a confrontation with past failings as a means of projecting better futures.

The Political Thought of America's Founding Feminists. By Lisa Pace Vetter. New York: New York University Press, 2017. 320p. $89.00 cloth, $30.00 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592717004005

— Penny Weiss, *Saint Louis University*

Lisa Pace Vetter's focus in this book is the "unsung advocates and chroniclers" who worked on behalf of "marginalized populations initially left out of the founding narrative" of America. Vetter rightly criticizes political scientists for ignoring the Jacksonian-era female thinkers she so ably tackles. While she suggests that the cause of such neglect has to do with "founding feminists" writing in "unconventional modes of theorizing" (p. 3), that strikes me as overly generous, given the discipline's willingness to accommodate diverse sources by people deemed important, and the fact that many writings by and for the marginalized were, in fact, standard theoretical treatises. Nonetheless, she is spot-on in taking the discipline to task for its exclusionary tendencies.

Vetter credits each of the seven figures she explores with something we are learning about more and more marginalized thinkers: "[N]ot only were these advocates engaging in many of the same theoretical debates and on many different levels, but, equally important, *they were also broadening and innovating on traditional mainstream theoretical concepts to better accommodate women and the disenfranchised*" (p. 4; my emphasis). The result, she asserts, is "a transformative understanding of democratic citizenship" (p. 6), and "a new political space" (p. 16), or "counterpublic," in which to theorize and to act. Vetter's strategy is to "bring the theoretical underpinnings of these reformers' efforts to light by framing them from the perspective of specific contemporaneous [male] political theorists such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Adam Smith, and Jeremy Bentham . . . without portraying early women's rights theorists as derivative of their male counterparts" (p. 18). She mostly succeeds in this endeavor.

Vetter first tackles freethinker Frances Wright. Especially given the breadth of her oeuvre, the influence of her lectures and newspaper, and the importance of the trends and theories she used and contested, the paucity of a secondary literature on Wright is almost shocking. Vetter's chapter adds significantly to it. I was especially happy to see attention to Wright's epistemology and the democracy it supports. As is often the case, the more Wright focused on systems of inequality, the more radical her thought became, shifting from a "romanticized republicanism" (p. 40) to a "withering portrayal of American society" (p. 41). The author convincingly shows that while Wright used the ideas of many, she always did so for her own ends: Her socialism was more political than that of Robert Owens, her appeal to the founding principles was more absolute than Jeremy Bentham's, and her vision of just gender relations was more egalitarian and less sentimental than Tocqueville's. Building in part on Bentham's work on corruption, Wright understands inequality in very modern terms, as Vetter notes: "[W]hite male privilege is supported by an elaborate network of corrupt political and religious institutions and sustained by oppressive social and cultural practices" (p. 57). She confronts the privileged with a new look at the costs to them of their seemingly desirable position (pp. 62–63). Vetter makes Wright quite appealing, from her "rhetorical prowess" (p. 63) to her independent thinking, which includes "inquiry and self-scrutiny" (p. 68) and "release from the authority of elites and the doctrines they sought to impose" (p. 70).

Harriet Martineau, like Wright, endured "vitriolic attacks" for her life and her politics (p. 76), and was an amazingly prolific writer in multiple genres. Vetter focuses intently and productively on Martineau's work on the concept and practice of sympathy. Vetter is most excited by the way Martineau moves Adam Smith's internal, "imaginative" practice of sympathy to a dialogic one. Vetter worries that "Smith's sympathetic observer may encounter difficulties in placing oneself in the shoes of someone of the opposite sex, or of a different race, or of a radically different socioeconomic status and accurately understanding that person's position." Martineau, in contrast, advocates direct engagement and discourse (which includes having factual social knowledge, as well as listening and observing), which allow the "other" to be heard, on their own terms (p. 81). Turning from a comparison with Smith to one with Tocqueville, Vetter compares their methods of coming to grips with the institution of slavery (Martineau's is more detailed, thorough, and filled with anecdotes and examples, as sympathy requires [p. 91]), and how those methods relate to Tocqueville's resigned conclusions and Martineau's hopeful ones. Vetter then shows how "Martineau's extensive analysis of the lamentable plight of American women in *Society in America* contrasts sharply with Tocqueville's" (p. 93), and the difference again turns out to be her robust practice of sympathy. Tracing one concept in this chapter is a source of its richness. In the end, both Smith and Tocqueville seem to shrink in comparison to the innovative Martineau. The first two chapters are wonderful.

Following is a relatively short, less satisfying chapter on Angelina Grimke, a figure "committed to a non-doctrinal, non-hierarchical, egalitarian form of Christianity" (p. 117). The two conversations into which she is placed, one with Catherine Beecher and one with Adam Smith, concern the ability of two sides of a deep political divide to hear each other and ultimately act in concert for greater equality. This time, the framing overwhelmed rather than made more visible the featured thinker's contributions.

Vetter turns to Smith's "moral theory of rhetoric and his concept of propriety" (p. 104) to clarify the conflict between Beecher and Grimke, the former accusing the latter "of abusing the power of rhetoric and transgressing the boundaries of feminine domesticity by using emotional language in the public realm" (p. 103). Smith sort of "rescues" Grimke from Beecher's criticisms with his rhetorical theory, while she in turn "expands on aspects of Smith's theory by demonstrating specific uses of rhetoric and moral theory that may be more capable of bringing about political and social change than critics of sympathetic rhetoric would allow" (p. 123).

Grimke's sister Sarah appears next, even more briefly, but more obviously politically, as the chapter title itself characterizes her as a "Quaker liberal." Vetter thinks that the secular, liberal version of her has wrongly overtaken the Quaker aspects, when the two should coexist. "To highlight the unappreciated political implications of her theory while not losing sight of its religious foundation," (p. 127) Vetter turns to "Quaker constitutionalism." In the chapter's second half, Vetter shows "how Sarah Grimke leads her audience through a systematic refutation of the scriptural arguments used to oppress women and a comprehensive critique of the 'legal disabilities' of women in America ultimately so that they may weigh her arguments on their own and form their own conclusions" (p. 133). Vetter finds some originality in Grimke's rereading of scripture, part of a long, laborious tradition, though this originality did not shine through to me. Perhaps it is sufficient to be part of "an alternative understanding of America's fundamental constitution . . . that requires the equality of men and women" (p. 142).

"Belligerent" pacifist and independent thinker Lucretia Mott is next. Vetter wants to push beyond Mott "as a moral and spiritual leader" who was superseded by more pragmatic and secular thinkers and activists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In this chapter, debates and even "striking differences" (p. 148) among feminists and abolitionists take a more central role. Vetter offers a closer reading of Mott's speeches, and emphasizes her "religious critique of dogmatism" that "forms the basis of a highly participatory, egalitarian, voluntarist understanding of political power" (p. 151). Vetter claims: "What is unique about Mott's message . . . is the overarching attack on all 'creeds and forms,' not just theological ones" (p. 153). Mott explores unconscious complicity in oppression and "places a heavy burden on human beings because [her view of social responsibility] applies not only to those who actually commit injustice but also to those who tolerate or otherwise benefit from it" (p. 154). Mott, like the other figures in this book, is concerned with dialogue across differences of opinion and religion in a pluralistic society (p. 157). Some attention is given to Mott's work against poverty, though more would have been welcome, both here and in other chapters, on how Vetter's figures often went beyond attention to race and sex in their work on democracy.

"No book on political theory and the founding of American feminism would be complete without an examination of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," Vetter rightly asserts (p. 166). But this is not a chapter on her political thought. Starting with a quick summary of what the literature says about the contributions of and criticisms against Stanton, the chapter aspires "to make a contribution to the ongoing debate regarding Stanton's elitism and racism," criticisms of her that "run the risk of overshadowing Stanton's remarkable achievements" (p. 168) and of marking the entire early women's rights movement as racist or elitist (p. 169). Vetter returns to "Adam Smith's theory of rhetoric as an interpretative frame to examine Stanton's rhetorical strategies" (p. 168), and many pages are devoted to the similarities between them, some aspects of which are familiar from previous chapters. Vetter focuses on "the role of ridicule in their respective moral theories of rhetoric" (p. 177), arguing that from early-on, Stanton employs a "rhetorical approach in which she frequently deploys ridicule, sarcasm, and other strategies to expose hypocrisy and advocate for reform, while consistently arguing for the equality of all people, male and female, poor and rich, black and white" (p. 169). Vetter is suggesting that Stanton may not believe some of the elitist arguments she makes but, rather, is asserting them to make the hypocrisy of elite males visible to them (p. 183), a rhetorical approach "vulnerable to misunderstanding and misuse" (p. 194). This may be so, but the argument did not contribute enough to the book or the literature on Stanton.

Finally, then, comes a short chapter on the "elusive and complex" (p. 198) Sojourner Truth, who "left behind no record written in her own hand" (p. 199) but nonetheless contributes to political thought. Methodologically, Vetter takes the two popular versions of Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" speech and declares that in the consistencies between them, we can infer "what she actually said and did" (p. 205). Like Stanton, Vetter's Truth uses the rhetorical tool of ridicule "to shame her audience, encourage self-reflection, and open opportunities for change" (p. 207).

I have several quibbles with the book. The chapters are stylistically and substantively uneven. I also wonder about the utility to teachers of American political thought of Vetter's repeated connections to *A Theory of Moral Sentiments.* There is, in addition, definitely more emphasis on women's rights than on abolition. There is some hedging between chapters, as when Smith's impartial spectator is criticized in one chapter and positively deployed in another. Vetter often makes contemporary connections to the historical figures whose thinking she recovers on the basis of a single evidentiary thread incapable of bearing the load. Attention to rhetorical strategies often overpowers

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592717004005 Published online by Cambridge University Press

attention to substance. Sample syllabi, organized both chronologically and thematically, would have made for really helpful appendices.

Yet, ultimately, I am inspired by the stories the book tells. At her best, Vetter is exemplary. The various theorists' attention to difference and dissent is note- and praiseworthy. Despite the focus on male counterparts, Vetter manages to keep *The Political Thought of America's Founding Feminists* centered on the women. Her explication of the theme of sympathy in multiple figures is most exciting, and surely nothing could be more relevant to Americanists and Americans today than information on the practice of talking across political differences. Women's deep commitment and contributions to a democratic America are well remembered here.

Heidegger and Politics: The Ontology of Radical Discontent. By Alexander S. Duff. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 214p. $99.99 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592717003504

— Jason Blakely, *Pepperdine University*

Martin Heidegger's politics have become a minor academic obsession. This preoccupation is understandable. After all, how could one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century have for some time enthusiastically backed the Nazi Party? Answers have often polarized into two camps: those seeking to disentangle Heidegger's thought from fascism (e.g., Jacques Derrida, Lawrence Hatab) and those viewing that task as impossible (e.g., Richard Wolin, Georg Lukács). The controversy has been further complicated by the undoubted obscurity of Heidegger's writings on this topic.

Into this arena of heated debate and confusion steps Alexander Duff with one of the best book-length treatments of Heidegger's politics published to date. Duff combines careful scholarship with admirable clarity, engaging Heidegger's key concepts without succumbing to overreliance on jargon (rarer than one might hope in Heidegger scholarship). Although he focuses heavily on Heidegger's masterwork, *Being and Time*, Duff also dexterously draws from across his published works and lectures.

Yet Duff's greatest strength is an interpretation of Heidegger that identifies a form of political thought that is not completely reducible to a single ideological position. Indeed, Duff opens with an illuminating discussion of how Heidegger has inspired otherwise ideologically incompatible political actors—from Iranian revolutionaries and radical Greens to Cold War dissidents and contemporary fascists (pp. 7–10). This is philosophically possible, according to the author, because Heidegger's politics are chiefly dispositional (a point I will return to) and thus highly malleable when it comes to content. In this way, Duff's interpretation of Heidegger captures what so many on both sides of the debate miss: namely, the considerable ideological pluralism that is possible within his framework of thought.

This is not to say that Duff's Heidegger is completely relativistic or bereft of political commitments. To the contrary, the author argues that Heidegger's philosophy justifies two basic and ostensibly opposing sensibilities: radical revolution and quietest discontent (pp. 17, 186–93). This argument is carefully constructed over the course of six chapters.

The first chapter begins by unpacking Heidegger's rejection of traditional ethics as a form of theory building. Duff helpfully situates Heidegger in various neo-Kantian debates of the time. But the larger upshot of his discussion for politics centers on Heidegger's extreme philosophical radicalism—his rejection of the use of theoretical categories and divisions typical of the history of philosophy. He sees Heidegger as profoundly hostile to theory. This hostility to theory will undergird his politics.

The second chapter introduces Heidegger's appropriation of Karl Jasper's notion of "limit situations" (especially death) as crucial for revealing the question of Being (pp. 44–52). If Heidegger is a philosophical radical—rejecting the entire tradition of thought that came before him—he is also a thinker who places a central importance on discontent, anxiety, and facing one's mortality. Dissatisfaction and "radical discontent" are central to authentic thinking in a way that not only colors Heidegger's political sensibility but also subsequently appeals to outsider movements "thinking at the margins of the Western project" (p. 10).

The next two chapters develop Heidegger's deep unease with quotidian human culture and politics through an analysis of his famous concept of "everydayness." Duff rightly argues that for Heidegger, the "everyday" is both an obstacle and the necessary starting point of authentic thinking about being (both "occlusive" and "disclosive" in Heideggerian language). Everydayness is the inescapable existential tendency of human beings to favor the "stable, visible, reliable, publically discerned aspects" of reality in such a way that covers over the true finite and ephemeral nature of Being (p. 71). Limit situations like distress, discontent, and especially anxiety about death disrupt this human tendency to dwell in a false eternity of present customs, ways of thinking, talking, and associating that happen to characterize their historical world.

Heidegger's way of breaking out of the dominance of everyday modes is individual and communal apprehension of Being and its dialectic with "the nothing" (pp. 141–42). Only then can humans resolutely and authentically grasp their existential conditions. The last two chapters argue that Heidegger's philosophy is inherently political insofar as the release from the everyday is a communal task requiring a radical philosophical skepticism and rejection of common ideas of polity and time among both ancients and moderns, the Left and the Right (pp. 177–82).