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What are you reading?

Lentin, A. (2025). *The New Racial Regime. Recalibrations of White Supremacy*. London: Pluto Press.

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In the scholarly legacies of Stuart Hall and Cedric J. Robinson, Alana Lentin's *The New Racial Regime* poses as both a continuation as well as a complication. It begs the question of how in contemporary times, race still operates as a central mechanism for organizing the materials and the structural relations between groups and people who are constituted as wholly different from one another (Lentin, 2025, p. 2). Race, Lentin insists again in her latest books, is *not* a fact of bodies, but a technology of governance, historically contingent and contextually specific: a way of assigning value, of marking who matters, of distributing the conditions of life and death across populations. Though not entirely new in its theoretical contributions, *The New Racial Regime* offers an intensification, illuminating how the notion of race changes over time: 'Race, despite being imbued with the character of fixity, is anything but; it is unstable, adaptive, and recursive.' (Lentin, 2025, p. 18).

Furthermore, the title's insinuation of a historical rupture is no coincidence and provides an exercise: if a *new* racial regime exists, there must have been something that holds the place of the old one. Lentin answers this exercise by tracing its history all the way back to the Haitian Revolution—an effort that Gurminder K. Bhambra (2015) previously addressed as a silencing due to its radical nature—slavery in North America and the palimpsest that is the lasting colonial project of race in its brutal formation. But the urgency of her endeavor mostly pertains to the present and in how race operates, how it is wielded and how it is *spoken*. Hereby she brackets the usage of time, for example: how slavery and colonialism were simply 'of their time', and that one should simply 'get over it'.

> [h]ow we think about time, then, is not neutral. Time is a tool of racialising power. Time can be given or taken away. It has been used to discipline negatively racialised people whose inability or refusal to live within strictures that are expressed in terms of time – wasting time, running out of time – is seen as evidence of their deficiency. (Lentin, 2025, p.83)

Additionally, Lentin states that what defines the new articulation is not necessarily how white supremacy persists, but how its mutation insists on maintaining to stay alive. An exemplifying case is a Jewish advocacy group, the Anti-Defamation League, and how they operationalize anti-racist and 'decolonial' language and further weaponize to mobilize white colonialist settler domination, 'us[ing] the language of anti-racism to isolate and repress certain racialized subjects while elevating others, (…) also shield[ing] elites from among the abjected group whose investment in "gentrifying disciplines" places a distance between them and the masses whose condition their scholarship is supposed to contribute towards improving.' (Lentin, 2025, p.132). Similar to the efforts of Sarah Schulman (2016), Lentin shows how unsettling feelings are instrumentalized as unsafe, how definitions of institutionalized injustice become detached from state power, and how accusations of harm are shielded to avoid actual accountability.

To me, the book's sharpest contributions concern the chapters on antisemitism and Palestine. Lentin situates antisemitism as structurally indispensable to racial capitalism rather than exceptional to it. It works dialectically alongside anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, Orientalism, and much like the masquerading power of race, antisemitisms peculiar power is in its concealment — reminding me of the works of Houria Bouteldja. Europe has positioned itself as antisemitism's great enemy and in doing so, has immunized itself against critique. But the reality unfolds differently. Lentin illustrates with the German case and its so-called *Staatsräson* and that it manages antisemitism as a permanent security rationale — one that criminalizes pro-Palestinian speech, racializes Muslim neighborhoods as sites of 'new antisemitism,' and in doing so wages a proxy war on racialized migrants and communities while Holocaust memory is monumentalized and ongoing racism denied. Similarly, in her

chapter on decolonization and Indigeneity, the analysis of Israel's 'Indigenous diplomacy', culminating in the 2024 Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, is among the most precise accounts currently in print of how settler-colonial formations appropriate the very frameworks designed to dismantle them.

Yet, I am apprehensive about the theoretical ambitions this book poses to tackle. Lentin explicitly wants to bring racial capitalism (meaning: the economic, the material, the political-economic) into the analysis. Although occasionally demonstrated, *The New Racial Regime* remains, at its methodological core, mostly a work engaging with discourse analysis. In no way do I propose this as a dismissal of the book: just as Stuart Hall has argued, the discursive field is real, it has material effects, and Lentin is masterful at tracking how language governs. The question, though, is one the book raises for itself: how exactly does one move between the analysis of racial discourse and the analysis of capitalist accumulation such that neither term merely illustrates the other? How do we account for the ways that racial logics are not only reproduced in and through discourse but structured by labor relations, extraction, property regimes, financial architectures? To theorize racial capitalism at this moment of Palestinian genocide, European austerity, and the resurgent far right, Lentin takes upon a huge task, but I am afraid it does mainly highlight its conjunction due to this complexity.

Most importantly, however, *The New Racial Regime* is a serious, combative, and politically necessary intervention. It paves the way to refuse the conceptual frameworks through which supremacy and domination reproduce, and to do anxiously so without the safety of an alternative system already waiting on the other side — leaving open the question of political economy is an honest reckoning with what the work ahead still requires of us.

Aslıhan Öztürk

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