in Spinoza, to Nietzsche's critique of utilitarianism. There is such a richness of this material throughout the book that it's hard to say who or which traditions are most important. A recurrence of certain ideas and protagonists associated with the recent affective turn in cultural studies (Lauren Berlant, Heather Love, Ann Cvetcovitch, Eve Sedgwick, and David Eng, for example) helps to locate *The Promise of Happiness* within the particular sub-field of affect studies. However, Ahmed is equally reliant on (and equally comfortable) with Audre Lorde (among other black feminists), Lee Edelman (among other queer theorists), and Giles Deleuze (among other earlier theorists of affect), as she is on Plato's *Republic*. The book is so much more than a tour through these ideas, and yet, I don't think it's an insult to describe it as something of a *Sophie's World* of happiness philosophy, because this may be one of its core functions for readers in feminist cultural studies, critical race theory, disability studies, and queer studies, whose methods and theoretical knowledge often favors the textual and the historical. For those types of readers, *The Promise of Happiness* will serve as a useful introduction to the philosophies underpinning contemporary theoretical approaches to thinking about sociality, subjectivity, affect, and the governance of life. But *The Promise of Happiness* is much more than Happiness Philosophy 101, for what Ahmed offers here is a deeply resonant but also strongly reasoned theory of how history and ideology *become affect*. The happiness imperative as an illustrative case study is at once bold and sweeping because, put simply, happiness is so hard to argue against.

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MARIA DO MAR CASTRO VERALA, NIKITA DHAWAN, AND
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Hegemony and Heteronormativity Revisiting "The Political" in Queer Politics

Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. 224 pp.

Maria do Mar Castro Varela, Nikita Dhawan and Antke Engel's *Hegemony and Heteronormativity* presents a very complex analysis of "the political" in queer politics. From the outset, the editors define the

object of study, “wherein ‘the political’ does not denote the *sphere* of politics, but the *processes, regimes* or *logics* of language, knowledge and power inherent in doing politics” (1; their emphasis). The collection of essays expands and creates a dialogue between two significant categories of queer politics: hegemony and heteronormativity. Indeed, it is the aim of this collection to rethink queer theory in terms of these concepts, “so as to avoid narrowing queer politics to a critique of normative heterosexuality and the rigid gender binary” (2). *Hegemony and Heteronormativity* marks out the definition of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Post-Gramscian theories lead us to rethink ideologies of dominance and power, and how hegemony cannot be disengaged from heteronormativity. In Randi Gressgard’s chapter “Revisiting Contingency, Hegemony and Universality,” Gressgard co-opts these theories to suggest “how recent theories of hegemony and feminist/queer critiques of heteronormativity can mutually enrich as well as subvert one another” (26). Ultimately, these essays offer the opportunity for a dialogue on dominance and power from a queer perspective, while reconsidering conventional understandings of queer. Lisa Duggan advises us the importance of avoiding considering these concepts as mutually exclusive, “the cultural and social organization of gender and sexuality is embedded within the institutions and everyday practices of global political economy, and is inextricably imbricated with the organization of race, dis/ability, nation, empire and religion” (xxv).

The writers focus on ways in which “heteronormative norms, institutions, practices and discourses consolidate the hegemony of heterosexuality” (13). In particular, the essay “From the ‘Heterosexual Matrix’ to a ‘Heteronormative Hegemony’: Initiating a Dialogue between Judith Butler and Antonio Gramsci about Queer Theory and Politics” complicates the notion of power as an effect of hegemony and introduces the term *heteronormative hegemony*. For Ludwig, hegemony can be pushed beyond the limits of class and assists us in new theories of heteronormative power. Ludwig and Gressgard, as well as Antke Engel and Katerina Kolarova, demonstrate the potential for queer politics to be further augmented by theories on hegemony. Using the film *I Am Sam* (Jesse Nelson, dir.; New Line Cinema, 2001) as her case study, Kolarova’s essay is a particularly sharp analysis on the intersection of queer and disability studies and their relationship with “the moving equilibrium of hegemony” (139).

Indeed, the strength of this collection of essays lies in the thoughtful application of the theory set out in the introduction. In “Normative Dilemmas and the Hegemony of Counter Hegemony,” Maria do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan extend the discussion of hegemony to the contemporary issue of same sex marriage, informed by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabba’s essay “Of Mimicry and Man” (in *The Location of Culture*, 121–30; London: Routledge, 1994). Their arguments are twofold. Firstly, using Bhabba’s idea of mimicry, both imitates normative heterosexual marriage while also destabilizing the norm. Secondly, Castro Varela and Dhawan argue same sex marriage reinforces the marginalization of those that choose not to marry. “Debates surrounding same-sex marriage politics problematize the idea of family, rearticulate care-politics and reinvent partnership, but they also stabilize the idea of monogamous love and exclude non-normative alliances from parity of participation” (116). Of the numerous essays in this collection, this particular piece stands out for its straightforward and interesting argument.

While well argued, a key criticism I must raise is the writing style chosen. If the aim of the book is to open up a dialogue on key concepts pertaining to queer politics, then linguistically the book should aim to be open for a wide academic audience. While the arguments on the interlocking power systems are salient, particularly in both Kolarova, and Castro Varela and Dhawan’s essays, the dense and sometimes convoluted manner of writing limits the audience to those who are already well versed in queer politics and the concepts of hegemony and heteronormativity. This is not an introductory book.

The conclusion of the introduction reminds us how the discussion needs to be ongoing in that the “concept of hegemony reveals how the production of identities and the critique of heteronormativity are themselves effects of hegemonic processes and therefore not per se subversive” (19). This is an informative and fascinating introduction to the term *heteronormative hegemony* and an important addition to queer scholarship, and will hopefully inform future academic dialogues on relationships of power.

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