of democracy, but reality itself has been co-opted as a sphere of magical fantasy to become the chief source of solace and salvation for radically narcissistic and demented human beings.

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Davina Cooper: *Feeling Like a State: Desire, Denial, and the Recasting of Authority.* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. Pp. x, 262.)

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This latest book by Davina Cooper is part of a bigger project to "conceptually reimagine what it means to be a state" (4), one in which she has also collaborated with others (see, e.g., Cooper, Dhawan, and Newman, eds., *Reimagining the State: Theoretical Challenges and Transformative Possibilities* [Routledge, 2020]). Indeed, one could say that this concern for disrupting and reworking the state has been with Cooper from her days as councillor for a London borough and monographs such as *Governing Out of Order* (Rivers Oram, 1998). In this new book, she asks a question that might not occur to many of us: What does, and what could, a state feel like, how can it be "replenishing, stimulating and satisfying" (16)?

Always intrigued by the brilliant, often orthogonal perspective that Cooper offers, I began reading *Feeling Like a State* in December 2019—and then COVID hit and our lives were put on hold. However, returning to this book now has provided its key contribution—a progressive rethinking of what a state should *feel* like—with an urgency perhaps not felt in 2019, when the UK and Europe seemed bogged down in a desperate cycle of denial as Brexit loomed ever closer. Now we are all having to rethink what a state should be, as states take control of our lives in ways unprecedented in my generation through the imposition of lockdown, restrictions on movement and assembly, and even dictating what we wear. In these unthinkable times, we might want the state to be acting with authority, but we also need states to be nourishing, caring, and feeling.

Key to the thinking in this book—and indeed to much of Cooper's work—is a concern for *responsibility*; to reconceptualize the state through examining a notion of responsibility that puts center stage an ability and willingness for action that can "support relations of social justice, ecology, and the more

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equal distribution of work and care" (70). It is this understanding that speaks so directly and so vividly to us in these troubled times. By questioning the idea that state responsibility does not necessarily mean *nation-state* responsibility, that social justice requires recognizing and advancing reciprocal relations between states and others, she opens up our thinking of what a state looks and feels like. Inspired by the work of Janet Newman and John Clarke (to whom the book is dedicated), Cooper's methodology of decentring the state allows for a rethinking, without romanticizing, of the place and role of civil society. Indeed, thinking about states as being akin to community organizations—and elements of community organizations as state-like—can be productive in these times. I am reminded of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria discussed in *Pandemic Solidarity* (Pluto, 2020): a "bottom-up political organisation based on street communes, [which] provided social services, food, education and democratic organisation during the Covid crisis." In the UK, during the first lockdown, it was often local community anchor organizations that took responsibility for the care of local residents, transforming themselves in only a few days into local hubs that organized food and prescription deliveries, kept in regular contact with their most vulnerable residents, connected people through WhatsApp groups, and much more. Just as Stirling Council's support of Palestinian rights through sanctioning a boycott of goods (discussed in the concluding chapter) prefigured an alternative concept of state concern, these examples call for concepts of state that include care about the future. This care applies not only to economic and health policies, but also to how we relate to others—our children, grandchildren, and strangers; such an approach is similar to what Black Lives Matter is doing in making us question our relationships with the past and looking to the state and public institutions to reimagine that.

The book deploys a methodology familiar to readers of Cooper's earlier work, using legal cases and the dramas surrounding them as data for analysis. It is not only—indeed, not primarily—what the judges have to say that provides the material, but the stories that lead up to the issues being fought through the courts, and the aftermath enacted in public and private domains. Her material is cases of conservative religious activism that focus on the politics of withdrawal. So, for example, the case of the Johns, a Pentecostal married couple who wanted to foster children but refused to assure the local council that they would present gay and heterosexual possibilities as equally valid alternatives to their foster children. Their foster care application was suspended and the case ended up in the courts. The story allows Cooper to explore the intertwining of love and state withdrawal—the Johns' assurances that they would love and care for their children were insufficient for them to be allowed to keep their state contract. In other examples, it is state officials' withdrawal that is challenged—the registrar who would not perform a gay marriage, the firemen who would not accompany a gay pride march. What the examples in this book do is show us the state in the everyday—and the everyday in the state. The everyday intertwining

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of the public and the private—indeed, do these boundaries have much use here?—make us work through not just state responsibility but how responsibility in seemingly private domains of love and care interacts with everyday public responsibility that we ascribe to the state. These dissident actions, no matter how fleeting, can make us appreciate the capacity for minority presence and affect (61), enabling us to ask whether and how it is possible to redraw those boundaries in a care-ful way. Ultimately the book is about "the desire for other kinds of states" (157), which is what many of us had hoped the worldwide pandemic crisis might bring about.

So, where does this lead us? As Cooper said in her Kings College inaugural lecture in 2019, social justice is in part dependent on the forms that institutions take. Cooper is asking us to think about democracy and how it can be enacted. Her case studies are all about arguing rights. By encompassing formations that we separate off from the state into "civil society," and by not taking a stand for or against these different rights claims, her stories enable us to think how acts of exclusion, discrimination, and sanctioning might enable progressive rethinking of what a democratic, inclusive state could look and feel like. The concluding chapter examines possibilities of how things might be otherwise through examples of state play, from LETS schemes to free universities and crowd-sourced constitutions, to show us ways in which the state should not—indeed cannot—be discounted. Her examples help us to rethink what and how states should look, feel, and be like. At a time when neoliberal states are relocating governmental responsibilities onto individuals or to their chums in private companies to make profits, the book asks us to look forwards, to a concept of the state, even if provisional, which is relational, caring, and feeling and has social justice at its heart.

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Carl Raschke: *Neoliberalism and Political Theology: From Kant to Identity Politics*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. Pp. viii, 196).

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Neoliberalism and Political Theology is a thoughtful and often insightful essay about a topic that has little to do with its title. The latter, along with the author's introduction, leads the reader to believe that his book will contribute

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