

Book Reviews

Beauchamps, Marie (2018). *Governing Affective Citizenship: Denaturalization, Belonging and Repression*. *Frontiers of the Political*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 186 pp. Hardcover \$138.00; Paperback \$40.00; eBook \$38.00. ISBN: 9781538158678.

Marie Beauchamps' *Governing Affective Citizenship* is a timely book, as the publication of this critical study on denaturalisation comes at a time when states around the world have begun weaponising the practice in their 'war against terrorism'. More crucially, her archival work shows that denaturalisation cannot be understood solely as a contemporary phenomenon. By turning to pivotal moments in French national history (i.e., the French Revolution, World War I, World War II, and the War on Terror), Beauchamps argues that denaturalisation was and remains caught up in affective governmental discourses that seek to differentiate between those who ought to belong in the nation-state and those subject to repression.

The book derives from Beauchamps' 2015 doctoral dissertation at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis and is composed of chapters that draw from her previous journal article publications. Here, I will only address the contents as presented in the book. The introduction begins by framing denaturalisation in the French context of *déchéance*, which 'expresses a demotion, a moral downgrading' as well as 'the deprivation of rights'. Beauchamps emphasises that while denaturalisation is often framed as a means to ensure security against threats, 'its effect is not security as such'. Rather, she argues, 'denaturalisation turns nationality and citizenship into affective technologies of government, turning questions of inclusion and exclusion into matters of belonging and repression'.

Part I looks at the French Revolution, and chapter one begins by addressing the rise of the citizen as a universal subject with the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). Citing debates by political theorists, she points out that despite the Declaration, the creation of a new political and juridical community led to distinctions between the citizen and the foreigner, effectively undermining the idea of the universal subject endowed with rights. In this context, denaturalisation serves as an indicator of who ought to be included and excluded. In chapter two, Beauchamps introduces Sara Ahmed's idea of 'affective economies' and the 'metonymic slide'¹ as a lens to help identify how categories such as foreigner and threat, as well as immigration and criminality, have come to accompany each other via emotions. Beauchamps brings up the case of Jean Mathieu Scholler to demonstrate how foreignness was associated with one's birthplace, and the trial of Olympe de Gouges in the next chapter to demonstrate how foreignness also depended on a juridical interpretation of who ought to (not) belong. Chapter four extends the conversation to the 1848 abolition of slavery and Furcy Madeleine's case to probe into the relationship between the law and political subjectivity.

Part II focuses on the World Wars and the interwar period, and the fifth chapter seeks to demonstrate how 'denaturalisation contributed to model a performative image of a national self' as well as how denaturalisation centred around discourses of safety, security, and emergency. Beauchamps demonstrates how the first denaturalisation law in 1915—which was invoked as a temporary measure for the duration of WWI—came to be normalised through a discourse that especially targeted new nationals as compared to native-born ones. Chapter six looks at WWII and how a 1939 bill, along with a law enacted by Vichy France in 1940, sought to legitimise denaturalisation as a means to preserve the national community. The next chapter looks at the Commission for the Review of Naturalization at their denaturalisation of Jews and other human beings, as well as a case where an individual was charged with *degradation nationale*, to demonstrate how governments sought to impose ideas about nationality from above.

Part III looks at terrorism since the 1970s and its effect on denaturalisation. Chapter eight brings up Article 25 of the civil code law (the 1996 version) and how it allowed the denaturalisation of those who engaged in

¹Sara Ahmed (2004). 'Affective Economies'. In: *Social Text* 22.2 (79), pp. 117–139. ISSN: 0164-2472. DOI: [10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117](https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117)

acts of terrorism. Highlighting the fluidity and indefiniteness of the term ‘act of terrorism’ and using Djamel Beghal’s case as an indicative example, Beauchamps argues that terrorism is ‘not necessarily about an act, but about the affective economy surrounding those acts’. She points out how the suspect of terrorism is ‘ensnared in an economy of fear and suspicion’ and how the state can ‘make foreign those who are prosecuted in the name of the nation’s security’. Chapter nine discusses President Hollande’s attempt to subject all French nationals (not just foreign-born ones) who engage in terrorist activities to denaturalisation and the then-Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira’s resignation and protest against it. Seeing that rhetoric about denaturalisation has not ceased even under President Macron’s France, Beauchamps ends the book by calling for the abolition of denaturalisation.

Beauchamps’ book is relatively short but rich with theoretical insights, drawing from a variety of sources from continental philosophy, political theory, citizenship studies, and security studies. Notwithstanding the interdisciplinary character of her book, she was able to keep a consistent theme throughout, which revolves around the question of how affective considerations shape governmental discourses and practices of denaturalisation. Her insight challenges public perceptions about governmental policies as deriving from rational and objective considerations about threat and security. It invites readers to adopt a critical view towards the practice of denaturalisation and pushes us to think about whether democratic states ought to continue with it, which is an especially important question to ask as states today are increasingly adopting denaturalisation measures in a post-9/11 world.

Beauchamps’ dive into the French National Archives enables her to present discourses of government officials in their considerations of who counts as a citizen and who does not. What is missing in her state-centric analysis (which could be an avenue for future study) is a consideration of public discourse that may have contributed to the shift of boundaries between the citizen and the foreigner. The power to denaturalise lies with the state, but the criteria of (non-)belonging may not have been the sole product of governmental discourse. Indeed, Beauchamps points out that multiple discourses exist and that the one she presents is not the only one. Hence, conducting a bottom-up analysis is important if one were to resist denaturalisation practices since the ones perpetuating the practice may not only be government officials but also parts of the citizenry.

Furthermore, Beauchamps tends to focus on governmental discourses that actively seek to denaturalise individuals or groups of people. Hence, people who conduct acts that lead to their denaturalisation that are not necessarily criminal (e.g., marrying a foreign national, (in)voluntary renunciations of citizenship, etc.) are left out from Beauchamps’ analysis of law and normalisation. Paying attention to the micro-occurrences of denaturalisation (as opposed to ones exclusively sanctioned by the state) may introduce other affective considerations among the denaturalised themselves. This may be difficult to achieve with archival research only. Hence, it presents a venue for contemporary research that involves interviews of denaturalised subjects.

A final, key concern of mine comes from Beauchamps’ framing of denaturalisation through the lens of security and her subsumption of all forms of citizenship revocation under the single term ‘denaturalisation’. While I believe framing denaturalisation within government discourses on security does indeed reveal a lot about the genealogy of denaturalisation practices (especially in a post-9/11 world), a wider perspective of denaturalisation requires us to shed light on other forms of it—especially those that seek to denaturalise ‘native-born’ citizens. Beauchamps’ archival analysis showed that in France, there is a recurring discourse that tends to shield native-born nationals from denaturalisation, whereas foreign-born ones were continuously exposed to that risk. However, her analysis does not substantially deal with discourses about the denaturalisation of native-born nationals outside of concerns about terrorism. On pages 18 and 77, Beauchamps does bring up the loss of nationality of ‘native-born’ citizens prior to 1939, but they are understood as an example of how citizenship criteria revolved around territorial considerations. She points out how new nationals came to be conceptually linked with ‘foreigners’ in the affective-juridical discourse of denaturalisation, but what is missing is an analysis of the affective discourse of how ‘native-born’ citizens were capable of being ‘foreign’ and denaturalised. While territorial

considerations are more than likely to be relevant, looking at the denaturalisation of ‘natives’ through affective and demographic discourses pertaining to, for example, international marriage, miscegenation, conscription (especially in the context of the Napoleonic Wars), and military service may add crucial insights to the genealogy of denaturalisation.

Beauchamps’ archival work in France has opened ways of looking at denaturalisation through affective discourses of (non-)belonging and security, but a number of other avenues need to be investigated to have a broader historical and contemporary understanding of denaturalisation as practised around the world. Hence, my review is less of a critique of Beauchamps and more of a call to keep pointing our flashlights against the unintended and inevitable shadows cast by our predecessors.

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Felski, Rita (2020). *Hooked: Art and Attachment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 200 pp. Paperback \$22.50; Cloth \$95.00; eBook \$21.99. ISBN: 9780226729466.

Notions of a kind of countercurrent in literary studies, avowedly opposed to what Eve Sedgwick termed ‘paranoid’ hermeneutic practices, are hardly new. In Rita Felski, this surface reading has always had one of its staunchest proponents. Her latest work, *Hooked: Art and Attachment* seems in many ways a maturation of this trend, combining questions of aesthetic value, the sustainability of literary study, and the confluences between what she calls ‘lay’ readers and the academy, explored through the central theme of our various forms of attachment to works of art.

Having demarcated this line of enquiry in a brief introduction, the remainder of the book is given to four chapters, each with a particular facet of this attachment as its central theme, with her notions of actor-network theory (ANT), heavily influenced by Bruno Latour, acting as a kind of conceptual framework, on which each definition is, to different degrees, comfortably hung. The first of these is a development of the introduction, engaging with questions of what artistic attachment constitutes as a means of expositing the relational structures of ANT. Felski then moves on to what she calls *attunement*, defined as our response to the presences of different pieces of art, and the social evaluative structures that determine our preferences for one form of art over another. Having examined the sociality of artistic preferences, she then embarks on a ‘defence’ of the practice of identifying in some form or other with an artwork, variously affectively or ironically. Finally, she concludes by offering a sense of how the relational systems she has expounded on might be made a part of the academy, posing the foundational question of an alternative and more affective approach to literature.

It would be tempting, from a brief description like the one above, to dismiss this work as that of a Susan Sontag-esque public intellectual and this book as offering nothing more revolutionary than a new ‘erotics of art’ or similar. In the tradition of many of the most readable theorists, however, Felski’s style, in a sense, enacts her conclusions, offering a prose that speaks simultaneously of the profound affective engagement she espouses and a wealth of scholarly erudition. What we are given, then, is a relatively brief but spirited and engaging polemic that resists straying into simplistic impressionism. Those readers familiar with her earlier writing will find less that is new here, with much of *The Limit of Critique*’s work on ANT and suspicious hermeneutics acting as a kind of foundation to this work. Much as, ironically, it can pay to be suspicious when a critic raises the possibility of ‘an overhaul of humanistic methods’, Felski’s contribution to this supposed paradigm shift is nevertheless a novel and clearly delimited one. In many ways, one is compelled to feel, her return to the basic structures of artistic attachment says more about most of our experiences of reading than much of the critical writing that has emerged since the advent of close reading as an academic discipline.

The work's basic premise is the exploration of the means by which 'artworks compel our attention or solicit our devotion'. Literature, it seems fair to suggest, survives in the main not through formalist dissections in the academy but by its treatment by the average reader as affective aesthetic experience. Perhaps this overstates the motivations of a tourist at an airport searching for a means to fill time, for instance, but the affective seems nevertheless closer to said 'ordinary' reader's approach than the disciplined analysis imposed by the traditional academy. The solution for Felski, it seems, is collapsing these two poles into a universalising network of textual circulation. In drilling down to the basic motivations for reading, perceptively noting that 'affective ties are often stronger in academia than elsewhere, because more is at stake', she offers a refreshing, almost Cartesian, approach to literary studies, returning to first principles so simple and unspoken as to often be erased. The defence of identification is a particularly strong example of this, offering one of the clearer examples of Felski's decentring and relational tendencies. In the broad claim that 'identifying involves ideas and values as well as persons; may confound or remake a sense of self as well as confirming it; and is practised by sceptical scholars as well as wide-eyed enthusiasts', she seems to attempt to offer to criticism what Sullivan and Klein offered to psychoanalysis. As we see, the monumental and the individual mentioned here are made fluid, organic, and responsive through a movement beyond straightforward notions of art's self-containment as a realm beyond ordinary experience.

In refusing to accept the simplistic dismissal of identification as interwoven with questions of empathy and identity, the affective foundations of literary studies are laid bare beyond that of our approach to the text. In the shrewd observation that 'the readings offered by literary critics ... are not outside identification, but premised upon it', the drive to level the disparity between reader and academy is given an aesthetic theoretical backing through what she goes on to describe as 'a sense of estrangement and dissociation [that] is the connecting tissue that binds character and reader'. Through this continual premising of commonality, we see the beginnings of her attempts to redress the 'missed connections between humanities scholarship and lay audiences' with which she closes the work. In so doing, there is an attempt at creating a kind of universal network of specialist and non-specialist readerships alike, with neither's approach given privilege over the other. Her premise that such a levelling will revitalise discourse around the discipline of literary studies is an optimistic one, but not one beyond the realms of possibility explored by this book.

If there is one flaw in Felski's innovative interpretive methods, it is a tendency to sublimate or otherwise dissolve too quickly the issues raised by her theoretical frameworks. Her early suggestion, for instance, that ANT 'allows us to circumvent a series of surprisingly stubborn dichotomies: art versus society, text versus context, sophisticated versus naïve response' in order to 'walk around them and arrive somewhere else' seems to raise more questions than the rest of the text can answer. Her dismissal of these fundamental concerns as 'surprisingly stubborn', if not in itself surprising, reveals something of the limitations of this approach, as fundamental concerns over textual stability and permeability are dismissed in favour of 'social meanings'. The issue here is that Felski seems, at least initially, to be far clearer on what her approach is not than what it is. Perhaps inevitably, when setting out, as she claims, on a 'rethinking of the fundamentals of aesthetic experience', there is a strong sense early in the text that more interpretive frameworks are being dismissed or 'circumvented' than are being refreshed or reconstructed. Part of this problem emerges from the vagueness by which she initially defines her terms, with statements such as 'I avoid overpsychologizing or oversociologizing the word by forcing it into the exclusive ambit of particular disciplines' almost guaranteed to raise hermeneutic eyebrows. The insistence on avoiding specificity, as we see here, can give an uncomfortable sense of vacuity to her arguments as alternatives to the familiar concepts she does away with are not always forthcoming. In so keenly pointing out the absences in her work, we might suggest, Felski seems to do much of her critics' work for them.

Equally, for an exploratory work of theory, one could fairly suggest this kind of oppositional logic is to be expected. Demarcation, after all, is essential to the establishment of any new interpretive avenue, a process that is clearly and effectively undertaken here. So too, once this is done, does Felski present a cogent and convincing

polemic, unsettling traditional category boundaries without offering straightforwardly comforting replacements. To a certain extent, one wonders how strategically sound this argument might be. In a society increasingly reticent to recognise the value of creative and humanistic disciplines, this move to strip away the primacy of detailed, professional analysis might be called reckless. As the drive to challenge notions of canonicity grows, on the other hand, perhaps the approach posed here of exploring the relational structures generated by attachments to text is precisely the kind of decentring that will prove corrective. Whether an attempt to homogenise the responses of reader and academy will help or harm the discipline, it is a notion comprehensively and fascinatingly explored in Felski's work, of value to any student of aesthetics.

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Lindley, David (2020). *The Dream Universe: How Fundamental Physics Lost Its Way*. First edition. New York: Doubleday. 240 pp. Hardcover \$26.95; eBook \$13.99. ISBN: 9780385543859.

From Plato's attempts to understand the celestial sphere via pure reason alone, to Galileo's invention of an experimentally driven approach to scientific understanding, and on to the furthest horizons of theoretical physics, David Lindley weaves a gripping yarn concerning the development of modern science and humanity's quest to understand the universe. *The Dream Universe* is accessible to the non-specialist and experienced scientist alike: general audiences will be held captive by the historical narrative and rich character portraits Lindley paints of the various revolutionary figures; more technical audiences benefit from a unique take on the underlying philosophical framework guiding current research in fundamental physics, which should rightly garner greater attention. *The Dream Universe* is impressive in its scope whilst not shying away from complexities. This is all the more masterly considering the book's relatively light page count: a testament to Lindley's illuminating and concise writing style.

The book is split into four parts, each describing a broad chapter in the development of science. First, Galileo's struggles against the Christian orthodoxy of Renaissance Europe are recounted, culminating in the birth of the scientific method, where detailed observations and mathematics displaced Aristotelian physics. Here, Lindley engages in an analysis of the origins of Christian orthodoxy, and along the way, the reader is exposed to the teachings of Plato, Eudoxes and the cult of Pythagoras. These fragments build up an explanation as to why, as Lindley puts it, a 'highly refracted interpretation of Aristotle's principles and opinions' was given such importance by the Catholic Church. This opening may seem like a general introduction to the history of science with little bearing on modern physics, but many of the ideas expressed here are skilfully woven into the final chapter's arguments, which gives the book a pleasingly circular structure.

Second, the golden age of classical physics, with its 'universe as machine' worldview, is presented. Here, Lindley tells how Galileo's scientific method, with mathematics serving as a tool for practising physicists, was rigorously applied to a wide range of phenomena, with great strides being made in thermodynamics, mechanics and electromagnetism. The overriding message is thus: the language of mathematics provides a description of the underlying laws of nature; it is not in and of itself their source. While many parts of this chapter will be familiar to those with a scientific background, Lindley peppers the usual narrative with interesting anecdotes, bringing the characters of Newton, Halley, and Maxwell to life. Lindley's account of Michael Faraday, a humble blacksmith's son turned physicist, and his groundbreaking insight into the relationship between electric and magnetic phenomena is the highlight of the chapter. The author's enthusiasm for Faraday is clear, and it's infectious: that such a deep insight into the nature of reality can be obtained from an intuitive, visual picture

and that such a conceptual image may be transcribed into a quantitative mathematical theory (with the help of the brilliant James Clerk Maxwell), is deservedly couched as one of the crowning achievements of classical physics. This exemplifies how physics should be carried out according to Lindley: intuition and imagination, motivated by precise experimentation, build a picture of the relevant physical system. Mathematics is then employed afterwards to provide a quantitative description.

Third, Lindley dives into the quantum revolution of the twentieth century. This chapter's purpose is to reveal the first divergence in scientific thought from Galilean philosophy: as physicists began to delve into the microscopic world, they encountered phenomena further and further away from their everyday experience. Intuitive physical pictures described by Newtonian mechanics were no longer sufficient to explain the properties of fundamental particles and their interactions. This led to more abstract areas of mathematics being brought to light and incorporated into the physicist's toolbox, such as the (re-)invention of matrix mechanics by Heisenberg and Schrodinger's description of particles in terms of his 'wavefunction'. As theorists grappled with these less intuitive mathematical tools, a gulf began to grow between the physical reality we can measure and the mathematical objects populating quantum mechanics. This is in stark contrast to classical physics, where mathematical variables were directly linked to physically measurable quantities. Lindley best describes the twentieth century's departure from Galilean physics with his account of Paul Dirac's 'discovery' of antimatter, the idea of which originated from the allowed solutions of Dirac's equation alone. Dirac inverted the paradigm of classical physics: rather than starting with self-evident phenomena and using mathematics as a descriptive tool, mathematics was now used to predict the existence of new physics, and it was down to experiment to confirm or falsify these predictions.

The final chapter is a startling one where the reader is exposed to many strange ideas which pervade modern theoretical physics. This section will delight even seasoned practitioners of science, who, by its conclusion, will surely share Lindley's discomfort over the path taken by fundamental physics. The reader encounters the eleven dimensions of string theory, ideas of supersymmetry, the multiverse, electroweak symmetry breaking and the Higgs boson, inflationary cosmology, and the universe modelled as an incomprehensibly large quantum computer. Lindley hammers home his point that many of these theories cannot be falsified. Either they make no physical predictions or require experiments operating at prohibitively high energies. Thus, theorists judge their theories based on vague notions of aestheticism and beauty, determined by the theoretical community themselves rather than being driven by experimental results. Lindley has by now built up to his controversial final statement: 'research in this area, no matter its intellectual pedigree and exacting demands, is better thought of not as science but as philosophy.' Lindley aptly describes modern theoretical physics as an exercise in a slightly revamped Platonism; mathematics and pure logic are once again seen as the source of physical laws and deeper insights into the universe's nature. A slight difference is, as Lindley puts it, 'Plato never supposed that by explaining the heavens he would also explain the earth, but that's exactly what fundamental physics proposes'. This chapter pleasingly comes full circle, returning us to the ancient philosophies detailed in the opening section.

The Dream Universe is an excellent read, providing a satisfying elucidation on the origins of modern physics and its apparent regression to platonist ideologue. Throughout, Lindley sprinkles his narrative with gripping anecdotes, serving to humanise the various characters and thus maintain the reader's interest. While the book has depth, it would be impossible for such a short volume to contain the entire story. Lindley acknowledges this throughout and signposts the reader to many resources which deal with specific topics in more detail. This is deftly done, and Lindley instils his own passion for the history and philosophy of science in the reader. Thus, *The Dream Universe* serves as a self-contained tale of the development of modern science, accessible to experienced scientists and general audiences alike, but may also be seen as an entryway to wider study.

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