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Richard Joseph
Kalamunda, Western Australia
rajoseph4342@hotmail.com

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Communication and creative democracy: Interdisciplinary perspectives, edited by Omar Swartz, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, Arima Publishing, 2011, viii + 301 pp., (paperback), ISBN 978 1 84549 456 8

The normative claim that drives this volume is that 'it is time to think creatively about how we conceptualise our democracy and how we think about what it means to be a community' (p.2). Few concerns could be more important. At a time when procedural democracy has become, or is becoming, ascendant across the world, there are widespread anxieties about the extent to which the experiential and affective dimensions of civic democracy fail to realise the lofty aspirations surrounding the ideal of government by the people for the people. Much has been written about the deliberative shortcomings of contemporary democracies, which afford citizens the right to vote while denying them serious opportunities to set the terms of the electoral agenda or reflect upon the most effective actions for realising self-determined ends. Much has been written about the routinely insulting exclusions and participatory inequalities that turn some citizens into second-class actors in the democratic sphere. Much has been written about the serious failings of the mass media from the perspective of informed and reflective democracy. Such concerns all point in a similar direction, but it may be that little can be achieved in relation to any one of them without a more radical re-think about what it means to be a member of a democratic community, not merely constitutionally or symbolically, but in terms of lived and felt experience.

Essays in this volume return repeatedly to a speech entitled 'Creative democracy – the task before us', which was written, but not delivered, by John Dewey on the occasion of his 80th birthday in 1939. In it he argued for the need to 'get rid of the habit of thinking of democracy as something institutional' and instead 'acquire the habit of treating it as a way of personal life'. This is precisely the challenge facing contemporary democracies, in which people find themselves remarkably empowered according to the checklists of procedural constitutionalism, but perva-

sively frustrated and disappointed in relation to their capacity to make a difference to the disorientating political and economic forces that persistently affect their lives. A truly creative approach to democratising democracy (as Giddens (2002) once put it) would undoubtedly meet with unqualified hostility from the beneficiaries of institutional inertia, but it is hard to imagine a long-term future for publicly credible democratic politics without this happening.

Having set out the need for this creative turn, I had hoped that this volume would have been full of stimulating and provocative proposals for the incremental enactment of culturally enriched forms of democracy. In that respect, this is a rather disappointing collection of essays, for three main reasons. First, few of the contributors go much further than the introductory essay in arguing for the need to think more creatively about democracy. Part II of the book is entitled 'Applying creative democracy', but the practical proposals, ranging from Laible's 'loving epistemology' to a consideration of e-voting, hardly constitute blueprints for even experimental or incremental practice. (Margaret Ann Clarke's chapter on digital storytelling is the most suggestive of the applied chapters, but it would have been so much better if it could have concluded with some recommendations for public policy or grassroots action.)

Second, the arguments in this book, while admirably faithful to the spirit of Dewey's 1939 speech, fail to engage with some of the most important recent literature emerging from similar perspectives. One would have expected this group of authors to have connected their thinking with the penetrating insights in *Media and the Restyling of Politics* (Corner & Pels, 2003), *Deepening Democracy* (Fung & Wright, 2003), *Democatic Innovation* (Saward, 2000) and *Legislative Theatre* (Boal, 1998). Most significantly, there is no engagement here with the works of Jacques Ranciere, surely the leading contemporary theorist of the aesthetic nature of democracy. Indeed, there is little in this volume to suggest that any problems and anxieties relating to democracy exist beyond the United States.

Third, while this volume raises some very important questions about the deficiencies of democratic culture, its authors have rather less to say about political power. In her chapter on 'loving epistemology', for example, Valerie Palmer-Mehta quotes Rothkopf's assertion that 'capitalism is an amoral system and … a society without a moral basis is unsustainable'. She follows this by stating that: 'While capitalism is not an inherently malevolent or corrosive structure, without a moral framework, it can be manipulated by those who view people's lives and their environments as nothing more than products to be manipulated, exploited and spoilt for personal profit'. The first statement makes a claim about the systemic incapacity of capitalism to deliver social fairness; the second refers to a contingent vulnerability of the capitalist system to unethical influences. This begs the question of how, if Rothkopf is right, a creative democracy could ever be compatible with capitalism; and how, if Palmer-Mehta is correct, the sphere of democratic politics can be safeguarded against the intrusions of unethical corporate power. As with cultural studies more generally, culturally framed political analysis runs the risk of seeming to attend to epiphenomenal affects while failing to acknowledge or address power structures. I would have liked to have read more from these authors about how rationalities of unaccountable power persistently distort and extinguish democratic norms and how they might be countered.

Despite these critical comments, I admire the way in which the authors of this volume refuse to treat democracy as if it were a settled entity. Debates about

democracy are likely to be more fruitful when they proceed on the assumption that it is a work in progress rather than a finished product (or even an exportable product). This volume reminds us that, amongst the critics of 'American democracy's' infamous complacency, John Dewey still has much to say to us.

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Stephen Coleman
University of Leeds
S.Coleman@leeds.ac.uk

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The arts of industry in the age of enlightenment by Celina Fox, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010, viii+576 pp., $US95.00, ISBN 978–0-300–16042–0

Although this large and handsomely presented volume—it has 260 illustrations, of which 60 are in colour—was published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, it would be unfortunate if it were read only by those whose interests lie in the history of art. *The Arts of Industry in the Age of Enlightenment*, centred as it is on the beginnings and early development of the Industrial Revolution, has a great deal to say of relevance to innovation and technological change. It is about the development of technical skills and their diffusion.

Celina Fox writes from her perspective as an art and cultural historian and her book has its central focus on the 1700s. In common usage at that time, 'art' referred more to technical skill and had weaker aesthetic associations than at present. As she puts it: 'the arts of industry had much richer connotations than they do today … [they] were taken to refer principally to the skills involved in the processes of industry itself' (p.1). That period, characterised by the intense and wide-ranging intellectual ferment labelled as the Enlightenment, also saw the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution.

Within the past decade there have been several books that relate directly or indirectly to the Industrial Revolution. For example, the economic historian Joel Mokyr (2009) has contributed a substantial study, while many other historians have emphasised the social history of the period (Crump, 2010). However, the catalytic effects on industry of what eighteenth century spin-doctors dubbed the 'Glorious Revolution' have been unduly neglected. Recently, some historians have re-interpreted the events of 1688 as a successful invasion from the Netherlands (Dillon, 2006; Vallance, 2006; Jardine, 2008). One effect of the victorious William of Orange's reliance on Dutch