

# The Kelvingrove Review

Issue 17

(Re)creation

July 2018



*The Kelvingrove Review 17:*

(Re)Creation

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## **Artist's Statement**

A Chinese-Scottish visual artist based in London, Ben Yau interrogates the aesthetics of global conflict, historical narratives, and social tensions. Trained in lens-based media, he now works with found visual artefacts, such as images from British Ministry of Defence research papers, market data from the Financial Times archive, and YouTube videos of political leaders speaking at UN general assemblies. These artefacts are appropriated and re-contextualised to address systemic frictions within notions of power. He has exhibited in group and duo shows in London and Glasgow, and in 2017 cofounded the art collective against climate change, Decade Zero, with fellow artist Zanita Zukanova.

The covers for this year's publication, on the theme of (Re)creation, makes use of largely bygone symbols of good and evil: an angel for one cover and a demon for the other. One is a Western rendering, and the other an Eastern one. They are displayed through cryptic coding to suggest a modern reinterpretation of these antiquated iconographies and elementary ideas.

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## Introduction

The seventeenth issue of *The Kelvingrove Review* decided to break the mould. Following our theme of (Re)Creation, we proposed reviews of work that, by nature of their inclusion in this issue, interrogate and, we hope, redefine traditional academic review journal conventions. As an Arts and Humanities journal, we wanted our reviews to reflect the vast fields of research and work in our area of study. This issue includes reviews of television programmes, films, fiction novels, and scholarly texts. Ranging from political upheaval, to alien invasion, to human memory, this collection of reviews presents you with ideas and questions that we hope encourage your own paths of re(creation).

Our issue begins with the illuminating insights of *Somebody I Used to Know*, a memoir that details Wendy Mitchell's own experiences with dementia. Through recounting her own memories, Mitchell returns agency to those living with dementia by redefining what it means to live with the disease. In *Women and Power*, Mary Beard traces the history of women's oppression through literal and institutional silencing in public and in governing spaces. In exposing these still-existing structures, Beard encourages readers to 'challenge and reform' their societies. *Queer Eye* follows five gay men as they makeover male participants in the United States. The show is a reboot from the original series that premiered in 2003 and similarly follows the structure of changing a transformee's life by teaching him about outward presentation and self-care. *The Amateur* uses case studies and various theories to propose shifting away from professionalisation and institutional elitism in favour of a more egalitarian and democratic dispersion of knowledge and power. In *Norse Mythology*, Neil Gaiman's bard-like presence guides readers through an anthology of stories reimagining the Norse pantheon.

*Annihilation* throws viewers into a shimmering alien ecosystem that forces its characters and viewers to reconsider our understandings of 'nature' and our relationship with it. *Arthur and Sherlock* details Arthur Conan Doyle's life and the influences leading to the creation of his seminal Sherlock Holmes detective series. *Skam* and its German adaptation *Druck* are teen-oriented lifestyle dramas that revolutionised local and global broadcast campaigns through innovative production methods and a core value of authenticity. *Stay with Me* offers a complex narrative meditating on the fictional relationships between a man and a woman and their families, their society, and the constantly evolving Nigerian political climate. *Utopia for Realists* presents readers with theories of economic transformation and transferrals of power. Finally, *No is Not Enough* succinctly explains recent global trends to help readers understand how our current political climate was created. Through her informative analysis, Naomi Klein provides readers with the tools to recognise and prevent further unrest and take action against global injustices.

We are so grateful for our reviewers who have lent their time, patience, and thoughtful insights to the *Review*. We would also like to thank Ben Yau for his striking artwork that is gracing our cover as well as the cover of this year's issue of our sister publication *eSharp*. We are incredibly appreciative of the publishers who have

contributed an outstanding array of titles under review in this year's issue. The editorial board also offers its sincere gratitude to Professor Alan Riach for his support and the *eSharp* team for their tireless collaborative efforts. I would personally like to thank Ellie, Will, Jenna, Laura, and Mary-Kate for their hard work and dedication.

Hanna Greenblott

Lead Editor, *The Kelvingrove Review* (17<sup>th</sup> Edition)



## *Somebody I Used to Know*

by Wendy Mitchell with Anna Wharton

London: Bloomsbury, 2018

(ISBN: 9781408893364), 320 pp.

**Joseph Wood (University of Glasgow)**

You could be forgiven for thinking from the first italicised page of Wendy Mitchell’s memoir *Somebody I Used to Know* that she is addressing a dead partner or relative. Mitchell describes a momentary feeling of total blankness,

A

*big*

*dark*

*black*

*hole*

and the passage ends ‘*And the worse thing was, just when I needed you most, you were gone*’ (p.1). Yet as these second-person flashbacks continue through the book it becomes clear that, rather than anybody else, the you she is writing to is her past self, somebody who was defined by her achievements and active lifestyle, somebody she used to know but who is now very distant from her.

Despite this irrevocable rift between old and dementia selves, Mitchell’s book, written in collaboration with ghostwriter Anna Wharton, has already become a bestseller and my copy is from the fifth print run since its publication at the beginning of February 2018. Its appeal is clear: Mitchell writes to us from the other side of dementia, documenting how the disease subtly undermines her agency while demonstrating her own open-minded and frequently optimistic outlook on a disease which is so often just shorthand for dreaded old age and senility. Mitchell has young onset Alzheimer’s and her book sets out to prove that ‘dementia has a beginning and a middle, as well as an end’ (p.140). Alongside flashbacks to her past self, it documents her illness from its beginning as unexplained falls while jogging through to her dealings with clinicians uninterested in her after diagnosis, and her struggle to continue working. The second half sees her subsequent reinvention after early retirement as a successful blogger and an ambassador for better research and public understanding of the disease.

The book shares several tropes and set-pieces we might expect from a dementia narrative – the secret trail of Post-It reminders, the lost words during a public speech, the breaking of the diagnosis to horrified children, the reluctant self-extraction from a high-powered job, the regaining of control over the disease through a public advocacy role – and juxtaposes Mitchell’s advancing dementia, which we might understand as one of a loss of

autonomy, with the hard-won autonomy of a resourceful woman who brought up two daughters on her own and progressed from working as a cleaner to become a roster 'guru' leading a non-clinical team within the NHS (p.81). Like those before it, Mitchell's narrative contributes to several ongoing discussions about how society deals with dementia, such as the way doctors relate to newly diagnosed patients, the difficulties of retaining independence, and the problems around assisted dying and advanced directives for people whose capacity to make decisions is eroded so gradually.

However, it has something which that other dementia bestseller, Lisa Genova's *Still Alice*, does not. While Genova's fictional world gives an uneasy sense that (God forbid!) even rich white academics get dementia, and so can be read as a narrative in which the disease is almost recompense for a privileged lifestyle of mimosas on Harvard Square, *Somebody I Used to Know* makes the disease seem like something that can affect anyone irrespective of background, and, more importantly, something that can be accommodated in many respects through better awareness of its affects. Partly this is due to Mitchell's less privileged background, and because her book has what Anne Hunsaker Hawkins has called the 'experiential authority' of non-fiction illness autobiography which rivals the medical authority of medical professionals (like Genova, who is a neuroscientist) with the first-hand expertise of a patient (Hawkins 1999). Yet it is mostly down to Mitchell's practical way of dealing with her disease and her repeated ability to persevere, and indeed to innovate, when times are tough.

Although never prescriptive, Mitchell details her own experience of difficulties presented by dementia alongside descriptions of how she has continued to live an independent and fulfilling life with the disease. Moreover, although there are moments of lyricism – Mitchell understands her dementia as a temporary fog or snowstorm that whites out her thinking and at one point it is figured as 'a thief in the night, stealing precious pictures from our life as we sleep' (p.71) – the book's prose is more often straightforward and to the point, rich instead in idiosyncratic details given in the first person by someone who, Mitchell is clear, is 'living with' rather than 'suffering' from a disease (p.173).

She extolls the adaptive benefits of modern technology and social media for someone whose memory or speech often let them down and stresses how minute forward planning allows her to travel to attend dementia conferences and workshops independently. Some of Mitchell's observations are particularly valuable since the experiences may be unfamiliar to general readers, such as heightened sensitivity to noise and bright colours, inability to deal with rapidly changing environments or to understand that cupboards and doors might have anything behind them. She also finds solace in experiences which are broadly thought to be negative: on believing she can see her parents again she writes that it is not unethical to go along with such a 'fantasy' because it is more important that you are 'valuing the person's experience' (p.193). She thus makes the important observation that, while the disease disrupts our memory, we are still able to find value and pleasure in experiences that take place in the moment. As she tells Julianne Moore, star of the film version of *Still Alice*, 'I live for the moment [...] I just enjoy each day as it comes' (p.149).

While the book is valuable for presenting Mitchell's point of view, I would have liked to read a passage indicating the role Wharton played in producing the book. As a professional ghostwriter, she is given a small by-line on the inside title page but not on the front cover. She is also credited in Mitchell's acknowledgment as someone 'without whom this seed of an idea would never have grown' (p.299). On her website, Wharton offers a range of packages for would-be writers starting with basic marketing and promotion advice to the elite 'Bestseller Package' where she produces and publishes an entire book based on interviews with the 'author'. However, her previous successes appear to have been ones she sought out herself and are all first-hand accounts by women who have overcome situations of adversity, such as deafblindness, female genital mutilation or domestic violence. Elsewhere in interviews and a TedEx talk, she sets herself up as someone with the skillset to empower women by providing them with the possibility of broadcasting their voice to a wider audience.

Presumably Wharton's role has been downplayed because much of the achievement of the text lies squarely with Mitchell and her existing blog; yet a section, however brief, on how and why Wharton approached Mitchell would be of interest. Moreover, if both authors were to address the mechanics of writing a memoir as, or with, someone whose memory is impaired and explain how far the clarity of the text relies on the filter of Wharton's narrative expertise, it would make the process – which the authors agree elsewhere was collaborative – appear as less of a sleight-of-hand than it currently does, and provide a valuable insight for readers working on illness narratives or autobiography.

For purposes of scientific communication, I would also like Mitchell and Wharton to have distinguished more clearly between the dementias that Mitchell lives with – Alzheimer's and vascular dementias, which are associated with memory loss and slowness of cognition and movement – and frontotemporal dementia which is associated with more pronounced behavioural and personality changes and, as such, might be more difficult to map onto the positive sense of a continued identity that Mitchell advocates.

In all, this is a valuable and engaging contribution to mainstream literature on dementia and associated illnesses because it succeeds where Wharton has succeeded before, in demonstrating how it is possible to find a positive way of dealing with a difficult situation and getting a marginal voice heard by a general audience. Without being evangelical, it shows Mitchell repeatedly debunking the silent assumption that people with dementia are unable to make choices about their own life and gives an insight into how important small adaptations in understanding and technology can be for those who, as Mitchell emphasises, are still *living* with the disease.

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## ***Women & Power: A Manifesto***

by Mary Beard

London: Profile Books Ltd, 2017

(ISBN: 978-1-78816-060-5), 115 pp.

**Pip Osmond-Williams (University of Glasgow)**

A classicist well-known for her outspoken commitment to feminism, Mary Beard is well placed to examine the power structures of Western society and explore how they have served throughout history as an effective practice for silencing women, tracing their roots to antiquity. The historical narrative of female exclusion from the ‘public sphere of speech-making, debate and comment’ (p.8) is challenging and complex, but *Women & Power: A Manifesto* is a succinct and accessible text which seeks to interrogate both our notions of power and our preconceptions of women in power. Originally presented as two lectures commissioned by the *London Review of Books* for the British Museum, *Women & Power* is arranged in two halves, opening with ‘The Public Voice of Women’ and followed by ‘Women in Power’, with the two sections in frequent conversation with one another. The former confronts the mechanisms deeply embedded in Western culture which have been used to silence women throughout history, with Beard tracing these roots to Ancient Greece and Rome and questioning how much, or how little, they have changed in modern day society. ‘Women in Power’, written after the 2016 Presidential Election and Brexit referendum, examines the representations of women in significant civic roles and questions the cultural templates which work to disempower women in contemporary society.

Beard’s particular focus on antiquity exemplifies how innate the process of silencing women is to Western civilisation, and she opens ‘The Public Voice of Women’ with ‘the first recorded example of a man telling a woman to “shut up”; telling her that her voice was not to be heard in public’ (p.3). From here she traces the exclusion of women from public speech throughout ancient history to the present day, questioning the ‘tremendous resistance to female encroachment onto traditional male discursive theory’ (p.31). Beard argues that forcing women into silence has been an accepted occurrence in the Western cultural sphere for millennia, succinctly demonstrated in her summation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in which ‘Io is turned by the God Jupiter into a cow, so she cannot talk but only moo; while the chatty nymph is punished so that her voice is never her own, merely an instrument for repeating the words of others’ (pp.10-11). It is, Beard asserts, the civilisations from which these examples are borne that have instructed our own templates of speech, informing our society as to whose speech is worthy of being heard.

Beard asserts in ‘The Public Voice of Women’ that ‘public speech was a - if not *the* - defining attribute of maleness’ (p.17) in the classical world, and here she offers a historical perspective on an issue particularly prevalent to the modern day. The declaration of Dio Chrysostom from the second-century AD that an entire

community of female voices would seem ‘terrible and harder to bear than any plague’ (p.19) should feel outdated to the modern reader, and yet as Beard repeatedly confirms, it is a mindset that still lingers: ‘It is still the case that when listeners hear a female voice, they do not hear a voice that connotes authority; or rather they have not learned how to hear authority in it’ (p.30). There have been frequent studies in recent years that support Beard’s assertion (Anderson and Klofstad, 2012; Karpf, 2006; Tigue et al., 2012). Modern society’s preconceptions regarding the utterances of men and women find uncomfortable resonance with the treatises of the ancient world. This is where *Women & Power* delivers most impressively; by continuously highlighting the parallels that exist between our society and the ancient world, Beard demonstrates just how unprogressive the twenty-first century remains in regard to how women are perceived. In spite of this, Beard remains measured and pragmatic in tone. While she understands that there is no singular ‘practical remedy’ (p.38) for the structures of power that have been embedded in our society since antiquity, her overriding message is one that seeks to challenge and reform.

The design of the text’s front cover connects neatly with the second half of the text, ‘Women in Power’, the most illuminating section of which documents the contemporary resonance of Medusa’s mythology. Inspired by a Roman floor mosaic which, in its original source, encircles the head of Medusa, the front cover of *Women & Power* is a striking black and silver design that surrounds not the Gorgon of Greek mythology but the author and title of the manifesto. By using this model, Mary Beard is aligned not only with the snake-haired female decapitated in mythology by Perseus and who remains ‘one of the most potent ancient symbols of male mastery over the destructive dangers that the very possibility of female power represented’ (p.71); so, too, is Beard affiliated with powerful women in public roles who have been rendered by the media in the image of Medusa and made subject to the normalisation of gendered violence: Angela Merkel, Theresa May and, most notably, Hillary Clinton. In her own public role, Beard reportedly receives ‘something we might euphemistically call an “inappropriately hostile response” [...] every time I speak on radio or television’ (p.35), the classicist having been sent both bomb and rape threats over the social media site Twitter. Her examples and own personal experience suggest that to be a woman in power, or indeed a woman with a vocal platform, is to become a target.

‘What would it take to resituate women on the inside of power?’ Beard asks near the end of the text (p.79), and it is here where she begins to put forward suggestions for transforming the structures that seek to exclude women, albeit briefly. Beard argues that, whilst the past century has brought revolutionary change with regard to the rights of women, the deep cultural structures legitimating women’s exclusion indicates that gradualism is an ineffective process to rely on if women are, at some point in the near future, to be acknowledged and accepted within society’s power structures. As Beard states, ‘You cannot easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure’ (p.86). She suggests that Western society’s perception of power is one which is narrow and exclusive and so, as a society, we must begin to rely on the power of followers rather than leaders, and seek to redefine ‘power’ as an attribute or verb rather than as a possession.

While *Women & Power* details comprehensively the reasons as to why women are not fully integrated within the power structures of Western society, the concluding exploration of how to redefine society’s concepts

of 'power' to include the female majority is brief and somewhat unsatisfactory, particularly as the text itself is self-defined as a manifesto which suggests a declaration of intent. The brevity of 'how' in comparison to 'why' does, however, appear to be deliberate. *Women & Power* is borne out of Beard's two commissioned lectures and this appears to dictate that which is included in the text. Beard writes in the 'Afterword' that, to remain authentic to the original lectures on which *Women & Power* is based, she had to forgo developing at length any ideas 'merely floated' within her work (p.94). This reasoning appears a little thin and the unresounding conclusion leaves the readers with the impression that the text is not yet finished, but this arguably mirrors the unfinished struggle still faced by women in the twenty-first century. In its incompleteness, the text seems to suggest that it is up to the reader, not just Beard, to propose solutions and participate.

The suggestions Beard does make are valuable starting points for consideration, although their brevity enhances Beard's closing argument that the picture is conclusively disheartening, that 'we have not got anywhere near subverting those foundational stories of power that serve to keep women out of it' (p.89). While this may seem dispiriting, *Women & Power* is charged with the same engaged and participating energy captured in recent movements around the world, such as the 'silence-breakers' of the #MeToo campaign. Beard is realistic in her expectations but suggests that, while fundamental change may not come within the next generation, with the raising of cultural consciousness there is the strong chance that progress can be made. In Beard's judgement, whilst classical antiquity may have structured power and the way that women are perceived today, it is up to us to recognise and react collectively against the classical frameworks that still shape and inform our society.

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## *Queer Eye*

Created by David Collins

Netflix, 2017

**Hope Fulton (University of Glasgow)**

On the seventh of February, 2018, Netflix released an eight-episode season of the reality television show *Queer Eye* worldwide. The show follows the defining popular cultural mode of our decade: a reboot. However, this reboot promised re-imagination and progress and a difference from its original release in 2003.

The premise is simple: five gay men transform and 'brighten up' the world of a 'straight guy' who is dissatisfied with his life. Arguably, the heart of the show is not the transformation, but rather a pervasive and permanent discourse on sexuality which runs throughout the series.

Each of the hosting 'Fab Five' has his own role. The roles are primarily superficial, and arguably conform to the stereotype that gay men 'have greater insights to decorating, fashion, fitness, and grooming than do straight men' (Westerfelhaus and Lacroix, 2006). 'Grooming' is responsible for the control and manipulation of the body, often associated with the fabrication of femininity, such as haircutting or make-up application. 'Food and wine' works on the assumption that heterosexual men need to be schooled in how to create healthy or interesting food and drinks. 'Fashion' is responsible for the outward, sartorial transformation, again associated with the (re)creation of femininity and female desirability. 'Design' is the domain of the domestication of a stereotypically masculine, often disorganised space. Finally, the ambiguously-named 'Culture,' which has by far the smallest contribution, is the sole role associated with internal transformation, and often consists of snippets of conversation between the 'Fab Five' member and the transformee rather than a concrete education, such as with the other roles.

The group has a few days to complete an external and supposedly internal make-over, helping the 'straight guy' to achieve his goals, which often include the desire for a heterosexual relationship. In its original 2003 release, the show, often juxtaposing hyper-masculine subjects and the queer hosts, was on a clear mission to introduce queerness to the heteronormative worlds of both their transformees and their audience.

The rebooted *Queer Eye*, (despite the subversiveness or non-conformity the title suggests) follows all the rules laid down by its heteronormative predecessor. The show is for the most part insubstantial, barely reflecting on its participants' desire for transformation. There are darker moments, such as when Karamo, 'Culture,' who is a black man, discusses racial prejudice with the white, Trump-voting police officer they are making over, or when Bobby, 'Design', discusses how his childhood church's homophobia affected him with a devoutly Christian transformee. However, these are kept for what feels like pre-arranged 'sad' or 'serious' moments, which superficially demonstrate how the show is purporting to be something more than a formulaic 'before and after' programme.

The show contains many signifiers which alert the audience that they are watching something which will not be challenging, emotionally nor cerebrally. The music, as in most reality television, is for the most part upbeat; when it deviates from this it is for a reason (i.e. an emotional cue). The camera-work is a combination of well-established reality television techniques: direct-to-camera interviews, fly-on-the-wall observations of the 'Fab Five' at work, and highly-produced vignettes of them dancing, laughing or posing. The show does not focus on the process of redesigning the house, or the rationale behind choosing clothing, but rather on the antics, flirtations and emotions of the 'Fab Five'.

Despite the fact that *Queer Eye* may be unable to avoid the superficiality inextricable from the reality genre, it is intelligently assembled and provokes genuine emotion in audiences as it entertains. It is what reality television should be: light, enjoyable, non-threatening and addictive.

Like the supposedly internal-external dichotomy of the make-overs it produces, the show claims to have an interior meaning under its seemingly superficial façade. As Tan France, 'Fashion,' states in the reboot: 'The original show was fighting for tolerance, our fight is for acceptance.'

However, this is where the show, which excels at its goal to entertain, arguably fails. The reboot is open to exactly the same criticism it received in its original version; if we define queer as identities which lie outside heteronormative sexual desires and understandings of gender, *Queer Eye* is barely queer. While Netflix has allowed the queer community 'access to the media mainstream, they are welcome there only so long as they observe certain limits imposed upon them by the conventions of the mainstream's heterosexist sociosexual order' (Westerfelhaus and Lacroix, 2006).

Gayle Rubin's distinction between 'good' ("heterosexual, marital monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial") and 'bad' ("homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative [...] commercial' sex or sex involving someone 'other than male or female') is an outmoded and exaggerated binary, but her theory can be used to helpfully critique the show (Rubin 2010, p. 2390). *Queer Eye*'s hosts are essentially 'good gays,' and this is the reason the show is allowed to exist and thrive. They are affluent, conventionally good-looking, apparently homosexual (as opposed to bisexual, pansexual, demi-sexual etc.), ostensibly monogamous, procreative, and cisgender. They entertain but do not offend.

There is also a frequent re-iteration of their monogamous nature. Promiscuity has long been a criticism, and in some opinions a strength, of the queer community. However, 'the strategy to be used to obtain the goal of social integration [is] to make gay life resemble heterosexual society--or at least the heterosexual norm. Above all this mean[s] extolling 'monogamous' relationships at the expense of all others' (Anon, 1999, p. 165). In the very first episode Bobby, 'Design', discusses his long-term marriage, a direct contrast to heterosexual Tommy's three marriages. Karamo mentions his son to a transformee. It is obviously important to normalise the concept of gay marriage and parenting and most importantly to not assume, as outdated queer theory does, that members of the LGBTQ+ want to live 'queer' lives (as defined by queer academics of the late twentieth century). Yet this moment smacks of a desire to display conformity rather than queerness.



Fifteen years after its original release the show still ‘unquestioningly reaffirms the straight/gay dichotomy that is reflective of, and remains central to, mainstream culture’s heteronormative bias,’ and ignores those who do not define themselves in terms of gender binaries (Westerfelhaus and Lacroix 2006). Despite the show’s name change, which removes the ‘straight guy’ element to enable the inclusion of a gay, cisgender transformee, the formula remains for the most part ‘domesticated’ gay men working for the benefit of heterosexual, gender-conforming subjects. The ideology and discourse remain predominantly unchanged.

The episode in which the ‘Fab Five’ make over AJ, a gay man withholding his sexuality from his family, offers a brief look at queer transgressions from the heteronormative. As the ‘Five’ find AJ’s collection of leather belts and harnesses, they joke about AJ being ‘into some freaky shit,’ chanting ‘things are about to get gay, super gay, leather, leather gay.’ In the reveal of his sartorial make-over, AJ models his leather harness, an indication that he is embracing a ‘queer’ sexuality, which refers to BDSM sex as something still associated with but not inextricable from homosexuality. However, this is soon put away in favour of smart, understated clothing. The episode’s emotional centre is not his relationship with his boyfriend, but his coming out to his step-mother and the affirmation of his uncomplicatedly ‘gay’ identity.

The fact that *Queer Eye* is a Netflix show also helps to remove any subversiveness it may have had. According to a 2016 study, a large portion of Netflix subscribers are millennials or younger, who are perhaps more open-minded and well-versed in LGBTQ+ issues (eMarketer 2016). Additionally, Netflix is a platform on which the user must actively choose what to watch. Unlike the original show which could be chanced upon by a channel change, the audience receiving the messages of acceptance which the show preaches are an audience who are more than likely already accepting.

*Queer Eye* has been met with major success. Its fans express their love for it on social media and news outlets such as *The New Yorker* have published articles on it and its hosts. It is a fun, uplifting, joyful and, most importantly, entertaining show. However, whilst queer discourse has evolved and broadened immensely since 2003, the show has not. *Queer Eye* does not provide the representation the queer community of 2018 want and need; it is not fighting for acceptance, but rather fighting to make its audience happy.

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# ***The Amateur: The Pleasures of Doing What You Love***

by Andy Merrifield

London: Verso, 2017

(ISBN: 9781786631060) 219 pp.

**Eirini Katsikea (University of Glasgow)**

*The Amateur: The Pleasures of Doing What You Love* is an encomium of amateurism and a condemnation of professionalisation. As its title proclaims, it is an amateur's ode to doing what you love for the *love* of it, and a review of the antagonising forces of specialisation evident all around the world in government administration, policy making, educational institutions, science and research, and workplace and market relations. As a result of Andy Merrifield's amateur engagement with urban studies, literature and critical studies, the book feels significantly personal, tracing Merrifield's lifelong commitment to being an amateur, and fascination with intellectuals such as Charles Baudelaire, Edward Said, Franz Kafka, Karl Marx, among others. Inspired primarily by Fyodor Dostoyevsky's 'Underground Man', a social outsider par excellence to the professional, career-path conveyor belt looking in, from the "Notes from the Underground" (1864; 1972), Merrifield's ideal of the social role of the amateur is constituted by the challenging of the 'professional expert'. The amateur, as such, paraphrasing Dostoyevsky, is 'someone who does exist today, but also someone who ought to exist' (p.xi).

Informed by Edward Said's views on the role of the intellectual, Andy Merrifield understands amateurism as a holistic way of life, constituted of a 'sensitivity to de-professionalise reality' and a 'political allegiance to ordinary folk' (p.12). By this definition, amateurism is de facto personal, and what is personal is de facto political, in a Platonian sense. Inspired by the social theory of Marx and the social poetry of Baudelaire, Merrifield sees cities as spaces of social struggle, conflict and resolution, and as fundamentally belonging to their citizens. Cities ought to be planned for living, and planned as they are lived by those who live in them; civil responsibility in this sense is exemplary amateurism in practice, both personal and political.

The author's preference for urban studies is also a personal matter. Firstly, as an academic subject he has come to love as a student of sociology, philosophy and geography, and has elaborated on throughout his career as an author. Secondly, as his first-hand experience with the failures of expertise in government administration that came in the form of his grandparent's forced relocation as part of a 'mass slum clearance programme' in effect in the UK during the 1960s (p.1). Merrifield wants us to remember, that these minimally-informed relocation efforts left people displaced and in hardship. The author's academic training, and his personal experiences, are offered as equal grounds on which we ought to reconsider whether the reality of urban life can be translated as neatly into an algorithm as the expert urban statisticians seemed to think possible.

This book is further personalised as Merrifield offers us a deeply personal account of a life spent attempting to love what you do instead of simply doing it. Narrating his love of books and learning, his engagement with teaching, and the eventual disillusionment by the intellectual staleness and bureaucracy of academia, followed by the weakening of his passion for his vocation, he tells us his own version of the diachronic story of the disenchanted modern man. Citing passages from the works of the two most famously disillusioned bureaucrats of literature, Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1925; 2009) and *The Castle* (1926; 1957), and David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King* (2011), Merrifield highlights the personal agony of the individual crushed under the rules of bureaucracy, and the fracturing of individual identity under the fixed demands of performance and its outcome-based monitoring.

Shifting between matters of individual performativity to the social ramifications of our century's 'cult of expertise', the book is an admittedly undisciplined collection of case studies and sources, which, nonetheless, does not rob them of their value. Merrifield, informed by pedagogical studies, performance and theatre theory, through a Sartrian reading of social performativity, brilliantly attempts to support the notion that personal development, effort and satisfaction gained from a job well done or done in good collaborative spirit are not measurable. For instance, where effort is irrelevant to metrics of productivity, we would like to believe that in our individual and social realities, effort does count towards something. For Merrifield, the performance standards of labour we are held against as workers are arbitrarily prioritised over our human standards, over our need for the performativity of ourselves for its own sake. If 'the capitalists can do without workers, then maybe it's high time workers realise that we can do without capitalists [...]. We can invent work without them, we can perform in other ways for ourselves' (p.111).

As a born and raised Greek, I appreciated his inclusion of cases from the Greek side of the financial crisis of 2008. In the opening chapters, we are told of how a paper published shortly after the crisis by a pair of 'experts' was taken as gospel and had disastrous results. The publication, later discovered to have been based on incomplete data and methodologies, proposed public sector downsizing for nations with significant public debt, such as Greece, instead of the more rational measure of using state monies to support economies and people in need. In the name of austerity politics and by the hand of bad science the workforce of public services was hacked and the services themselves radically privatised, which only further weakened the Greek economy, despite what the experts prophesised. Merrifield, celebrating the various anti-establishment initiatives happening across Europe, such as the 're-municipalisation' of Paris' water supply, urges us to retake control of our local politics and cities, and to reclaim our democracy.

During the last chapters, Merrifield once again gets personal, writing about 'the genius of curiosity' via a panegyric of Baudelaire's 'Painter of Modern Life' (1863; 1995), but only repeats himself in concluding that expertise stunts imagination, inquisitive learning and curiosity, whereas the amateur has a free and critical mind, and the imagination of a child. Nevertheless, as Merrifield is immersed in the city of Baudelaire, we can't help but be taken along with him, and despite the book's slight yet frequent structural weaknesses, it is a delightful and vibrant read.

Had Merrifield not been partial to the character of Karl Marx as a social outcast, and had he not settled for a Marxist condemnation of bureaucracy in advance, he could have offered an explanation of rationality that runs deeper than the social effects of optimising capitalism. While briefly mentioning Max Weber's work on rationality, Merrifield reproduces the most common reading of Weber's conception of capitalism as the exemplary rational form of economic activity and an absolute panegyric to the technocracy of the Western civilization. However, Weber himself had discerned in the processes of bureaucratisation and consequentialist (outcome-based) reasoning potential dangers for the most cherished values of individual freedom, creativity and interpersonal engagement. Where Marx famously described the 'alienation' of Western man, Weber also warned brilliantly against 'disenchantment' with the world if rationality is taken too far. Whereas at times we can excuse Merrifield his amateurism and deem his account as trivially non-exhaustive or undisciplined, his selectiveness at other times seems puzzling and potentially detrimental, not only to his readers, but also to his own thinking.

As a concluding thought, had I personally not been academically interested in the sociology and philosophy of rationality, I would not have found any fault in Merrifield's book, but would deem this a wonderful and honest book on amateurism, by an amateur, who loves being one.

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## *Norse Mythology*

by Neil Gaiman

London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018.

(ISBN: 9781408891957). 283 pp.

**Hannah Everett (University of Glasgow)**

The subject matter of Gaiman's latest publication is fairly clear from the title. A much-distinguished author, Gaiman has delighted readers with his allusive and personal style, and in this collection of Norse stories, he deals directly with material which has inspired his other works, such as *American Gods* (2011). Gaiman's tribute to his favourite mythic sequence is, despite the cliché, truly a journey. Envisaging himself as a storyteller for the long dark winter nights and the unending summer evenings of the North, he takes the reader from the beginning of the world to the end, and then back again.

Divided into separate sections, the tales can be read both as an integrated whole and as stand-alone stories. A description of the main characters prefaces the stories, while a glossary of minor characters, places, and magical objects is found at the end of the book with details of the sources for each chapter. The placement of these reference sections outside of the tales allows readers to immerse themselves in the comedy and tragedy of the Norse gods without being distracted by the wider discussions about the cosmology of the Viking world. The notes and glossary provide encouragement and easy access to further information about the stories and their origins, as well as clear attribution to the source material. The difficulties in selecting material for the book is apparent. In some instances, Gaiman wants to introduce other stories from the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*, but refrains, merely mentioning certain aspects in passing, such as Odin's other name of 'Third' from Gylfaginning in the *Prose Edda* (Faulkes, 1995, p.8). These allusions, bereft of context, could confuse readers new to the world of Norse mythology (p.2).

Gaiman is also inconsistent in including translations of place-names and characters, some of which are literal descriptions of place or person, which would help to broaden the presentation of the Norse view of the world (p.20). Knowing that the giantess Skadi's name may come from the Old Norse noun *skaði* ('harm, damage') is not necessary to understanding her role in tying Loki's testicles to a goat's beard, yet it does widen the context of the tale (p.173). Nevertheless, Gaiman evidently has a grasp of the material and supporting academic thought, particularly in the frustration at the lack of stories that has survived about Norse goddesses. In the introduction, Gaiman highlights the idiosyncrasies and contradictions of the stories that constitute what we know of Norse mythology (p.xiv). He does not consider the effect of the Christian lens on the stories' content, structure, or characterisation, but he does make the reader aware of Christianity's part as a catalyst in the documentation of Norse mythology.

Gaiman has combined stories and poetry from two primary sources, the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*, to varying effect. Chapter 2, 'Before the Beginning, and After' successfully blends prose and poetry into a coherent and fantastic creation story. However, the attempt to incorporate 'Lokasenna', a poem detailing an exchange of insults between Loki and the rest of the Aesir when Loki gatecrashes their feast, in Chapter 15, 'The Last Days of Loki', is misplaced (p.232). Gaiman seems to misinterpret the entertaining irreverence and vulgarity of Loki as malicious and threatening, construing a malevolent personality to shoehorn into the chapter (Larrington, 2014, p.80). In the notes section, Gaiman describes the tension of incorporating 'Lokasenna' into the other material and limits the amount he uses the poem, yet he does not manage to resolve the discordancy (p.282). Nonetheless, it is a testament to his skill as a writer that he is able to assume the bardic mantle in the face of numerous preconceptions by scholar and non-scholar alike about the nature and form of Norse mythology. By using the characters, places, and plots of other stories, it would be very easy to fall into rehashing descriptions of the *Eddas* without interacting with the myths as a storyteller.

Perhaps the least successful element of Gaiman's adaptation is his eclectic use of archaic and contemporary language (p.32). To be confronted with an archaic sentence structure containing a casual modern expression is jarring; it is a reminder of the temporal and spatial distance between the story and the reader. The informality is primarily in Thor's speech and is used to highlight his 'straightforward' character, as Gaiman kindly describes it (p.3). Archaisms occur throughout the book, although they are most prominent in the creation stories in Chapters 1 and 2, a reflection of previous conceptions of mythic language. Despite the effect, the periodic tonal shift is disconcerting, as it brings the reader out of the immersive exploits of Odin, Thor, and Loki. Luckily, this is not a constant state of affairs.

Gaiman's *Norse Mythology* emulates the oral storytelling tradition from which the myths emerged. His innovative adaptation is that he has done it on paper. This book is not for people who want to study the myths, but for those who want to participate in narratives of lore that span centuries. Instead of claiming to write a definitive version of the Norse pantheon, Gaiman promotes an interactive approach to stories which from the point of conception were fluid and changeable. Gaiman places himself within the tradition of storytelling, but uses his own voice. As Gaiman encourages readers in the introduction, 'read the stories in this book, then make them your own'.

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## *Annihilation*

dir. by Alex Garland

Netflix, 2018

**Toby Neilson (University of Glasgow)**

*Annihilation* (Garland, 2018), adapted from Jeff VanderMeer's bestselling Southern Reach series (2014), cements Alex Garland's status as a director making science fiction that "thinks", or, perhaps, science fiction that *thinks* it thinks. Following the success of *Ex Machina* (Garland, 2015), Garland's latest film tackles similar themes to its predecessor. Both films espouse and are entangled in post-human thought, exploring the notion of life beyond humans. *Ex Machina* followed a fairly traditional post-humanist trajectory, investigating the ontology of the machine vs. the human allowing for the opening of a space to ask questions about the worth of organic human life compared to that of artificial intelligence. This is in many ways the bread and butter of philosophically engaged science fiction, with the same sort of exploration seen in classic science fiction films, such as *Metropolis* (Lang, 1915), *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii, 1995). Garland lent a contemporary sensibility and commercially viable narrative tension to *Ex Machina*'s man/machine contemplation, which allowed the film to appeal to science fiction and non-science fiction fans alike. Something very similar happens with *Annihilation*, but interestingly the post-human context is lent a more staunchly ecological weight. *Annihilation* is concerned with how humans interact with environments, creatures and life forms estranged from anthropogenic comprehension.

Set a year in the wake of cellular biologist Lena's (Natalie Portman) husband's presumed death on a military operation, one evening, still deep in the throes of grief, her supposedly dead partner Kane (Oscar Isaac) suddenly appears at her house. He acts very strangely and it becomes clear that he is dangerously sick. Lena attempts to rush him to hospital, at which point, to Lena's continued shock, the couple are ambushed by a SWAT team who abduct them and take them to a secret government facility called Area X. It is revealed to Lena that Kane was the sole survivor of a secret military operation to investigate a mysterious extraterrestrial anomaly that crashed into a lighthouse on the US coast 3 years prior. A strange shimmering light emanates and rapidly spreads from the epicenter of this cryptic incident. This luminescent alien zone is referred to as "The Shimmer". Lena joins a small, all female team of scientists, including a psychologist, a physicist and a geo-morphologist, to enter and investigate this strange and nebulous realm. It is Lena's hope that she will find a cure for her husband in the heart of The Shimmer, but all of these scientists get rather more than they bargained for on their journey through it.

The Shimmer is both alluring and terrifying. This strange kingdom is home to a series of hazardous, yet often beautiful, biological mutations. Early on into their trip the team encounter a huge crocodile, which attacks the physicist Josie (Tessa Thompson). After a short struggle, and having felled the beast, we learn that it has the teeth of a shark. These kinds of symbiotic biological morphologies abound in The Shimmer; flowers grow in the



shape of human skeletons, deer antlers are seen to blossom petals and bears scream with unsettlingly human voices. The Shimmer breaks down the traditional genetic boundary between life forms, wherein species specificity becomes indiscernible. Humans in *The Shimmer* are clearly just as susceptible to these morphologies; abandoned video footage from Kane's military operation reveals a soldier wracked in agony, cut open by his comrades to reveal his innards writhing as a network of Lovecraftian worms. Through these Frankensteinian transfigurations *Annihilation* aesthetically contextualises a realm of human/non-human entanglement, which neatly falls in line with philosopher Timothy Morton's writing on ecological symbiosis. In *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (2017), Morton argues that 'step one of including nonhumans in political, psychic and philosophical space must therefore consist in a thorough deconstruction of the concept of "nature"' (p.10). *Annihilation* attempts precisely this deconstruction of 'nature' through the realm of *The Shimmer*. It is described as a prism, which refracts everything that goes through it; be it radio signals, memory, a sense of direction or even genetic code. Those who walk in walk out changed, as its fragmented light creeps into and distorts the very fabric of being. In so doing, *The Shimmer* operates as a realm that hereditarily includes nonhumans in political, psychic and philosophical space since the human and the nonhuman are no longer distinct categories; a flower and a human, a bear and a human or even a worm and a human are no longer materially bifurcated in *The Shimmer*.

This leads one naturally to ruminate on Donna Haraway's writing in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (2016), within which she argues that living in an ecologically appropriate manner 'requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all.' (p.4). By this she means that we need to make collaborations and kinships with human and non-human life alike. In the 'mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times' (p.1) that we live in, variously theorized as the Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Cthulucene, Haraway proposes that we need to make inventive connections with the more-than-human world so that we can 'live and die well with each other in a thick present' (p.1). The scientists' traversal through *The Shimmer* gives narrative context to Haraway's ecological call to arms, or, perhaps more appropriately, her call to tentacles. These scientists can all be seen to dwell in a thick shimmering present where their very genetic foundations become mixed up and unexpectedly collaborative with the non-human life around them. However, this symbiosis is more often than not lent an abject and horrific form, unsettling the perhaps more appealing oddkin that Haraway envisages.

Oddkin are not solely made in the narrative's espousal of biological symbiosis, but the film itself can be seen as a refractive symbiotic prism in its homage, perhaps indebtedness, to classic science fiction cinema. The film feels at points more like a kaleidoscopic refraction of *Solaris* (Tarkovsky, 1972) and *Stalker* (Tarkovsky, 1979) by way of the *Ghostbusters* remake (Feig, 2016) than it does its own unique film. *Annihilation*'s narrative arc is an almost precise repeat of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, the hallucinogenic closing sequence openly recalls *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s (Kubrick, 1969) iconic "Jupiter & Beyond the Infinite" scene and *The Shimmer*'s biological monstrosities remind one of John Carpenter's hazardous mutations in *The Thing* (Carpenter, 1982). In doing so, *Annihilation* perhaps struggles to carve a sense of its own identity in the face of its mesmeric array of direct

and/or indirect science fiction film references and influences. The urgency, and indeed at times potency, of the ecological themes it evokes set up *Annihilation* as quite a serious film, of pertinence and use to the eco-ethical climate of the Anthropocene epoch. Yet its patchwork of references and paeans detract somewhat from this, as does its tendency to fall back on “creature feature” crocodile and bear attack sequences.

*Annihilation* seemingly vacillates between taking eco-ethics seriously, as per its espousal of thought aligned with that of Timothy Morton and Donna Haraway, and ignoring this somewhat for climactic narrative action. A confusingly juxtapositional tone is created in the process. This balancing act between the two produces a film that oscillates, sometimes precariously, between its own eco-philosophically engaged critique and its status as a commercially-driven genre film. Amidst this negotiation *Annihilation* finds a rough-hewn balance between science fiction that *thinks* and science fiction that *does*. In spite of the film’s somewhat ironic inability to make an entirely successful symbiote of the two, there is still plenty to admire and enjoy here, particularly in the closing act. While *Annihilation* might not shine with brilliance, it does most certainly at points shimmer with it.

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# ***Arthur and Sherlock: Conan Doyle and the Creation of Holmes***

by Michael Sims

New York City: Bloomsbury, 2017

(ISBN: 9781632860392) 256 pp.

**Charlotte Orr (University of Glasgow)**

In *Arthur and Sherlock: Conan Doyle and the Creation of Holmes*, Michael Sims investigates the inspirations and influences that contributed to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's creation of the beloved scientific detective Sherlock Holmes.

The book is split into three sections. The first section, 'Dr. Bell and Mr. Doyle', details Conan Doyle's early life, honing in particularly on his medical education at the University of Edinburgh. It is at this point that Sims begins to effortlessly weave together contextual information all integral in the creation of Holmes: a history of the professionalisation of medicine, of scientific research and of the history of the novel. Sims focuses on Dr. Joseph Bell, the formidable Lecturer in Surgery at the University of Edinburgh with whom Conan Doyle formed a close connection while studying. In fact, Bell hand-picked Conan Doyle as one of his dressers (a highly coveted position where the student would work closely with the surgeon to provide post-operative care for their patients, potentially help with surgeries, and, in emergency situations, perform surgeries). Sims delves into specifics of Bell's work ethic and his methods of teaching, to show how the surgeon's unique ability to simply look at a patient and deduce facts about their life, profession, and illness inspired the almost unbelievably accurate deductive abilities of Holmes. In the descriptions of Bell's surgical prowess and startling intelligence, Sims truly evokes the theatre of Victorian medicine.

Not only was Conan Doyle surrounded by doctors at the forefront of medical practice and research, but he could also boast a literary inheritance, with an uncle who was a famous cartoonist and *Punch* illustrator. Sims takes care to make reference to the distinguished relations such as these, who enabled the infant Conan Doyle to sit on the lap of William Makepiece Thackeray when the canonical writer of Victorian satirical fiction visited the Doyle family home in Edinburgh. Sims also introduces an aspect of Conan Doyle's life with which he was not always comfortable; a part of Conan Doyle's life that Sims suggests was a haunting presence for the entirety of his life: his alcoholic father. Sims introduces Charles Doyle in this first section, hinting at his promising early work as an artist, his descent into alcoholism, his stay at multiple lunatic asylums all around Scotland and his eventual tragic death at Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum. Despite the geographical distance between the father and son, Sims consistently brings Charles Doyle back into the narrative, highlighting Conan Doyle's psychological struggle with his own grief and shame surrounding his father's circumstances and suggesting this struggle as

another source of inspiration. While the first part of the text primarily deals with real influences for Conan Doyle, Part Two focuses on fictional sources of inspiration.

In Part Two of the text, 'Prophets and Police', the reader discovers the prominent literary influences for Conan Doyle's distinct detective, beginning with a history of crime fiction. Sims aligns Conan Doyle's Sherlock with Voltaire's Zadig, Dumas's D'artagnan, and Poe's Dupin. Sims dwells on the influence of Edgar Allan Poe, in particular Poe's creation, C. Auguste Dupin, in the short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841). Because Conan Doyle gives ample credit to Poe, and Sims declares him a Poe super-fan and diminutively suggests that the Sherlock Holmes stories were what we would now term fan-fiction. Sims does not merely explain that Conan Doyle saw himself as an imitator of Edgar Allan Poe, but explores the mysterious life and untimely death of Poe and the influences that led Poe to write *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* before outlining the entirety of the plot. The reader should prepare for an *incredibly* detailed account of Poe's short life and the story. Aside from Poe and Dupin, Sims suggests a kind of fictional ancestry including Zadig (created by Voltaire) and D'Artagnan (created by Alexandre Dumas). Sims relates these fictional proto-detectives in this part back to what he believes Conan Doyle imagined as real-life detectives: doctors and scientific researchers like his beloved Bell, as well as famous men of science such as Charles Darwin and his bulldog Thomas Henry Huxley.

Sims's text culminates in a third part entitled 'Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson'. In this part, Sims identifies how Conan Doyle makes Holmes (super)human: he imbues Holmes with potential faults such as an insatiable energy for work, astounding intelligence, a tendency towards addiction, and a hatred for the establishment. Sims suggests that Holmes has a human complexity not often witnessed in the character of heroic protagonists because of the unique mix of inspirations and influences in Conan Doyle's life. Of course Holmes's trusty sidekick, Dr. Watson, a character who effectively plays the part of the contemporaneous reader, also adds a sense of realism to the novels.

The changing image of Holmes is also explored: the image modern readers have of Holmes in a deerstalker and overcoat was not in fact imagined by Conan Doyle, but by an artist only after two Holmes stories had been written. Sims discusses the early drawings of Holmes for the periodical publications of the novels that culminated in the creation of Holmes as we now imagine him. Thus, the final part adds a further strand to the rich tapestry of contextual information that he provides for the backdrop of Conan Doyle's life: he writes in detail about the history of the periodical press, paying particular attention to the history of *Beetson's Christmas Annual*, the periodical in which *A Study in Scarlet* (the first serialised novel featuring Holmes) appeared. Furthermore, Sims discusses the beginnings of the notion of celebrity by exploring the interactions between Conan Doyle and his literary agent, Alexander Pollock Watt. On a couple of occasions, Sims also hints at Conan Doyle's growing interest in the supernatural or occult phenomena, but this is never fully explored because of the particular time period of Conan Doyle's life that Sims covers (perhaps there is scope for a sequel?).

What is most striking about Sims's book is the way in which he is able to bring to life fin-de-siècle Britain without overloading the reader with contextual information. Not only is the reader able to understand

Conan Doyle's primary sources of inspiration, but also how that inspiration evolved throughout the nineteenth century (medicine/the periodical press/the novel/ the development of crime fiction/the idea of celebrity etc.). This contextualisation is a remarkable feat; I cannot imagine how difficult it was for Sims to avoid falling into an endless research rabbit hole when exploring the history of nineteenth-century medicine. Since the only downfall to Sims's text is that it is not a biography of Conan Doyle's entire life, the reader can only hope for a sequel entitled *Arthur and Sherlock: Conan Doyle and the destruction of Holmes*. Indeed, the cover art hints at the years of Conan Doyle's life that Sims does not cover. On the cover stands a proud Conan Doyle in a smart suit and hat, leaning on a cane. However, Conan Doyle's shadow looks quite different. Lurking in the background is a Holmesian figure: slightly hunched, wearing a deerstalker, smoking a pipe and brandishing a magnifying glass. The cover suggests a Jekyll and Hyde relationship between Conan Doyle and his fictional scientific detective Sherlock Holmes, hinting at what has not yet been explored by Sims: Conan Doyle's growing dislike and eventual destruction of his creation.

***Skam***

Directed by Julie Andem

Oslo: NRK, 2016-2017

***Druck***

Directed by Pola Beck

Mainz: ZDF, 2018

**Maïke Niermeyer (University of Glasgow)**

What began as an effort to reach out to teenagers and bring them back to the Norwegian public service broadcaster NRK has since developed into a world-wide phenomenon. The web series *Skam*, written and directed by Julie Andem, covers a range of issues that are relevant to young people today, such as mental health, romance, sexuality, and religion. Despite its small production budget, minimal publicity, and region-specific content, the third season saw record viewer numbers of 900,000 in Norway alone and was widely pirated and watched around the world. This success allowed the series to compete with US series not just nationally, but internationally, with *Skam* now being recreated in several other European countries and the US. Due to differences in culture, law, and the values of broadcasters, each remake brings something different to the series' concept. My focus here is going to be on the German recreation *Druck*.

*Skam* is based on an idea formation method called NABC (Needs, Approach, Benefits, and Competition) developed at Stanford Research Institute. NRK conducted several months of research on young adults, gaining their trust, asking them questions, and listening to what they 'need' in order to develop the characters and plot of the series. They found that US television series, the public broadcaster's greatest competitor, subject Norwegian teenagers to immense pressure for perfection. *Skam* seeks to deconstruct these US-presented ideas of perfection by using social media as the basis of their 'approach', broadcasting the series horizontally, unscheduled, through social media channels, text messages, and short clips. By casting young, unknown actors and actresses and taking the experiences of teenagers seriously, the series benefits young people and shows them that their problems matter and that there are ways to solve them

*Skam*'s 'approach' combines the seriality of soap operas, the liveness of reality TV, the brevity of social media, and the gravity and impact of quality drama. Most adaptations have embraced social media even more than the original and use it frequently to tell the stories of the initially peripheral characters who become more important in later seasons, like Isak, Sana, and Chris. *Druck*'s Isak – here called Matteo – is very active on Instagram, for instance he posts a video of himself sneaking up on Hanna and Jonas in the middle of a romantic moment. This type of social media post foreshadows Matteo falling in love with Jonas. Fans of the series have the opportunity to directly comment on these narratives: they can reply to Matteo's Instagram post or join one of the many fan and discussion groups on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, or Instagram. The density of the material and the liberal spread of hints across not only the main characters' but also the side characters' social media channels highlight and strengthen the importance of *Skam*'s online presence. However, too much of this might

undermine *Skam*'s core message. The original put a lot of emphasis on pauses in broadcasting, slow and quiet clips without fast cuts and sparingly placed social media updates. Overwhelming the viewers with content might have the opposite effect of what is desired – viewers may lose focus on the protagonist's plotline and instead get lost in a complex network of online personas, which the original tried to avoid.

Producer and researcher Mari Magnus outlines *Skam*'s 'benefits' by claiming,

SKAM aims to help 16-year-old girls strengthen their self-esteem through dismantling taboos, making them aware of interpersonal mechanisms, and showing them the benefits of confronting their fears.

*Skam* takes normal, flawed characters and tells their stories in ways that inspire empathy and fit perfectly into the digital lives of their audience. The themes are universal and relatable because they are a result of actual conversations with teenagers.

*Druck* is similarly dedicated to portraying characters with integrity and authenticity (ZDF Presse, 2018). The creators imbue the series with German pop culture references (for instance naming an episode 'Liebe ist alles' after a German pop song or including references to current German politics) and adapt the script to fit German society. Drugs and alcohol are more commonplace than they are in Norway, so the plot around Jonas' weed consumption is resolved earlier and given less weight. The series does a good job of taking Berlin's rich music culture and diverse population into account. ZDF broadens the target audience to '14 to 20-year-olds' without a gender specification and includes many cultural references to German pop and hip-hop music. The series also casts black actors and actresses for Amira, Sam, and Samuel. Curiously, however, not a single main or side-character has a Turkish background, despite the large number of Turkish-German citizens that live in Berlin and Germany in general. This might be attributed to a previous rather unsuccessful attempt by the public broadcasters to portray Turkish-German teenagers; the 2006 series *Türkisch für Anfänger* (trans. 'Turkish for Beginners', Das Erste) had a promising premise but stumbled into comedy with few genuine or valuable moments for teenage viewers. NRK is aware that they are 'competing' for the attention of young adults with Netflix and high budget American productions, while they, a publicly funded channel that once broadcast a herd of reindeer migrating north in real-time, are perceived as old-fashioned and boring (linnéa s, 2017). However, *Skam* does not completely deviate from the typically Scandinavian 'slow TV'. The clips are short, simple, feature many slow-motion sequences, and there are often long breaks between updates. NRK succeeds in attracting young people without giving up their original style and values.

Similar to Norway, German television does not have much on offer for its teenaged audience. ZDF, whose average viewer age is 60 (Statista, 2018), does not usually supply content for young adults. By using social media platforms and websites to stream the series rather than depending on viewers to turn on ZDF at a certain time, they ensure that they are not in direct competition with any rival channels such as Pro 7 that cater to a

younger audience. The medium specificity requires smartphones and Instagram accounts to follow the narrative and makes the series almost inaccessible for adults by inhabiting a space populated by teenagers. Viewers find the profiles of the fictional characters amid their friends' profiles and interact with them in the same way. This engagement could be a way for young people to claim their own entertainment spaces. Teenagers already create and consume content on Instagram, but none of it receives any attention or praise from traditional entertainment structures. In fact, older generations tend to look at social media with scepticism and dismissal. *Skam* could be a way to introduce scripted quality drama to these spaces.

In adapting *Skam*, it seems that being faithful to the concept far outweighs being faithful to character or plot. In fact, the more research that is conducted the more the series *should* deviate from the original to serve the needs of its audience with honesty and authenticity. With *Skam's* tremendous international success, however, it is dubious whether national adaptations are even necessary. If teenagers around the world are able to follow and identify with a series in Norwegian, do they really need their own version in their own language? Or is the original strong enough to stand on its own and be consumed abroad just like mainstream US series? As the high budget US adaptation *Skam Austin* started airing in late April 2018 on Facebook, it is possible that the US will yet again fulfil the role of the world broadcaster, while the regional adaptations disappear in its shadow. This could have been avoided if the original version had been more easily accessible. Many dedicated fans have translated the series or even learned Norwegian to watch *Skam*, but the challenges of copyright laws and geo-blocking were simply too great to allow the series to really fulfil its potential. I think it is an interesting and important development that European countries have started taking advice from each other in trying to establish alternatives to US television, but teenagers nowadays are so globally connected and technologically savvy that they could have easily overcome cultural differences had the legal challenges and budget restrictions not kept many of them from trying. I hope that they will give regional versions and the original a chance before they default to the American adaptation.

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## *Stay With Me*

by Ayòbámi Adébáyò

Edinburgh: Canongate, 2017

(ISBN: 9781782119609). 298 pp.

**Maria Arvaniti (University of Glasgow)**

*Stay With Me* starts in medias res, with the novel's main character Yejide directly addressing Akin, the husband she left fifteen years before the opening chapter takes place. From the novel's first few pages the reader is thrown into the web of complicated dynamics that connect and divide Ayòbámi Adébáyò's characters: Yejide, Akin, their children, as well as Akin's family and second wife. The love, the loss, and the heartbreak that Yejide experiences is painted in sharp, clear strokes by Adébáyò's pen, laconic yet evocative, and always presented with a matter-of-fact bluntness that the reader will come to recognise as characteristic of Yejide. 'I must leave this city today and come to you' she says in the very first line of the novel, setting in motion both her return to Akin and the novel's plot itself. As Yejide makes her way back to Akin, Adébáyò proceeds to guide her readers through an elaborate flashback, detailing the life Yejide led in her husband's home, focusing on the problems of their marriage in late 1980s Nigeria and beyond.

In many ways the setting of this story is as strong a character as Akin and Yejide, especially for non-Nigerian readers of *Stay With Me*. During the timeline of Adébáyò's novel Nigeria is a country in flux, enduring coup after coup, as military dictatorships give way to an uncertain democracy, a chaos so extreme that groups of armed robbers are able to terrorise citizens and go unpunished. The milestones in Yejide and Akin's lives are marked by the concurrent political and social crisis; Akin asks Yejide to marry him after a protest over the death of a university student, admitting that he knew that the only reason she said yes was because it was the right moment, both of them inspired by the righteous anger of the protest and the desire to do what's right.

However, Adébáyò is not writing a political thriller, or a historical analysis of Nigeria at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is writing about two people and their marriage, allowing the reader an insight into a different side of the country, providing a more private and intimate look into the reality of life in Nigeria. Yejide and Akin's everyday lives, their struggles and beliefs are showcased by representing a patriarchal polygamy in the construction of their family after Akin is forced to take a second wife. Through the extreme pressure put unto women to bear children, Adébáyò allows us a glimpse into a culture that western civilisation rarely gets to experience with such familiarity and intimacy.

*Stay With Me* is a novel full of what Bahktin calls the carnivalesque; a subversive, disruptive force that introduces alternatives to the way society functions and highlights the 'polyphonic' nature of Adébáyò's work (Cuddon 2013, p. 105). As a story, *Stay With Me* is powerful enough even when one only takes into

account Yejide's chapters. The burden of being thought barren in a society that vilifies childlessness, the pain of losing not one but three children, as well as the betrayal of the person one relied upon the most are all powerful enough narrative threads to keep readers invested in her complicated character. *Stay With Me*, however, becomes more than just Yejide's story as it is enriched from the beginning with the addition of Akin's voice. The two narratives are presented in more or less equal terms, allowing for an in-depth understanding of both characters, who view the same, defining events of their lives through completely different lenses. Adébáyò skilfully avoids playing favourites and making moral judgements about her characters; despite the morally dubious choices Akin and Yejide occasionally make, the narrative allows them the space to make them. Where an external narrator might have judged or questioned, Adébáyò uses a first-person narrative for both Yejide's and Akin's chapters. She allows for the expression of what Cuddon calls 'varying, independent views which are not "controlled" by the author to represent the author's viewpoint', fully embracing the carnivalesque (ibid). As the reader, too, follows the thought process of the two characters from the start, even the most questionable decisions that Yejide and Akin make can seem like a natural and unavoidable conclusion to the events that preceded it.

Akin's reminiscence of his time with Yejide starts from their meeting in 1981, unlike Yejide's flashback, which does not start until 1985, when Akin's family forced him to take a second wife as a response to the couple's childlessness. It is, perhaps, one of the first clues the reader gets as to how different Akin's world is to Yejide's; she lies in the core of his existence and therefore his narrative world begins with her, whereas hers has been shaped by her inability to have children, and the trials his family put her through. Narratively, however, this gap is easily bridged as Yejide's chapters tend to deal with the everyday while Akin's are mainly polaroid shots into his mind, the way he thinks about the world, and insights into events Yejide has no knowledge of. Adébáyò's characters provide the solution to what could be a serious problem with the novel; the repetition of the same set of events. Instead of creating a repetitive and stale narrative however, the stark difference between Yejide and Akin's versions of the world and their reality allows the readers to engage in a constant re-examination of the story and the world that Adébáyò has invoked.

A clear example of this is the way *Stay With Me* deals with one particular event: the death of Funmi, Akin's second wife and Yejide's rival, recounted first in one of Yejide's chapters. She is found dead on the foot of the stairs just after Olamide, the couple's first child, has had her naming ceremony. When Yejide finds her she is distraught, and even worries people will suspect her for killing her husband's second wife. Akin's reactions are side-lined as Yejide is too overcome with her own concern for Funmi and her new-born daughter to pay too much attention to him. He seems unaffected by Funmi's death, but that does not cause Yejide any concern.

It is in the following chapter, presented from Akin's point of view that the readers learn the darker truth behind Funmi's death, as well as the part Akin played in it. Akin is never punished for Funmi's murder, and the truth of her death never seems to be revealed. Adébáyò's honest depictions of Akin and Yejide can sometimes be one of the novel's weak points. The continuously shifting dynamics of truth and pretence highlight the one truth

of Adébáyò's world: no matter how much of their lives two people have devoted to each other, love needs to be constantly renegotiated, and you can never truly know the people around you. It is less the impossibly powerful force for the betterment of humanity that Yejide thinks it to be and more of the fallible emotion that Akin takes it to be, something that can bend, crack, and even break.

Coming to the end of this review it becomes clear that writing about Adébáyò's debut novel is not an easy matter. From childlessness to child loss and the rise and fall of a marriage, the Nigerian author manages to evoke the entire spectrum of human emotions, from the brightest moments of joy to the worst kinds of heartbreak and betrayal. *Stay With Me* is a novel of rebirth and recreation, of the thin - and sometimes difficult to discern - line between barrenness and life, and the many parts we are all forced to play as members of society. *Stay With Me* was, indubitably, a critical success. As for whether the novel's powerful emotional impact was due to Adébáyò's strength as an author, or whether she was lucky in offering a fresh perspective at the right time, only the future of her career will tell.

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## ***Utopia for Realists: And How We Can Get There***

by Rutger Bregman

Translated by Elizabeth Manton

London: Bloomsbury, 2017

(ISBN: 978-1-4088-9026-4), pp. 316

**Simon James Holton (University of Glasgow)**

Utopia is an idea which has fascinated many for centuries, whether through dreaming up one's own personal and prescriptive dream of a perfect society, or by suggesting broader principles and ideas for the amelioration of our present, collective lot. Rutger Bregman, author of *Utopia for Realists*, certainly situates himself squarely in the latter camp. His book is less a unified vision of a better society than a series of meticulously researched, evidence-based suggestions for its improvement. Many of his ideas may seem too good to be true, but the man who sparked a basic income debate in his home country of the Netherlands argues through calm but relentless logic and innumerable studies that such things as giving free money to everyone, a 15-hour work week, and completely free movement of people would have not only offer a moral and social benefit, but an economic one too.

Suggestions such as these are hard to disagree with, but Bregman is certainly not afraid of the provocative and the polemic. He devotes the opening section of his book to explaining why everything in the past was worse and why we now live in the land of plenty, a claim he justifies predominantly with economic statistics. Less palatable later sections look at why disasters boost the economy, and why national borders are the single biggest cause of discrimination in world history, outweighing any other form of wage discrimination such as race or gender. Though one could be forgiven for going through the majority of the book believing he is a dyed-in-the-wool liberal preaching to the converted, Bregman heaps praise on the founders of neoliberalism Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and reserves his harshest criticisms for what he calls 'underdog socialists' who concern themselves too much with emotion, compassion, and being a purely critical opposition without offering a viable alternative (p. 261). He is at heart a populist; he does not have much time for the academic left and its propensity for jargon or tomes of 'aristocratic' ideas such as 'post-capitalism' or 'intersectionality', and moves onto the next idea rather than delving too deeply into any given subject (p. 258). His myth debunking, however, more often than not finds a worthy target, such as the myths of the deserving and undeserving poor and the so-called dangers of immigration.

The overall picture then, is a varied and multifaceted one. Bregman's readable style is that of high-quality journalism, full of anecdotes and deftly explained statistics which elucidate his theories. His accounts are infectious and I found myself passing them on to a friend before even finishing the book, fulfilling what seems like his desire for his ideas to propagate as widely as possible. This included accounts of the 5-day sanitation worker strike which brought the city of New York to its knees in 1968, and the 6 month banking employee strike

in Ireland in 1970 which didn't make an awful lot of difference, belying the importance and status we attribute to certain jobs over others. His style matches his intentions and audience perfectly; he wants this book to have as broad a readership as possible, because he believes that ideas such as these, given support and traction, can change the world. Fundamentally, his book might be reduced to two tenets, posed in stark contrast to the accepted wisdom of our times: there is an alternative to the political situation in which we find ourselves, and that alternative is simple, obvious, and to be found in properly conducted, rigorous, randomized controlled trials. It is easy to see why, in our increasingly polarised, post-truth world, such ideas are so attractive, and yet seemingly so impossible.

Naturally, it is not quite as simple as all that. As Bregman repeats, (and rather ironically attributes to Disraeli, by no means an established fact): 'There are three types of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics' (p. 122). The vast majority of this book is based on solid research but he is occasionally guilty of overstating the implications and findings of research he presents. Naturally, behind Bregman's seductively clear and simple account there is a process of selection and exclusion, and there is no such thing as a neutral fact. Though he consistently opposes himself to empty theorists, his book would have benefitted from a bit more theoretical weight to produce a sustained and consistent argument, rather than an admittedly readable compilation of short soundbites, facts, and anecdotes. In one section he criticises the overuse of GDP as a metric of progress, suggesting a 'dashboard' of many metrics including community service, knowledge and social cohesion (p. 122). We see the beginnings of a critique of what Wendy Brown has called 'neoliberalism's 'economization' of political life and of other heretofore noneconomic spheres and activities', but he never goes quite far enough in this regard (Brown: 2015, 17). His frame of reference never strays far from neoliberal economic dogma and there is not a single suggested societal change in his book which is not primarily justified by economic benefit.

This is, no doubt, simply the realist in him coming to the fore. However, as Bregman himself argues, what is considered reasonable or realistic is not written in stone, but is an inherently mutable, moveable concept. As he shows himself, immeasurable suffering is enacted globally over what is reasonable or realistic. Further, in his eagerness to talk about redistribution of wealth he so rarely speaks about a redistribution of power. His eagerness to play down inequality based on race and gender as statistically negligible make it rather difficult to ignore that his world of cold, hard, economic fact, along with the vast majority of his chapter epigraphs, are the preserve of old, white, predominantly straight European men. Such recourse to identity politics seem almost churlish in the face of such a positive, honest book that genuinely wants to change lives for the better. Yet, if Bregman truly wants to inspire everyone to change the world, that means inspiring everyone, not just those who look like and think like him, or those in power.

Bregman's book is a timely contribution to a fast-developing field, with journalists and academics taking political and economic theory and presenting it for a general readership. Its greatest strength lies in its accessibility and readability. Economists, political theorists and statisticians may not find much within to stretch them theoretically, but Bregman's lucidity and wide appeal provide a masterclass in real world research impact. For the

general reader this convincing and comprehensive book will provide a broad foundation of polemical economic thinking, but a deeper understanding of political and economic theory must be sought elsewhere.

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# ***No Is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics***

by Naomi Klein

Canada: Penguin Random House, June 2017

(ISBN: 978-0-241-32088-4), 273 pp.

**Jack Anderson (University of Glasgow)**

From the start of his campaign in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries, Donald Trump has become a symbol of the unrelenting speed of the news. The ‘post-internet’ media-scape has become saturated and indeed, defined by, daily transactions with Trump’s turbulent image. With Trump’s inauguration as the forty-fifth president of the United States at the beginning of 2017, it would seem that this disorientating new kind of politics is -- for the time being -- our new condition. In her new book, *No Is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics*, Naomi Klein tries to make sense of ‘how we got to this surreal political moment’ and argues that under the cover of shocks and crises, ‘it could get a lot worse’ (Klein 2017, p.11). Klein’s discourse not only maps the terrain of Trump’s neo-liberal ‘corporate coup’; it also outlines the blueprint for a constructive counterattack to defeat it (ibid, p.18). As the title tellingly declares, saying no to Trump’s shock politics is simply *not enough*: given the somewhat epochal nature of this historical moment, a passive refusal must give way to an inspiring resistance.

It comes as no surprise that Klein was able to publish this work just six months into the Trump presidency. *No Is Not Enough* is a culmination of the Canadian journalist’s trilogy of widely read oppositions to capitalist globalisation. Much like *No Is Not Enough*, the timely nature of her literary canon has given her thesis particular salience. In 2000, her debut *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, an exposé of brand-orientated consumerism and the operations of large corporation, synthesised the sentiments of the alter-globalisation social movement which had started in Seattle several months before. Her follow up *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* went to print in 2007, pre-empting the credit crunch. In *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein examines the disaster capitalist ‘tactic of systematically using the public’s disorientation following a collective shock – wars, coups, terrorist attacks, market crashes or natural disasters – to push through radical corporate measures’ (ibid, p.2). In her most recent outing, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (2014), Klein argues that in the current era of neoliberal market fundamentalism, the climate crisis cannot be addressed due to the nature of profligate consumption.

Through a neat structure which corresponds chronologically to ‘how we got here’, ‘where we are now’, ‘how it could get worse’ and ‘how things could get better’, Klein intertwines the three pillars of her doctrine – corporate superbrands, neoliberal shock politics and endgame environmentalism – to explain the global shift to the right. Using this collective paradigm, she argues that ‘Trump, as extreme as he is, is less an aberration than a logical conclusion – a pastiche of pretty much all the worst trends of the past half century’ (ibid, p.9).



In trying to comprehend the circumstances which facilitated Trump's 'corporate coup' of the White House, Klein convincingly follows the trajectory of marketing dynamics in the 1980s. The realignment of corporations' logistical principles meant that they were now *brand* rather than *product* centric operations, and this radical change had huge implications for what it meant to operate in the marketplace. This new model was defined by the goal to become a 'hollow-brand – own little, brand everything', in this new epoch 'multinationals were competing in a race toward weightlessness: whoever owned the least, had the fewest employees on the payroll, and produced the most powerful images as opposed to things, won the race' (ibid, p.26). Klein argues that Trump is the personification of this weightless mentality: the *ultimate brand*.

Through his role on *The Apprentice*, Trump was able to 'leap into the stratosphere of the Superbrands' attaching his name to everything (ibid, p.29). Trump's brand is termed in the lexicon of reality television: in the universe of Trump there are two existential categories – winners and losers. *The Apprentice* is the definitive embodiment of this capitalist burlesque, glamorising the battle for 'survival in the cutthroat jungle of late capitalism' (ibid, p.47). Ultimately, Klein attributes the shock of the 2016 Trump victory in the polls to the rise of the superbrands and the concomitant consequences this has had on mainstream cultural dynamics. She portrays a picture of Trump's presidential campaign as being the logical extension of his reality television big boss rhetoric. By turning the election campaign into a form of reality TV, Trump was able to pitch to voters 'that he would make America a country of *winner*<sup>1</sup> again' (ibid, p.50). Throughout this section, Klein excellently synthesises an array of her previous expertise on corporate branding with a perceptive understanding of how the philosophical underpinnings of free market theory became a key component of mass entertainment.

In the subsequent sections, 'where we are now' and 'how it could get worse', the make-up of the Trump administration comes under a sharp scrutiny which is substantiated with well selected evidence in the form of small case studies. In one such instance, Klein accesses the dramatic implications and potential influence that Rex Tillerson's appointment as Secretary of State could have on the current climate crisis. A CEO of ExxonMobil, one of the biggest oil companies in the world, Tillerson is the embodiment of profit driven corporate temperament. Indeed, Klein points out that despite ExxonMobil carrying out cutting empirical climate change research in the seventies, under Tillerson's leadership the company has 'lavished more than \$30 million on think tanks that systematically spread doubt through the press about the reality of climate science' (ibid, p.67). As the section argues, at a time when the window to combat the effects of climate change is closing expeditiously, having a president of the United States say that climate change is a hoax invented by the Chinese is extremely alarming. Climate change denial, like all things in Klein's narrative, is at the core ideological project of neoliberalism:

when hard-core conservatives deny climate change... they are also defending... neoliberalism – which holds that the market is always right, regulation is always wrong, private is good and public is bad (ibid, p.79).

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<sup>1</sup> My italics.

The narrative framework of Klein's discourse comes together remarkably well in the third section of the book. For Klein shock politics is the perfect neoliberal storm, whereby corporations use a strategy of disaster capitalism to profit from war, climate change, terrorist attacks and other destabilising events in order to push through corporate legislation. Trump's cabinet are painted as the 'masters of disaster', a coming together of business men who have profited from 9/11, the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina. By looking at how Vice President Mike Pence, who is 'seen by many as the grown-up in Trump's messy room', exploited the human suffering of Hurricane Katrina by pushing through pro-free-market ideas in the immediate aftermath, Klein gives us a harrowing picture of what to expect politically when disaster hits under Trump (ibid, p.151).

The remainder of Klein's discourse steers towards a cautiously optimistic finish; citing the intersectional, unified nature of the immediate resistance to Trump. Just days after he was inaugurated, 4.2 million people took to the street for women's marches in six hundred different cities. For Klein this demonstrated the snowball effect that occurs when a collection of seemingly separate social movements come together under the same umbrella of resistance. In the face of Trump's shock doctrine, the left must capitalise on chaos Trump's presidency to create a truly intersectional platform of social resistance. Klein gives several examples of this when this notion succeeded such as the 'we are all Muslim' reaction the Muslim travel ban and the veterans' participation in the Standing Rock episode. This resistance must offer an alternative to shock politics and in the closing pages of her book Klein gives us her 'Leap Manifesto', which rekindles the idea of reaching for utopia. Her vision of a 'platform without a party' that is lead 'with values not policies' is not necessarily a new idea (ibid, pp. 236-239). However, now more than ever, does it need a plan of contingency and it would seem that the arrival of Trump provides the perfect agency.

*No Is Not Enough* draws much from Klein's previous work and for familiar readers her hypothesis may not have the same 'ground breaking' impact as some of her early work. Klein acknowledges this herself in the introduction:

I've kept it brief and conversational... But I've come to realise that the research I've done over the past years can help shed some light on the crucial aspects of Trumpism. (p.8).

Indeed, Klein's narrative on Trump is a concise synthesis of a hypothesis which she has been working on for over a decade and this is why it emerges as such an interesting analysis. The work's chief value lies in this synthesis, by using her background and expertise, Klein pulls together seemingly disparate threads to present as Trump as the master of disaster in a world of cascading crises. In doing so, she has created an accessible handbook which is filled with clever observations which help us to understand the chaos of this frantic political moment, how it came to be, and how it can be transformed for the better.

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