

port, Polish Communists and their newspaper surprisingly continued to thrive. Polec even states that it is Morski's departure for Poland that brings about a decline in the movement. Notwithstanding the weaknesses of the work, the monograph lays a good foundation for further scholarship on the Polish Canadian Left. It also advances the Polish Canadian historiography and that of the larger communist movement in Canada.

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Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers and the State of Perception* (Duke University Press, 2015). 306pp. Paperback \$24.95.

The preface to Massumi's book invites the reader to consider starting at the end. It is a fitting exhortation in a book that examines a temporal twist coined 'ontopower'. Temporal tautologies are used as headings throughout the book including 'futures past' (190), 'fast forward on rewind' (197) and, my favourite, 'smoke of future fires' (202). I am particularly partial to the latter because it points to Massumi's 'unabashedly metaphysical' approach (205). Massumi situates ontopower "in a field of action with other regimes of power", arguing that "it is necessary to adopt an ecological approach to threat's environmental power" (200).

The newly consolidated mode of power that is ontopower pivots on the 'singular time signature' (200) of preemption, which "denotes acting on the time before: before it has emerged as a clear and present danger" (vii). The first chapter begins with former US President George W. Bush's oft quoted rationale for the invasion of Iraq: "[i]f we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge" (3). Massumi maintains, however, that "although the exemplary events through which this operative logic [of preemption] is evaluated in the book are, for the most part, historically moored in the Bush administration, the power curve they express exceeds it" (221). He argues that preemption "is an *operative logic* of power defining a political epoch in as infinitely space-filling and insidiously infiltrating way as the logic of the 'deterrence' defined as the Cold War era" (5).

From the outset the vast scope and challenge of Massumi's project are clear. The first hint at how we might understand the operative logic of this new entrant into the ecology of powers is the word 'ontopower' itself. 'Onto' means being. Preemption is productive. It brings the future into being as it "trace[s] itself out as a self-propelling *tendency*" (5). One related proposition is that "The security that preemption is explicitly meant to produce is predicated on its tacitly producing what it is meant to avoid: preemptive security is predicted on a production of insecurity to which it itself contributes" (196). Writing about a temporal tautology that asks us

to consider “What is this time of the before?”; “How can it be acted upon?” and; “How can that acting upon already constitute a decision, given the ungraspability of that which has yet to eventuate and may yet take another form?” (v), is not easy.

Fortunately Brian Massumi is a gifted writer with the intellectual heft to bring these questions together and make the metaphysical visible and intelligible. The writing achieves a lightning strike of insight regularly enough to reward commitment. The prose is spiced and leavened with sentences that hit the bull’s eye on complex concepts. A random selection of such sentences include: “Preemption stands for conflict unlimited: the potential for peace amended to become a perpetual state of undeclared war” (16); “Winging headlong into a warlike future on the threat edge of chaos is a hard way to live in the present” (18); “Threat passes through linear time, but does not belong to it. It belongs to the nonlinear circuit of the always will have been” (191); and “The operative logic of the liberal-democratic state of the people has been abstractly head-butted to the sidelines by the neoliberalism of the operative logic of the security state” (223).

The articulation of questions such as “How could the nonexistence of what has not happened be *more* real than what is observably over and done with?” (190), throughout the book crystalizes a whole host of threads that threaten to spin off in too many different directions. Such questions typically give rise to what are called propositions, which pull us back to the book’s core concerns. Examples and case studies also work to bring concepts shimmering on the horizon of intelligibility into focus.

The book builds on Massumi’s earlier scholarship, including an oft-cited chapter “The Future Birth of the Affective Fact” (2010; the title of chapter 7 in the book under review). The nature and impacts of preemption have previously been considered by human geographers Ben Anderson (“Preemption, precaution, preparedness: Anticipatory action and future geographies,” 2010) and Louis Amoore (*The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security beyond Probability*, 2013), who interrogate the shift away from probability and calculation as a basis for action towards uncertainty and imagination. Socio-legal scholar Lucia Zedner (“Too much security?” 2003) has examined the way that security and insecurity are intertwined so that security measures always form the platform for demands for more security. Media theorist Richard Grusin (“Premediation,” 2010) has described the preemptive turn in media reporting post 9/11. My own work, with co-authors Pickering and Wilson, investigates the temporal tautology of ‘pre-crime’, as a manifestation of preemption on the ‘home front’ (“Pre-crime and counter-terrorism imagining future crime in the ‘war on terror,’” 2010; *Pre-Crime: Pre-emption, precaution and the future*, 2016; see also Zender, “Pre-crime and post-criminology,” 2007).

Regardless of the extant work on the politics and practice of preemption, Massumi’s contribution is of singular importance. ‘Potential politics’ exemplified through ontopower are the politics of fear, war, and chaos. According to Massumi, the question of what a ‘counter-ontopower’ might be is a crucial one (ix). The an-

swer to that question demands that we are able to grasp where this new power sits in the landscape of powers and how it works. The book is a significant step towards developing such a counter-power.

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Dan Malleck, *When Good Drugs go Bad: Opium, Medicine, and the Origins of Canada's Drug Laws* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2015). 320pp. Paperback \$34.95.

On 30 May 1908, William Lyon Mackenzie King, then Deputy Minister of Labour, replied to a letter from Peter Hing, a leader of the Chinese Anti-Opium League of Vancouver, who had asked Mackenzie King if he could inquire into the manufacture of opium in Vancouver while also investigating the 1907 anti-Asiatic riots. Mackenzie King responded that there could be “but one opinion ... toward this evil, which ... does so much to destroy not only the lives of individuals, but the manhood of a nation.”¹ Mackenzie King’s statement displays many of the themes explored in Dan Malleck’s *When Good Drugs Go Bad: Opium, Medicine, and the Origins of Canada’s Drug Laws*: race, gender, and the relationship between individual health and national welfare. However, while many historians have located the origins of Canada’s drug laws in anti-Asian racism, Malleck argues that these historians have overemphasized the importance of anti-Chinese sentiment. Rather, both the Opium Act and the Patent or Proprietary Medicine Act of 1908 were the outcome a longer series of social and cultural developments—particularly the professionalization of physicians and pharmacists—and the ways that these groups imagined themselves as protectors of national health and integrity. Regulation of medicinal and non-medicinal drug use drew upon a common set of late-nineteenth century anxieties about national health that paved the way for drug prohibition—a development all the more remarkable given the weight of laissez-faire arguments about the medical marketplace.

Prior to the early-twentieth century, Canadians could access opium and other drugs primarily through pharmacies. However, as Malleck demonstrates with pharmacy records and home-remedy books, opium competed in a relatively open medical marketplace characterized by multiple alternative therapies. “The main user of opiates was the medical profession itself,” Malleck reminds us, and by the mid-nineteenth century, opium had become a crucial tool for an emerging medical profession that claimed therapeutic superiority over alternatives such as homeopathy (27-28).

While opium was a powerful medicine, it was also a dangerous one. Cases of opium poisoning and addiction brought about by medical use raised the stakes for Canada’s doctors as they negotiated their emerging professional identity, often