

post-anthropocentric cosmos which Watkin associates with Latour.

Each of Watkin's readings is admirably clear and impressively thorough, and his decision to approach the field in terms of a single over-arching movement lends his book both a coherence and a momentum that distinguish it from the great majority of survey-style overviews. Needless to say, readers with different political and philosophical priorities may well see, in the overall movement from Badiou to Latour, something rather different than the broad opening and progression that Watkin applauds – but there isn't space for this argument here, and in any case politics isn't one of this book's central concerns. Two other questions, however, seem harder to avoid.

First of all, given Watkin's determination to avoid any reliance on a specifying host capacity or substance, combined with his determination to expand the frame of reference as far as possible, the question of what exactly still serves to demarcate a distinctively human figure seems hard to pin down. That is Watkin's point, of course, in his appeal to 'multiple, layered accounts of the human' over any 'single-aspect' identification. Nevertheless, in his recurring reference to the neonates or the severely senile, what seems to recur are indeed *figures* in the most literal sense, figures that we might recognise as human because, presumably, they appear to conform to a recognisably human shape. But this begs the question of why this should be so, and of where (or why) we should locate the points at which any figure per se might cease to *look* human, in order to appear as something else.

Second, the more thoroughly Watkin purges his human figures of their reliance on a host capacity such as reason or affirmative thought, the more his own appreciation of the humanity of senile or disabled figures seems tacitly to rely on a form of just such affirmation. Total elimination of every host capacity deprives these figures of any opportunity to affirm their *own* humanity, of course, as actors in their own right, and like some of Malabou's 'new wounded' they can appear here only as the objects of others' benevolent concern. But no matter how inclusive and diversified our categories of apparently human-shaped objects might become, doesn't their

affirmation as human still depend, as ever, on some actors' capacity first to recognise them as such, and then to do what is required, at the level of social organisation, to affirm and look after them? Watkin's book certainly helps us to escape the conventional limits of humanist affirmation, but to my mind its celebration of an effectively 'unlimited humanity' seems to rely on precisely the sort of affirmative thought it seeks to undermine.

Peter Hallward

Paper trails

Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016). 216pp., £21.95 hb., 978 0 26203 396 1

The punning title of Kate Eichhorn's book refers to the 'somewhat audacious argument' at its core: that the xerographic (or dry photocopying) machine played an overlooked but decisive role in the formation of alternative artistic and political communities in North America during the late twentieth century. As Eichhorn notes, however, evoking the oversignified margin 'remains a somewhat perilous endeavour'; perhaps as a consequence, this thoroughly researched study of the emergence and decline of xerography tends towards a romantic celebration of the subcultural, alternative or peripheral.

The book begins by providing a succinct history of xerography's technological development from the late nineteenth century onwards; including unexpected details such as Edison's 'electric pen' of 1895, a motorised stencilling device that would eventually morph into the modern tattoo needle. Post-Fordist regimes of work hastened these machine advancements, and yet, as Eichhorn demonstrates, the burgeoning countercultural movements of the mid-twentieth century promptly abraded the administrative and bureaucratic world of white-collar office employment. The wildly successful North American copy shop Kinko's provides a neat framing device for Eichhorn's story, a grassroots business founded in 1970 that generated 'the space and equipment to

turn an administrative task (copying) into art and anarchy and social practice.’ Copy shops like these are cast as liminal social spaces in *Adjusted Margin*, integral to a shared ‘experience of public culture and the production of non-localized networks and communities.’

Eichhorn explores the creative repurposing of a mass administrative technology, tracing the Xerox machine’s allegorical relocation from the office to artist’s studio. The prevailing use of these machines served to challenge established notions of copyright and alternative publishing networks flourished (often at the expense of employers whose machines were quietly exploited), circulating everything from fan fiction to mail art to avant-garde poetry. ‘Visual artists and writers’, Eichhorn tells us, ‘embraced xerography as a way to produce books and booklike objects quickly, cheaply and collaboratively.’ The activities Eichhorn describes here complement those anthologised by Gwen Allen in her 2011 study *Artists’ Magazines*, where she connects the emergence of dematerialised modes of art to experiments in alternative publishing culture. Eichhorn’s technological excavation provides a welcome counterpoint to Allen’s earlier art historical perspective, enriching a growing field of historical research concerned with late-twentieth-century art, politics and print.

The book considers copy shops as sites of permitted illegality, where under-age IDs are produced and copyright laws openly flouted without recourse. The impossibility of enforcing copyright as a result of technological advancement adds a valuable historical dimension to current debates regarding ‘open source’ online publishing and illegal digital sharing within the humanities. However, this line of enquiry takes a darker turn as Eichhorn points out how copy shops’ association with illicit behaviour functioned in association with their high numbers of immigrant staff to construct a space of ‘imagined terrorisms’ in the post-9/11 consciousness. The heightened surveillance and state aggression against Muslim workers at Best Copy in Toronto is taken as a case study to explore how public opinion arrived at ‘the point where simply frequenting the shop was eventually posited as potential evidence of a terrorist link.’ Eichhorn further proposes that a notable increase of

photocopying businesses in close proximity to university campuses from the late 1980s onwards can be tied to education cutbacks and the rise of adjunct faculty members without access to institutional resources, an interesting contention that would, to become wholly credible, benefit from further research.

Xerography’s critical role in the production of publics and counterpublics is a major theme in the book, which particularly concentrates on the history of subcultures in disinvested urban centres prior to enforcement of gentrification schemes in the later 1980s and 1990s. While similar ground has been covered before, Eichhorn looks beyond the illustrious subcultural urban centres of this history to suggest that xerography and zine production permitted the ‘deterritorialisation’ of those downtown scenes. The circulation of photocopied materials allowed for activist and subcultural values to spread far beyond the limited physical space of, for example, New York’s East Village. That this stands as a pre-digital form of social media is a convincing claim: ‘Beyond revolutionizing printing by enabling one to photocopy anything on a wide range of surfaces in myriad contexts, then, xerography anticipated the mobile, high-speed, real-time forms of communication that would be taken for granted by the end of the century.’ Drawing on conceptualisations of the public sphere from Jürgen Habermas to Michael Warner, it is, she writes, a pressing question of mediation: ‘what types of publics become imaginable through xerography that would have otherwise remained unimaginable?’

The book moves on to a discussion of AIDS and queer activism, via which the organised production of graphic posters, flyers, zines and large-scale demonstrations strikingly intervened in prominent public spaces. The significance of xerography is shown to go beyond solely reprographic mechanics, being instead bound up with the very fundamental ‘freedom to be public’ for which queer groups were advocating. In concurrence with other writers including Sarah Schulman and Tara Burk, Eichhorn discusses photocopying and postering in terms of the visual character of cities, where the urban landscape is evocatively transformed into a peeling papered canvas, in some parts an inch thick. Eichhorn conveys the sheer volume of Xeroxed materials circu-

lating under the official radar, from illegally copied university texts to scientific reports on new AIDS drugs, and her enthusiastic prose evocatively captures a tactile sense of inky materials being passed from hand to hand. If the book risks repetition at times this might be attributable to the endlessly reproductive technology under discussion.

Eichhorn concludes by pointing out the almost total replacement of xerographic machines with digital photocopiers by around 2000, an occurrence 'most people didn't even notice'. This, she contends, is significant because the original machines enabled replication without a master copy, whereas the new technology consists of a scanner and data bank: 'While people no doubt continue to use copy machines in subversive ways, in the digital era they can no longer do so with a guarantee that they won't leave a trace.' A visit to a technology museum in Berlin reveals that, as objects, copy machines are 'bereft of design considerations'. As such, unlike the stylish typewriters, turntables and Polaroid cameras that continue to change hands as desirable retro commodities, these machines have been completely abandoned. However, the technology lives on in what Eichhorn calls the 'xerox effect', a DIY aesthetic that is digitally reproducible and functions in dialogue with new forms of social media. As she puts it: 'If photocopied posters, flyers, and zines still quickly found a place in Occupy, it is because the aesthetic of these forms continues to signify something that exceeds a method of document reproduction.' The significance of the photocopied aesthetic is that it 'is anarchic and punk, radical and queer', a bold claim that needs, possibly, to be situated in relation to less optimistic readings of analogue media and nostalgia, as discussed, for example, in the 2014 collection *Media and Nostalgia* edited by Katharina Neimeyer.

Eichhorn's lucid 'media archaeology' persuasively situates the photocopier as a new technology essential to the production of alternative communities in late twentieth-century North America. In this it achieves the outcome of good material culture research by taking an object of such ubiquity that it had become practically invisible and rendering it fresh again. As in her previous book, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (2013), Eichhorn weaves

insightful cultural analysis with personal and practical observations, treading a line between scholarly and activist registers. Although her celebration of radical xerographic practice flirts with hyperbole, the tone is exciting. The clean design of the book itself remains thankfully free of 'xerography's gritty aesthetic', but it also hints at the inherent contradiction of writing a scholarly-press history of activist materials. The copyright page clearly states: 'no part of this book may be reproduced'.

Victoria Horne

Smart writing

Sarah Kember, *iMedia: The Gendering of Objects, Environments and Smart Materials* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). vi+122pp., £45.00 hb., 978 1 13737 484 4

Sarah Kember's new book positions itself in a field of theory dominated by an often masculinist discourse that privileges conceptualisations of its research objects as things or environments in-themselves, instead of as the conflicted and hypermediated objects-in-time that they are. Im/mediacy is a recurring theme throughout the book, which bears both a political and conceptual charge. In particular, Kember targets the theoretical practices stemming from Object Oriented Ontology (or OOO), arguing that disavowing processes of mediation and problems of subjectivity leads to a disturbing complicity between the media industry and iMedia theorists. Her contention is that if we stop asking the question 'who writes?', while positing a flat ontology as the ground on which materials, environments and objects appear as equal, undifferentiated and neutralised, then we run the risk of erasing the structural and epistemological hierarchies which constitute those objects. This negation can do little to counter the current post-political, neoliberal consensus, especially if it goes hand-in-hand with a dismissal of critique as something outdated and redundant.

The task of *iMedia* is to unpack and undo such covert complicities between theory and the post-political. She does this in a skillful, albeit sometimes