

argument demonstrates that the industry still has yet to thoroughly and permanently create a space for queer, non-normative, and nonwhite agents. As she writes in her epilogue, “Who knows how long the current industry fascination with trans models will last, or what impact this new visibility will have on the industry, those who pursue the fashion press, or buy the brands these models work for” (273). Brown then cites the example of 2008’s Fashion Week in New York, where no model of color appeared in the more than one hundred presentations. Brown’s text is an insightful work and beneficial to any scholar whose research explores race, gender, sexuality, fashion, photography, and queer culture. Brown’s historical reading of modeling as both transgressive and conservative, made so by the identities and sensibilities of the historical agents involved, the pressures of the capitalist market, and the normative codes of society makes *Work! A Queer History of Modeling* an insightful and engaging addition to the growing literature in queer scholarship.

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Rosenfeld Sophia,  
**Democracy and Truth:  
A Short History**

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Pennsylvania Press

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This is a crisp, fascinating, beautifully written book that provides important context and perspective on one of the most pressing issues of our age: the relationship between truth and politics. Specifically, Rosenfeld is concerned with the historical and intellectual roots of democracy and takes the reader on a guided tour of how democratic ideals and practices grew up alongside concern for truth, facts, statistics, and information as twin pillars for the growth of democracy itself. Any summary of the argument at this

point would be absurd, for the book is less than two hundred pages and is written in such accessible prose that there is no barrier to a general reader getting the clearest possible introduction to such diverse threads of the story as Kantian philosophy, the census, literacy standards for voting, slavery, the history of education, and censorship. One of the greatest strengths of the book is how effortlessly Rosenfeld weaves together three centuries of intellectual history around the subjects of truth and democracy—across several continents—and offers it up to readers as a compelling narrative that holds one’s attention even through topics such as why governments need to keep statistics, but also occasionally withholds information. The lessons for our current post-truth age are also explored, making the book not just a compelling history, but also an exemplar of what it is talking about: an exploration of facts and ideas with an eye toward their effect on current concerns over the erosion of democratic norms and the drift toward authoritarianism.

The weakest part of the book comes at the outset, in the first chapter, on the philosophical issues surrounding truth. After recounting a familiar litany of abuses to truth under the Trump administration, Rosenfeld arrives a bit late to the party in the post-truth debate. Her presentation of post-truth as a mere epistemological problem (on pages 20–21) is too simple. In a hurried analysis, she seems to suggest that the social constructivist critique of the possibility of objectivity is the correct one, even as she tries to defend the concept of truth from the hands of a brute like Trump. Can we have it both ways? She salves her conscience by contending, with scant evidence, that the movement of postmodernism could not plausibly have had anything to do with the scourge of post-truth, largely on the grounds that this academic idea has had so little cultural influence. She writes, “despite many recent pundits’ claims, [postmodernism] has actually had little direct impact outside the academy and the arts” (20). Yet that point, as well as the proper

understanding of constructivist and relativist critiques of the notion of truth, is itself very much a matter of ongoing debate. One wishes that the author had spent more time with the philosophical literature on truth—not to mention post-truth—before coming to such a hasty set of conclusions. As intellectual history, this book is superb. As philosophy, it is disappointing.

Things take a decided turn for the better in chapter 2, where Rosenfeld seems more in her element, drawing together a range of facts and insights into a compelling narrative on how the ideas and practices of democracy grew alongside a growing appetite for record-keeping, scientific exploration, journalism, and fighting against political corruption. As she explains it, governments relied on knowledge and an educated citizenry as the backbone of the technocratic and increasingly specialized role of democracy itself. In this part of the story, one sees the big picture of the Enlightenment’s growing respect for expertise (by way of contrast with today’s erosion of this, as chronicled in Tom Nichols’s *The Death of Expertise* [Oxford University Press 2018]). The democratization of truth is a complex notion, and Rosenfeld helps us to understand the flaws, limitations, and intricacies of democracy’s reliance on the norm of truth.

In the third chapter, Rosenfeld explores the deep roots of populism in American politics, both left and right, and the epistemological tensions that can ensue. Whereas populists may see themselves as the guardians of a sort of common-sense approach to truth, the folksy narratives they tell themselves can also undermine it, culminating in some of the outrages of the Trumpian insistence that reality must bend to a preferred political narrative. The distrust of elites who make knowledge claims, who do science, and who have the kind of evidence that stands behind good public policy can be swamped by the fictions that underlie the democratization of truth (or its hijacking by a faux-populist wannabe authoritarian) and so, occasionally, as

today, pose a threat to democracy itself.

In the fourth and final chapter of the book, the argument both comes together and falls apart, in its focus on our present situation. Here, Rosenfeld once again takes up the question of post-truth. Yet I felt that, again, she missed the point. In trying to make the case that some writers on post-truth have overstated the influence of postmodernism, she trots out a straw man claim that those who would hold that postmodernism has at least some responsibility for post-truth are conflating postmodernism with idealism. That is, quite simply, not the case. The charge against postmodernism is not that it claims the real world *does not exist*, but that, by buying into the politicization of all truth claims, one has handed Trump and his ilk a loaded ideological weapon to pretend that truth is malleable. The worry here is not ontological but political. Indeed, couldn't one imagine Trump agreeing quite happily with Foucault's claim that any profession of truth is an expression of power? Have not two of Trump's advisors said that there are alternative facts and that truth is not truth? The only remaining question here is whether postmodernism could have been one of the contributing causal factors for post-truth. Rosenfeld displays an enormous failure of imagination in claiming that, unless Trump and his allies were reading Derrida, this could not be true. Yet if Rosenfeld had actively engaged with the literature that makes these claims, she might have been forced to contend with several overt avowals embracing postmodernist principles by some of Trump's influencers. Surely, Trump himself would not have to have read postmodernist literature to pick up its cultural influence. The postmodernist assault on objectivity gives Trump and his followers permission to deny facts and make up false narratives wherever they like, just as postmodernism undermined science and facilitated the growth of science denial in the science wars of the 1990s. One need not believe that postmodernism is the only—or even the most important—

root of post-truth, but to claim that it does not bear any responsibility at all strains credulity.

The last twenty pages of Rosenfeld's book are a tour de force in which she asks a series of hard questions—and offers some preliminary answers—for what may be necessary to rescue democracy from its post-truth dilemma. She wonders whether social media platforms are at odds with the idea that free speech is one of the anchors of democratic governance and questions whether there may need to be some limits. She recommends shoring up some of our precious institutions, such as voting, the independent judiciary, and teaching more critical modes of thinking in elementary education. She even puts in a good, though qualified, word for science. Then, curiously, in analyzing the values of journalism and fact checking, she offers that “the goal should remain objectivity, however compromised” (161).

In the end, Rosenfeld seems uneasy with providing a full-throated endorsement of the idea that truth matters, that it is worth defending, and that it is essential for the health of democracy. She seems less suspicious of pro-truth institutions than she does of the notion of truth itself. Given that, one wonders whether all of the historical perspective earlier in the book is worth it if we cannot finally admit that both truth and democracy require not just illumination but the courage to say that this matters, and that it is a question not just of facts but of values.

This book is an important contribution to the truth debate. Its insights on the historical and cultural connections between the growth of concern with truth, alongside the growth of democracy, are superb. When it comes to diagnosing how we may understand and contend with the gathering threats to truth and democracy that we face in our current era, it seems—at best—uneven.

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Moots, Glenn A., and  
Phillip Hamilton, eds  
**Justifying Revolution: Law, Virtue,  
and Violence in the American War  
of Independence**

Norman: University of  
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The American Revolution remains the central event in American history. Its contemporary historiography, beginning with Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Belknap Press 1967), is perhaps the foremost accomplishment of the American historical profession. Over the past half-century and more, our understanding of that event has been pushed into numerous corners previously unexplored.

One might have thought that not only the general outlines of the subject, but also the key points had all been broached. Not so. Until now, “no monograph has yet examined that conflict in the context of just war theory” (5). In these past few decades, the general subject of just war theory has been the subject of more than forty books—just none on that subject and the American Revolution. This collection fills the lacuna.

Following an introduction by the editors, *Justifying Revolution: Law, Virtue, and Violence in the American War of Independence* features thirteen essays grouped under the headings “*Jus ad bellum*” (four essays), “*Jus in Bello*” (six essays), and “*Jus post Bellum*” (three essays). The collection avoids the two most common pitfalls of edited collections—redundancy and unevenness—to a remarkable degree. Too, the editors have succeeded in assembling a very able cast of contributors who address all of the chief questions and take notably different postures toward the overarching question of the American Revolution's justness.

The first section, “*Jus ad bellum*,” develops the background and content of Western European thinking on just causes of war by the eighteenth