REVIEWS

Conditions of the university

Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Education*, Pluto Press, London, 2013. 232 pp., £54.00 hb., £15.00 pb., 978 0 74533 294 9 hb., 978 0 74533 293 2 pb.

In an interview with Giovanna Borradori given after 9/11, Jacques Derrida said: 'I am incapable of knowing who today deserves the name philosopher.' Faced with questions of international law, 'I would be tempted to call philosophers', Derrida suggested,

> those who, in the future, reflect in a responsible fashion on these questions and demand accountability from those in charge of public discourse … A 'philosopher' (actually I would prefer to say 'philosopher-deconstructor') would be someone who analyzes and then draws the practical and effective consequences of the relationship between our philosophical heritage and the structure of the still dominant juridico-political system that is so clearly undergoing mutation. A 'philosopher' would be one who seeks a new criteriology to distinguish between 'comprehending' and 'justifying'. For one can describe, comprehend, and explain a certain chain of events or series of associations that lead to 'war' or 'terrorism' without justifying them in the least, while in fact condemning them and attempting to invent other associations.

Today, as well as questions of international law and terrorism, we are also confronted with what we might call the post-2008 'Financial War' and by what is happening to our universities. In this context it would take only a minimal edit of Derrida's words for these to be describing the work of Andrew McGettigan: the most significant 'philosopher-deconstructor' on the contemporary British scene.

It was during the closure by Middlesex University of its Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (now relocated to Kingston) that McGettigan, a graduate of its doctoral programme, immersed himself in the topic of higher education (HE) finance. As he notes, 'I had to become a freelance "policy wonk" in order to work out what was going on.' The result, two years later, is *The Great University Gamble*. It is a peerless book that should be read by everyone who works in or cares about universities, even vice chancellors – or especially vice chancellors. To paraphrase Derrida, McGettigan faultlessly describes, comprehends, and explains the chain of events that has led to the present mess in higher education policy without being persuaded by them in the least; criticizing them and attempting to invent other associations of democratic oversight and academic accountability for our universities. This is an essential resource, and one that I will refer to again and again.

If the book has a fault, it is one of genre. On the one hand, it is described as 'a primer', there to educate the general reader about the complexities of higher education finance. On the other hand, while McGettigan moves through the terrain of funding councils, recruitment markets, bond issues and corporate structures with forensic detail, his work as a critical public-interest philosopher-journalist is at its most compelling when he mobilizes this expert knowledge into an argument against our present conditions. The genre of the primer does not always allow this argument to take flight. McGettigan often has to write with the handbrake on in order not to lose sight of his pedagogical mission amidst the complexity of his material. He has, then, a gift for understatement: 'uncertainty hovers over the new higher education funding regime'. This is the result of simultaneously addressing disparate audiences: concerned academics who need to get up to speed on Income Contingent Repayment loans and his fellow 'policy wonks' who will skip the sections on the Consumer Price Index. It is, however, possible to read McGettigan's exposition in a much stronger way than the limitations of genre allow.

Let us begin where McGettigan's book ends, with the question of what he calls 'financialization', in essence monetizing the student loan book. Perhaps the most notable thing about the seemingly incomprehensible and increasingly ad hoc nature of higher education policy in England is in retrospect the entirely predictable and seemingly relentless drive to our current predicament. In 1998, a year into Tony Blair's first Labour government, Gordon Brown sold off an initial tranche of student loans in order to help him meet his golden rule of fiscal discipline, balancing public income and expenditure over the economic cycle. These were old mortgage-style loans for £1,000 tuition fees and maintenance, introduced by the previous Conservative government with fixed terms. A consortium of Nationwide Building Society and Deutsche Bank AG bought up these loans, with an undisclosed

subsidy from the Treasury. A further sale followed in 1999. In 2003 the Labour government oversaw the controversial introduction of loans for £3,300 tuition fees. These loans have income-contingent repayment thresholds (i.e. the graduate does not start repaying the loan until they start earning at a certain salary level) and the interest rate on them was fixed at the Bank of England base rate (currently 0.5 per cent) plus 1 per cent or the RPI, whichever is lowest. In 2008, during Brown's premiership, Labour passed the Sale of Student Loans Act, which enables the government to sell loans to a third party without the consent of borrowers. Importantly, this act enshrined in law the interest rates of previous loans because no borrower could be worse off through the sale, nor could purchasers change the terms of the loans. The idea was to set up a regular sale of tranches of the loan book in order to create an ongoing income stream for the Treasury and to spread the risk of the loan book across the private sector, which would bundle up the debt into financial products such as derivatives and credit default swaps. Then the crash happened.

By late 2009 this plan looked more difficult to achieve. And it is in this context that the minister with responsibility for universities at the time, Lord Mandelson, commissioned the Browne Review of the long-term 'sustainable' funding of universities, which was expected to be accompanied by a report from specialist advisers on alternative ways to monetize the loan book. In May 2010, on the other side of the election, the Coalition appointed Rothschild bank to undertake a feasibility study for the sale of the income-contingent loan portfolio.

Since the publication of *The Great University Gamble*, McGettigan's work with the website False Economy and the *Guardian* newspaper has brought to light, through a freedom of information request, Rothschild's report to the government. In it Rothschild advise that the loan book is an unattractive prospect for private investors because the yields on pre-Browne loans are too low and cannot be changed as a result of the 2008 Act, while the level of expected non-repayment of post-Browne loans (some 39.4 per cent on present estimates) makes this set of loans equally unattractive. Therefore, Rothschild suggest, in order to secure adequate profit levels for private investors the government should either retrospectively increase the interest rates on pre-Browne loans (only a government can do this) or underwrite profit margins through the guarantee of a so-called 'synthetic hedge' that covers the spread between actual income from loans and agreed levels of acceptable profit. Initially the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills did not deny the content of the report, then after the *Guardian* front-page story the parliamentary office of Secretary of State Vince Cable released a statement that he had ruled out the possibility of changing the loan terms for pre-Browne borrowers but the sale of the loan book was still an active consideration for the government. David Cameron was asked about the sale of the loan book at Prime Minister's Questions. He spoke for one minute in response and failed to answer the question directly, choosing instead to praise the government's Free Schools programme. Eight days later the chief secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander, announced in parliament that the sale of the loan book would now proceed as part of a pre-election disposal of £10 billion of government financial assets. There are at present no details of the terms of the proposed sale.

McGettigan would argue that this latest twist in the tale of HE is just another example of the democratic deficit that currently blights our universities. Ever since the student demonstrations of 2008 against the introduction of £9,000 tuition fees the Coalition government has actively sought to avoid public discussion of higher education. It is too painful a topic for the discredited Liberal Democrats to address, while the Conservatives are pursuing a privatization agenda that (given the difficulties experienced over changes to purchasing in the National Health Service) they would prefer progressed under the radar of public scrutiny. The opposition have been ineffective in exploiting the government's discomfort over higher education or in exposing this agenda. The 2011 HE White Paper, 'Students at the Heart of the System', has been kicked into the political long grass. Instead the government has used existing powers, instructions to quangos, responses to consultations, amendments to seemingly unrelated parliamentary bills and other technical devices to further its higher education policies without having to subject a bill to parliamentary inspection. The result has been an often seemingly shambolic approach to policymaking. However, we can see at least two significant issues developing that must be considered of considerable public interest and accordingly be subject to much wider scrutiny.

The first is the supply-side reform of higher education in England in preparation for its de facto privatization by a future majority Conservative government. As McGettigan explains, the bewilderment felt by many in English universities at present is a classic example of the preparation of an industry in advance of privatization. The government would like to break the monopoly universities have over the supply of higher

education by easing the path of private providers into the marketplace. He furnishes substantial evidence to suggest that every attempt is being made to give favourable terms of entry to firms such as the Apollo Group, Kaplan and Pearson, sometimes (as in the case of the sale of the College of Law to Montagu Private Equity) on dubious legal grounds. Private providers have access to the student loan book (taxpayers' money) and are expected to provide a cheaper form of mass higher education without the overheads of research activity, present regulatory frameworks, accountability to local communities and so on. One ambition is to grant degree-awarding powers to Pearson/Edexcel, an A-level exam board that does no teaching, in order that further education colleges can validate degree courses without reference to universities, which in the government's view are behaving like a cartel over the awarding of degrees. Having set such precedents the Conservatives would seek to legislate retroactively to regularize 'reforms' that have now become facts on the ground.

However, as a result of the high fiscal cost of loans, student numbers remain capped in the UK, and so entry to the market by new providers must be at the expense of existing universities, which are being hit by both a transfer of student places to private providers and a decline in applications as a result of the hike in tuition fees. One telling table in McGettigan's book shows that in the last academic year, 2012–13, all but seven universities in England suffered a decline in student numbers and therefore income. The government wishes to create a 'level playing field' for private companies, meaning that their start-up activity will be protected at every turn from the competition posed by existing universities while all state subsidy is withdrawn from all but the elite in areas where the privates can compete with mid-tier universities. Few institutions are immune to the effects of these changes and it is a simple matter of fact to state that the post-Robbins dispensation of the present university sector in England will be significantly altered as a result of them.

This is exactly what the government wants to happen without the difficulties of engaging in a public debate about the quality and efficiency of the system they are dismantling or its economic, cultural and educational benefits. It is not at all clear that the majority of vice chancellors in England appreciate either the intent or the consequences of the government's reforms. Rather, for the most part they imagine that their own institutions and strategic plans will be sufficiently robust to benefit from the increased marketization of higher education funding. At best this view is naive (not everyone can be a winner); at worst it is based on a wilful ignorance of what is actually happening and a complete failure to recognize the seismic shifts that are taking place under their feet. McGettigan reserves some choice words for the emaciation of university governance and the dangers of allowing vice chancellors to act as if they were chief executive officers of companies. The genius of supply-side reform in a competitive sector with a fixed cap, through divisive policies such as research concentration, differential tuition fees, Key Information Sets, and so on (anything which renders measurable, and so manageable, the otherwise intangible pedagogical transformation of higher learning) is that it encourages university managers to think that they are making these changes themselves; even that they desire these changes and that they are wholly beneficial to their institutions.

The second and related cause for concern is the consequences of these reforms for the nation's finances. Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) loans are complicated and it is best to defer to McGettigan's exposition of them. As loan systems go they have their benefits for both borrowers and lenders. However, in the political fudge that was rushed through parliament as a partial implementation of the Browne Review, most of the benefits to the government of ICR loans were compromised. Accordingly, as the Treasury well knows, the present loans system is unsustainable. It will take until 2046 to grow to maturity, when there will be the first write-offs of outstanding loans taken out by students in 2012. During this time, at its most expensive, the cost to the taxpayer of this system of loans will amount to 6 per cent of GDP, while by 2046 outstanding student debt will peak at over twice that at £191 billion. This is not a situation that will be allowed to continue by any government of any colour: as McGettigan puts it, 'politics will intervene' to stop this happening. This is why the Conservatives continue to press ahead with the Friedmanite solution of opening up the higher education market to new private providers, who it is hoped will drive down the cost of a degree. It is also why they are keen to keep selling off tranches of the loan book and subsidizing their sale. It may be 'economically illiterate' to do so (because governments can service such debt for much less than private institutions), but it is politically important to be seen to be raising money from the loan book in the interest of deficit reduction. The resource accounting and budgeting (RAB) charge – the amount of expenditure recorded to cover the estimated non-repayment of loans issued in a financial year – is listed in government accounts as an 'impairment' and a sum is set aside and ring-fenced

to cover this estimated cost. The Office of Budget Responsibility estimate the difference between outlay borrowing for loans and repayments to rise to nearly £10 billion by 2015/16 and to continue to rise until the mid-2030s. It would seem that the government is currently working on an optimistic understanding of what the impairment for the loan book might be (assuming rising graduate salaries and the best of all possible worlds for government finances). Therefore any shortfall in the impairment calculation may fall within future departmental budgets. It would be extremely naive for anyone in higher education to imagine that the taxpayer will fill such a hole. While in the eternal present of neoliberalism the post-Browne loan book was presented as a deficit reduction measure, and university chiefs colluded with it because they imagined it would bring more money into their institutions over the short term, this settlement is in fact storing up significant problems for the national debt and kicking (not very far) down the road a day of possibly damaging financial reckoning for universities in England.

There is much more one could pull out of McGettigan's book, including the questions of a bond market in institutional debt issued by English universities or the actuarialization of the student loan book to identify 'investment grade graduates'. One should be grateful that McGettigan stands on the side of 'the university' and academics. Such acuity and rigour would be much sought after by the likes of McKinsey. The story of the production of this book is of an individual who chose to use his university education to push back against those who would gladly sell that inheritance to the highest bidder, by arming himself with the necessary arcane and technical knowledge required to speak back authoritatively to power and so begin to redefine the terms of the debate. There is a lesson here for all academics who at this moment decline to enter into public discussion about the future of our universities or to become involved in running their own institution, either because they would prefer to keep their heads down or because it all looks too difficult to understand. Such academics, in the words of McGettigan, have become 'too willing to cede difficult chores to bureaucrats'. If a publicly funded, mass higher education system in England is to survive their own tenure in universities they must engage with what is happening around them. They should begin by reading McGettigan.

Martin McQuillan

Lacking a homunculus

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human I*, trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997. 396 pp., £60.50 hb., £24.95 pb., 978 0 80472 665 8 hb., 978 0 80474 171 2 pb.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human II and Unpublished Fragments (Spring 1878–Fall 1879)*, trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2012. 648 pp., £54.95 hb., £18.95 pb., 978 0 80472 875 1 hb., 978 0 80478 393 4 pb.

Near the end of 2012, a UK-based production company calling itself the Planetary Collective released a short film online called *The Overview Effect*. The film features stunning footage of the Earth from outer space, interspersed with interviews with astronauts, scientists and philosophers. The upshot of the film is that the view of the Earth from space produces a shift in consciousness – the 'overview effect' – that entails a realization that we as human beings are not separate from the planet on which we live. The general message of the film is that of sublime wonder and unity: national boundaries disappear, and over its surface the planet reveals strange, luminous patterns of colour, cloud and light (otherwise known as cities, smog and the electrical grid).

The Overview Effect was immensely popular upon its initial release. But its 'we are the world' message of planetary unity tends to gloss over a dubious strategy frequently used by humanist thinking: that it is we as human beings who have the self-ordained privilege of the overview effect, and it is through such feats of technology that human beings will once again establish mastery over the planet – with which we are 'one' only when it benefits us as human beings. However, in its appeal for a planetary consciousness, *The Overview Effect* tends, in fact, to reveal something different: the indifference of the planet vis-à-vis our repeated attempts to render it meaningful. It is in this context that one is reminded of Nietzsche's famous passage from 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense':

> In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering in innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge. That was the haughtiest and most mendacious minute of 'world history' – yet only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths the star grew cold, and the clever animals had to die.

Here Nietzsche gives us an 'overview effect' quite different from the film. In this version, we have never been one with the planet, and neither does the planet require our cleverness and technical ingenuity to save it – from ourselves. Nietzsche's capacity for undermining the human is perhaps needed now more than ever. On the one hand, we who are still on the Earth's surface cannot escape an awareness of the impact of climate change, beset as we are by disasters that increasingly refuse the distinction between the natural and human-made. On the other hand, the process of recuperating the planet for us as human beings continues unabated. Whether we can 'save' the planet is one question – whether the planet needs saving is another.

Nietzsche encapsulated this dilemma in the title of his third published book: *Human, All Too Human*. The entirety of *Human, All Too Human*, along with Nietzsche's notebook writings of the period, are now available in two volumes, in a new edition published by Stanford University Press. Surprisingly, there has never previously been a complete critical English edition of *Human, All Too Human*, much less of Nietzsche's complete works. In the 1990s, Stanford addressed this gap and began a project to publish 'The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche'. The series was to be based on the definitive edition of Nietzsche's works: the edition of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari begun in the 1960s and numbering some fifty volumes in all, including lectures, unpublished manuscripts and notebooks. In the 1980s a project began to make available a more accessible, fifteen-volume 'student edition' and it is on this that the Stanford Complete Works is based. Now under the editorial leadership of Alan Schrift and Duncan Large, the project was on hiatus for some time, and has only recently been resumed. Both volumes of *Human, All Too Human*, translated and annotated by Gary Handwerk, are a welcome addition to Nietzsche studies. Steering away from some of the liberties taken by Walter Kaufmann, and distancing himself from the rigidities of R.J. Hollingdale, Handwerk's translation is able to capture in a more nuanced way the polyphony of voices in Nietzsche's writing – by turns sarcastic, enthusiastic, naive, spiteful, meditative, joyful.

This edition is also welcome because, as a book, *Human, All Too Human* is often under-represented in Nietzsche scholarship. *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals* are frequently taught in the classroom, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* frequently cited for its literary merits, and late works such as *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo* read for their iconoclasm. A close look at *Human, All Too Human* not only shows that many of Nietzsche's later concepts were already present there in nascent form, but also brings much of the later work back into the broader issue of the problem of the human being. Many claims have been made for Nietzsche by later generations – a nihilist Nietzsche, an existential Nietzsche, a political Nietzsche, a feminist Nietzsche, a quantum Nietzsche, even a cyber-Nietzsche. A proposition, then: if there is a Nietzsche for our twenty-first century of planetary disaster, extinction and the 'posthuman,' it resides not in his later work but in the two volumes of *Human, All Too Human*.

For example, in the second volume Nietzsche gives us another, much more sardonic, variant on the overview effect:

> There would have to be creatures of more spirit than human beings, simply in order to savor the humor that lies in humans seeing themselves as the purpose of the whole existing world and in humanity being seriously satisfied only with the prospect of a world-mission. If a god did create the world, he created humans as *god's apes*, as a continual cause for amusement in his all-too-lengthy eternity.... Our uniqueness in the world! alas, it is too improbable a thing! The astronomers, who sometimes really are granted a field of vision detached from the earth, intimate that the drop of *life* in the world is without significance for the total character of the immense ocean of becoming and passing away.... The ant in the forest perhaps imagines just as strongly that it is the goal and purpose for the existence of the forest when we in our imagination tie the downfall of humanity almost involuntarily to the downfall of the earth.

As Nietzsche jibes, the strange endeavour of human thinking tends to eclipse the world, until we become so philosophically solipsistic that even the non-human – by its very name – begins to look at lot like the human. Nietzsche caps off his rant with the following: 'Even the most dispassionate astronomer can himself scarcely feel the earth without life in any other way than as the gleaming and floating gravesite of humanity.'

But Nietzsche's phrase *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* has several senses to it. Certainly it evokes a sense of disappointment – the 'all too human' as less than human, as the failure to live up to the various standards, criteria and values that we associate with being human. And, as Nietzsche repeatedly points out

in his book, this itself has become a hallmark of the human. But the phrase also evokes a more critical sense of failing to challenge our most basic and habitual ways of thinking and living – including the questioning of those same criteria and values that demarcate the human from the non-human. At the same time, Nietzsche's invectives against humanity are outstripped only by his refusal to dispense with the term 'human', much less imagine a romantic, transcendent realm 'beyond' the human. As if presaging his later idea of the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche repeatedly *affirms* this notion of the all too human. Human beings are all too human not only because they fail to live up to the human, but because they are specifically human, singularly human, and in an immoral way that refuses both the divine fiat of science as well as the natural history of religion's chosen peoples. As Handwerk notes, human beings are human for Nietzsche because they are 'thoroughly human' – and in this lies their potential to astound, to disappoint, to baffle, to incite curiosity or spite, to wax poetic about wonder and to occupy ourselves with the banality of evil.

Of course, what Nietzsche says about humanity is inseparable from how he says it, and in this regard *Human, All Too Human* is unique among Nietzsche's books. When Nietzsche began writing it in or around 1876, many changes were afoot – he not only broke from Wagner and his circle, but the 32-year-old philologist was forced to retire from his teaching post at the University of Basel due to a series of health problems, which included stomach problems, joint pain, migraines, nausea and vomiting, and rapidly deteriorating eyesight. Deciding to relocate to a better climate, he travelled to Sorrento, where he wrote the bulk of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*. 1878 saw the publication of *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, comprising some 600 aphorisms. According to Hollingdale, of the 1,000 copies printed, only 120 sold – the remainders were rebound together with the second volume for the 1886 edition. (In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche himself recounts how, upon publication, he sent two copies to Wagner, from whom he had definitively separated, and by coincidence Wagner had at the same time sent him a copy of *Parsifal*. Nietzsche describes the coincidence as a moment of dissonance, 'as if two swords had crossed'.) The following year another 400 aphorisms were published with the title *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, and the year after that another 350 aphorisms with the title *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. Writing in *Ecce Homo* some twelve years after its initial publication, Nietzsche would characterize the book as 'the monument of a crisis' and a 'spiritual cure'.

The change in lifestyle was echoed in Nietzsche's writing style as well. While in Sorrento, Nietzsche began writing in the brief, aphoristic style that would

characterize some of his best-known works. But Nietzsche's aphorisms are not of a single mould, and his turn to the short form manifests itself in different ways, from mini-essays in the vein of Montaigne to taut maxims reminiscent of La Rochefoucauld. We also get dialogues, parables, poetry, even jokes. Indeed, *Human, All Too Human* reflects Nietzsche's experiment not only with style, but with reading as well. One anecdote has Nietzsche reading La Rochefoucauld's *Sentences et maximes* on the train to Sorrento, but Nietzsche himself gives the biblio-detective in us a number of clues: in addition to scholarly works on Greek tragedy and philology, Nietzsche was reading Chamfort, Lichtenberg, Montaigne, Pascal, Vauvenargues, Voltaire (the dedicatee of the first edition of *Human, All Too Human*), and of course Schopenhauer, ever Nietzsche's 'educator' and paragon of misanthropic aphorisms.

One of the great advantages of the Stanford edition is the inclusion of a scholarly and annotated presentation of Nietzsche's notebook writings that correspond to his published works. In the case of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche's notebooks not only provide a fascinating glimpse into his production process, but also contain gems that jump out of the page. For instance, an entry from the fall of 1878 simply reads: 'A novel. A volume of poetry. A history. A philology.' An entry from the summer of 1879, perhaps during a bout of illness, reads: 'All I lack is a homunculus.' Another note, from the fall of 1879, reads: 'I am thinking of having a long sleep.' Nietzsche puts the phrase itself in quotes, but does not give a reference.

Human, All Too Human is a masterclass in the short form, an exegesis on the virtues of the 'incomplete thought', as prescient today in our era of the 'overview effect' as it was in Nietzsche's era of Darwinism, industrialization and spiritualism. It is no accident that such experiments in the incomplete thought take as their subject the problem of the human. Above all, the phrase 'human, all too human' signals the beginning of a trajectory that would reach across all of Nietzsche's writings, and would continue into the rediscovery of his work by generations of twentieth-century philosophers and theorists. Handwerk concisely summarizes this trajectory in his Afterword to the second volume: 'Human beings, these aphorisms and mini-essays continue to remind us, are only human, and we would be far better off shaking our recurrent illusion that we are divine, along with the equally recurrent illusion that we are simply bestial.' Were Nietzsche writing today – doubtless working as a part-time adjunct instructor teaching online courses from home – he might very well regard the flora and fauna of contemporary theory, from nonhuman *actants* to posthumanism to objects and hyperobjects, as so many varieties of this impulse to redeem the human, through the back door, the side door, a trap door… The so-called 'overview effect' can, however, be presented in a different way: the condition of the human as its inability to decondition itself, the horizon of the non-human reflected back as the 'gleaming and floating gravesite of humanity'.

Eugene Thacker

Tied to life

Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni and Fanny Söderbäck, eds, *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2012. 244 pp., £55.00 hb., 978 0 23011 831 7.

The trope of feminist 'daughters' has been subject to much criticism of late, for conflating the wide range of feminist relationships into a mother–daughter dyad, and for promoting a vision of feminism as a singular journey, where goals and concepts are passed down to the latest generation, who continue or finish off what their feminist great-grandmothers, grandmothers and mothers began. In spite of such criticism, the editors of this collection have elected to retain the daughter trope, though they attempt to refigure daughterliness in an 'undutiful', transgressive mode. To be 'undutiful' is presented here as a 'productive form of conceptual disobedience', which resists singular, unilinear models of feminism and highlights 'the multiplicity of voices and agendas that are necessarily integral to feminist thought and practice'.

Given this stated aim to foster undutiful criticality and represent a diverse range of approaches and perspectives, it is unfortunate, then, that the preface and opening chapter – written by Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, respectively – both equate the mindset of undutifulness, and the future of feminism, with one theoretical framework: a Deleuzean posthumanism. In her preface, Braidotti states unequivocally that becoming undutiful means 'becoming nomadic', and above all posthuman: 'All closeted anthropocentric feminists need to come out at this point and express their dutiful adherence to their own species supremacy. The others can move on and run with the she-wolves of nomadic becoming'. Grosz's opening chapter similarly sets up a Deleuzean posthumanism as the (only) way forward

for the future of feminist theory, outlining several key areas for improvement such as the displacement of epistemology (questions of discourse, knowledge, truth, scientificity) by ontology (questions of the real, matter, force, energy), and of identity politics and studies of the subject by the 'inhuman work of difference'. There is a striking irony in Braidotti's and Grosz's intimations that the best way a feminist can cultivate the mindset of an 'undutiful daughter' is to follow in the footsteps of a very specific group of thinkers (which includes themselves). Moreover, the approach taken here – where being 'undutiful' means adhering to a certain set of philosophical commitments – arguably contradicts the editors' aim to embrace and highlight a diversity of approaches, and apparently leaves feminists who work on issues of subjectivity, identity or epistemology excluded from 'undutifulness' and from feminism's future or cutting edge. It is hard to shake off this first impression, especially as Braidotti is frequently cited in many of the following essays, and terms such as 'becomings' and 'assemblages' appear with reasonable regularity. Such inter-referentiality can at times create the feeling that a new orthodoxy is being established, as opposed to an exercise in 'conceptual disobedience' taking place.

Despite these issues, there are some enjoyable essays in the collection, which is divided into three sections. The essays in the first section – 'New Concepts' – represent perspectives from philosophy, cultural studies and literary criticism, and coalesce around the issue of how to affirm continuities over time whilst also enabling discontinuities, change and novelty. Grosz's opening essay, as mentioned, offers a rather one-sided set of assertions and 'hymn to the new'; but Emanuela Bianchi's philosophical essay gives a more nuanced analysis, discussing 'interruptive time' as an alternative form of feminine or 'women's time'. She begins by tracing the association of interruption with the feminine to Aristotle's account of sexual reproduction, which posits that the form or 'spark of soul' is transmitted through the male semen, while the female contributes matter to the offspring. Ordinarily, this has been interpreted as a portrayal of the female and the feminine as passive in contradistinction to the active male role and masculine principle. Bianchi, however, argues that, in fact, the female is characterized less by passive materiality in Aristotle's account than by 'matter's irrepressible unruliness or its unaccountable aleatory propensities'. Her reading is based on Aristotle's answer to the question of why female offspring result from a process where the 'spark of soul' is provided only by the male: that is, that a female offspring is the result of an *interruption* in the process, an error due to insufficient heat, which may occur due to some exigency such as youth, old age or a 'wind in the south'. Thus, 'in this ancient scene … the opposition between masculine and feminine time is less an opposition between linear and cyclical time (as we moderns would have it) than one between a continuous cyclical and teleological time which is masculine, and an aleatory and interruptive time marked as feminine.'

Bianchi's claim is that retrieving this classical articulation of the feminine as interruptive or aleatory might be a fruitful gesture for contemporary feminist politics, as it offers a temporal modality that supplies a 'necessary resistance to the masculine narrative of linear historical progress'. She then goes on to identify briefly the trope of 'interruptive time' within feminist accounts of female bodily experience, and queer theorists' accounts of the lived temporalities of queer subjects. There are issues in the analysis (as Bianchi acknowledges), concerning the conceptual entanglement of 'female', 'feminine' and 'women'; and the connections between Aristotle's account of sexual difference, feminist embodiment theory and queer theory need to be elaborated and considered in much more depth than is possible here (the essays in the collection are on the short side). The question should also be asked as to whether continuing to code certain modes of temporality as 'feminine' and 'masculine', or as 'women's time' and 'men's time', is a strategically or analytically effective way of proceeding. Nonetheless, Bianchi's notion of interruptivity promises an interesting contribution to the study of the gendered dynamics and politics of time, as does Red Chidgey's cultural study of the production of 'the feminist new' and 'scenes of anachronism' within feminist zines.

The essays in the second section – 'New Bodies and Ethics' –are concerned with cultivating a sensibility that is more attuned to collective embodied being and to the nonhuman. The first essay, by Claire Colebrook on 'feminist extinction', begins with the provocative argument that posthumanism is in fact the fulfilment or culmination of feminism: feminists have always postulated feminism as a 'better logic for all life', not just for women as a special interest group, and hence 'feminism's recent turn to life (in environmentalism and "new materialisms") should not appear as an addition or supplement but as the unfolding of the women's movement's proper potentiality.' She goes on to argue, however, that much of what passes itself off as posthumanist or vitalist philosophy today remains mired in a residual humanism, as it sustains the lure of '*saving life*'. The problem is that 'we are always and

already so tied to life that it becomes the screen or tableau upon which we imagine nothing other than our own living.' The turn to vitalism, then, can be taken as 'another vampire gesture: man consumes himself, and then imagines that he is no longer the rapacious animal he once was.' Accordingly, we need to try and consider the world as its own duration, and not as our milieu, to abandon the fantasy of our own endurance and consider the 'dead end of life' without recuperating gestures. To illustrate, she refers to Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, framing it as a recent addition to a particular body of feminist writing – including Shelley's *Frankenstein* – which questions the value of the maximization of life and survival.

Whilst undeniably thought-provoking, Colebrook's essay arguably repeats Braidotti's and Grosz's implication that there is only one way forward for feminism, as well as making rather grand assertions without sufficient supporting arguments. The claim that posthumanism is feminism's 'proper potentiality' is certainly contentious and warrants closer critical examination: is feminism at its heart, or taken to its logical extreme, really a kind of species death wish? And are the rubrics and imaginaries of anti- or post-survivalism really the key to a more effective kind of feminism? Colebrook's examples from feminist literature are illuminating in terms of the post-survivalist aesthetic and mood, but the case for the political and ethical value of imagining post-survivalist modes of existence needs to be set out much more thoroughly. This is also true of the essays by Astrid Neimanis and Davina Quinlivan in this section, which contend that thinking of ourselves as 'watery bodies' or 'breathing bodies' will break down the boundaries between inside and outside, human and nonhuman. The claim is that such ways of thinking will open up 'other ways of being and acting in the world', and improved models or methods of communication, but the essays would perhaps have benefited from some more specific examples of how this would change feminist theorizing or activism for the better.

This more targeted kind of analysis is undertaken in the final essay in this section by Katie Lloyd Thomas, which focuses on the case study of a neonatal care unit at an East London hospital, and considers the collective work performed by the medical equipment, staff and others in caring for very pre-term babies: what she calls a 'sociotechnological matrix of neonatal care as an alternative to the womb'. Lloyd Thomas suggests that this inclusion of technological and social constellations in our accounts of maternal subjectivity and relationality might constitute a 'queering' of maternity. She contrasts this to the accounts of subject formation developed by psychoanalytic theorists Luce Irigaray and Bracha Ettinger, both of whom privilege naturalized intrauterine relations in the third trimester of pregnancy in their figurations of 'becoming subject in the feminine' – precisely the phase that the pre-term babies miss out on. The documentary, anecdotal approach adopted here by Lloyd Thomas helps give the essay a more concrete applicability than some of the others, demonstrating how thinking in terms of human–nonhuman and inter-human connections can give rise to new models of parenting practices and parental or care-giving subjectivities.

This leads us into the third section – 'New Subjectivities' – which considers the contemporary material conditions that shape specific forms of political subjectivity and engagement. Gabeda Baderoon's essay, for example, examines recent South African women's writings that craft original and unsettling forms of embodied black subjectivity, and chart a new claim on public space by black women in present-day South Africa. In addition, the section features some insightful examples of 'undutiful' rereadings of 'classic' feminist texts from the perspective of the present, such as Kyoo Lee's interpretation of Beauvoir's notion of 'secondness' or 'secondariness' in *The Second Sex*. By naming woman as the *second* sex, rather than the *other* sex, she argues, Beauvoir points to the logic of serial subversion, the pattern of discursive ordering; or, in other words, gives the 'second sex' a distinctly temporal and social dimension. Beauvoir thus holds open the 'second line' to be worked on by other possible inscriptions, Lee contends, unlike Irigaray, who turns the 'second' into a monumental 'two': a 'recuperated heteropair'.

Another productive example of 'undutiful' feminist rereading comes from Judith Butler, who revisits Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* in light of current debates on gay marriage and alternative theorizations of kinship and sexual difference. Mitchell's claim is that sexual difference has largely unconscious dimensions that are transmitted through time and across generations, and moreover that sexual difference has a kind of 'drive to stay put', a 'persistence and transmissible recalcitrance'. This is why, she claims, despite deliberate socialization, and social, economic and legal changes, there is still 'a kind of underwater tow that makes progress regress on matters of "gender" equity'. Butler's key intervention here is to challenge Mitchell's dichotomous treatment of the social and the unconscious as two separate realms, arguing for a more integrative approach: 'just as the theory of the social invariably relies on unconscious

dimensions, so the theory of the unconscious cannot be elaborated without reference to modes of transmission that form an important, if undervalued, dimension of social reality.' Indeed, Butler finds hints of this kind of understanding in Mitchell's own text (despite her explicit theoretical division of the unconscious and the social): for example, when she suggests that the recalcitrant undertow can be understood as an 'unconsciously *acquired* [shared] history' (emphasis added). This, Butler claims, implies that the social 'occurs twice', both times in the modality of history: 'one is acquired and performs a regressive and conservative function; the second belongs to a more deliberate present, operative in reforms that seek to make change in and for the future'. Such a reworking of Mitchell has important implications for contemporary debates on new kinship configurations, as it means that the recalcitrance or 'undertow' identified by Mitchell need not be taken as 'a sign of the invariant laws of human society', or a kind of inherent psychic conservatism, even as we recognize that it makes social change a slow and difficult process. As such, Butler's analysis here arms us with strong arguments against those who claim that certain kinship configurations enshrined by changing legal rulings, for instance on gay adoption or marriage, are 'against nature' or the fundamental 'symbolic rules' of society.

No single collection, of course, could be inclusive of all the different directions in feminist theory and practice emerging at any one time. It could be objected, however, that the essays in this one tend to agree with each other a bit too much, especially as we are promised 'productive disagreement' and 'cognitive dissonance'. It was surprising, for example, that there is no inclusion of the new directions in feminist phenomenology that have been emerging of late, which would have provided an interesting alternative to the Deleuzean and posthumanist work on 'new bodies'. It would also have been interesting to see some more alternatives to the anarchic 'politics of refusal' articulated here. In the collection overall, Occupy operates as the paradigm of this kind of anarchic feminist politics: Fanny Söderbäck's introduction, for instance, claims that Occupy 'embodies a conceptual revolution on the level of dissemination', and Jack Halberstam's essay praises the Occupy movement as illustrative of 'an anarchic project of cultural riot and reciprocation', signalling 'a collective awareness of the end of "normal life"'. Reading this a few months after the collection's publication, however, one can't help but reflect on the fact that Occupy has now gone rather quiet, and that 'normal life' does seem to be continuing. This may not be because of a lack of a coherent political programme; other movements which do have clear agendas and concrete demands also go quiet. But a deeper critical analysis in the essays, or an inclusion of a wider range of perspectives, might have given us some more substantial food for thought, as we consider the impact of Occupy, and how feminist politics might fare and change over the next few years. Is a carnivalesque 'cultural riot' all that is left once we refuse a projected utopian future?

Victoria Browne

Through iron and glass, darkly

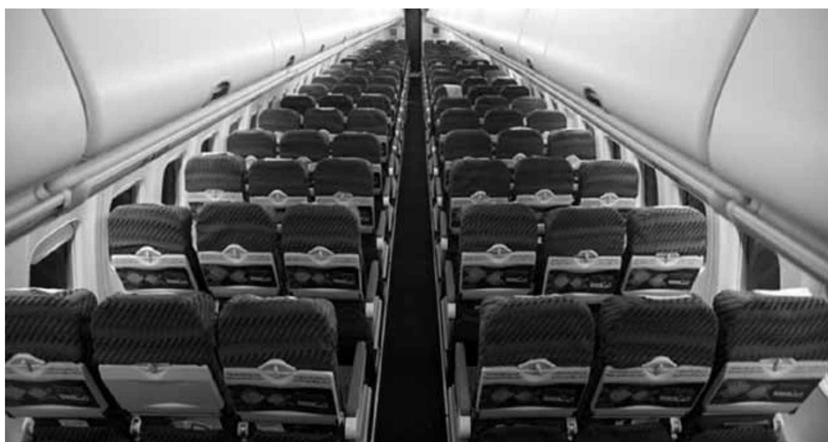
Douglas Murphy, *The Architecture of Failure*, Zero, Winchester and Washington DC, 2012. 167 pp., £11.99 pb., 978 1 78099 022 4.

Douglas Murphy's debut is an odd, unsettling monograph. The book begins with a description of the present as heralding 'a new period of *Ruinenlust*', in which there exists a preponderant passion for the ruins of modernity, as opposed to Romanticism's earlier infatuation with the ruins of antiquity. Like his peer Owen Hatherley, Murphy sets out to recover through his study the image of 'a potential future that only existed in the past'. Whereas Hatherley approaches this theme head-on, however, in his 2009 *Militant Modernism* Murphy prefers to address it more obliquely. *The Architecture of Failure* looks at the spans of time that bracket the modern movement on either side. Murphy opens with an examination of the 'ferro-vitreous' age, from the Great Exhibition of 1851 to the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The second half of the book covers the drift from exhausted postwar modernism towards the renewal of architectural transparency following the turbulence and upheaval of 1968.

Despite the considerable temporal remove that separates one from the other, Murphy attempts to draw a 'comparison between contemporary architectural culture and [that of] the late 19th century'. Without positing any kind of cyclical correlation between the two, whereby the former would appear as simply a repetition of the latter, he argues that they are bound together, all the same, by a common set of historical conditions. But this unity should not be seen to consist in their mere stylistic affinities, either – a shared predilection for eclecticism and monumentality, for example.

These are symptoms, rather, of a deeper shift that has taken place since the death of the 'heroic' avant-garde midway through the twentieth century.

The primary factor motivating this shift is not the sudden appearance of anything qualitatively new. Quite the opposite. It is instead the gradual disappearance of the radical sense of novelty that had given the twentieth century its dizzying, delirious aspect to begin with. As Murphy suggests, this feeling of missed opportunity is captured by the figure of a bygone future, the gnawing suspicion that things might have turned out differently (if only, if only). Now that the propitious moment has come and gone, in the old world that survived *après le déluge*, the aspirations that guided architectural modernism have today been rendered untenable. '[T]he poor architecture that manages to get built is a reflection of our depressing political situation', Murphy writes, with characteristic gloom. In the present absence of any imaginable alternative, he thus maintains that 'we are as far away from a revolutionary architecture now as we were at the time iron and glass buildings emerged.'



Certain peculiarities complicate what is otherwise a solid and convincing, if perhaps somewhat oversubtle, thesis. One of *The Architecture of Failure*'s more confusing features is the structural asymmetry of its two sections. While the first part of the book is devoted to an interpretation of three specific buildings of the iron and glass age – the glamorous Crystal Palace at Hyde Park, its shoddier reincarnation at Sydenham, and the ill-fated Albert Palace – the second part instead looks at three general trends within post-'68 architecture, which Murphy christens Solutionism, Iconism and Virtualism. This imbalance can prove somewhat disconcerting for readers who anticipate detailed analyses of individual structures beyond the earlier chapters. Despite passing treatments of Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano's Pompidou Centre in Paris and Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao later on in the sections on Solutionism (postmodernism/high-tech) and Iconism (post-structuralism/'decon'), Virtualism (a kind of Deleuzean neo-baroque) finds no built equivalent. Its reality is instead displaced onto the unconstrained imaginary space of digital 'diagrams,' allowing for infinitesimally intricate, schizoid patterns of design.

In fact, there is a way in which the second half of the book almost forms a microcosm of the original Crystal Palace at Hyde Park described in the first. Following a brief interlude near the middle where Murphy touches on the modernist moment, the architectonic of his argument opens up, beginning to resemble the format of a classic nineteenth-century Expo. Solutionism, Iconism and Virtualism are itemized, stereotyped and put on display, as if laid out in booths or pavilions in which the reader–*flâneur* can wander spectrally to and fro. If not a historicist inventory of styles, *The Architecture of Failure* in this respect offers a showcase for the many ideologemes, mannerisms and rhetorical conceits that comprise contemporary architecture. Murphy recapitulates this Expo effect through miniature modules, outlining the characteristics that most exemplify each tendency.

Nevertheless, these miniatures ought not be mistaken for caricatures. There is an undeniable fluency to Murphy's prose, a casual command of the theoretical underpinnings and jargonistic buzzwords that justify (even alibi) and conceptually sustain the architecture of the last forty years. He makes short work of the unwieldy neologisms and extravagant phrases that have proliferated in recent decades, deftly dismantling the work of the era's most trend-setting, 'cutting-edge' tastemakers and designers. Patrik Schumacher and Peter Eisenman are subjected to particularly mordant critiques. The former is taken to task for his 'acquiescent pseudo-radicalism', the latter for his 'cherry-picking of technical language'. Yet the more important insight comes as Murphy manages to register the rise of 'Theory' *precisely as a symptom* of architecture's post-1968 condition, and its introduction of 'a new notion of "radical critique" into architectural culture'. Murphy's own attitude towards 'Theory' is marked by a profound ambivalence. Though he polemicizes mercilessly against architects' opportunistic abuses of its terminology, Murphy deploys many interpretive models borrowed from the realm of 'Theory' himself. Early on, he introduces familiar Derridean notions

such as 'spectrality,' 'hauntology' and 'archive' to his analysis. A few pages later, Benjamin's gloss on allegory provides Murphy with a point of entry into his rumination on ruins. Towards the end of the book, he traces out the vast array of concepts, flows, antiphrases and assemblages in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy.

But Murphy's sympathy for transdisciplinary usages of 'Theory' only extends so far. His criticism of the role it has played in recent architecture is twofold. At one level, he objects to its superficiality. Murphy faults some practitioners for 'bringing theory into architecture as a purely aesthetic device'. The other side of Murphy's criticism is far more damning. For, in so far as it constitutes an ostensive form of 'radical critique', the book contends, 'Theory' functions to exonerate architects in advance for whatever questionable design decisions they might make. It becomes a kind of ritualistic gesture, 'a way of avoiding wider self-criticism'. Murphy brands those who rely on such methods 'conservatives masquerading in radical clothes'. Still, *The Architecture of Failure* wisely refrains from committing the opposite error, of denying all legitimacy to the theoretical frills in architecture. Ultimately, its appraisal of the influence 'Theory' has had over the discipline is *historical*: 'Difference is becoming standardized, the unique is becoming generic.'

This historical dimension of Murphy's study underpins an implicit *political* subtext that runs beneath the entire book, and that is, in fact, the guiding thread connecting its two halves. On the surface of things, there seems no obvious similarity between the ferro-vitreous age (1851–89) and the period of postmodernism (1971–2012). How, then, can they be compared? The answer must be sought in the political catastrophes that ushered in the two eras. In each case, a surge of revolutionary upheaval had erupted only three years before – in 1848 and 1968, respectively. By contrast, 1851 and 1971 correspond to the political reaction that set in afterwards. Murphy highlights this background as it specifically informed the construction of the Crystal Palace:

> Where there is self-aggrandizement, fear and doubt is never far away. The Great Exhibition being held in 1851 cannot help but bring forth images of revolutions and insurgency. The Great Exhibition was being organized and formulated in the wake of the failed European revolutions of 1848, and in the UK, the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law movement threatened to unleash the same turmoil.… In this context the Great Exhibition has been understood … as a symbolic plaster over open social wounds, but it was also moving in the direction of economic and political liberalization … a path between a volatile working class and a protectionist aristocracy … [B]efore the exhibition there were all kinds of worries – of assassinations, of terrorism, of petty violence, of disease, of infrastructural collapse, but … the exhibition passed without any violence or even significant disruption; the hordes of anarchists failed to materialize.

If the Crystal Palace embodied the economic spirit of the age, its political spirit was personified by that great nothingness, Napoleon III, whose true meaning would only be revealed in the *coup d'état* of December 1851. Here Bonaparte gave way to Bonapartism, a phenomenon hardly limited to the nephew. Bismarck and Disraeli were themselves both Bonapartists, representing liberal modernity hopelessly at odds with itself. As Murphy observes, the Great Exhibition that year would furnish the architectural apotheosis of bourgeois society thrown into crisis by the Industrial Revolution.

'The Crystal Palace was certainly one of the most significant early moments of modern capitalism', Murphy writes. 'Indeed, it is widely described as *the* moment in which modern … capitalist culture was born.' This also allows Murphy to establish, for example, a homology between the Crystal Palace (1851) and the Pompidou Centre (1971) in relation to the 'social unrest' of their times. Whereas the former recalls liberal policies of laissez-faire and free trade promulgated by Cobden and the Manchester School, the latter conjures up associations with neoliberal policies of deregulation and financialization formulated by Hayek and the Austrian School:

> Both were 'radical' designs by relative outsiders won through public competition. Rogers and Piano's winning design … hinged upon notions of flexibility; the building would be a massive shed with little or no internal division; … the designers would merely provide the space for 'events,' with all the post-'68 connotations that the word brought up.

This emphasizes the element of 'social unrest' that lay behind the building of the structure, provoking a comparison between the Pompidou and the Great Exhibition in terms of their epochal significance also. 'Just as the Great Exhibition can be analyzed as marking a fundamental shift, the birth of the modern consumer', Murphy writes, 'the Pompidou Centre can signify the shift into the postmodern world of consumption.'

Nevertheless, such similarities only hold up to a point, after which the parallel breaks down. Of the qualities that distinguish the two epochs, what most separates one from the other is the opposite directionality each assumes vis-à-vis its origin. The period stretching from 1851 to 1889 might well be

characterized as an 'upswing' in the development of a revolutionary movement in Europe, as based upon the progressive self-organization of an international working class. This culminated in the foundation of the Second International in 1889. Only a few months later, Paris hosted the 1889 Exposition Universelle, where the two most stunning engineering marvels to date were unveiled: the Eiffel Tower and the Galerie des Machines. Murphy appeals to the authority of Sigfried Giedion, official historian of Corbusian modernism, who asserted early on that 'the exhibition of 1889 is both the climax and … the conclusion of [the age]'. Conversely, the period beginning in 1971 through to the present must be deemed a 'downswing' in the development of revolutionary social forces at the heart of the capitalist world-system. With neoliberalism rising out of the ashes of Fordist technocracy, the sense of political agency it propped up has all but disintegrated. A watershed can be discerned some time around 1989 with the break-up of the Soviet Union, but this was merely the *coup de grâce* dealt to the revolutionary dream of the nineteenth century.

This raises a question regarding the character of the failure mentioned in the book's title. What sort of failure does Murphy investigate? Though he insists the issues discussed in the text are 'as much *architectural* issues as any other kind', it is difficult not to feel that there is something more at stake. The book engages in a species of ideology critique. More often than not, the architectural failures attest to deeper political failures that have taken place. *The Architecture of Failure* skilfully manoeuvres over diverse historical terrain without ever losing sight of this central thematic, using architecture as a lens covered by a film of black dust, through which the political regression of recent times may be viewed with melancholic lucidity.

Ross Wolfe

It's easy if you try

Sally Anne Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012. xi + 490 pp., £22.50 pb., £60.00 hb., 978 0 19989 262 4 pb., 978 0 19989 263 1 hb.

What use is so-called 'analytic' philosophy to feminism, anti-racism and the cause of social justice? Haslanger recalls encountering scepticism among some feminist theorists about her deep commitment to the methods of this tradition in philosophy. Haslanger's answer to these critics is the sophistication of her accounts of gender, race and ideology critique and their applicability to the causes of fighting sexism and racism. These accounts find their most extensive treatment in this book, which brings together several of her articles on race and gender previously published elsewhere, with one new chapter and an extensive introduction.

Haslanger is a metaphysical realist who is also a social constructionist about race and gender. In her account, first developed as an explication of Catherine MacKinnon's position, to be a woman is to occupy a social role of systematic subordination. More specifically, the social type 'woman' is the group of all those individuals who (i) have observed or imagined bodily features which are presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction, (ii) are marked within the dominant ideology as individuals who ought to play a given subordinate role, and (iii) are systematically oppressed because they satisfy both (i) and (ii). It follows that in this account women as a type are subordinated by definition or by the nature of the group.

Haslanger embraces this conclusion and argues that we ought to fight for a world where there are no men or women, or races. Her point, of course, is not that there will not be males or females (Haslanger is self-consciously old-fashioned about the distinction between sex and gender). Rather, her claim is that none of these future human beings will occupy our gender roles. There might, however, be successor genders which would not match up with any structure of oppression. She also makes similar claims about 'races' whose elimination needs to be fought for, whilst conceding that there might be space for something like ethnicities or ethno-races in just societies. From these considerations a further conclusion follows: although women and blacks are oppressed by their social nature (so to speak), no one is by nature a woman or a black person. To be a woman or black is to have become one in virtue of occupying a social role of a given kind.

Many of the articles that make up this book are dedicated to exploring several features of these definitions of gender and of race. The first feature of note is that Haslanger's definition of woman, as the occupier

of a higher-level role, neatly accounts for the phenomena of intersectionality and cross-cultural variation. There is, in this view, no one social role that all women occupy independently of culture, race, social class or other features. Instead, these individuals are likely to occupy different social roles. However, these roles themselves are all instances of a broader type of role. This is the role of being subordinated in a systematic fashion because of being bodily marked as suitable for playing a given role in reproduction. Haslanger is deeply aware that her definition of woman may seem counterintuitive. The objection is even more keenly felt with regard to race. She defines a racialized group as comprising all those individuals who (i) have observed or imagined bodily features (which she labels 'colour') that are presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region, (ii) are marked within the dominant ideology as individuals who ought to play a given subordinate or privileged role, and (iii) are systematically oppressed or privileged because they satisfy both (i) and (ii). It has been remarked by her opponents that this definition does not capture our concept of race. In other words, she has been accused, when she purports to write about gender and race, of changing the subject. Haslanger's response appears to vacillate between two different strategies. In order to appreciate them, more needs to be said about Haslanger's metaphysics.

Haslanger is a metaphysical realist of a sort; her position is akin to promiscuous realism in so far as she adopts a crowded ontology. In her view objective types, groups of things which have a unity because each member of the group possesses the same mind-independent property or properties, proliferate. Genders and races are, counterintuitively, among them. They are also socially constructed in several ways. First, the classification systems of genders and races are themselves socially constituted in so far as these are classifications of social roles. Second, the individuals who occupy these roles are also discursively constructed in so far as many of their characteristic behaviours and habits are to a substantial extent the result of what is attributed to them, and what they have consequently internalized, because of their roles. For instance, individual women are constructed because they have acquired the bodily habits indicative of submissiveness and weakness which are expected of those occupying their roles. Social construction, so understood, does not make individuals or the kinds to which they belong less real.

For Haslanger, it might also not make them less objective. To appreciate the point it is useful to

introduce some terminology adopted by Haslanger herself. She uses the term 'difference' to refer to the basis (if any) in reality of distinctions that we may wish to draw, while she reserves the terms 'distinction' or 'classification' for the linguistic/conceptual act of marking differences. The classification of individuals as men or women is the drawing of a distinction. The types that this distinction draws exist if they have enough unity. Because of the workings of discursive construction, individuals who are classified as belonging to the group become more homogeneous, and thus the groups acquire social reality. So genders and races are real. They are also objective if there is a difference or a set of differences which the classification tracks. Note that these differences might not be the properties those who employ the classification take themselves to be tracking. In this manner, concept users might be mistaken about the differences in reality that their concepts latch on to. With regard to genders and races these differences are social (rather than natural, as many assume). They are objective because they are not mere projections or inventions. They are also mind-independent in a sense: they cannot be wished away. They are mind-dependent in another sense as they have been brought into existence as a result of human activity. But this kind of dependence does not undermine their objective reality.

With these points in mind we can return to Haslanger's responses to the charge of changing the subject. One of her lines of response is that her

approach is ameliorative or analytical. She does not aim to offer an account of the concepts of woman or white that are in common currency. On the contrary she tries to forge new concepts that are superior to current ones for the purpose of understanding social reality with a view to fighting social injustice. In other words, she takes herself to be a kind of social scientist who develops new theoretical concepts that fit reality better than commonsensical ones. Her other line of response relies on Haslanger's commitment to semantic externalism. The latter is the view that the content of our thoughts or beliefs is not fixed exclusively by what is in the head but depends also on the speaker's linguistic community and on her natural and physical environment. A consequence of the view is that competent speakers of a language do not know, by introspection alone, what they are talking about. The classic example in the analytic literature is 'water'. This so-called natural kind term refers to stuff whose chemical composition is H_2O. Speakers ignorant of chemistry still refer to H_2O when they talk about water, although they do not know that *that* is what they are talking about. Haslanger attributes the same semantics to social kinds terms and thus denies that we should rely on our intuitions when we are trying to become clear about what we are talking of in the case of race or gender. These two lines of response are different, albeit not straightforwardly incompatible. When using the first, Haslanger concedes that in one sense she is changing the subject, in so far at least as she is changing the concepts.

Several questions might be raised about the usefulness of the approach. How is the cause of justice helped by claiming that we should fight for a world in which there are no more blacks, or whites or women (as defined by Haslanger)? One might be tempted to say: this is just semantics. And, in a sense, it is just semantics; but it shows that semantics matters a great deal. Haslanger's metaphysical and linguistic frameworks reveal how ideology works to naturalize what are, in reality, socially constructed distinctions. Careful attention to how language works, to how generalizations are made, helps to debunk any misunderstanding of these social types as natural kinds.

These are just some of the issues explored in this extremely rich collection of papers. There are other important running themes, which I cannot discuss here, about adoption and about how to fragment and disrupt identities based on gender and race. Readers who are not familiar with, or sympathetic to, analytic philosophy might become a bit impatient at times with some of the lines of thought pursued here and perhaps frustrated by some of the background assumptions made. To them I would say: please persevere! There is real insight to be gained from the clarity and carefulness that Haslanger brings to her analyses of these issues.

Alessandra Tanesini

Animal careers

Oxana Timofeeva, *History of Animals: An Essay on Negativity, Immanence and Freedom*, Foreword by Slavoj Žižek, Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, 2013. 168 pp., £17.00 pb., 978 9 07207 672 4.

Animals have had a 'bad career', as Oxana Timofeeva deadpans. It seems, however, that the worse that career is in reality – as animals go from totem objects to hyper-exploitation and extinction – the better it is in philosophy. Today animals are everywhere: valorized as forms of alterity or becoming that demand respect, admiration and envy. This apparent paradox is one of the tensions that Timofeeva aims to diagnose and explode. Animals, whether well or badly treated, are a problem for philosophy. Deftly tracking between philosophy, psychoanalysis, politics and literature Timofeeva carefully reconstructs the disruptive negativity of the animal in relation to philosophy's attempt to impose an order of things on animality. If animals have a history, then this history may not simply be the history we tell.

The struggle of philosophy with the animal has been to try to place animals either within philosophy or outside it, but either way within a structure, order and hierarchy. Animals are endlessly exploitable material, whether dismissed or celebrated, for philosophy. Primarily, animals are either included in a continuum which ranges from the 'lower' forms to the human as featherless (or furless) biped, such as in Aristotle, or excluded from any relation to the human, as in Descartes. Timofeeva's method is not simply to add to the discourse of blaming philosophers for the mistreatment of animals, however. Instead she aims to probe how this attempt at ordering places philosophy in constant contact with the animal as a point of internal subversion.

The result is a reading method that Timofeeva calls 'naive'. Rather than trying to assert a superior discourse that would grasp the real animal, we can, instead, probe the animal as a disruptive moment of negativity. This challenges two familiar critical reading

strategies that we can associate, perhaps unfairly, with the names Derrida and Deleuze. In the first case, of Derrida, we have the feigned modesty of 'mere' commentary on a great philosopher, which only happens to reveal that they are not so great. The originality of our reading emerges from the margins that philosopher cannot control and we supply the 'missing' element that only we have noticed – say, the animal. The second, Deleuzean, option is more explicitly grandiose in its recovery or reconstruction of a thinker or artist in terms of their affirmative force, in this case the 'becoming-animal' that exceeds philosophy. Both are fundamentally affirmative discourses, which assert the animal as immanent force.

What is lost in both cases is not only the modesty of actually reading – the naive method – but also an effect of negativity that lies within the disruptions of the text. Animals are not some positive or immanent force, which is another fantasy of philosophy, but rather levers of restless negativity. In a series of brief but engaging readings Timofeeva explores this negative effect in relation to Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, Kojève, Bataille and Heidegger. The results are often, deliberately, comic. Hegel's struggle to spiritualize the animal causes him to regard bare skin as more spiritual than hair, feathers or fur. A hairy chest on a man does not, according to Hegel, represent strength, but rather 'a relative weakness of the cutaneous organisation'. Yet all these attempts to position the animal open, in varying degrees, to the unsettling position of animality. The primary figuration of the animal is as the expression of immanence, and hence the importance of what Timofeeva calls 'the political ontology of fish'. The negative position of the fish at the margin of metaphysics is as an example of a creature fully immersed in its element. In Deleuze and Guattari's 'ontology of affirmation', this status is simply reversed to a positive one of immanence as subversion. The 'negative animal' disrupts this image by unsettling the opposition and positioning of the animal as or in immanence. Hegel's discourse is turned against itself. While Hegel stridently condemns 'transitional animals', such as amphibians or reptiles, as somehow failing to live up to the Notion or Idea of the animal, this gap of negativity opens a disruptive place. The ordering of the animal breaks down as animals unsettle place in a restless movement that pushes beyond and against the Notion. There is a 'chance of subjectivity' in this gap of negativity, in which animals' revolt against order to achieve what they have been denied.

This revolt opens the political stakes of the animal, which Timofeeva tracks through the writing of the Bolshevik modernist Andrei Platonov. Contrary to Agamben's assertion that animals figure 'bare life' as a constitutive element of the human, Timofeeva elaborates a thought of 'poor life'. Platonov's exploration of the untranslatable experience of *toska* (a kind of profound boredom or melancholia), through the experience of Russian peasants trying to grasp and create communism, brings together animals and poverty. Under the conditions of deprivation following the Russian Revolution, Platonov's communists become revolutionary animals, struggling to build communism out of very little material. This 'poor life' deploys an ethics of work and generosity, with animals sacrificing themselves to help humans, and humans reduced to destitute animality.

What Platonov's work offers is a thinking of the desire for communism as a negativity cutting across animal and human. In this dialectic the more radical the negativity of nature – the fact that nature is not 'nice', as Timofeeva puts it – the more the hope for freedom emerges between animals and humans. This is not a concession to suffering or a teleology of necessary transition. Instead, this negativity is intolerant of existing suffering and even debauched in its explosive expression of sexual desire. Revolution can only be made by turning back to animals, by turning towards the unhappy animals who want to be happy.

In a subtle fashion Timofeeva's book ruptures the horizon of contemporary discourses of animality. Against the affirmative tendency to celebrate animals as sites of alterity or becoming, her dialectics of negativity restores the animal to history as the subject that unsettles the police order. The refusal to condescend to the animal as an object to be saved or celebrated opens a gap for the 'negative animal' as the possibility of a new subjectivity that could recover the truth of a bacchanalian revel in which humans and animals come together to achieve the subjectivity they are denied.

Benjamin Noys

Selective affinities

James McFarland, *Constellation: Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin in the Now-time of History*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2013. 344 pp., £29.99 hb., 978 0 82324 536 9.

In seeking to provide a book-length examination of the relationship between Walter Benjamin and Friedrich Nietzsche, James McFarland's central claims in this monograph are clear: first, Benjamin had an intimate knowledge of Nietzsche's work, both early and late; second, and more ambitiously, Benjamin orients his theoretical position, from the *Trauerspiel* book to the work on the Paris Arcades, in reference to Nietzsche. These two claims are anchored by what McFarland refers to as the simple premiss of the book: that the relationship between Nietzsche and Benjamin is a historical one. Implicit in this is a reassessment of Nietzsche's reception both in general and within the context of Benjamin's work. Nietzsche's writings must be untethered from the bonds of the proto-fascist reception disseminated by Elisabeth Föster-Nietzsche and the Nietzsche Archive, and, at the same time, distinguished from the Marxist caricature of a thinker of bourgeois irrationality. In this way, McFarland locates an element of theoretical radicality shared by both thinkers that allows him to locate a Benjaminian moment in Nietzsche and a Nietzschean moment in Benjamin.

Such shared radicality, McFarland asserts, is situated in a methodological congruence. This is something that Adorno also points towards when he writes that, for Benjamin, truth is not located in a timeless universal but in the historical. For Adorno, however, Nietzsche's influence in this regard may have occurred without Benjamin being explicitly aware of it. By contrast, McFarland locates the presence of Nietzsche at every stage of Benjamin's thought, and finds in it the mark of a deep affinity between the two thinkers: Nietzsche's relationship to Benjamin goes beyond mere influence to a relationship of mutual assistance. As a result, the book's simple premiss grows more complex: at work in Benjamin's thought is a tension between a nihilistic Nietzschean limit to that thought and the presence of Nietzsche's assistance in thinking through this limit.

In order to demonstrate the centrality of Nietzsche to Benjamin's thought, the text traverses the terrains of philological analysis, historical investigation and philosophical interpretation. These three areas remain formally unsynthesized, but ultimately always point back towards Nietzsche's centrality. This tendency can be seen clearly in the first chapter, 'Mortal Youth'. Its argument rests on McFarland's attempt to revive the material content of Benjamin's engagement with the German Youth Movement in order to liberate the truth content of his early encounter with Nietzsche. This portion of the text is a quasi-biographical retelling of Benjamin's radical youth culminating with his friendship with the tragic figure of Fritz Heinle. The intense biographical detail gives way to a reconfiguration of Benjamin's juvenilia around the figure of Nietzsche, who appears, initially alongside Goethe and Schiller, as a representative of the transformative power of youth against the normative claims of adulthood. That Nietzsche could appear in such company is a testament to the varied forms of engagement, appropriation and interpretation of his thought at the time. It is also here that we see McFarland's main thesis in action: Nietzsche's presence in Benjamin's thought at this stage must be seen as the result of a serious engagement rather than a mere product of the wider intellectual context. This allows McFarland to delve deeper into Benjamin's occasional criticisms of Nietzsche than have other commentators. Benjamin's rejection of Nietzsche's biologism, for instance, can be seen in light of the wider interpretation. Nonetheless, according to McFarland, these criticisms belie the fact of a deep and serious engagement that remains concealed at the surface level of textual interpretation. Benjamin's criticisms of Nietzsche always give way to a deeper affinity, on McFarland's account, and the latter does an excellent job in demonstrating the philological dimension of Benjamin's early engagement. However, because the continuity of Nietzsche's influence is so heavily emphasized, McFarland is unable to account for Benjamin's movement away from the primacy of aesthetic experience. As such, the importance of the 'higher concept of experience' that Benjamin begins to develop in relation to Kant's transcendental philosophy, for instance, goes unexamined.

For McFarland, the deep connection to Nieztsche can be grasped most clearly in the development of Benjamin's concept of truth. Benjamin's youth politics, specifically the *Sprechsaal* he set up in Berlin, represents the practical basis for his later philosophical reflections. For McFarland, the *Sprachsaal* was radically apolitical: it emphasized the transformative potential of youth through the irreducible standpoints of its members. Rather than being a site on which a political programme could be synthesized, it expressed the extremes of youth, but also its receptive and expressive spontaneity. This is mirrored in the harmonic concept of truth that Benjamin discusses in

his fragment 'Language and Logic', which is, for McFarland, compatible with a Nietzschean conception that resists formal justification. It is undoubtedly the case that the interplay between Apollonian harmony and Dionysian dissonance represent an important influence on both Benjamin's theory of tragedy and his conception of artistic truth. However, in the quotation provided by McFarland, Benjamin is clear that his aim is to disrupt the semblance of the harmonic concept of truth he describes. Benjamin is also clear about the limits of his appropriation of Nietzsche. As he remarks in the *Trauerspiel* book, Nietzsche excludes the philosophy of history from his account of tragedy. Thus, while Benjamin accepts that Nietzsche is correct to say that modern theatre is unable to reproduce Greek tragedy, he also argues that such standpoints begin from the problematic presupposition that it is possible to write tragedies in the modern age. For Benjamin, in Nietzsche's renunciation of the historical-philosophical understanding of tragedy, the form of the tragic loses its historical specificity, becoming a 'purely aesthetic creation'.

Unlike Nietzsche, therefore, who examines tragedy in aesthetic terms, Benjamin questions the efficacy of tragedy from a historical standpoint that understands its own temporal specificity. For McFarland, by placing Nietzsche's theory of tragedy as the 'Archimedean point' of contemporary tragic theories, Benjamin raises the question of the possibility of a positive theory of the tragic. Within this conception, the only thing left for tragedy is the contemplation of the loss of tragic meaning. McFarland is thereby able to assert the centrality of a Nietzschean motif to Benjamin's examination of *Trauerspiel*. Benjamin, McFarland asserts, is a reader of the esoteric Nietzsche who understands that the affirmative content of *The Birth of Tragedy* can only be grasped through the silencing of the false affirmation of Wagner's musical enthusiasm. It is the spectre of an all-encompassing nihilism that closes the possibility of tragic meaning which brings Benjamin and Nietzsche together. Yet, according to Benjamin, it is not the theory of the tragic that marks the Archimedean point found in Nietzsche's work by contemporary thinkers such as Franz Rosenzweig and Georg Lukács, but history. For Benjamin, any theory of tragedy must confront the conditions of the tragic form's historical possibility. This requires an approach that can account for the expression of the tragic form in both the philosophy of religion and history; two areas that, Benjamin claims, Nietzsche was happy to abandon.

The problem of the efficacy of the tragic form is, therefore, expressed by Nietzsche, but is, equally, irreducible to this expression. This would seem to test McFarland's thesis concerning the centrality of Nietzsche to Benjamin's thought. Furthermore, and perhaps more fundamentally, it seems quite possible that the overcoming of Wagner's musical enthusiasm that McFarland sees in Nietzsche's intellectual development is itself mirrored in Benjamin's turn away from a Nietzschean romanticism that emphasized the centrality of aesthetic experience and youthful spontaneity. McFarland is only able to counter such breaks by having recourse to a claim that Nietzsche occupies the *methodological* centre of Benjamin's theoretical reflections. Thus, even their most extreme moments of philosophical dissonance can be resolved at the level of methodological congruence. On the one hand, then, McFarland succeeds in establishing a deeper understanding of Benjamin's reading of Nietzsche. The philological detail that *Constellation* provides will undoubtedly provide a valuable resource for those looking for a deeper understanding of the Benjamin–Nietzsche relationship. On the other hand, it is hard to avoid the feeling that too much of McFarland's argument rests on a 'correct' reading of Nietzsche that makes him palatable to a contemporary audience. Thus, while McFarland claims that the book operates only by way of a simple premiss – that there is a historical relationship between Benjamin and Nietzsche – he is forced to place a lot of weight on his own interpretation of Nietzsche. McFarland attempts to demonstrate that Benjamin shares this reading of Nietzsche, but the claim is not altogether convincing. The indigestible nature of Nietzsche's thought must have been one of the key factors that made him a figure of interest for Benjamin. In making Nietzsche more palatable for both the reader and Benjamin, the possibility of an explosive confrontation between these two dynamic thinkers is rendered into a static dialogue, since a deeper affinity is always guaranteed at the level of method. Thus, while McFarland claims to go beyond other interpreters, it is likely that in regard to Nietzsche's influence on Benjamin, Irving Wohlfarth still has the last word: the relation between Benjamin and Nietzsche should not be sought at the level of an overall affinity or even as a simple opposition, but as a pattern of convergence and divergence that fluctuates throughout Benjamin's work.

Phillip Homburg