism within the New Left, which pushed Nagata to adopt such horrific violence in order to succeed in her leadership role as one woman among many men.

Shigematsu answers her initial questions regarding feminist explanations of violence by women with a discussion that situates *ūman ribu's* ideologies in a broader context. She highlights that increasing empowerment of women created female leadership on various levels. However, the book further argues that institutionalized sexism and gender discrimination remain to shape women's political agency. Accordingly, women in leadership roles—whether they are as radical as Tanaka Mitsu and Nagata Hiroko or whether they work within state authorities as Germany's Angela Merkel and South Korean's Park Geun-hye do—continue to be judged by male standards of leadership. These standards often include an assertive attitude towards the use of violence. At the same time, powerful women need to display a stereotypical feminine sensitivity unless they accept being portrayed as cold-hearted and 'unwomanly'. *Scream from the Shadows* relates the discussion of this dilemma to *ūman ribu* because of its support for violent women. These activists accepted violence as a reaction to injustice and as a female attribute that is inherent to *onna*. The movement viewed violence as a necessary evil for the assertion of female leadership and the reclamation of women's agency in a patriarchal world.

Almost casually, Shigematsu ties further discussions of intersectionality issues, individualism and feminist communities into her account of this movement.

Thus, she presents a book that is—for many reasons—highly relevant for understanding contemporary women's movements and serves as an inspiring reminder for feminists across the globe to learn from history.

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Chris Crass. 2013. *Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis and Movement Building Strategy.* PM Press. (295 pages)

Reviewed by **Lesley Wood**

In her piece, "Love as the Practice of Freedom", U.S.-based writer bell hooks (1994, 244) argues, "until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that undermine our individual quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle." In Chris Crass's new book, he works to show how our movements can understand and counter such internalized and systemic oppressive systems and can move toward these goals of freedom and collective liberation.

The book isn't a roadmap. Indeed, it is a set of stories and essays of attempts, disasters, and victories of twenty years of organizing in the U.S. within projects including Food not Bombs, the global justice movement, feminist collectives, anti-racist, and queer campaigns. It argues that to organize more effective, revolutionary movements, those of us who are most privileged by the system in terms of our race, class, gender, sexuality or ability need to listen better, to be more humble, and will need to prove ourselves worthy of the trust of organizers from more marginalized communities. But unlike some discussions of the ways that privilege and power operate in movements, Crass' book doesn't keep the argument at the level of ethics, but instead grounds it in a reading of history that says that the most transformative, sustainable movements are those that are grounded in the experience of marginalized communities. Crass argues that without keeping this analysis of power and praxis central to our work, organizers that are white, male, cis, straight and able-bodied will be likely to re-enact hierarchical and oppressive relationships, taking us further from the goal of building the relationships necessary for a more democratic, socialist society.

This book is divided into distinct sections, each with a number of pieces ordered roughly chronologically. It begins with a broad agenda -- building an anarchist left. The theme of the second section is anti-racist feminist practice, which includes widely read pieces like "Against Patriarchy: Tools for Men to Help Further Feminist Revolution." This is followed up with a section called; "Because good ideas are not enough: Lessons for vision-based, strategic, liberation organizing praxis,' with pieces on leadership and the U.S. civil rights movement. The fourth section is described as "collective wisdom" and it brings together lessons from five different and diverse anti-racist organizing projects through interviews and essays.

While a few of the pieces in the collection were previously distributed on the Colors of Resistance listserv and website, and through a collection of essays put out by *Kersplebedeb* distribution, bringing them together and framing them so cogently gives them additional power. It is Crass' book, but he is at pains to emphasize that both the book and the organizing behind it are part of an

ongoing collective effort to make more strategic, transformative movements. The first pages of the book are jam packed with a who's who of endorsements by some of today's most skilled organizers in the U.S., and the book itself contains many voices, including a forward by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, author of *Red Dirt Woman* and *The Great Sioux Nation: Oral History of the Sioux-United States Treaty of l868*; an introduction by Chris Dixon, author of a forthcoming book on anarchist organizers, and the interviews with five different anti-racist organizing projects.

Personally, this is a book I've waited a long time for. Crass is a white U.S. anarchist who became politically active in the 1990s via suburban punk rock. The book articulates the evolution of an anarchist politics that some of us came to in the 1990s and 2000s, out of a recognition that hierarchy couldn't be reduced to race, class, gender and sexuality. It is a politics that took into account the idea that the personal was political, and the feeling that large, ritualized protests were not creating a more just and fulfilling world. While such anarchist work is widespread in a wide range of contemporary organizing, including immigrant rights, Occupy, police brutality, and student movements -- it is more visible in workshops than in publications. Crass puts this 'small a' anarchist approach into historical context.

This is not just a book for anarchists, and indeed many anarchists won't see themselves within it. But it is a book for those interested in the challenges and gifts of grassroots organizing, whether they see themselves as communists, anarchists, revolutionary sovereigntists, feminists, queer activists -- or some combination of the above. Indeed, he's been certified by some of the most powerful grassroots organizers in the U.S. today.

This book is meant for those engaged in, wanting to be engaged in, or burned out from being engaged in, deep, transformative social justice work. It should be read and discussed by organizers interested in building multi-racial, anti-capitalist, feminist movements. It is written from the perspective of white organizers in a U.S. context, and will be particularly relatable for audiences sharing that space and identity. However, it offers accessible, strategic thinking about the intersection of different forms of inequality and the dynamics of alliance building that should offer insight to those in other contexts and positions.

Rich with stories that will make you laugh and groan, it is full of solid, earnest, loving advice that will push you to think more strategically and patiently about the work that social justice requires. Unlike some discussions of organizing, Crass doesn't suggest that this work will be easy. He recounts the stories of awkward meetings, angry confrontations and bad strategy. He clearly shows us why challenging power inequalities within our organizing can be far more emotionally draining than occupying a government office or marching on Washington. Nonetheless, Crass concludes with a hopeful essay entitled, "We can do this." He doesn't want our movements to get stuck, to get depressed and for our activists to eat each other, and the next generation of organizers, alive. He tackles the tendency for organizers, activists and radical academics to spend

much of our time critiquing our movements and our politics. Crass rightly points out that while critique is a crucial part of rethinking and rebuilding existing practices, the trap of right/wrong, solid/fucked up can trap us, steal our energy, and stop us from thinking creatively and strategically for the long haul. Instead he suggests that in order to be strategic, and to keep our momentum up, we need to combine critical reflexivity with a focus on the opportunities and assets we have, and work to build a just world. *Towards Collective Liberation* is the sort of book you want to hand to your comrades and friends, read passages from, and head into the streets. With a book like this, it feels like yes indeed, we can do this.

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About the review author

Lesley Wood is an organizer and scholar in Toronto, Canada.

Wood, Lesley. 2012. *Direct Action, Deliberation and Diffusion: Collective Action after the WTO protests in Seattle*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (paper; £55.00.)

Reviewed by **Neil Sutherland**

In *Direct Action, Deliberation and Diffusion: Collective Action after the WTO protests in Seattle,* Lesley Wood seeks to examine the micro-level interactions that influenced the diffusion of the cluster of tactics associated with the 1999 World Trade Organisation (WTO) protests in Seattle, drawing on ethnographic research spanning over several years (primarily between 1999-2002). To draw out these ideas, Wood conducts a comparative analysis, studying the strategies of six case organisations - three in New York City, three in Toronto - all of which had a history of disruptive protest and cited the Seattle demonstrations as having a "big influence on their activities" (p.3). In short, what was found was that while the New York organisations continued to experiment and utilise innovative tactics drawn from the Seattle Protests a year after the event, similar organisations in Toronto had largely abandoned them. This fundamental difference is traced back to the deliberative periods surrounding the potential adoption of Seattle tactics and strategies, and Wood sets out to inspect the factors that led to innovations being either implemented or discarded.

To situate this discussion, Wood begins by describing the background and history of the 1999 WTO protests based in Seattle, noting that activists involved in the demonstrations "push[ed] past the classic repertoire of marches and rallies and began to engage in Direct Action" (p.1). Some time is spent delineating the specific innovative direct action tactics that were utilised during the demonstrations, specifically: black blocs, the use of giant puppets, lockbox blockades, and jail solidarity techniques. Although none of these tactics and strategies can be considered as entirely 'new' in themselves, each was nevertheless "reinvigorated as a result of its association with activist successes in Seattle" (p.34), and taken together can be considered as a cluster of 'Seattle tactics.' Following this broad introduction, Wood then goes on to examine the deliberation and diffusion processes within each of the case organisations through eight short chapters. For the purpose of this review, the foci of these chapters can be split into two broad categories – (a) macro, external factors, and (b) micro, internal factors that influenced the relative quality of deliberation, and the success or failure of diffusion.

Concerning macro issues, Wood turns to the political, societal, cultural and economic factors in New York and Toronto, providing an overview of the environment in which the case organisations operated. Whilst a cursory glance would suggest that the situations were similar, in fact, there were fundamental differences in the relational context of both cities which were critical in influencing diffusion of Seattle tactics. For example, although the case organisations in Toronto had more experience in fighting neo-liberalism pre-Seattle, this meant that they had developed more entrenched and routinised

repertoires, and were less likely to consider and incorporate *new* tactics through deliberative periods. Furthermore, Toronto's political landscape was dominated by relatively few centralised and risk-adverse 'opinion leaders,' who deemed Seattle tactics as inappropriate for use – stifling the opportunity for collective deliberation amongst other organisations. In contrast, deliberation about alternative strategies was more free-flowing in New York, between fragmented but interconnected groups. These organisations were smaller, poorer and more willing to take tactical risks than their counterparts in Toronto, and were therefore increasingly receptive to innovations - often locally experimenting with Seattle tactics. Later chapters also examine the impact of police repression and the 9/11 attacks on deliberation opportunities, demonstrating how the organisations in each city reacted to such developments, leading to further experimentation with, or abandonment of, locally new innovations.

The remaining chapters are dedicated to investigating the micro level, internal factors that underpinned successful and failed diffusion. Wood explains this by citing several core discussions -- identification with Seattle protestors; summit hopping; property destruction –-to illustrate how specific interactions and conversations shaped the potential for deliberation about, and diffusion of, Seattle tactics. Several findings emerge from this. For example, it is suggested that in Toronto, activists and organisations did not generally identify with protestors in the 1999 WTO protests (who were predominantly white, middle-class students), whereas those in New York did. As noted: "unless potential adopters [...] identify with the users of that tactic, they are unlikely to experiment with that tactic" (p.122), and participants explained their rejection or acceptance through constructed stories about their own collective identity (articulating who 'we' are, as well as who 'they' are).

Furthermore, Wood notes that another reason for the Toronto-based organisations rejecting Seattle tactics was that conversations often became quickly polarised, thus limiting spaces for deliberation. When discussing summit hopping, for example, activists in Toronto distanced themselves from Seattle protestors (and by proxy, their tactics) on the grounds that they were privileging global concerns at the expense of local organising. On the contrary, "a bridge was built" (p.91) by the organisations in New York, who articulated the connectedness of global and local arguments, welcoming new strategies and even joining summit protests themselves. Through a number of short examples across the text, Wood deepens these arguments and demonstrates the fundamental differences between the Toronto and New York organisations, thus addressing the primary research question, that is, why New York activists continued to experiment with Seattle tactics when activists in Toronto had largely abandoned them. However, in the chapter centred on property destruction, Wood draws a parallel between the organisations in the two cities, as, in *both* cases, confrontational black bloc tactics were not incorporated. Because of anxieties around illegality, arrests and police repression, neither Toronto or New York based organisations were willing to deliberate about the use of these tactics, and "without such discussions, Seattle-style property destruction [didn't] become part of the local repertoire in either city" (p.112).

This is a crucial point that highlights the underlying message of the book, that is, without open, egalitarian, diverse and reflexive deliberation, diffusion is unlikely, or even “impossible” (p. 3).

One of the primary contributions of this text is undoubtedly Wood’s unique ‘insider’ status. Before the study began, Wood was actively involved in the organisations under study, having grown up in Toronto and lived in New York. Early on it is noted that this positioning might give way to a better sense of the internal dynamics of the organisations, as well as developing research that is centred around specific questions and concerns of movement activists themselves, making the results “more useful [...] and more interesting” (p.21). Indeed, this form of activist-centric ethnography offers deep insights into the theory behind the inner workings of social movement organisations which may otherwise be off-radar. Whilst there has been much written on diffusion theory, deliberation and direct action in the past, this work often fails to actually engage with activists directly. However, whilst Wood’s commitment and dedication to social movement organising is unquestionable, the overall writing style didn’t reflect this as effectively as possible. Much of the empirical data on offer throughout the book is in the form of short interview extracts, email correspondence, and official data (such as minutes and manifestos); little time is dedicated to offering thick and rich descriptions of Woods’ time with each organisation. As a result, the text feels somewhat more detached than other recent activist ethnographies (Juris, 2008; Maeckelbergh, 2009; Graeber, 2009; Lagalisse, 2010). This may have been an instrumental choice, as, given that the book is relatively short, it may have been difficult to include more in-depth examples and vignettes without losing the theoretical insights. However, where more textured narratives emerge, it considerably adds to the overall impact - giving a sense of what it was really like to be participating in, organising with and contributing to such movements at a specific point in time.

Stylistic issues aside, overall, *Direct Action, Deliberation, and Diffusion* offers a valuable and important analysis. A considerable amount has been written on the tactics of the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, from activists and academics alike, but Wood supplements this by taking a more critical approach and examining how these strategies have diffused through deliberation processes. Rather than accepting the notion that Seattle tactics are unquestioningly incorporated into post-1999 social movements’ repertoires, Woods’ musings on unsuccessful deliberation (and the consequent abandonment of innovations) may indeed provide movement activists with relevant insights into the importance of (often unevaluated) internal processes. Furthermore, whilst this book takes Seattle tactics as the primary focus, in fact, these kinds of arguments and analyses may prove fruitful in the future. As noted in the final conclusions, it will be interesting to see how similar processes and discussions around tactics/deliberation unfold in light of the Occupy movement, and this text may provide a valuable building block for subsequent analysis.

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About the review author

Neil Sutherland is a researcher from Bristol, currently based at the University of the West of England. In his research he seeks to reconceptualise leadership as a collective and relational socially constructed process, and as something that can exist in the absence of individual leaders. He is especially interested in exploring democratic organisational and decision-making practices, and the ways in which they facilitate distributed and non-hierarchical forms of organisation.

Mattoni, Alice. 2012. Media Practices and Protest Politics – How Precarious Workers Mobilise, Ashgate (214pp; 49.50 Sterling)

Reviewed by **Mark Bergfeld**

For more than forty years now, Italian social movements have inspired those seeking to change the world. From the *sciopero bianco* (work-to-rule strike) in the Northern car factories to the social centres amidst urban ecosystems, Italian workers and youths have always developed new repertoires of contention. Home to the formerly largest communist party in Western Europe, the PCI, Italy also brought forth groups such as *Lotta Continua,* the *Tute Bianche* and *Ya Basta!*. While the former was synonymous with the *operaismo* movement in the 1970s, the latter two remain emblematic of a new anti-capitalism in the 21st century. To the dismay of many, it appears that the comedian-turned-politician Beppe Grillo and his Five Star Movement overshadow the legacies of Antonio Gramsci and Toni Negri today.

Alice Mattoni's book *Media Practices and Protest Politics - How Precarious Workers Mobilise* shines a different light on the Italian anomaly. Her study of precarious workers and their media practices is an invaluable resource for academics and social movement participants alike. It facilitates a deeper understanding of how activists embed themselves in a varied media environment. She argues that activists use different media and technological objects in the course of the same campaign. "The result [is] that media texts carried their contents from one site of the media environment to another" (p. 18). This unique theoretical approach promotes a re-assessment and re-thinking of protest politics, contemporary activism, and new communication technologies. In light of the recent tendency to over-emphasise activists' use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Castells 2012, Mason 2011, Gerbaudo 2012), this study is a breath of fresh air in a techno-utopian desert.

Mattoni's starting point is the notion of 'precarity' in Italy. Throughout the 1990s working conditions deteriorated in Italy. In effect, neoliberalism undermined workers' labour rights and excluded them from certain functions of the welfare state. While those (re-)entering the labour market bore the brunt, it also renegotiated the position of those workers in fixed and long-term contracts. Mattoni describes how the issue of precarity reached a tipping point when a government minister labelled precarious workers "the worst of Italy" in front of rolling television cameras. The main trade union confederation, the CGIL, only exacerbated this narrative by regarding precarious workers as a threat.

Mattoni tells a wonderfully crafted story of how precarious workers constituted themselves as a political actor within the mainstream and institutional politics. They manipulated and subverted the renown Milan Fashion Show, called Euro Mayday parades against precarity, throughout Italy, linked up with university students and faculty in the occupation of La Sapienza University, and coordinated a strike of call centre workers. In doing so, they rendered themselves visible "as political subjects instead of mere victims, [...] producing

an alternative system of meanings about the labour realm independently of trade union confederations" (p. 156). This further required the transformation of activism and protest culture.

Mattoni describes this process by broadening Charles Tilly's concept of "repertoire of contention" to "repertoire of communication." This involves an interplay between "direct actions [...] oriented towards the symbolic and expressive side of protest" (p. 50) and actívists' "perspective on the media as tools in front of different audiences" (p. 156). As innovative as this may seem it delineates and confines the role of activists to communicators in a techno-political space. Unfortunately, it does not endow them with the strategic and tactical capacity to change the balance of forces in society. Furthermore, one cannot reduce a social movements' achievements to whether or not they have attained a stable position in the symbolic realm. This downplays political facts and successes which do exist. Her sharp focus on changes at the level of signification and representation blurs real political manifestations.

At its peak, namely, there were 22 Euro Mayday parades in different cities across Europe. Today we still find precarious workers' organisations from the *Precarious Workers Brigade* in London to the *Precários Inflexíveis* in Lisbon. While there is no longer any mass movement of precarious workers, it has become common currency to campaign around the issue of precarity. Just recently Gregor Gysi of the German Left Party, *die Linke*, incessantly addressed the issue of precarity during a televised election debate. In large parts, this can be attributed to the groups and mobilisations analysed in this book.

All in all, her study bears important lessons about the technological mediation of activism today. Mattoni points out how precarious workers and activists are both media consumers and producers. They read daily and left-wing newspapers, watch television, and co-produce media by writing leaflets, blogging, or making videos. Inasmuch as activists do not only want to be consumers of media, they do not only want to consume a pre-digested or pre-mediated form of activism. Activists have three roles in relation to the media: they are news producers, news audience, and news sources (p.66). This renders the citizen journalist or media activist obsolete. Mattoni writes, "the expression 'media-activism' had lost its original meaning in media-saturated societies, due to the diffusion of portable digital devices" (p. 100). Being an activist means deeply embedding oneself in a given media environment -- *and an attempt to change it*. In other words, activism vis-a-vis *media knowledge practices* and *relational media practices* is a *a-teleological* process of shaping and being shaped by technological objects and the media environment at large (p. 20).

Her argument is convincing. Yet, existing capitalist social relations imply the hegemony and hierarchy of certain mainstream news outlets or a particular medium over others inside the media environment. Especially in Italy where Silvio Berlusconi owns much of the television media this cannot be denied. Consequently, other media is created in its image. Thus, social movement groups adapt to both mainstream and left-wing media as well as "the characteristics of the media environment as a whole" (p. 114 - 117). While that is

not necessarily counter-productive to a movement's goals, it does raise the question of slowly-creeping adaptation and compromise that many movements have fallen prey to in the past.

What does Mattoni though mean by *adaption*? Precarious workers use contentious performances such as theatre and parades to mediate a greater visibility in the mainstream press. The mainstream's requirement of a ready 'media story' is accommodated. This raises the question whether protest groups reproduce existing capitalist social relations or perhaps even render some forms of protest acceptable while others are unacceptable.

Mattoni's focus on *relational media practices* as "manipulation, recombination and appropriation" (p. 20) can assist one in answering these questions. Serpica Naro, the fake Japanese fashion designer, invented by a group of precarious workers in the fashion and textile industry serves as an example of such practice. Precarious workers successfully organised an official catwalk event at the Milan Fashion Show under her name. At the same time, they held demonstrations outside the Fashion Show accusing Serpica Naro of employing precarious labour. The troika of manipulation, recombination and appropriation would not be complete if precarious workers had not used the show itself to raise the issue of precarity in the fashion industry. This "repertoire of communication" was far more successful than if they had limited themselves to traditional demonstrations outside of the show.

Through such stories, interviews, and examples, Mattoni is able to reveal how activists employ a self-reflexive strategy in which they adapt themselves to their audience. They consciously choose different mediums, technologies and tools of communication to achieve the greatest possible degree of visibility. Hereby, she draws on Dieter Rucht's Quadruple - a model which outlines different relational media strategies: *abstention, attack, adaptation, alternatives* (Rucht, 2004). These four types of media strategies show that activists do not only adapt to their media environment but learn how to contest and delineate themselves by attack. In addition, they create media institutions which serve as counter-hegemonic alternatives. Mattoni's emphases on 'visibility' and 'audience' run into similar problems as her focus on representation and signification. To think about different audiences means one also needs to think about which audiences or elements are 'active' and which are 'passive.' Activism and organising are not an act of substitution but a means to activate more people in the process of contention. While from a media practice approach the notion of an audience suffices, an emancipatory and radical democratic politics which these precarious workers ascribe to requires a re-thinking of how an audience becomes active participants.

Mattoni's book has many strengths. Her ability to disclose the meaning behind activists' media strategies is her greatest by far. Instead of developing theorems and categorisations *of* social movement practice she lets activists' lay theories frame both the discussion on the issue of precarity as well as their media strategy. In doing that, precarious workers become active political subjects capable of subverting and refusing dominant narratives on precarity. Instead of

establishing an ideological framework *a priori* her method allows her to see beyond the latest technological or ideological trend and produce knowledge that can stand the test of time. This will allow others to apply her tools to and within the varied social movements to come. We can look forward in anticipation to her next work. It is certain that Mattoni will challenge us to re-assess and re-think social movements, political communication and contemporary activism.

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About the review author

Mark Bergfeld is a socialist activist and writer. He was a leading participant in the UK student movement in 2010. He has written for the New Statesman, Jacobin and a number of other magazines. His work is regularly translated into German, Norwegian and Spanish. He is currently a research student at Queen Mary's University of London. His writings can be found at mdbergfeld.com. He tweets at @mdbergfeld. Mdbergfeld AT gmail.com

Gerbaudo, Paulo. 2012. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: PlutoPress. (194 pp)

Reviewed by **Maite Tapia**

What has been the impact of social media on the recent popular movements in Egypt, Spain, and the US? In occupying Tahrir Square, Madrid's Puerta del Sol, and Zucotti Park in lower Manhattan, how did the "tweeps" (Twitter users) and Facebook users transform themselves from virtual coordinators into street-level occupiers, or how were they able to generate place-based mobilization and massive sit-ins? To what extent are those movements actually "leaderless" and "spontaneous"? These are the main questions Paolo Gerbaudo addresses in his compelling book *Tweets and the Streets*.

By providing an alternative explanation, or a more nuanced view, of how social media matters in these new social movements, Gerbaudo goes against the determinism of the so-called techno-optimists like Clay Shirky (2008) or Paul Mason (2012), as well as that of the so-called techno-pessimists like Evgenyi Morozov (2011) and Malcolm Gladwell (2010). Whereas the optimists celebrate the social media as new tools facilitating collective action, the pessimists denounce these new technologies for bringing complacency and providing the illusion of activity to replace actual participation in revolutionary action. Gerbaudo claims the importance of social media is in their role as "choreography of assembly," which he defines as "a process of symbolic construction of public space" (12). The choreographers are the influential Facebook admins and tweeps that set the stage for street-level mobilization or gathering of the masses.

Gerbaudo highlights two critical elements. The first is the marshaling of emotions, or the way tech-savvy key actors use "emotional conduits" to influence the participants, creating a common identity and thereby enhancing the likelihood of mass mobilization. The second is the "soft leadership" positions, created through the use of social media, assumed by the choreographers who, because of their influential position, are able to guide and mobilize others into collective action. These movements are thus neither leaderless nor spontaneous, as they have sometimes been portrayed; bureaucratic, centralized, or hierarchical structures are not excluded, contrary to Castells' notion of networks (2009) or Hardt and Negri's multitude claims (2005), but have actually been constructed through the use of these new media.

Based on ethnographic research, about 80 in-depth interviews with activists, his own observations of the protest camps, and an analysis of tweets and Facebook messages, Gerbaudo takes us through the initiation and maintenance of the Egyptian uprising, the Spanish *Indignados*, and the Occupy Wall Street movement, paying particular attention to the cultural use of social media as a means for collective action. His chapter on the Egyptian revolution focuses specifically on the *Shabab-al-Facebook* (Facebook youth) during the 18 days of uprising against the then president, Hosni Mubarak. When the Egyptian police

beat the blogger Khaled Said to death in June 2010, a popular anti-regime Khaled Said Facebook page was created by Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian living in Dubai. Through Facebook statuses, Ghonim engaged his readers in conversation, responding to user comments and triggering a "process of emotional identification" as many previously unpoliticized middle-class Egyptian youth would now identify with a common hero, Khaled Said, and against one common enemy, the Egyptian police. Social media were used extensively in anticipation of the big demonstration planned for the 25th of January, 2011. To actually transform virtual bloggers into street-level protesters, and to involve the Egyptian working-class, however, a massive amount of street and face-to-face work was needed. And thus, while social media and "choreographers" like Wael Ghonim were critical in evoking an emotional response, that alone was not sufficient to explain the sustained occupation of Tahrir Square.

The chapter on the mobilization of the Spanish *Indignados* illustrates the prominence of the internet-based group *Democracia Real Ya* or DRY in setting the stage for the mass demonstration on May 15, 2011, also known as 15-M. Created online by two previously unconnected recent graduates, Fabio Gandara and Pablo Gallego, DRY resulted in an online platform against the government's austerity measures. By avoiding extreme leftist politics or ideologies in its manifesto, the organization was able to find support from many more people than did other, often more extreme, political campaigns and organizations. Leading up to May 15, DRY admins would engage in online discussions with other users, evoking strong emotions in anticipation of the protest. In addition, however, much work had to be done offline, such as hanging posters, passing out leaflets, and connecting the different groups on the ground. Especially once people had gathered in Puerta del Sol, the main means of communication became face-to-face rather than virtual. Gandara and Gallego took a back seat, while groups like Okupa, a more radical squatters movement, took over. In this way, while social media were crucial in initiating the movement, street-level groups became critical in sustaining the encampment.

Gerbaudo's final case study is of the role of social media during the Occupy Wall Street movement. While social media weren't very successful in initiating the movement, their role became more prominent during the encampment phase. During the summer of 2011, the initial call to occupy Wall Street on September 17, 2011, was put forth by two key people working for the Canadian countercultural magazine *Adbusters*: the 69-year old Kalle Lasn, the founder and main editor based in Vancouver, and the 29-year old Micah White, a senior editor based in California. Lasn and White reached out to radical groups on the ground in New York City, which started to meet and to organize a first General Assembly as early as August 2nd. The launch of the movement, however, lacked broad public support compared to those in Egypt and Spain. According to Gerbaudo, the groups created a rather elitist communication model built around Twitter rather than Facebook, and failed to develop an engaging emotional conversation with a broader audience. Over the course of the encampment, however, Twitter became an important tool of coordination and communication

among the protesters. Furthermore, as opposed to the more countercultural messages from *Adbusters*, the slogan "We are the 99%" went viral, facilitating for many an emotional and popular self-identification. With this chapter, Gerbaudo has shown that social media in itself will not translate into mobilization; to enact any form of collective action, organizers are needed on the ground and emotional connections must be made.

Before concluding, Gerbaudo highlights the importance of the "soft leadership" that was present in all three cases, even though there have been strong denials by the participants of the existence of any leadership or even "organization." As a consequence, however, the illusion of spontaneity as well as horizontalism obscures any accountability or responsibility on the part of those leaders. For example, once Hosni Mubarak stepped down, Ghonim tweeted "Mission accomplished. Thanks to all the brave young Egyptians. #Jan25," and people left the square. As we now know, the military council that immediately took over wasn't very different from Mubarak's political regime.

Gerbaudo is an excellent writer, engaging the reader with fine-grained, convincing case studies as well as a strong theoretical component. His case studies clearly show how the role of social media can be regarded as "setting the scene" or providing an "emotional choreography" that is likely to trigger the mobilization of their many users. While social media were highly successful in the case of the Egyptian uprising and the Spanish *Indignados* movement, Gerbaudo also shows how they can fail, giving the reader a clear understanding of the conditions under which social media can or can't get people onto the streets. Throughout the text, Gerbaudo emphasizes how social media do not eliminate the need for street-level communication, but have to be complemented by face-to-face interactions.

Finally, I want to raise some questions. First, it wasn't always clear whether and how those contemporary movements diffused from one country to another and the role social media played in the processes of diffusion. Was there a need for an emotional narrative as well to encourage participation across countries? Could a shift of scale be possible, promoting an international movement, through the use of Facebook and Twitter? Second, in the Occupy Wall Street case, I would have liked further details on the links between the anti-globalization movement and this popular movement. Many activists in Zucotti park had a background with the anti-globalization movement. How was OWS able to become more diverse and, again, how did Twitter or Facebook enhance this process? Third, what happened to those movements after their protest camps were dismantled? Have social media been able to sustain the movement during the times of non-protest? Can social media function not only as a catalyzer for collective action, but also as a virtual "abeyance" structure (Taylor 1989)? Finally, a chapter comparing the role of "old" and new social media across movements - their similarities, differences, advantages, and disadvantages - would give the reader a more grounded, historical perspective.

Despite these minor remarks, this book is definitely a must-read for people interested in popular social movements, the role of social media, the debates on

organizational horizontalism, and forms of leadership. For academics and activists alike trying to understand how a "revolution" can emerge and the difficulties in sustaining it, this engagingly written book provides important contributions to the field of social movements and social media, challenges commonly accepted theories of well-known socio-political thinkers, and provides critical insights and learning tools which – who knows? – might come in handy for the next revolution.

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Reviewed by **Deborah Eade**

I began reading this book in the first half of June 2013 as three still-unfolding events, each linked to Internet-based activism and online activity, made global news. The first was the sit-in in Istanbul's Taksim Square by environmental activists, in protest against the nearby Gazim Park being razed to make way for a shopping mall. News of the protest attracted many hundreds of people with various grievances against the Ergodan government. The riot police used water cannons and tear gas to dispel the peaceful demonstration. Their brutality was captured on video. The 'woman in the red dress', who was sprayed at close range with pepper gas – aimed directly at her (unveiled) head – as she walked home from the university, became what Norman Stone (2013), professor of International Relations at Bilkent University in Ankara, called 'an immediate if reluctant icon'. Rather than cover the protests, mainstream Turkish TV broadcast a documentary about penguins, of all things – widely satirised via social media as a bizarre example of the government crackdown on citizens' right to information on national issues. Meanwhile, in the name of 'austerity', the government of neighbouring Greece closed down public broadcasting and the national orchestras. Thousands of journalists and musicians were fired with no prior warning. What a sad irony for a country that gave birth to the concept of 'democracy' – but also, let's not forget, of oligarchy and kleptocracy. At the time of writing, the laid-off journalists are occupying the buildings and live-streaming progammes, for no pay (Keep Talking Greece 2013).

The second was the wave of demonstrations in Brazil, initially portrayed as a vociferous but containable protest against a 10% increase in the cost of metro and bus fares. Some regional governments swiftly revoked the price hikes. But as millions of poor and middle-class Brazilians took to the streets in one city after another, the protests focused on the spiralling expense of hosting sports extravaganzas at the expense of investing in public services, and stamping out police brutality and endemic corruption. Impressive government anti-poverty efforts notwithstanding, economic growth has by-passed millions of Brazilians. But email was commonplace in Brazil years before it was widely used in Europe, so it is no surprise that the polling firm Datafolha found that 81% of respondents first heard about the protests via Facebook (Reuters 2013). The use of social media both heightened international attention to the issues – and, once again, showcased heavy-handed policing. A video explaining the multiple contradictions, 'No I am not going to the World Cup', was posted on YouTube on 17 June 2013, just before the demonstrations. Four days later it had attracted *2.5 million* views. (You can add to these at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZApBgNQgKPU/.)

The third was the first of many revelations by Edward Snowden about domestic as well as international espionage conducted by the US National Security Agency (NSA). Whether explicitly or tacitly, since 9/11 most Western governments have justified greater public surveillance as a price worth paying to thwart terrorism. 'Activists,' as Symon Hill points out, 'are used to the idea that the police and other government agencies may be reading their emails' (p. 122). Given that this surveillance has also included active infiltration by private companies as well as security forces, he comments that 'it would be naive not to recognize that hacking is also likely to be a common practice' (p. 124). Few non-activists had reason to imagine, however, that their every online activity was potentially captured in a vast NSA database with no special warrant needed to obtain it. AOL, Apple, Facebook, Google (which owns YouTube), Microsoft, Yahoo and company fell over themselves to deny that they provide users' data to the NSA. British politicians boasted that UK surveillance was squeaky clean, only for Snowden to show that its intelligence agencies set up fake Internet cafés and intercepted phone calls to spy on delegates at the G20 meetings the UK was hosting – and that they routinely shared data with the NSA. In the face of this, assurances that 'if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear' cannot allay public disquiet about, much less justify, comprehensive state-sponsored intrusion into the private lives of law-abiding citizens. It is one thing to lock down your Facebook settings and to assume that email is about as a private as PA system. But it is all too easy to imagine how someone might pick up a 'suspicious' profile because they used a credit card to buy olive oil from Palestine or, indeed, reviewed a book with 'revolutions' and 'activism' in the title.

Symon Hill has extensive activist experience on issues ranging from disability rights and economic justice to campaigns against the arms trade and militarism. This 'on the ground' engagement provides an invaluable backdrop against which to analyse the various roles that the Internet in general and social media in particular have played in contributing to social movements. Hill dispels several urban myths. First, facile allusions to 'Twitter revolutions' (p. 16) tend to overrate the importance of technology and to ignore deeper understandings of the reasons for mass political unrest. 'When Tunisian dictator Ben Ali fell from power, there was excited talk about a revolution brought about by the internet. Some found it a convenient explanation – much easier than analyzing economic causes or addressing the complicity of Western governments in oppressive regimes' (p. 17).

He also underlines that although social media can give an outlet to simmering public discontent, and a means by which people can organise and publicise their concerns, they are only one component of political activism. 'The internet has not been the cause of this wave of activism' (p. 136), and web-based campaigns such as the Avaaz and 38 Degrees networks can be successful only 'if used as part of wider struggles' (p. 117). While perhaps not every reader would be entirely comfortable with the Tunisian activist who claimed he 'protested on the streets with "a rock in one hand, a cellphone in the other"' (p. 61), Hill is right to point out that 'economics are overlooked surprisingly often when discussions

start about the Internet's role in activism. However much we discuss technology, let's not do so in a way that leads us to forget the slums in Egypt, the soup kitchens in Greece or the newly present food banks in Britain' (p. 26).

A third general point is that online campaigns need to exploit their symbiotic link with conventional media. Ironically, this becomes most important when the state media either ignore protests – in favour of penguins, let's say – or portray the demonstrators as delinquents and hooligans. The first video clips of the Tunisian uprising were seldom posted or 'liked' on Facebook for fear of reprisals, but were shown on Al Jazeera – which enabled Tunisians (and an international public) to view them. Other examples abound in the book, illustrating the importance of making strategic use of mainstream media while being aware that most are for-profit ventures – as the saying goes, 'if you sup with the devil use a long spoon'. Indeed, Hill draws attention to the 'paradox of cyberactivism', which 'usually involves reliance on major corporations', such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, that 'can end up facilitating discussion about campaigns aimed against them' (p. 125).

Hill draws on a broad range of examples of Internet activism, albeit with a slight bias towards UK-based reference points, such as Boycott Workfare, Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), UK Uncut, and 38 Degrees – although, to be fair, he also gives serious attention to the so-called 'Arab Spring', the Spanish *Indignados* and Russia's Pussy Riot. Equally, his point is that often an event starts in one place, and then snowballs, taking on unique characteristics in each context. For instance, Slutwalks began as a response to a police officer, who said, speaking on personal safety at Toronto's York University, that women should avoid victimisation by not 'dressing like sluts' (cited on p. 47). Over the following year, there were Slutwalks in more than 250 cities worldwide, in each case organised by local women (p. 48). In some cases, women asserted the right to wear 'provocative' clothing, while in others the focus was on everyone's right to dress as they so please – veiled and skimpily clad women sharing a common platform. Similarly, the Occupy movement began as Occupy Wall Street, in protest against the role of the banking and financial sector in bringing about the global economic crisis – although I was pleased that Hill alluded to the time-honoured Latin American tradition of organisations of landless and peasant farmers staging occupations to 'reclaim' idle land. So widespread had the Occupy movement become that items banned from the 2012 London Olympics site included '"demonstration articles or items",accompanied by a picture of a tent' (p. 84)!

The author does not pretend that web-based activism is all democratic sweetness and light, however. While activists may aim to practise non-hierarchical organisational forms, prior experience of doing so tends to be thin on the ground. Women and ethnic or sexual minorities, people with disabilities, or those who are not fluent in English, for example, often denounce discriminatory or patronising attitudes in activist groups that are broadly perceived as democratic. Another problem is that of sustainability, unless there is 'an economic element to resistance' (p. 141). The flipside is that movements

risk being ephemeral or institutionalised; Hill refers to 'the number of religious groups that began as exciting alternatives to the mainstream only to turn into cautious, respectable institutions' (p. 139). I would make the same point about Northern NGOs that in opting to channel government funds end up trading their cutting-edge potential for a knife too blunt to cut butter. More positively, broad-based activism means that people bring a range of educational and social experiences and opinions, leading to discussions on political ideology, organised religion, ethnicity, LGBTQ issues, or what strategy to adopt in the face of violent repression.

In a chapter that is particularly chilling in the context of the outsourcing of government surveillance to private companies, Symon Hill describes the practice of 'astroturfing' – 'fake versions of grassroots activism' that seek to give the impression of a groundswell of opinion on a given issue, often by 'establishing complex multiple identities online, with email, Twitter and Facebook accounts that all match up' (p. 128). Some activist groups have used the same tactic, setting up corporate websites that seem to be authentic, but are in fact intended to expose the company in some way. Gramsci would have recognised this struggle for hegemony.

Symon Hill is well aware that activism is by definition a moving target as groups wax and wane, campaigning methods evolve and those on opposing sides of the battle for ideas try to outwit each other. Technological advances tend to accelerate this evolution. Critics say that people can get the warm glow of being engaged with national or global issues without ever venturing outside. What counts is getting beyond 'cliktivism' (p. 116), which seems increasingly like a virtual form of 'rent-a-crowd' fuelled by perpetual outrage. As he says, 'We need to engage on several fronts at once, with different tactics in different contexts. The Internet is one battlezone among many' (p. 143).

My only real gripe about the book concerns the bibliography. Each chapter has its own references, many of which are to interviews, newspaper articles or websites. For no obvious reason, the bibliography includes only a tiny proportion of the print or online articles. Entries are organised alphabetically but ignore the convention of inverting the authors' family name and given name. It is not clear what this reader-unfriendly quirkiness was intended to achieve.

But this editorial quibble in no way distracts from Symon Hill's timely, informative and thoughtful account of a significant aspect of contemporary political activism.

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R. D. Smith. 2012. Higher hopes: A black man's guide to college. BFI Technology: Rochester. (292 pp; $9.41)

Reviewed by **Mandisi Majavu**

Henry Gates (1997) once wrote that "every black man…has had his own gauntlet to run. Each has been asked to assume the position." In responding to this challenge, black men have had to think seriously about the kind of masculinity they choose to embody as part of their humanity in this world. The possibilities to choose from range from Nelson Mandela to Malcolm X and to today's multi-million sports stars such as Michael Jordan.

Mainstream society generally embraces black men who turn to sports to express their masculinity. Traditionally, white societies dealt harshly with black men who sought to attain their competency and masculinity by seeking liberation from the chains of imperialism and white supremacy (hooks 2004). "This black man potential rebel, revolutionary, leader of the people could not be allowed to thrive" (hooks 2004). Mainstream societies still view this particular type of black masculinity as being the personification of the threat to white manhood, as well as white male authority and dominance (Wallace 1990). Hence, white males who oppose this type of black masculinity are cast as chivalrous and heroic.

Interestingly, mainstream writing about black masculinity, even by black authors, tells us that all black men need to do to be materially successful is to become better patriarchs (hooks 2004). Meaning, the best that black men can do is to achieve an 'honorary' membership within hegemonic white masculinity by accumulating great wealth (Collins 2004). Further, it is not enough to achieve great wealth or to amass educational credentials, to be accepted by white society black men have to appear to uphold white social values.

R.D. Smith's (2012) book, entitled *Higher Hopes: A black man's guide to college*, gives advice to young black men attending college on how to achieve an 'honorary' membership within hegemonic white masculinity. Smith (2012) identifies his book as a "college-prep book," specifically addressed to black men. Although activists will not find this book useful, what I find interesting about it is what it leaves unsaid. Smith's book is an apolitical treatise on how black men can make themselves useful to societal hierarchies. For instance, Smith advises university black students to choose a "marketable major." In his own words, he writes that "I don't want to ruffle feathers but the job market has often sent clear signals that in hard times it wants people with marketable skills" (Smith 2012: 23).

Smith (2012: 20) further cautions black men to participate in college activities that help them achieve academic success at best "or not detract from academic success at worst." This is not one of those books that explore black radical pedagogy. It certainly is not one of those books that activists searching for alternatives to patriarchal manhood will find useful.

The search for alternatives to patriarchal manhood however is an issue that many black activists are still grappling with. Historically, although movements like the Black Consciousness and the Black Panthers forged a revolutionary black masculinity, the kind of masculinity these movements created was still very much rooted in the values of mainstream patriarchal masculinity. The image of these movements, for instance, revolved around toughness and courage.

In her book, *Black Macho*, Michele Wallace (1990) writes that black male chauvinism contributed to the shortsightedness and failure of the Black Power Movement in the U.S. Similarly, a reading of the South African Black Consciousness Movement literature "reveals an explicit largely uninterrogated masculinist bias" (Gqola 2004). Mamphela Ramphele, a former Black Consciousness activist, confirms this observation. According to Ramphele, the Black Consciousness movement was patriarchal (Gqola 2004).

The anarchist tradition does not have much insight to offer on how to develop a liberatory masculinity either. Writing about Spanish anarchists, Kaplan (1971) writes that the traditional relationship between men and women was carried over into revolutionary Spain. "In the unions and collectives dominated by the CNT, women continued to perform the same work -- homemaking, baking, and washing -- that they had performed before the revolution" (Kaplan 1971).

Ackelsberg (1985) agrees with Kaplan's analysis. She points out that the subordination of women "was at best a peripheral concern" within the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement's agenda. According to Ackelsberg (1985), most anarchists simply refused to recognise the specificity of women's subordination, "and few men were willing to give up the power over women they had enjoyed for so long." She explains that although many anarchist men might have been committed, in principle, to a sexually egalitarian movement, "for too many of them commitments ended at the door of the home or at the entrance to the union hall" (Ackelsberg 1985). Similarly, although the Yippies overcame a number of oppressive mainstream habits, women within the movement were still largely supposed to serve men (Albert, 1974). "For now there had to be colorful clothes and liberated smiles and free sex along with an adoring deference for the still male god. Women were allowed only in a lower echelon of participation as 'our women'" (Albert 1974). According to Albert (1974), sexism in Yippiedom was one of its chief weaknesses.

It is worth noting however that a revolutionary black masculinity not only has to overcome mainstream patriarchal values, but also the "weight of a psychohistory that represents black males as castrated, ineffectual, irresponsible, and not real men" (hooks 2004). That is one of the challenges facing black activists today.

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