

ing, *mutatis mutandis*, at the issues at hand, there may then be some merit to viewing Adorno as two separate thinkers, neither reducible to the other. More accurately, by reading the *Aesthetics* as elementary movements toward *Aesthetic Theory* and not a crude form of it, more may be gained in thinking their systematic connection through argumentative disjunction than there would be in suturing them together. To undertake this one would have to inquire into the problems Adorno encountered, for instance, in the notion of world-feeling (*Weltgefühl*), to account for the relative demotion of the role of co-enactment (*mitvollziehen*), or to register any other remarks that were abandoned or deemed insufficiently defensible to be included in *Aesthetic Theory*'s drafts. In reverse, one could treat the *Aesthetics* as a prompt to consider the absence in the lectures of his claims on the double character

of art as autonomous and *fait social*, and the various post-1959 conditions that would ensure its introduction. Perhaps providing a better model for thinking the *Nachgelassene Schriften* and *Gesammelte Schriften* relation, any attempts of this sort would enrich its philosophical content by way of the necessary intellectual history and division. But the temptation to trade having to labour over Adorno's written prose for the comparative ease of turning to his lectures persists, and with it the danger that patient interpretive work will be sacrificed in the process. Whether such a sacrifice is executed for the sake of pedagogy or to soften the welcome to a general audience, obscuration or avoidance of intellectual difficulty harbours nothing more than the base theoretical conservatism contained in an injunction to digestible reception.

Louis Hartnoll

## Rebellious admiration

Clare Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2018). 304pp., £80.00 hb., £19.99 pb., 978 0 82236 998 1 hb., 978 0 82237 003 1 pb.

Clare Hemmings is one of the most innovative and original voices in contemporary feminist theory. Her work cuts across disciplinary boundaries and is largely concerned with an ongoing and wide-ranging critical reflection on the production of 'feminist theory' as a field. *Considering Emma Goldman* offers a continuation of this project in a new and provocative direction. In her previous book, *Why Stories Matter*, Hemmings focused on the pervasive historiographical assumptions underlying feminist theory's interpretive framing of feminism's past, present and future. In *Considering Emma Goldman*, Hemmings switches her focus to addressing the theoretical impasses and sites of political struggle that continue to shape feminist and queer theory in the present. At the same time, *Considering Emma Goldman* is also a personal project – a critical reflection on how Emma Goldman partly inspired Hemmings to become a feminist, and how she continues to animate Hemmings' conflicted if committed relationship to feminism. Hemmings' attachment to Goldman also allows her to take more

seriously than she did in *Why Stories Matter* the powerful lure of the past or lost object. Here, nostalgia gets its due, albeit renamed as wonder. Finally, *Considering Emma Goldman* is an experiment in thinking through how a figure of the feminist past – in this case, one not easily or entirely claimed by feminism – can be both resource and method for accessing the complexity and messiness of feminism as a political project with a multivalent history and a varied set of ideas.

The kaleidoscopic approach of the book draws upon three distinct archives: the 'subjective' archive of Goldman's letters and political writings, the 'critical' archive through which Goldman's work has been interpreted, especially by feminist critics, and the feminist and queer 'theoretical' archive with which, and against which, Hemmings reads Goldman. Most provocatively, Hemmings also offers, in the fourth chapter, an example of what she calls the 'imaginative archive', in which she presents a series of letters written by Almeda Sperry, a correspondent, friend and

sometime lover of Goldman's, with Goldman's missing responses penned by Hemmings. With these four archives Hemmings orients her readers to think about Goldman as a figure of attachment and defamiliarisation for feminist politics and theory in the present. As a political thinker and writer who was both highly skeptical of the political goals of organised feminism in her own time, and far more radical than her feminist contemporaries in her demands for sexual freedom for women, Goldman figures the ambivalence that Hemmings identifies as integral to the central terms of feminist theory today: gender, race, and sexuality. This kaleidoscopic approach unsettles as much as it re-asserts the importance of Goldman for feminism. And this is partly Hemmings' point: we are left questioning not only why and if we should identify Goldman as a feminist – a term she rejected – but also some of the more routine assumptions of what counts as a feminist issue or object in the present. Hemmings reads these archives against each other in order to bring into view what remains unresolved in feminist and queer theory: namely, the continuing problem of femininity for feminism, the problem of race and racism as historical formations that refuse the clarity some feminists might wish to impose on them in order to 'know' them in the present, and the difficulty, for queer and feminist theory, of conceptualising 'sexual freedom' as something other than a claim to sexual rights.

By focusing on the contradictions in Goldman's thinking and practice, as well as the ways in which it disturbs taken-for-granted preoccupations in feminist and queer theory, Hemmings aims to interrupt 'feminist certainties' and 'expand the range of possible ways of inhabiting feminism'. Here, Hemmings' focus on ambivalence echoes that of other feminist and queer theorists, including Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed, both of whom she cites as fellow practitioners of an approach to feminist theory that keeps the impossibilities of its contradictory claims open. Ambivalence, for these theorists, signals a refusal of certainty and an insistence on staying with the discomforts and irresolvability of contradiction. Goldman figures ambivalence for Hemmings, both in terms of her anarchist insistence on privileging the process of politics rather than its goals, and also in her will-

ingness, in her letters especially, to make explicit the disjunctures between her political claims and actions and what she might feel or think (something that is especially resonant in the chapter on sexuality in which Goldman's personal disdain for effeminate men and lesbians contrasts with her public declarations of support for homosexuals).

This is not a book, however, about Goldman the anarchist. The importance of *Considering Emma Goldman* lies elsewhere, especially in Hemmings' explorations of the power of attachment in feminist theory and the limits of its contemporary preoccupations. Hemmings is most successful in relation to the latter in her first chapter, 'Women and Revolution', in which she draws out the historiographical and critical implications for contemporary feminist theory of Goldman's antipathy towards women and feminism, despite her simultaneous call for women's sexual freedom and the complete transformation of the public-private system of gender privilege. Goldman's hostility toward women, especially bourgeois women, becomes, for Hemmings, a discordant opening through which the question of why women might disidentify from feminism can be asked. Here, Goldman's 'outsider' perspective helps to clarify some of the failures of feminist thinking. That is to say, it is in her role as a critic of feminism that Goldman has the most to offer feminism in the present.

Hemmings is less successful in using Goldman as a defamiliarising figure in the chapters on race and sexuality. In these chapters the engagement with Goldman seems somewhat arbitrary in relation to current debates. While Goldman's thinking on race, and especially sexuality, offers a challenge to some of the ways both terms have habitually been thought in feminist and queer theory, I remain unconvinced that we need Goldman in particular to confront those habits. As I read these chapters I found myself thinking of work not cited by Hemmings which could and does do this work. Hemmings presents us with Goldman's thinking on these issues but does not offer enough engagement with the work of contemporary theorists, which makes her claims about the impasses around race and sexuality seem too narrowly defined, too reductively located in certain niches of feminist and queer theory. Indeed, rather than defamiliarising fem-

inist theory in the present, these chapters return us to Hemmings' attachment to Goldman: it is Hemmings' appreciation of Goldman that becomes the most resonant feature of these chapters, an appreciation that is able to take full flight in the fourth chapter in which Hemmings imagines herself as Goldman the correspondent.



The difficulty of the task Hemmings has set herself – to confront the impasses and difficulties of feminist and queer theory in the present through a return to a figure whose attraction, for Hemmings, lies as much in her style of being as in her political writings – is revealed early in the introduction where Hemmings tells the startling (to me at least) story of how her younger teenage self switched the focus of her rebellious admiration from Margaret Thatcher to Emma Goldman. We might think of this story as one of the political reveals of the book: how contradiction and ambivalence in feminist politics and attachment might lead one to move from one strong iconoclastic

female figure to another, from an icon of the new right to an icon of the anarchist left. Thatcher and Goldman both knew how to fashion themselves as political figures worth paying attention to. Both enjoyed the drama, the theatricality, of their publicity. And both were skilled debaters and orators. This uneasy symmetry of 'Mrs T' and 'E.G.' is part of the difficulty – and the productive provocation – of Hemmings' approach to Goldman. It invokes the uneasy specter of a political orientation that can morph from a certain kind of libertarianism – 'there is no such thing as society' – to anarchism, in which the state is regarded as an oppressive obstacle to the free expression of human life in all its potentiality. What feminism is – as a politics – remains suspended in these convergences, as it does in the imagined correspondence between Hemmings / Goldman and Almeda Sperry; a suspension that is productive, no doubt, of the 'imaginative archive' that Hemmings challenges her readers to construct and inhabit. But it also raises the question of how we might think about 'style' in relation to feminism (or queerness): does a certain style tell us something about a person's political or theoretical orientation? Put differently, was Emma Goldman's 'panache' immanent in her anarchism, as Hemmings wants to argue, or something more peculiar to Goldman, something in excess of, or beside, her political beliefs and commitments? My reservation here is that 'panache' becomes an unambivalent celebration of a way of being in the world that might just as easily be attributed to someone like Margaret Thatcher as Emma Goldman. The exceptionalism of figures like Goldman and Thatcher become the lure through which we might attach ourselves to their politics, their ideas, but our investments in their exceptionalism also surely reveal the elsewhere of political identification and practice, the nonplace where desire and imagination meet, a place that cannot secure or explain the relationship between one's politics and one's way of being in the world, despite Hemmings' hope that it can.

**Victoria Hesford**