

postcolonial order it is the grounds for legitimate and rightful belonging, opposing itself to the people out of place. Sharma is unrelenting in her critique of the politics of autochthony as an essentialist discourse that yokes race and nation in antimigrant terms. Chapter 8 will likely challenge the sympathies of many readers. Sharma critiques the mobilization of autochthony not only by dominant groups against minorities, such as the Rohingya in Myanmar, but also by minority indigenous peoples in North America—specifically, Mohawk and Cherokee peoples, as they insist on their nationhood in ways that reproduce, Sharma argues, the exclusionary discourses of all postcolonial nationalisms.

Despite her claims to the contrary, Sharma's horizon is a utopic one: she calls forth a borderless world in which the many stand in solidarity against those few who rule and exploit. This is not a manifesto, and she does not provide a clear proposal for how to achieve such a world beyond disidentification with the category of national citizen, intimating a kind of anticolonial antinationalism. An account that wrestled with historical alternatives might have provided richer examples of such solidarity building, which could include the efforts of "indigenous" activists working across racialized lines—I use scare quotes to indicate that the term is problematic without abandoning it—or ideas of world-making in projects of cosmopolitanism and "affective communities," to use Leela Gandhi's term. Nor does Sharma engage with the pull of national life in ways that make this political framework hard to reject. Nonetheless, the book should inspire deep thinking about what remains a central but perhaps still too often underanalyzed concept of the nation in modern historiography.

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ISAAC ARIAIL REED. *Power in Modernity: Agency Relations and the Creative Destruction of the King's Two Bodies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. Cloth \$97.50, paper \$32.50.

Isaac Ariail Reed is a historical sociologist whose *Power in Modernity: Agency Relations and the Creative Destruction of the King's Two Bodies* is dominated by a theoretical argument rather than a narrative of change over time. He highlights an important historical problem: how political authority, once lodged in the divinely sanctioned figure elaborated by Ernst Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies*, has been secured in the modern era's secular forms of government. Reed pursues this issue in an historical analysis of Bacon's Rebellion in seventeenth-century Virginia and in the travails of two newly hatched republican regimes on opposite shores of the Atlantic in the 1790s: the United States of America and the fledgling French Republic. But this historical analysis of some 120 pages is prefaced by a wide-ranging hundred-page discussion of

theoretical issues, in which Reed spars with Georg Simmel, Franz Kafka, J. L. Austin, W. E. B. Du Bois, Orlando Patterson, Karl Marx, René Girard, Jeffrey Alexander, Pierre Bourdieu, Hannah Arendt, Julia Adams, Max Weber, Alfred Gell, Bruno Latour, Judith Butler, and many others. And the book closes with a sixty-page theoretical conclusion, contrasting Reed's account of political authority in modernity with those offered by more or less Marxian political economists, Habermasian discourse analysts, modernity deniers, and theorists of biopower.

In the opening chapters of the book, Reed introduces his own general vocabulary of power, centered on three figures: rector, actor, and other. A rector is a person who holds a superior position in a hierarchy, defines the goals of the organization he or she heads, and assigns the necessary tasks to subordinates. An actor is an agent who is recognized as appropriate to carry out the rector's plans and is assigned control over the means to do so. Actors work on behalf of rectors but must have a certain discretion to take initiatives on the rector's behalf without specific authorization. An other is a person not recognized as an agent but only as an object against whom power can be exercised. Others can be excluded altogether from projects the rector authorizes or, in extreme cases, can be eliminated—enslaved, exiled, or killed. In the first section of the book, Reed examines the difficulties and possibilities of projects, agency, authority, errors, power, and oppression—undertaken, endured, or resisted by rectors, actors, and others. Although projects and their hierarchies can be formed at various levels of the social whole, Reed's interest is above all in rectors and actors who are vested with sovereign political authority.

The religiously infused figure of the king's two bodies, Reed argues, provided an effective model for the exercise of sovereign authority in the medieval and early modern European world and its transatlantic extensions. Although the king's natural body was subject to death, the king also possessed an immortal political body, sometimes dubbed "the crown." The king's lieutenants, who made up this political body, were themselves rectors, empowered to carry out the king's will, and they retained their authority to do so in interregnums, or when the king was too ill, too distant, or too distracted by his other concerns and duties to act in his natural person. But this immortal and religious figuration of power was no longer available to the secular and republican regimes established in the United States and in France in the late eighteenth century and that have proliferated ever since. Officials of these regimes could assert that they represented the body of the people, but this claim was far more disputed than the previous claim to represent the body of the king—the king, after all, was singular, but the people were multiple, and its boundaries were ill-defined.

Reed illustrates the dynamics of this problem most

compellingly in his analysis of the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 and the simultaneous war with the Ohio confederation of Native Americans who occupied the fertile lands south of the Great Lakes. The Whiskey Rebellion arose in western Pennsylvania, when settlers there violently refused to pay the federal government's newly instituted tax on whiskey, the sale of which was the settlers' chief source of cash income. Many rebels were former soldiers in the American War of Independence who had recently seized land from the local indigenous tribes. They claimed to be acting as "the people," which was, of course, the ill-defined—and in the end rather mystical—body of the new nation, thus presenting a challenge at once practical and theoretical to the untested federal government's own still shaky claim as the legitimate embodiment of the people's will.

Washington and Hamilton responded adroitly, carrying out successful negotiations with the rebels while militias under federal command ominously marched west from Philadelphia. Nevertheless, the federal government's authority on the western frontier remained tenuous. But events farther to the west that overlapped in time with the Whiskey Rebellion solidified the federal government's claim to embody "the people." During the Battle of Fallen Timbers, General Anthony Wayne defeated the Ohio natives, and his troops systematically razed their villages and burned their cornfields, clearing the way for western expansion by settlers. This military campaign, much celebrated in the American press, signified a dramaturgical refiguring of the body of the people, which now unequivocally included white settlers who, in Reed's terminology, became actors starkly contrasted with Native Americans who were now definitively marked as others, liable to government-sanctioned expulsion from the land and to slaughter. This, Reed argues, was the grisly performative consolidation of the new American body politic.

Reed convinces me that the performative, dramaturgical, and potentially violent shift from the political figure of the king's two bodies to the analogous two bodies of the people was a decisive feature of the advent of modernity. And it is certainly plausible that the modern figure of the immortal body of the people, whose definitions and boundaries have been endlessly contested in the modern era, is inherently less stable than the medieval and early modern mystical and immortal body of the king. For this reason, Reed's conceptual vocabulary and arguments are unquestionably valuable to any historian interested in the fraught emergence of political modernity. But in the end, Reed's account can only supplement, not displace, existing scholarship on modernity's political dynamics. Most seriously, it never poses the question of why the seemingly more stable figure of the king's two bodies has been almost entirely replaced over the past few centuries by the dangerously unstable body of the people. Here, in my opinion, his

brief and dismissive discussion of Marx seems particularly shortsighted. It is at least plausible that the dynamics of capitalism, with its ever-increasing commodification of life, have, at least since the mid-eighteenth century, repeatedly undermined both personal identities and seemingly fixed institutions, causing solid monarchical sociopolitical orders to "melt into air." Reed's book offers important insights into the struggles of political modernity, but it is only a partial account.

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CAROLYN MERCHANT. *The Anthropocene and the Humanities: From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi, 212. Cloth \$26.00.

Carolyn Merchant is a household name in environmental history; *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) still has a towering presence in the field. After its appearance, Merchant has continued to publish widely on topics in environmental history and ethics, with a feminist sensibility—somewhat toned down over the years—and broad, interdisciplinary erudition. Her latest book is an entry into the crowded (some would say overcrowded) literature on the Anthropocene. It is also conceived as a popular summation of her oeuvre. Merchant emphasizes the need for engagement with the humanities if the human species is to find a way out of the Anthropocene and into what she calls "an Age of Sustainability." Hence the book is structured around six humanist themes—history, art, literature, religion, philosophy, and ethics and justice—with one chapter devoted to each. The idea is to showcase material that may throw light on the current ecological crisis and a possible exit from it, while recapitulating her previous writings on the themes.

The history of the Anthropocene concept takes a middle-of-the-road approach. Disregarding recent proposals for dating its birth to the end of World War II, as well as various candidates for an "early Anthropocene," Merchant cleaves to the chronology first proposed by Paul Crutzen: the invention of the steam engine set off the new geological epoch. There is merit to this chronology, but not of the kind Merchant adduces. She claims that a spike in carbon dioxide concentrations in the late eighteenth century indicates that steam power transformed the atmosphere. But around that time, anthropogenic CO₂ emissions were still overwhelmingly caused by deforestation, the freshly patented Watt engine still half a century away from diffusing through even the most advanced sectors of British industry. To fend off the many alternative birthdates of the Anthropocene, the argument for the primacy of steam would have to be qualitative. Merchant is more convincing in her attempt to mediate between the two main contending names of the epoch: "the Capitalocene," she asserts, is the con-