Given that Bellamy is quick to establish "moral obligations" that fall on citizens, one might think that, when push comes to shove, he would say that those citizens who reject his vision for the EU simply err; they fail to see what morality demands of them. But then the question arises how his arguments could ever "attain legitimacy" in the sociological sense of the term, which is his avowed goal. Of course, Bellamy could say that, "in the here and now," such questions need not concern us, because empirics neatly align with normative proposals. Yet, this would sit uneasily with his theory's commitment to democratic self-determination, which must also leave room for creativity in developing new political forms (that may well be in tension with presumed moral obligations).

I find another issue troublesome. It seems that Bellamy, like many other contemporary republican thinkers, adopts an excessively idealized view of the nation-state. In his case, this view seems to be informed by nostalgia for "the welfare democracies that emerged in western Europe post-1945," which he presents as "approximating . . . a republican regime" that "established a degree of relational equality among citizens with regard not only to the process of making collective decisions but also the substance of the decisions themselves" (p. 11).

This idealized view has dramatically little to do with the reality of most EU member states, however. Far from instantiating "relational equality," they are marked by rising socioeconomic inequality, mistrust in the political system, and degrees of polarization that undermine citizens' "incentive to develop only commonly avowable policies and principles that address shareable values and interests or mutually acceptable compromises" (p. 79)—which is one of the conditions that a collective must meet, according to Bellamy, to qualify as a "people."

Therefore, one wonders whether operating with a more realistic view of nation-states might have led Bellamy to different conclusions about the EU. Moreover, reading Bellamy's book one gets a sense that the most urgent task facing us is actually the reform of *domestic* representative democracies, even though it is doubtful that European nation-states can ever again assume the shape of the much-glorified post-1945 republican regimes. Indeed, if we accept Bellamy's republican conception of nation-states, then it is clearly not so much the EU that is out of sync with normative ideals but national democracies.

Machiavelli and the Politics of Democratic Innovation. By Christopher Holman. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. 320p. $56.25 cloth.
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Early in Christopher Holman's persuasive and exhaustively supported *Machiavelli and the Politics of Democratic Innovation*, he quotes one of the many letters written by the former Florentine secretary to his friend Francesco Vettori. Anyone who stumbled across their correspondence, Machiavelli writes, would be astounded to find that two men who seem "serious" and "directed toward great things" had also combined their stately political observations with subjects that were "frivolous ... lascivious ... and useless." But if those future readers considered the matter carefully, they would not find such combinations to be blameworthy. We "are imitating nature," Machiavelli writes his friend, "which is changeable; and whoever imitates that cannot be reprimanded." Indeed, Machiavelli's twenty-first-century readers have found recently that this changeable interlocutor has a democratic edge that is as timely as plutocracy, torture, and usurpation. Holman's work is both an outstanding contribution to that moment and a fount of evidence in support of a radically democratic Machiavelli.

Holman writes that a radical democratic vision is realized through the empowerment of a universal human creative urge, and he offers us an analysis with an "emphasis on what Machiavelli has to offer to a radical democratic theory grounded in an affirmation of the universal capacity for creative innovation" (p. 4). But Holman must begin by dealing with an apparent contradiction in Machiavelli's work: his seeming combination of imitation and radical innovation in his approach to the exemplars he directs his readers to study. (Consider, for example, the preface to Book One of the *Discourses on Livy*, when Machiavelli begins his emulatory analysis of Livy's *ab urba condita libri* with a call to his contemporaries to turn to ancient examples while, at the same time, boasting that he will "enter upon a path not yet trodden by anyone"; Machiavelli: *The Chief Works and Others*, Allan Gilbert trans., 1989. p. 190). Holman resolves this issue with a virtuoso turn to Walter Benjamin's concept of a "constellative mode of historical appropriation." "Ideas," Benjamin wrote, "are to objects as constellations are to stars" (p. 30). Just as constellations exist in the sight and minds of those who chart them, so arguments about and interpretations of history are composed by combining events and ideas from the particular (and inevitably anachronistic) perspectives of the interpreters.

For example, Livy did not report the actual events of seven and a half centuries of Roman history; indeed, even the founding date of Rome is likely a fiction, which Livy himself all but suggests. Rather, Livy is drawing out events and ideas from his perspective of the story of Rome and using them to craft a narrative that is, in Holman's words, a "conservative patrician image" (p. 31). Machiavelli, who begins *The Prince* by drawing our attention to the importance of perspective, to the political vision of the artist who can sketch valleys from mountaintops and mountains from valleys and who can interpret kings from among the people, and the people from the princes, emulates Livy in this method. From Machiavelli's own position, however, when Italy was a battleground for France, Spain, and the Catholic Church, the ideas and

events of Roman antiquity form a different constellation. Rather than demonstrating, for example, the body politic of Menenius's fable, in which the people have to embrace their responsibility to serve and feed the nobility, Machiavelli sees from his perspective a Rome that succeeded precisely because the aristocrats and the people alike were able to find political expression for their innate human need to express their capacity for creative innovation.

In addition to recognizing the human ability to create, Holman's Machiavelli recognizes the plasticity of human character itself. The Florentine's anxiety regarding corruption, the inevitable erosion of the habits that can sustain a healthy state, is matched by a wary hopefulness about the possibility of creating the practices that can make possible a political body dedicated to the release of human creative potential. This fluidity in human behavior—the same variability that fills the letters to Vettori with political gravity and bawdy humor—helps human beings imitate nature and *fortuna*.

In Dashiell Hammett's *Maltese Falcon*, the detective Sam Spade tells the story of a man named Charles Flitcraft from one of his previous cases. Flitcraft had been an insurance salesman with a home, a wife, and children, who felt that his middle-class American existence put him in sync with a nature that he took to be reliable and regular. When a near-fatal accident with a falling girder at a construction site suggests to Flitcraft that he had read the nature of life incorrectly, he abandons his job, home, and family and decides to govern his life by decisions as random and chaotic as he assumes the world around him to be. The successful prince adapts himself to life as Flitcraft did, but with a greater awareness of his strategies. A virtuoso Machiavellian actor plays on a world that is contingent and variable, trying to mimic the shifting fortunes all around; this actor is not a tyrant, "able," in Holman's words, "to impose his or her will upon" the world, "without resistance" (p. 102), but instead is a skillful and creative performer.

This creative capacity is not limited to princes. Holman positions himself against conservative readings of Machiavelli that interpret his view of the people as a passive mass, capable of being bought off by guarantees of their "private security." Instead, Machiavelli's people are "an active force that seeks a concrete place in government in order to vent its ambition" (p. 215). By his emphasis on this "concrete place," however, Holman also positions himself against other radical democratic readings. The radical democratic impulse of his Machiavelli is not just a call to revolutionary ferment; like actors in the space of freedom embedded in Arendt's definition of a true founding, the people of Holman's Machiavelli seek the institutionalization of their creative capacities.

"The discord between the people and the Roman Senate," Machiavelli writes in Book One, Chapter Four of the *Discourses*, "made that republic free and powerful" (Machiavelli, 1989, p. 202). Republics are the perfect institutionalized form for the creative agonism that Holman finds in his meticulous reading of Machiavelli. After all, because "human multiplicity" is an ineradicable part of our contingent nature, conflict is inevitable, and it was not the *fact* of conflict that made Machiavelli's Rome different from other societies. "The key political issue is not whether conflict can be eliminated," Holman reminds us, "but rather the form that conflict takes and the modes by which it is negotiated" (p. 215). The institutions of the republic as Machiavelli sees it, including but not solely the Tribunes of the plebs, enable a ground from which all citizens can enter the space of political argument and innovative action. It is this redemptive space of political action, and not a better set of defenses around their private lives, that can bond a people to a republic, form the habits of an autonomous citizenry, and introduce the possibility of radical change to an otherwise sterile state. Thus do the people approach the expression of creative energy that many readers of Machiavelli associate with the prince. After all, Holman and Machiavelli remind us, a republic is a state in which "the people, by means of their virtue, become princes" (p. 11).

AMERICAN POLITICS

Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics. By Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 472p. $99.00 cloth, $27.95 paper.

The Branding of Right-Wing Activism: The News Media and the Tea Party. By Khadijah Costley White. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 286p. $99.00 cloth, $27.95 paper.
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In the immediate aftermath of Donald J. Trump's election to the office of president of the United States, many Americans were left with a sense of disorientation, wondering what exactly had just happened, how it had happened, and whether it was indicative of a larger social, cultural, and political trajectory. Before too long, journalistic accounts—whether supportive of President Trump, horrified by his election, or ostensibly objective—filled bookstore shelves. Many focused on the most alarming and sensationalistic aspects of the story, such as Russian interference. Only more recently have social scientists begun to publish their own book-length treatments aimed at providing theoretically grounded, empirically supported analyses of the conditions that may have paved the way to the 2016 election and its aftermath. The two books under consideration join an expanding literature on the media's role in the rise of right-wing populism. Khadijah Costley White's book, *The Branding of Right-Wing Activism: The*