The Gray Zone: Sovereignty, Human Smuggling, and Undercover Police Investigation in Europe. *Gregory Feldman.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019. 240 pp.

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Gregory Feldman's accomplished new ethnography offers an original consideration of action, ethics, and sovereignty informed by fieldwork within an undercover investigative police unit. Through his willingness to "listen and watch before I judged" and to "answer their questions and accept their challenges" (xvi), Feldman achieved an unusual level of access to a group of police officers whose daily routines take place in the gray zone, that is, in the murky shadows of the state security system. The privilege of interacting with them was conditional on preserving full anonymity of the unit he studied. Thus for context we are offered only the most general of parameters: the action unfolds in a cosmopolitan city in a southern maritime state in Europe, where the securitization of migration has become the norm. Beyond these identifiers, abstracted from its environment, history, and language, Feldman's investigative unit is presented to the reader as a nearly generic entity.

Working on the margins of the normal legal order, the ethnography's protagonists are agents empowered to enforce the law. It is because the gray zone is a structural feature of the modern state, Feldman asserts, that we must understand the implications and potentialities of the conduct that occurs within it. In relation to the crimes under investigation and in the relative absence of

hierarchical control, what are the officers' ethical choices and their justifications? What is the significance of the relationships within the unit and among the investigators and their targets, their office-based colleagues, and their supervisors? In answering such questions, Feldman develops a sophisticated argument about sovereignty's dual nature. Sovereignty, he claims, can be understood as consisting of two distinct forms, which he conceptualizes as the first sovereign form, that is, the nation-state which is premised on a hierarchical arrangement of atomized and abstracted subjects, and the second sovereign form, which is fleshed out, in an Arendtian fashion, as the "sovereign spaces through which [people] come to life as particular persons" (xvii).

The gray zone, situated beyond the "top-down vertical imperatives of the first sovereign form" (xviii), emerges as the locus of the second form, enabling the officers to conduct themselves as full persons rather than as the abstract subjects of the first sovereign form. In other words, we are encouraged to see the world of undercover policing as a sphere that is less rule bound than that of official law enforcement. It thus offers subjects the opportunity to engage with each other as sovereign persons, even when they remain in relationships that are profoundly unequal, contentious, and ultimately violent.

In a useful move, Feldman opens the book with a page-long précis of this argument, followed by a discussion of its philosophical complexity in the introduction. While a short review cannot do justice to these reflections, suffice it to say that what seems central to Feldman is not the sovereign state's capacity to declare exceptions (and thus to wield extralegal violence per Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben) but, rather, the power of joint action's ability to "initiate new beginnings" and to "(re)constitute political space . . . and break from the old

order" (8–9). This latent capacity and the signs of its exercise interest Feldman as he tracks the work of the investigative team. Indeed, the most compelling parts of the book are those where the team's members, introduced through rich biographical detail, confront situations in the field where rigid legal frameworks are of no use, and where their own choices must determine outcomes for suspects, victims, and themselves.

In the first chapter, we learn about the team's place within the national Immigration Service and about its own internal organization, horizontal arrangements, and egalitarian values. Feldman draws a sharp contrast, explored further in the next chapter, between his protagonists and the office bureaucrats in the organization. Removed from the fast-paced realities of the street, their desk-based work is the embodiment, for the purposes of this ethnography, of the first sovereign form. In contrast, Frank, Brian, Vincent, and the four other men who make up the team instantiate the second form, struggling "to carve out an alternative sovereign space" (180) within or on the margins of the security apparatus. Investigating outlaw groups, they cultivate their identity as a tight-knit, honor-bound unit that draws on the particular talents of its members under well-respected leadership.

In chapter 3, Feldman explains the mechanics of an investigation through surveillance, the recruitment of informants, and the breaking of official codes in the gray zone. Chapter 4 will particularly attract those readers who were drawn to the book because of Feldman's 2012 *The Migration Apparatus*. The team's investigative work is situated in its transnational context, showing the intertwining of licit and illicit flows, the criminal exploitation feeding off the irregularization of migration in Europe, and the globalization of the gray zone.

Throughout the book, Feldman fleshes out examples of the team's casework that highlight how the second sovereign form is manifested in the reflexivity and self-awareness of the team's members, in their ability to see their criminal targets not as objects but as persons, and in their measured rather than gratuitous use of violence.

There is a gendered dimension to Feldman's ethnography that may deter some readers. His fieldwork hinged on the possibility of his partaking in the type of male camaraderie that involves shooting guns (as in the opening scene) and shooting the breeze during stakeouts. His insights come from a place of affection for his subjects, with whom he spent more than 600 hours in work and social settings. He is transparent about the fact that his sympathies lie with the gutsy investigators, whom he got to know well, and not with the anonymous bureaucrats who get the short end of the stick in this book. This is not to criticize Feldman for being faithful to his own project but to pick up on a point he makes himself in the conclusion: the gray zones that give rise to the second sovereign form obtain in most modern institutions, not just the action-packed world of undercover cops. Even bureaucracies cannot be reduced to atomizing vertical organization, something ethnographers are in a position to grasp once they can situate such institutions in context and decode their cultural superstructures. In spite of prevailing conformism, staid officialdom too retains interstices where people can exercise their capacities for thinking and joint action.

The Gray Zone may be underestimating this fact, but this is a minor issue in an overall rewarding and inspiring read. It could inform projects on subversions in many fields, including those far removed from policing. It will also

be of interest to those in anthropology and beyond who are on the lookout for fresh contributions to debates on sovereignty.