

Look at his marvellous hands!

Yvonne Sherratt, *Hitler's Philosophers*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT and London, 2013. 336 pp., £25.00 hb., 978 0 30015 193 0.

Yvonne Sherratt's book on the response of philosophers to the Third Reich is written in the style of a docu-drama. There are colourful descriptions of foliage in Heidegger's Todtnauberg and peasants in 'folksy knickerbockers'. Attention is drawn to the scent of fresh roasted coffee and sweet pastries, as Carl Schmitt hears the announcement of Hitler's appointment as chancellor in a Berlin café. Thick dark hair is parted neatly on both Nietzsche's and Schmitt's heads. Men such as Schmitt, Alfred Rosenberg or Kurt Huber are 'handsome', while Arendt is referred to as Hannah, a girl 'ready for total devotion' to Heidegger, who, later, her long dark wavy hair cropped short, 'escaped the gas chambers by the skin of her teeth', and took comfort in the 'solid presence by night and by day' of Heinrich Blücher. The language of *Hitler's Philosophers* wants to be immediate, to express something of the passions and solidity of the philosophers it discusses, whose own disciplinary predilections apparently push them towards abstraction, lack of concreteness, disembodiment. But the effect is largely comic or bathetic, as when Sherratt divines the last thoughts of Walter Benjamin. Behind the thick wooden door of the hotel room in Spain, where he would kill himself, he suddenly remembers the childhood game of hiding, about which he wrote in his childhood memoirs: cue a quotation. In this book, objective and subjective registers mesh oddly. The inner lives of the philosophers are impossibly fictionalized, while the documentary mode is evoked as unproblematic fact. History, what happened, is rendered in broad strokes. Hitler comes to power. Democracy is buried and all the nastiness begins. There are Faustian Pacts and philosophers who offer 'total allegiance'. The thesis is little troubled by memories of the 'civil war' and proliferation of positions within Weimar democracy, or indeed within Weimar philosophy, where a Walter Benjamin (opponent of Nazism) might engage, in the 1920s, in some manner with the work of a Carl Schmitt (protosupporter of the Nazi regime). There is little texturing here. There are either collaborators or opponents, in much the way that Hitler himself might have seen it – those who are for, those against 'us'.

This book claims for itself the honour of being the first text to examine the part played by 'one quiet and unassuming group – the philosophers' in the Third Reich, which may be true to the extent that the emphasis is on philosophers as a somewhat incoherent 'group' comprising past and present ones, those who promoted or accommodated to Nazism and those who were its victims and fatalities. The book is ambitious, for it is an indictment of the moral failure of the whole of classical German philosophy and its heirs. Sherratt sets out to find the traces of disreputable thinking in philosophy, which is to say largely within German Idealism, as well as other somewhat random disciplines, including law, biology and musical composition. Themes of the strong state, the superman, anti-Semitism and biological racism all occur, as is to be expected. She scans the work of Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer, picking out the references to the Jews and the nation. Feuerbach is accused of accusing the Jews of ritual cannibalism, and the hoary old question of Marx and the 'Jewish question' is dealt with in half a page. Wagner features, as does, of course, Nietzsche. Darwin appears, as does the transmutation of his ideas in Ernst Haeckel's eugenicist polymathism.

All this is presented as a stimulus to Hitler's own engagements with philosophy: 'Men of logic or the passions, Idealists or Social Darwinists the highly sophisticated or the very crude, all supplied Hitler with ideas to re-enforce and enact his dream.' Hitler is said to imbibe smatterings of these ideas (in much the same way as Sherratt gives us smatterings). The illustrious philosophers Sherratt lines up are presented as anti-Semites and supremacists, but, at the same time, Hitler is a poor reader of them and abuses them for his own ends. However, whether he is a reader of them at all is not answered decisively in this study. The main sources that Sherratt quotes on his reading and thinking in the 1920s – anecdotal ones by Hitler associates such as Ernst Hanfstaengl and Hermann Rauschning – are not ones that carry much credibility for historians of the Third Reich. But it is certainly the case, as Sherratt outlines in detail, that Hitler enjoyed very favourable conditions in prison in 1924, after the Munich Putsch,

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and he received regular visitors and the opportunity to peruse books by Kant, Schiller, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, as he wrote *Mein Kampf*.

Sherratt chases up whatever encounters between Hitler and philosophy she can find. These mostly consist of little details: Hitler boasted that he carried Schopenhauer in his knapsack in the First World War; the actress and film director Leni Riefenstahl gave Hitler a first edition of Fichte's *Collected Works*, published in 1848. The context of the Führer's philosophical interests established, the book moves on to consider philosophical collaborators, such as the Nazi Party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, and the forgotten names, Alfred Bäumler and Ernst Kriek, whose bodies of work are unread now, but were once influential. These undistinguished thinkers, who help to force through a purging of the universities of any non-Nazi influence, are a prelude to the infamous names that follow: Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger. Gallons of ink have described their philosophical ideas and their biographical complicities with Nazism and some have woven the two. Sherratt sticks with the gossipy and personal, in the main. We learn of the charlatany of Schmitt's first wife. We read excerpts from his diaries about Jews as goats and apes. We find out that the wartime singer Vera Lynn targeted Schmitt as the enemy. We hear again the story of Heidegger's promotion to rector of Freiburg University and the mean way he shook off his mentor Edmund Husserl. We are told about the affair with Hannah Arendt. We get edited highlights from Farias, Ott and Faye, who have dug

deeply into this lowlife. In the chapters on Schmitt and Heidegger, there are casual moves between the work, the life and the political environment, such that, for example, through Schmitt's auspices, 'Hitler's dream was becoming enshrined in law'. Heidegger, who is labelled 'the intellectual Nazi superman', is said, in a curious metaphor, to have 'provided the icing on the cake of Hitler's dream'. The thinking of Schmitt and Heidegger is not shown to be distorted by Nazism, as Kant's or Schopenhauer's may have been. It is genetically Nazi. Sherratt's move here is not illegitimate in itself. Indeed, it is always entertaining for anyone immune to the lures of Schmitt and Heidegger to read, in various online reviews of the book, how throwing up this material yet again upsets the apple carts of those Schmittians and Heideggerians who would like to separate mere biographical details from the complexities of the work. It is simply that in the shorthand that it appears in here – for example, 'Heidegger's entire oeuvre has been interpreted as founded upon Nazi beliefs', and Schmitt 'enshrined Hitler's tyranny in law' – only those who are already convinced will be convinced.

The section on opponents switches the thesis to one of how Hitler influenced philosophy negatively, or rather how he impacted upon the lives of those 'philosophers' who were politically and racially excluded from Nazi Germany and its institutions: Adorno, Benjamin, Arendt and the Catholic Kurt Huber, who was beheaded for his supportive role in the White Rose anti-Nazi movement. We learn far more about

Arendt's love affair with Heidegger and its aftermath, and Adorno's love of the high life, than we learn about their philosophies and the ways in which these might emerge out of experience of and reflection on Nazi domination. (Sherratt has written elsewhere on Adorno's philosophy, in a study titled *Adorno's Positive Dialectic*, 2002.) The opponents of Nazism are taken-for-granted geniuses, who are destroyed by Nazism. The perspective that Benjamin, for one, was destroyed financially, institutionally, prior to the victory of Nazism, in the pincer grip of capitalism, is not countenanced. But this is a world in which brilliance is a free-floating entity. It is only in such a world that the following question makes sense: 'Why did a man as brilliant as Heidegger succumb to an individual as bluff as Hitler?' Intelligence should somehow override political enmeshment and political self-interest. We hear this question posed in another way, from Karl Jaspers's lips, as he reveals himself to be of the party that believes in the necessary elitism of the ruling class. "How do you think a man as coarse as Hitler can govern Germany?" Heidegger replied, eyes shining with glee, "culture is of no importance. Look at his marvellous hands!" The line from Heidegger is quoted to suggest Heidegger's succumbing to the unintellectual, practical man. But the book does not undermine this perspective, for it seems to hint that politics is truly a dirty business that philosophers should not meddle in, because they, unworldly creatures, will, if given half a chance, be seduced by evil and corrupted by their own vanity. Better to embrace powerlessness and some vague notion of moral authority in the book-lined study.

The shock effects of the book, with its repeated insistence on the atrociousness and barbarity of Nazism – as if we, the readers, or the author, might occasionally forget – are not lessened when the aftermath of war is addressed. A nightmare descended and so did the philosophers, who proved themselves to be bad men, in the main, and did not redeem themselves. Bad people retroactivate philosophical systems in their defence – as with Eichmann drawing Kant's categorical imperative into the nexus of justification of his actions in his Jerusalem trial, and Arendt being unable ever to extricate herself from Heidegger's tendrils. It is indeed chastening to realize that, in the 1950s, former Nazis were reappointed in German universities' philosophy departments. In Heidelberg in 1957 the philosophy faculty was almost entirely dominated by former NSDAP members. But while this raises institutional and political questions, which should not be, as here, disconnected from the founding of the GDR and the reconstitution of capitalism in West Germany, it also

begs a question that the book is not interested in pondering. Could this so-called perversion of philosophy in Nazism be also its realization? Might philosophy have an affinity to Nazism, or at least no allergy against it? And if not, if its complicities with Nazism are an aberration, what is it about philosophy as a discipline that should make it immune to Nazism's lures? Philosophy is assumed here to be a moral doctrine that should – but somehow fails to – guarantee the moral behaviour of its proponents: 'If this discipline cannot set an ethical standard, then which one can?'

Writing from the perspective of the present, it is Sherratt's claim that philosophy, as a discipline, has subjected itself to insufficient soul-searching over its role in the Third Reich and so has failed to act morally. As a consequence, Schmitt, Heidegger and Frege remain on the curriculum, while Benjamin, Arendt and Adorno have struggled to be admitted into the philosophical canon, in the English-speaking world at least; Jaspers, Löwith, Scholem and Huber are largely forgotten or out of print; and Marcuse, Cassirer and Horkheimer are marginalized in other fields. In this assessment, though, perhaps the concentration on biographical details and questions of conduct proves to expose the failure of the book to consider the forcefulness of the discipline of philosophy itself. For certainly some of those marginalized names were not content to rest as philosophers, devising interdisciplinary and specialism-busting frames, such as Critical Theory, which cannot be assimilated back into the business-as-usual of philosophy without disrupting the framework and ushering in questions of history, politics, sociology and economy and a critical relationship to the scope and edges of philosophy itself.

Esther Leslie

Always historicize?

Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor, eds, *History and Psyche: Culture, Psychoanalysis, and the Past*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2013. 347 pp., £57.50 hb., 978 0 23011 336 7.

'Always historicize!' has been a fashionable rallying call in recent times. Yet only a minority of those who scrutinize the workings of mind or body have paid much heed to the summons. As the cultural historian Anthony Ashplant comments in this anthology, even sympathetic critics of Freud's insights have regretted the characteristic disengagement of psychoanalysis

from wider social and political issues, usually focusing all their attention upon the putatively universal characteristics of individuals' 'internal worlds'. Resisting the most rigorous rulings of post-structuralism, however, most of the writers in this collection agree that there may indeed be universal aspects to the desiring or defensive mechanisms of psychic functioning, but they also, inevitably, have a significant historical dimension. 'How are we to grasp the irreducibly human dimensions of historical reality?' is the critical question asked by another cultural historian, Bill Schwarz, in a different collection pondering the relations between history, memory and time. However, on the other side of that divide separating those two muses, Psyche and Clio, only a minority of historians have shown any interest in answering that question, or even addressing the all-too-human forces entangled with the historical enterprise. It is the continuing distance between history and psychology that is the trigger for this collection, with its two editors, the feminist historians Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor, affirming: 'Human history is intrinsically psychological, even if those who research and write history are often reluctant to acknowledge this truism.'

In particular, as the editors emphasize, British historians have, in general, largely disdained psychoanalytic reflections as undermining their stress on firm objective evidence. This includes those influential left historians once clustered around the Communist Party Historians Group that flourished in the decade after 1945. Unsurprisingly, despite his immense significance as a historian, the work of the late Eric Hobsbawm therefore makes no appearance in this collection. More surprisingly, nor does that of Raphael Samuel, one of Hobsbawm's eager young followers, who wrote so movingly about the structures of feeling motivating Party members, such as Hobsbawm himself. Samuel was the initial driving force behind History Workshop, the movement dedicated to exploring 'history from below', which blossomed in Britain and elsewhere from the late 1960s and was responsible for launching the *History Workshop Journal*, in 1976, for a while proudly proclaiming itself *A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historians*. This journal was soon instrumental in introducing psychoanalytic perspectives into historical research, and it is from this background that the editors convened the Psychoanalysis and History seminar – running now for almost twenty years – to which most of the authors in this collection have contributed.

In so far as the ties between history and psyche are discussed nowadays, it is overwhelmingly the legacies

of historical 'trauma' that are most prominent in such research, with the enduring impact of the Holocaust on generations of Jewish 'survivors' its imprimatur. It is therefore interesting that collective trauma is hardly touched upon in this collection. Instead, the main focus is on historicizing the development of psychoanalysis itself, exploring how the thoughts of particular psychoanalytic innovators – Freud himself, W.H.R. Rivers, Donald Winnicott, Wilfred Bion and others – were shaped by their historical moment. Much has already been written, for instance, on the significance of Jewish identity, with its distinct fears, attachments and horrors, on Freud's own thought and the growth of psychoanalysis more generally. In this volume, Timothy Ashplant tackles this theme in various ways. He suggests that it was the impact of intensifying anti-Semitism in Freud's life, with its discourses of Jewish men as effeminate or homosexual, Jewish women as oversexed and seductive, which led Freud to reject Charcot's insistence on the hereditary character of hysteria, seeing its potential imbrication with racist belief. It was also anti-Semitism, Ashplant notes, which not only entailed Freud's turn away from direct engagement in politics, but also encouraged his shift into self-analysis. This move, he argues, not only enabled Freud to work through his hostility to his father, but also furthered his refiguring of political rebellion in terms of its putative roots in personal rebellion. Ashplant largely endorses Carl Schorske's account of the way in which Freud's writing serves to neutralize politics in its turn to mythic familial dynamics: 'Patricide replaces regicide, psychoanalysis overcomes history.'

Ashplant's essay makes good use of various cultural theorists and Freudian scholars in its account of the possible strengths and limitations of Freud's Jewishness on his theoretical outlook. Surprisingly, however, he makes no reference to the writing of Britain's keenest observer of the significance of the Jewish origins of psychoanalysis, Stephen Frosh. It seems a pity that Frosh, a contributor to the Psychoanalysis and History seminars, was not included in this volume, when his own long-term project has been exploring both the historically diverse and conflicting impact of psychoanalytic thought on conceptions of subjectivity as well as the saturation of the social terrain with the effects of personal desires and the orchestration of fantasies in the construction of imaginary 'realities'. Moreover, his book *Hate and the Jewish Science* (2005) not only tackles Freud's conflicted feelings about his Jewishness, and the ways in which anti-Semitism fostered his mistrustful outlook and need for

theoretical loyalty, but – altogether less defensively, if more controversially – Frosh celebrates what he sees as the roots of psychoanalysis in Jewish identity and culture. As the ‘universal stranger’ for two millennia of Western society, Jews became, he argues, not merely convenient scapegoats, but the paradigm of ‘otherness’, both without and ‘within’ (in the form of the unconscious). Hence Freud’s stress on the incommensurability between the psychic and the social (a stricture he sometimes himself ignored), and his offering of a psychology that potentially encourages a critical rather than a conformist outlook on historical and social change. However, one would have to admit, it has surely been a potential more honoured in the breach than the observance, an occurrence we can’t simply blame on its later Christian followers, when some of the founders of the more conformist American ego psychology were themselves Jewish.

Further essays exploring the significance of time and place on psychoanalytic reflection and practice include John Forrester’s account of W.H.R. Rivers and Michael Roper’s revisiting of Wilfred Bion, both practitioners whose work is seen here as moulded by their wartime experience. Moving beyond the clinic to consider the effects of psychoanalysis on government policy, Sally Alexander’s fascinating essay on Donald Winnicott highlights the enduring, and indeed, as is clear from this collection alone, growing impact of his work. Many feminists may have worried, rightly, about Winnicott’s insistent identification of women with motherhood (despite his own two wives not becoming mothers). However, Alexander highlights Winnicott’s significant contributions to welfare reform, alongside the extraordinarily compassionate and creative work he did with working-class women and children in his clinics for forty years.

The second theme in this book addresses shifting notions of ‘subjectivity’. In what turns out to be the most passionate and provocative of the essays, Barbara Taylor surveys and critiques the impact of post-structuralism in launching conceptions of selfhood as fluctuating and fragmentary, seen as discursive artefacts, devoid of that genuine interiority (or deep structure) thought to constitute the ‘inner world’ of psychoanalysis. While welcoming some of the creative energy released by this theoretical turn, Taylor is especially critical of British Foucauldians, such as Nikolas Rose and Patrick Joyce, for whom all concern with subjectivity disappears into explorations of ubiquitous mechanisms of compulsion, described as regimes of ‘governmentality’. This explains why there is only passing reference to Foucault’s ‘complicatedly hostile’

attitude to psychoanalysis. It is a lost opportunity, some might think, when reflections on the intriguing silences and mysteries of Foucault’s private life, including his destruction of all personal documents that might provide clues to it, might add a certain richness to speculations about his presentation of what others have called the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ and the sense of ‘panoptic surveillance’ characterizing the theoretical outlook of Foucault and his dedicated followers, from the 1980s onwards.

All historians do operate with some notion of the human psyche and its presumed motivations and emotions, however implicitly, Taylor argues convincingly; just as desires and feelings inevitably mediate historians’ relationship with their object of study, however unwittingly. Empathy or dislike, projection and fantasies of various kinds, thus enter into the historian’s research, which means that it is never free from the dangers of misreading the past in terms of public or personal dispositions of the present. Yet this subjective engagement is just what Taylor uses to reject any anti-humanist argument, replacing it by a belief in ‘our common humanity’, thereby anchoring research into the past in the overlapping terrain of historical and psychoanalytic reflection:

Of course we can never experience life as it was lived by past individuals. But what is achievable, indeed unavoidable, is what Starobonski describes as the ‘critical relation’ between the historian and her subjects, produced by the ‘ceaseless movement’ between ‘intuitive identification’ and a ‘panoramic view of the context and cultural patterns’ in which these subjects were embedded.

Somewhat more cautiously, in an area she has been researching for many years, Katharine Hodgkin queries the new historicist Stephen Greenblatt’s assertion that psychoanalysis is not applicable to early modern subjects. Historical research, she agrees, certainly highlights very differing presentations of selfhood, as in the pious autobiographies of the early modern period that exhibit little interest in childhood or even familial ties in their accounts of the life’s journey towards spiritual salvation. Nevertheless, Hodgkin points to certain enduring psychic structures, alongside great diversities, as she explores the extensive confessional writing of Elizabeth Isham (from the early seventeenth century), in which her account of an apparently dispersed self, constituted through its long pathway to the divine, also contains numerous passages evoking sibling rivalries and other dynamics more familiar to us from modern autobiography. It is this interest in the continuities of subjectivity, as much as the distance and strangeness

that emerge in viewing the past, even our own pasts, which these psychoanalytically versed historians all choose to emphasize. The early and celebrated Italian practitioner of this genre Luisa Passerini sums up the shared outlook in the final essay in this volume:

The main contribution of psychoanalysis to historical studies ... has been to make subjectivity – including its unconscious dimension and its internal fissures – into an object of history, and in particular to make memory itself analysable as a form of subjectivity.

Ironically, though, especially as we rethink the past forty years in the wake of Thatcher's demise, it was the sole contribution in this collection that barely touched upon actual psychic states that I found especially useful in reflecting upon the recent past and historical shifts in our understandings of personal malaise. More Foucauldian in outlook, Rhodri Hayward's essay, 'The Pursuit of Serenity', addresses the creation of the postwar welfare state. For metaphysicians such as Heidegger we are never at home in the world we are hurled into, with 'angst' ('dread' or 'anxiety') seen as intrinsic to existence. For Freud, anxiety states could be traced back to accumulated sexual excitation. In contrast, Hayward maps out the political background to cultural understandings of 'anxiety', shorn of metaphysical or classic psychoanalytic associations, used to spread the message that anxiety is a social condition, whose roots lie largely in poverty and economic insecurities. The reforms and nationalizations inaugurating the British welfare system were therefore presented as necessary for the construction of a healthy society, post-1945, premised on a belief in the role of the state in the elimination of personal misery: 'many of the maladjustments and neuroses of modern society', as Bevan explained when minister of health, arose directly from poverty and insecurity. The overriding and enduring success of Margaret Thatcher, as she rode the high tide of corporate capital's determination to increase profits by rolling back all the popular gains of the postwar settlement, was precisely to overturn that consensus. Supported at every turn by much of the British media, Rupert Murdoch and Paul Dacre in particular, she successfully associated any notion of state or public control with harmful constraint on individual freedom; notions of the private and privatized with personal happiness premised upon the pleasures of choice. This consensus holds such sway today that few dare challenge it.

Some readers may be relieved to find that this collection is one of the very few critical texts edited by two contemporary feminists in which the thoughts of Judith Butler are entirely absent, let alone the

queer theorists who have danced behind her. However, I missed her, and them, thinking that the feminist content of the book would have been strengthened by a stronger challenge to normative readings of gender and sexuality, when only one contribution, by Elizabeth Lunbeck, addresses this issue: she highlights the lack of substance in Freud's account of the 'narcissistic homosexual', which remained virtually uncontested for half a century. Lacanians will also be ruffled by their fleeting appearance in these essays. However, one volume cannot hope to be exhaustive, and this rich and interesting collection will provide an essential resource for those wanting to explore creative encounters between psychoanalysis and history. As Joan Scott argues in a recent essay, these encounters can be all the more productive not despite, but precisely because of, the need to reflect upon the incommensurability between the differing temporalities and contexts for understanding each domain. Psychoanalysis forces historians to question the way accounts of the past are contaminated by the effects of fantasy and unconscious motivation, while history just might contribute to our understanding of the specific content of prevailing fantasies at any particular time.

Lynne Segal

Neoliberal art history

David Joselit, *After Art*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ and Oxford, 2012. 136 pp., £13.95 pb., 978 0 69115 044 4.

In his new book David Joselit makes a clear case for a progressive art-politics of the future. He asks us to 'take image diplomacy seriously and attempt to imagine how art can function as currency without falling into monetization'. This profitless mode of currency, a power 'as real as it gets', describes the latest forms of image production, the 'emergent image ... that arises out of [pure] circulation'. The emergent image is 'located on a spectrum between the absolute status of native site specificity on the one hand, and the absolute freedom of neoliberal markets on the other'. The nativist or 'fundamentalist' tendency speaks to traditional modes of artistic production and reception, the work of art tied to site and place. The migrant or 'neoliberal' work is severed from its original site in order to release the work into 'free and unfettered markets'. And if the 'dialectic ... between the "native" and the "neoliberal"' were the central terms of both modern and postmodern

art and politics, then the emergent image – situated in ‘cascading chains of relocation and remediation’ – is the grounds for art made after art. (That the ‘cultural openness’ produced by new modes of formatting is characterized *in opposition to* neoliberalism, and not its very mode of being, speaks to the kind of analysis generated here.)

It is hard to imagine a more canonical claim among current academics working on contemporary art than the ontology of ‘image explosion’ described and embraced by Joselit in Chapter 1. Recurrent claims about the ‘vast image population explosion’ and how humans exist within ‘conditions of ubiquitous image saturation’ are the working assumptions of contemporary art history. ‘Everyone who inhabits contemporary visual culture’, Joselit writes, ‘assumes the complex communicative capacity of images to be self-evident.’ This self-evidence puts an end to ‘art’ as the belief that ‘images may carry new content’ and inaugurates, according to Joselit, the era of ‘formatting and reformatting of existing content’; what he calls ‘The Epistemology of the Search’.

Joselit’s argument turns on new kinds of behavioural patterns generated by art spaces rather than discrete artworks. Rejecting a postmodern aesthetic of the collage, ‘after’ art pursues an aesthetic of *folding*, which establishes the ‘*becoming* of form through variable intensifications and manipulations in a continuous structure’. Joselit cites various architectural instances of the ‘emergent’ image including platforms and differential fields; what he describes as ranges of densities and intensities within a common gradient. If postmodernism was driven by the dialectic of figure/ground within the work of art, the new aesthetic is defined, he argues, by a ‘broader oscillation between the work and its aesthetic environment’. How new is this oscillation between work and audience? As Joselit (unwittingly?) remarks, it is ‘like Minimalist sculpture’, in that it ‘requires a spatialized form of reception in which the viewer’s shifting position from place to place causes modulations in significance’, and in that this mode of image manipulation has centrally emerged ‘since the mid-1950s’. And yet we are assured we are on to something new. The politics of this new mode of performance – exemplified, for instance, by Sherrie Levine’s *Postcard Collage #4, 1–24* of 2000 – is the act of narrating the ‘social lives of images’. The politics are ocular: ‘staging of a performative mode of looking through which the single image and the network are visible *at once*’. It is the staging of the performance that produces new forms of *visibility*. Despite the emphatic declaration of ‘image explosion’, there is little

sense that one is in fact immersed in images but rather that art and its critics manage to stage, dramatize and narrate image saturation from a provisional but real distance. The saturation doesn’t affect the artist or critic when it comes time to experiencing the work; the works are *about* image saturation, if anything. We witness, for example, an ‘operatic demonstration’ and ‘elaborate tournament of events for objects’ in Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster Cycle*.

The sign under which the new art is made is not, then, that of meaning but of *format*: what Joselit defines as ‘a heterogeneous and often provisional structure that channels content’. Formats ‘regulate image currencies (image power) by modulating their force, speed, and clarity’, and are opposed to *objects* which are characterized by ‘discernible limits and relative stability [that] lend themselves to singular meanings’. Analogue forms of ‘centripetal’ interpretation are inadequate to the emergent forms of digital image populations. The ‘tethering [of] things to meanings’, Joselit



writes, ‘participates in the very process of reification’ – meaning ‘bolsters the object’ – that progressive art history has sought to undermine. Le Corbusier’s centrifugal ‘image promenade’ at the Maisons La Roche–Albert Jeanneret (1923), for instance, produces a space resistant to the ‘enclosure of meaning’ and open to ‘discussion and action’. Joselit’s ideal is the production of works that function as a ‘commons, a building or a work of art [that] may *host several actions*, both virtual and actual’. Rirkrit Tiravanija’s *Secession* (2002) exemplifies this vision of the common space: we learn that the activities that occurred there – film screenings, DJ nights, a ‘big’ barbecue, Thai massages – ‘shifted rights of action away from the museum ... and toward its users as shareholders’.

And whatever a format is, it is, for Joselit, *new*. (Just how new? It never gets old: the word ‘format’ appears roughly forty times in the book’s 96 pages of text). Formats ‘channel an unpredictable array’,

open up ‘eccentric pathways’, ‘create value through their magnitude and density of connections’, produce ‘multiple branching of connections’ and a ‘wide variety of connections’. ‘After art’, Joselit explains, ‘comes the logic of networks where links can cross space, time, genre and scale in surprising and multiple ways’. It’s a politics of newness, variety, multiplicity, surprise. Joselit’s closing call for ‘newly creative and progressive ways’ of exploiting the art world’s powers – what he calls (three pages earlier) ‘exploiting its complex format more creatively’ – is actually much closer to the avant-garde ‘make it new’ politics it defines itself against. Then again, when Ezra Pound in *Make it New* (1934) defined ‘modern existence’ as something ‘governed by ... the necessity to earn money’, his fantasied solution, artistic and economic, was an end to the fluctuations produced by exchange, as Jennifer Ashton has recently argued. Rather than producing ever-new forms of cultural connections (at least literal ones) – a basic tool of economic expansion – Pound sought in economic redistribution an end to the ‘bad taste’ of price fluctuation and the production of poems whose ‘meaning ... can not “wobble”’. The modernist poem that did not ‘wobble’ was identified with an economy that didn’t either. Indeed, in 1934 in the USA the New Deal was attempting, with increasing success, to produce such a thing. Joselit’s ‘logic of networks’ is similarly identified with a fixed economy: one of rank exploitation by the 1 per cent, the very system Pound’s emphatic ‘newness’ was directed against.

That anyone who is interested in politics should turn to art as their model of efficacy has always required justification. Joselit takes the traditional route: he turns low-degree guilt (an academic position in an art history department) into a primordial power. He rejects the ‘lingering tendency to regard art’s power as *virtual* – as an epiphenomenal reflection of other kinds of “real” power, such as capital’. But if the mistake in the past was to see art as the representation of power, Joselit wants to see the power of art ‘as real as it gets when it comes to capital’s effects’. Joselit cites Tania Bruguera’s desire to ‘rupture the membrane between art and life’ with works that have ‘direct social impact’. Having a direct impact, it turns out, is in inverse proportion to the work’s capacity to bear ‘meaning’ or produce a ‘representation of reality’. While representations produce indirect forms of impact, the production and articulation of new formats are the occasion of new social realities. The art world is more real than the reality putatively outside it: ‘It’s not just the purchase of artworks, but the self-image of entire nations, the transformation

of neighborhoods and cities, and the fashioning of diplomatic identities.’ The power of art ‘has probably never been greater’. (Joselit’s anomalous ‘probably’ reflects the lasting scruples of his enterprise.) He goes on: ‘Art links social elites, sophisticated philosophy, a spectrum of practical skills in representation, a mass public, a discourse attributing meaning to images [a ‘connection’ Joselit explicitly rejects], financial speculation, and assertions of national and ethnic identity.’ The art world’s complex ‘format’ is more politically effective than related fields of the university or film industry. We are told not to ‘deny this power’ of art ‘through postures of political negation or to brush it under the carpet in fear of “selling out.” The point’, Joselit insists, ‘is to *use* this power.’

Joselit takes Ai Weiwei’s work as an example of the unprecedented power of art today. Ai’s success in the Western art world of museums, galleries and biennials allowed him to further ‘*speculate*’ on his international profile, and he used this capacity to engage in a series of political actions. Ai’s *Fairytale* for Documenta 12 in 2007 transported 1,001 Chinese to Kassel, Germany, along with 1,001 chairs dating from the Ming and Qing dynasties that ‘stood in as mute surrogates ... for the Chinese tourists who were probably invisible as individuals to most visitors to the exhibition’. As Joselit describes it, here Ai has ‘given form’ to the concept of ‘*population ... in migration*’. Like the other examples in *After Art*, political efficacy is associated not with formats themselves but with the *visualization* of formats for viewers. Thus the aim of Tania Bruguera’s 2009 *Generic Capitalism* – perhaps Joselit’s central model – ‘was [in] making ... unconscious assumptions painfully visible’. It is the standing apart from and ‘giving form’ to ‘formats’, making the unconscious conscious, that constitutes the political power of art. That this process of visualizing hieratic networks is in fact the traditional *October* model of political efficacy does not prevent Joselit from citing Bruguera’s admonition that she does not ‘want people ... to look at’ her work, but to ‘be in it’. More surprisingly, Joselit posits Ai’s example, which is ‘as real as it gets when it comes to capital’s effects’, against Hans Haacke’s 1971 *Shapolsky et al. Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. Even though Haacke ‘mapped the Byzantine connections of ownership of dozens of tenement buildings ... through a maze of corporations and partnerships’, this project was, Joselit argues, fraught with failure. Why? Because in doing so Haacke implied that ‘art’s power is necessarily negative or oppressive in its association with exploitative forms of property ownership.’ Against

Haacke's 'critique [of] the power of images', Joselit affirms how Ai 'exploited the power of art to transport people and things both spatially and imaginatively'. Joselit's joyful science certainly irons out any remaining contradictions among avant-garde projects – the art world is corrupt and it is also ineffective – but it does so at the expense of making its effectiveness identical with its corruption.

Putting aside the one-dimensional account of artworks as 'reifications' – 'mediums lead to objects, and thus reification' – it would take only a little reflection to see that the end of the distribution of wealth in the 'era of art', at precisely the moment Joselit's 'reframing, capturing, reiterating, and documenting' paradigm first emerged (a set of procedures exemplified for him by the work of Sherrie Levine), was also the moment at which the US economy began its most aggressive turn away from equality. In the period between 1932 and 1979, during what many economists call the 'Great Compression', the top 1 per cent's income share dropped from 24 per cent in 1928 to 9 per cent in 1970. The 'Great Divergence' first emerged in 1979 – in artistic terms we'll call it the 'era of formatting' – when the richest 1 per cent's income share began its exponential rise. Thus Joselit's

reiterated call for a 'currency of exchange that is not cash, but rather a nonmonetized form of *transaction*', which he defines as 'the *power* of connectivity', has a way of simply being the form art takes not *under* neoliberalism but *as* it. If art is, as Joselit says, 'the paradigmatic object of globalization' based on the nonmonetized exchange of 'cultural difference', then it is paradigmatic for neoliberalism as well, which, as ideology, can be defined by its capacity to turn every (monetary) exchange into culture (exchange), actively obscuring the former with the latter. And to call that mode of transformation *the* model of power today is certainly right, but it is wrong to celebrate it. The newly liberated 'users as shareholders' own stock in a company that makes them feel better about themselves, and when they feel better about themselves they tend to work harder for lower wages. Or maybe we should see things from Joselit's perspective and recognize the form of power hidden in the idea that the 'quantitative density of connections ... ultimately leads ... to qualitative differences'. If those qualitative differences mean greater inequality but also 'greater political openness', then Joselit has described a real achievement.

Todd Cronan

Third-way aesthetics

Christoph Menke, *Force: A Fundamental Concept of Aesthetic Anthropology*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2013. xiv + 111 pp. £14.99 pb., 978 0 8232 4973 2.

Christoph Menke has written a slim book, but one that, at least at first sight, seems to pack a big punch. It comes with the promise of both a neglected 'fundamental concept' – 'force' – and a brand new field, since 'aesthetic anthropology' seems not to have bothered anyone that much until now. Unfortunately, a bold intervention is not much use in a non-existent field, and this pretty much sums up the problem with this book.

Menke revives an age-old dispute as to the correct usage of the word 'aesthetics', arising out of the eighteenth-century conflation of aesthetics 'in the Greek sense' (referring to the things of sensibility) with the philosophical treatment of art. The book's main contention is that, however counter-intuitive, this conflation is not to be undone by prising apart art and aesthetics. (That would be what Peter Osborne has done, for example, in 'Art beyond Aesthetics' in his recent *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of*

Contemporary Art – a text that is almost a negative image of the one under review.) Menke goes for a third way: it is aesthetics itself that must be internally split. Menke's unsung hero here is Herder, and the thrust of the book retraces his critique of Baumgarten, to the point where at times it is unclear whose voice we are reading. To wit, the Baumgartian attempt to extend philosophical inquiry into the realm of the sensible backfired when it misrecognized its object. As a philosophical project *aesthetics* was stillborn when it mistook the animating 'obscure forces' of *the aesthetic* for 'subjective faculties'. Inheriting a Cartesian understanding of subjectivity that equated cognition with the capacity for action, it took aesthetic forces to be fundamentally practical, to be exercised so as to improve their performance and serve as self-guidance.

Against this Baumgartian 'aesthetics of capacity' Menke proposes an 'aesthetics of force'. Here, forces

must be understood as neither mechanical nor biological, as unconscious energies that cannot be trained or directed, that are purposeless and follow no laws. Therefore no 'aesthetic training' or refinement of taste is useful or possible. These forces are human, but *not yet subjective*. They are not at the subject's disposal for the performing of actions; they are at play and realize only themselves. And yet these obscure forces are understood as the *human ground* of the subject's capacities, as the precondition of reason. The challenge is to rethink the object of aesthetics as one that can only be negatively delimited, remaining stubbornly obscure and impervious to enlightening. For aesthetics to become the thinking of these forces as the ground of man (*sic*), a 'contraction of philosophy to anthropology' is required.

Moreover, inasmuch as Baumgartian aesthetics had made the preposterous mistake of taking as its starting point the human faculties that aesthetic forces had become, an aesthetic anthropology must be *genealogical*; albeit in an explicitly non-Foucauldian sense, for Foucault too is seen to be afflicted by the Baumgartian confusion. Needless to say, this is a socially blind genealogy. It must probe subjective faculties for the obscure forces out of which they emerge, which they carry within themselves and into which they are always in a process of turning. For the process is an ongoing one, and subjective faculties *emerging out of* obscure forces are always liable to *turn into* them again. Accordingly, aesthetic events – the object of study for an aesthetics of force – is the turning of faculties into obscure forces, through a process of aestheticization. With this insight, philosophy itself is transformed and a new quarrel between philosophy and aesthetics is inaugurated. This new quarrel is not based on mere antagonism (the Platonic rejection of poetry), nor on alternative accounts of the same object (as in Kant); instead it poses *the aesthetic* as a different and competing mode of reflection that cannot be a mere object *for* philosophy, but, as its ground, cannot be discarded. By turning to *the aesthetic* 'philosophy turns to something that calls into question the form of philosophical thinking itself'.

So far so good, but in a book of just six short chapters, the strange ahistoricity of Menke's narrative begins to grate by the end of Chapter 5 (not to mention his and his translator's anachronistic decision to stick to masculine pronouns, and the gendered 'man', in order not to 'compromise the brevity and fluidity of the language' – a gesture that is by now so violent it interferes unduly with the flow of reading). While it is true that Herder has not been in anyone's thoughts that

much of late, it is no secret that his 'aesthetic anthropology' comes out of Spinoza. But Menke chooses to write as if uncovering a long neglected alternative, as if there was no current Spinozist aesthetics in relation to which this book would inevitably be read. Indeed, Deleuze makes an appearance just once, in a footnote. The traditional disregard that French and German philosophies have displayed for each other can hardly excuse this fact. But, lamentable as this is, it is not the worst of the book's problems. This comes to the fore when we turn to the other half of the Baumgartian conflation, the philosophical treatment of art. Menke explains that 'the aesthetic cannot, and should not, concern art alone'. Our question is: how does it concern art *at all*?

As was also the case in Menke's previous foray into aesthetics, *The Sovereignty of Art* (reviewed in *RP* 94), 'art' remains gloriously foggy and conveniently unencumbered by any particular artworks. Menke's aesthetic force seems to be an updated version of the aesthetic negativity that in *The Sovereignty of Art* was a precondition of artistic autonomy. As was the case then, Menke not only denies the social embeddedness of artistic practice, he makes the negation of social praxis a precondition of art. But against the Hegelian charge of the 'objectless relation to the self' of the aesthetic, Menke argues that aesthetic play does not take place before, beside or above the praxis of determining; it is merely other to it. Hence, no Schillerian leap is required for 'aesthetic representation' (which presumably includes art-making); this is 'sparked' by their antagonism, by that becoming aesthetic of practical faculties that Menke calls aestheticization. The one factor that distinguishes artworks from mere beautiful things here is that the former 'also show the process of aestheticization'. Unfortunately, the only evidence of this we are offered is a dubiously apposite quotation from Schlegel.

Some time later, Nietzsche is dragged unreconstructed into Menke's ahistorical present. What he bears is an image of the tragic artist as the one with enough dexterity to handle intoxication without regressing to mere barbarism. In *his* intoxication the artist liberates *his* aesthetic forces to exceed or fall short of *his* practical faculties.

In the pleasure they take in their own aesthetic condition, the artists see another good revealed, one that differs from the practical goodness of actively realised purposes... The artist is always able to let his forces exercise themselves freely ... even in the face of fear, despair, and utter defeat ... even where his faculties are destroyed.

Who are these artists? The last time we saw them being described in these terms – heroic, intoxicated, and conveniently male – abstract expressionism was all the rage. But I digress; this heroic gesture discovers in tragic failure another good, which is not the practical good and is not subordinated to practical reason. With it, the book concludes (paraphrasing the *Twilight of the Idols*) that the ethical-political import of aesthetic experience lies in its providing ‘a freedom from practical freedom that is not a submission to an overwhelming outside power’. Given Menke’s previous engagement with Adorno, this version of autonomy seems intractably solipsistic.

After reading *Force* one might be tempted to recommend that Menke visit some biennials, but this would be idle since he has already been to quite a few. In fact, he was one of 100 thinkers (dead and alive) chosen to provide ‘100 thoughts’ for Documenta 13 last summer. Since the original German-language publication of *Force* in 2008 he has made the rounds of European museums from MACBA to OCA, and Sternberg Press has published his lecture ‘The Aesthetic Critique of Judgement’, bulked up by

a preface and Q&A session. One has to wonder how it is that Menke became a darling of the artworld. Ironically, it could be the trend for post-Deleuzian affect theory, which has been very much the thing of late. Whatever it is, the problem is that Menke’s theory does not take kindly to such close contact with actually existing artworks.

What is discouraging about books like Menke’s, when read alongside his artworld presence, is that these encounters – however brief – seem not to have engendered a minimal curiosity about the other partner. In this regard, philosophy is the guiltiest side. These days most artists consider reading and writing part of their practice; however feeble, most have some level of familiarity with the philosophical tradition. The artworld does not need philosophical homilies delivered as if from an otherworldly stage. That art and philosophy are both so eager to embrace the distortedly exalted view each has composed of the other does not bode well for the prospects of their respective fields. At this point, conjuring up obscure forces might be precisely the wrong thing to do.

Yaiza Hernández Velázquez

Shot/reverse shot

Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images*, Continuum, London and New York, 2011. 247 pp., £55.00 hb., £17.99 pb., 978 1 44112 257 5 hb., 978 1 44115 343 2 pb.

Recent years have witnessed a growth in publications seeking to stake out a newly defined and emerging territory named, by certain of its exponents, film-philosophy. Indeed, one of the primary exponents in an anglophone context, founder of the web portal *film-philosophy*, Daniel Frampton, precisely coined the term ‘filmosophy’ in his 2006 book of that title in order to describe the supposed immanence of the conceptual activity associated with the discipline of philosophy – let’s call it thought – to cinema. Nonetheless, this needs immediate qualification. For what is at stake is *some* cinema. There is an evaluative dimension that lies at the crux of the battle between cognitivism and film-philosophy in which Robert Sinnerbrink’s new book seeks to intervene. More particularly, *New Philosophies of Film* responds to what it describes as a need to ‘steer a successful course between the Scylla of dogmatism and the Charybdis of reductionism’ that would apparently arrange the battlefield at present. At the same time, for Sinnerbrink, the so-called Grand Theory which dominated academic film discourse in

the 1970s and 1980s, and which was a target of the most influential of the cognitivists, Noël Carroll and David Bordwell, is the main protagonist in stimulating the very reductionism and dogmatism which continues to dominate exchanges between cognitivists and film-philosophers today.

So what is film-philosophy? A good deal of impetus for one strand of it derives from the influence of Deleuze, and it is often characterized as indicating a switch from Lacanian orthodoxies – still represented, albeit in idiosyncratic Hegelian form and operating outside mainstream film studies, by Žižek’s writings on film. This strand is characterized by a commitment to immanence, tied to Deleuze’s insistence that films think, a view held by the other doyen of cine-thinking, Stanley Cavell. Philosophy departments, however, and at least certain film departments, at universities during the 1980s, also began to play host to a quite distinct approach to cinema, one fuelled by analytical philosophy, but sharing with Deleuze a sense of the limitations of both psychoanalysis and

structuralism, and giving rise to a strand that all film studies students now refer to, in shorthand terms, as ‘cognitivism’. Sinnerbrink’s book is explicit in its aim to produce points of convergence between these two strands and to find ‘new ways of synthesising, rather than dismissing, alternate theoretical frameworks and critical philosophical perspectives’. If Deleuze and the cine-thinking strand, and Carroll and the cognitivists, both dislike psychoanalysis and structuralism, however, they would fail to recognize the version of each of these latter fields that they respectively invoke. This fact of mutual non-recognition is merely one of the challenges faced by Sinnerbrink in his self-appointed task to place such implacable opponents into dialogue.

Sinnerbrink has an idea about what film-philosophy should be. He also wants to show us when it is not what it could or should be. The distinctions are important in anglophone film studies, less so elsewhere. In France, after all, analytical philosophy has made little or no headway into university film departments. The situation in the USA is, however, different. While, then, Carroll may have declared our era to be post-theory, and while Deleuze’s main exegetical ally in the USA, David Rodowick, has written with bitter irony his own ‘elegy for theory’, Sinnerbrink’s intention is to propose a response to the combat which sets out a potentially productive *différend*.

The book is in three parts. The first addresses the cognitivist turn associated with Carroll and the massively influential Bordwell, whose book *Film Art*, written with Kirstin Thompson, is still a staple of undergraduate film studies courses. The second part is devoted to what the author regards as the bifurcating paths of Cavell and Deleuze, both of whom advance film-philosophy without regarding themselves as members of such a discipline. The third part presents itself as cinematic thinking in action, with three chapters devoted to a particular film from a heavyweight of contemporary art-house cinema. If the thesis of this book is to be convincingly argued, then David Lynch, Lars von Trier and Terrence Malick will need both to be named and to find their places justified in a pantheon including Deleuze, Cavell and, in the Cavellian lineage, Stephen Mulhall.

Sinnerbrink offers a sympathetic survey of the main players in cognitivism. Classic film theorists like Bazin, Münsterberg, Arnheim and Metz rub shoulders with Carroll, Bordwell, Currie and Platinga. He is however careful, despite his quest to heal, to display an attunement to the reductionism and pretensions to scientific rigour by means of which the cognitivists sought to condemn the so-called grand theorists,

encapsulated in the title of Bordwell and Carroll’s edited volume *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (1996). When the author considers the core contributions of the cognitivists, he is correspondingly very alert to their limitations, finding for example that their approach to narrative does an injustice to the aesthetic qualities of film. More recently, of course, the cognitivists have themselves extended a sort of olive branch to the grand theorists, in the form of their inclusion in anthologies of film and philosophy, entries from the very tradition they have sought to attack. The rapprochement, if that is indeed what Sinnerbrink has in mind, and he says he does, has, in this sense, already been under way for some time, with students being exposed to a wide range of approaches through the existence of such collections on reading lists. Thus, in the second part, Sinnerbrink’s use of film titles as metaphors give us Cavell and Deleuze as a *bande à part* (from Godard) and ‘scenes from a marriage’ (Bergman), respectively, and thus restyle the ‘new philosophies of film’ as undergoing a form of relationship counselling (‘marriage’ even features as an entry in the book’s index).

However, it is precisely in this context, it is worth noting, that books such as this rely themselves, in part, on exclusions to avoid muddying the water. For example, Steven Shaviro’s *The Cinematic Body* (1993) is neither referred to, nor warrants inclusion in, the list of further reading. Yet surely this book stands out as one of the first significant (admittedly Deleuzian)



entries in what would come to be identified as film-philosophy. Likewise Laura Marks's influential attempt to outline a haptic theory of film, in her *The Skin of the Film* (2000), is not entirely (if no doubt partly) reducible to the mere *application* of Deleuzian concepts to cinema. Both books are aware of the critique of psychoanalysis in Deleuze's cinema books and both attempt to articulate a certain immanence to the films they discuss of a cinematic thinking. Part of the reason for these exclusions may come down to the particular Deleuze that Sinnerbrink wishes to cultivate alongside Cavell and the more obviously pragmatist Mulhall. The author asserts that while Cavell gives us cinema as a response to scepticism, Deleuze offers us cinema as a riposte to nihilism. For this, Sinnerbrink replies upon one version of Deleuze's rupture between the movement image and the time image. But such an account pays scant attention to the ontological version of the rupture also outlined in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* and relies exclusively on the historical rupture defined by Deleuze. To be fair, Sinnerbrink does not swallow the rather disingenuous criticism of Deleuze mounted by Jacques Rancière in *Film Fables* and cites counter-arguments. The counter-arguments, however, are limited to a consideration of what is itself a limited repositioning of the Deleuze position as anti-nihilist by Paola Marrati. It might have been interesting to see if a stronger defence against Rancière could have been mounted by way of a genealogy of Deleuze's approach to film as this was informed by his familiarity with French film criticism in the 1970s and early 1980s. It is, after all, these sources that help to forge the ontological side of Deleuze's reading of a rupture.

In France, the dispute between cognitivism and film-philosophy makes little impression on the very film culture which in part gave rise to 'grand theory'. As Hunter Vaughan points out, in his introduction to a recent issue of *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, the relationship between French intellectual culture and the moving image is a special case. What, one could ask, does a journal such as *Trafic* or *Vertigo* (the French one) do, other than produce output which would often be called film-philosophy? What does Jean-Luc Nancy do when he writes on Kiarostami or on Claire Denis? Or Jacques Rancière when he discusses the Westerns of Anthony Mann?

Translation has played its part in the genesis of so-called film-philosophy. A lot of the theorization in the 1970s and 1980s undertaken by such French critics as Serge Daney, Pascal Bonitzer and Alain Bergala was conducted in magazines and reviews, but was far from comprehensively in thrall to the twin paradigms

of psychoanalysis and structuralism. Yet even the most prolific of them – Daney – remains represented in English by one single volume. Raymond Bellour – who took over the editorship of *Trafic* after Daney's death in 1992 – is known in English only for his 'structuralist' work: close readings of Hitchcock and Barthesian essays, often published in *Screen* in the 1970s, such as 'The Unattainable Text'. Other important books from the period, such as Jean-Louis Schefer's *L'homme ordinaire au cinéma* (1980), remain untranslated. Arguably anglophone film-philosophy would have found useful and influential allies much sooner if the work of French critics had been more widely translated into English. Yet, for all that, the efforts of those operating under the anglophone banner of film-philosophy have been valuable

What, then, of the key third section of the book, where Sinnerbrink wants to show us the immanence of cinematic thinking? The directors chosen for consideration in the final section of the book are already canonical as far as film-philosophy is concerned. (Neither von Trier nor Lynch was canonized by Deleuze himself, of course, but they certainly have been by scholars influenced by Deleuze.) The films – von Trier's *Antichrist*, Lynch's *Inland Empire* and Malick's *The New World* – are presented as objects which resist appropriation under the banner of any particular thought system. In particular both *Antichrist* and *Inland Empire* are said to resist cognitivism, the former film explicitly. Malick is presented, in this context, as a 'romantic' film-maker, and, of course, Sinnerbrink knows the philosophical heritage of a director who studied Heidegger and has been written about by Simon Critchley as well as by Sinnerbrink himself.

So there are affordances and resistances. There is a praxis of viewing. There is a dialectical underpinning to this book that will perhaps come as no surprise to those who are aware that the author also previously put his name to a study of Hegel. It has to be asked, however, if we really need the resistance of *Antichrist* and *Inland Empire* to show us the limitations of cognitivism. For, if we need to be shown this resistance as one of the immanent thoughts of the films in question, then is the recourse to the argument that such refusal does in fact go on not in itself an acknowledgment that the presentation by the author of immanent thought presents perhaps an insurmountable challenge? Is it not the case that one will always end up using film as a mirror through which to view concepts and debates in film studies, including the dispute between cognitivism and other theoretical approaches?

These questions notwithstanding, Sinnerbrink's book will add a dose of welcome scepticism to anyone embarking on the consideration of some recent developments in anglophone film studies under the sign of Carroll and his cognitivist band. Sinnerbrink injects life into his consideration of the cognitivists by means of adroit illustration from examples of his

own choosing which display a cinephile's reservoir of resources – not always something that can be said of commentators content to use the same filmic examples as do their sources. This aspect is one of the many pleasures of Sinnerbrink's addition to the growing body of work in this field.

Garin Dowd

Structural adjustment programme

David Webb, *Foucault's Archaeology: Science and Transformation*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2013. 181 pp., £65.00 hb., 978 0 74862 421 8.

Appreciation for the work of Michel Foucault comes in phases, defined, as in the literature on so many others in the twentieth-century continental canon, by the particular era of the master's work that is foregrounded. Historical schematizations are the bread-and-butter of Continental philosophical scholarship, and this holds true especially for Foucault. The theorist of the archaeological substrates of modern knowledge is rarely considered in equal measure with the philosopher of the panopticon, and vice versa. Even more than this, it is the latter half of Foucault's output that finds most coverage in publishers' catalogues. To treat Foucault's theories of sexuality and of power-knowledge is to echo with a contemporary resonance and potential marketability that any study of the quasi-rationalist abstractions of *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* would struggle to match. And yet Foucault's work is not so easily sliced in two.

Just as Foucault took succour from the rationalisms of Bachelard and Canguilhem in his theorization of the discursive conditions of possibility underlying formations of scientific knowledge, so too did he learn from the same the importance of treating subjective and bodily interiors as thoroughly penetrated by external conditions of legibility. (Canguilhem, in particular, has much to tell us today about what has come to be known as 'biopolitics', although sustained reflection on Canguilhem is missing from the book under review.) At a moment when French structuralism is being subjected to a serious philosophical reappraisal, it seems apposite that a book should emerge that asks in a sustained fashion after the epistemological and logico-mathematical concerns that incited the 'early' Foucault's work, especially the aforementioned *Archaeology of Knowledge*, published in France in 1969. That David Webb should write such an accomplished addition to the recent growing reassessment of

the structuralist 'moment' is an event worth savouring. One hopes, however, that future research will subject the so-called 'later' Foucault to a similar treatment. To what extent, we should ask, does the Foucault of *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish*, apparently so embedded in the density of the historical archive, bear the influence of, and transform in turn, the epistemological reinventions pregnant in the work of Canguilhem, Bachelard, Cavallès and others? Rather more, I suspect, than many previous commentators on Foucault have imagined.

What is especially useful in Webb's approach is his refusal to treat Foucault as a mere documenter, a passive witness of transcendental shifts in historical possibility. As he avers near the beginning of his book, Foucault's aim in *The Archaeology* is to tease out a response to the question that crowns the conclusion of *The Order of Things*: namely, what the effects might be of a 'repeat of Kant's critique of pure reason on the basis of the mathematical a priori'. Webb makes much of the mathematical a priori, understood as an alternative to the forms of transcendentalism that have compromised attempts to erect history or the *cogito* into the causative horizons of knowledge. The aim of archaeology, on such a reading, is to use resources from the philosophy of mathematics and of science more generally to understand the dynamic conditions that allow forms of knowledge to assume a position of dominance. Webb's analysis here is significantly indebted to Jean Cavallès's still little-read *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science*, a watershed text in French philosophy that, in its concluding call for a 'philosophy of the concept', became a manifesto of sorts for the generation that followed the gradual waning of the existentialist star in postwar Paris.

Cavallès's book is painstaking in its critique of all forms of philosophical transcendentalism, taking

Husserl and Kant to task for their idealist recourse to the ego or the subject as the unifying centres of theoretical knowledge. It's well known that this incessant drive to expunge the subject, no doubt very much part of Foucault's project in 1969, would come back to haunt French philosophy as high structuralism waned, with the worst excesses of a recrudescing humanism coming to fill the gap. Foucault's late work would itself find a refuge in a kind of subjectivism, albeit one that sought in its emphasis on general ascetic practices of the self, in short in its Hellenism, to elude any sense of individualism in the modern sense. Cavaillès himself arguably sidestepped the problem through his ultimately ambiguous use of the notion of 'intuition' (a term with a precise meaning in mainstream philosophy of mathematics, but one conscripted to fulfil other tasks by Cavaillès), a point that Webb acknowledges but doesn't push far enough. While it is probably a little too much to expect an answer to the recurrent problem of the subject in a book of such self-consciously limited scope as Webb's, one would have liked to see him push Foucault a little further on the questions begged by the latter's own account of the constructed 'unity' of positive theoretical knowledge.

Webb makes clear that, for Foucault, '[d]isrupting the assumed unity of experience lends support to the idea that historical a priori conditions are not simply empirical conditions', a 'disruption', however, that is assumedly not particular to Foucault. What results from the latter's particular break with the experiential, nonetheless, is the refusal of any figure of totality to explain variations in discourse, with the de-totalized notion of the 'archive' proposed in its stead: '[u]nlike formal or transcendental conditions of possibility, an archive cannot impose boundaries at which a conditioned discourse must break off.' Thus, the archive, far from being a transhistorical, formal invariant, is contingent upon the 'complexities of ... space and time in which regularities form', with those complexities linked in turn to the manner in which 'events' in one discourse may come to effect the rules of composition underlying another. To put this in more general terms, Webb has identified what I take to be the defining feature of structuralism as it departs from previous formalisms, namely its willingness to countenance the possibility of objects of different forms of knowledge interacting with and altering the very conditions under which such objects of knowledge can be said to emerge. If Foucault will do the most to pursue the consequences of this transitivity between object and structure within the terms of history, Althusser will pursue it through the field of the political, while, in



perhaps the most sophisticated elaboration of the idea available in late 1960s' France, Pierre Macherey will demonstrate the complex topology that exists between a literary text and its non-transcendental, structural conditions of textual possibility.

That Webb is only able to catalogue rather than fully elaborate the novelty of these new epistemological claims is a function of the form of his book, situated somewhat uneasily between a guidebook and a monograph proper. It may be better to think of it as a case study in how the novel possibilities of structuralism were worked out within one text, and on those terms it succeeds admirably. Webb begins with succinct but useful summaries of the influence of Cavaillès, Serres and Bachelard on Foucault's developing epistemology, before launching into a sustained commentary on the text of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* itself, divided into detailed reflection on the problem of discursive regularities, of the statement and the archive, and of archaeological description more generally. Of particular interest to this reader was Webb's sure-footed discussion of the problem of change and transformation. Archaeology, in opposition to any abstract notion of change, would wish to understand 'transformations involving different elements of discourse'. At stake is the inherent complexity of discourse, its inability to remain encased in any one form, and this complexity in turn points to the lack of any original unity of the temporality proper to discourse, such as the unity appealed to by Heidegger in his search for the ontological conditions underpinning human finitude. In so far as discourse is always situated in time, the form of time itself comes to both condition and

reflect the dispersal and multiplicity that discourse embodies. Astutely, Webb notes of Foucault's reliance on the thematic of 'transformation' the danger that he will replace one form of originary unity, namely the temporal, with another, a principle of uniform 'transformation' across multiple discursive forms. How can Foucault account for both the inherent complexity of such discursive forms in their dispersal in and over time and the regularities that must exist across those multiple discourses if 'discourse' as a category is to mean anything at all?

The answers adduced by Foucault are strikingly unsatisfactory, although Webb makes a good fist of defending him on the grounds that his rejection of any *originary* temporal unity and continuity permits nonetheless 'a view of plural transformations in which continuity and discontinuity both feature'. Change, understood under these conditions, is never a necessity; another configuration of discursive relations is always possible. There's something here of the late Althusser's investment in the aleatory, although one senses that the latter was, even in his heyday, rather more willing to import metaphysical solutions to the problem of stasis and change derived, for example, from Lucretius and Spinoza than Foucault was, at least at this most formalist point in his career. It is surely symptomatic that, in his defence of Foucault from accusations of incoherence in his account of time, Webb makes frequent rhetorical recourse to the 'complexity' at issue, as if Foucault's stoic refusal to directly propose a theory of the temporal in its relation to discourse is a virtue rather than a vice. Such indirection, however, has an important purpose for Webb, ensuring as it does that an original, transcendental temporality isn't smuggled in through the backdoor. Instead, for Foucault 'time does not precede the formation of regularity in discourse. To analyse such a formation is to reveal the rules by which temporal order itself is composed.' No doubt this is an elegant restatement of the problem more than anything else, but Webb is to be commended for not ducking what is surely the most contentious problem at this point in the development of Foucault's oeuvre.

At a philosophical moment when unmoored metaphysical speculation threatens to displace the rigours of critical theory, serious and approachable attempts such as Webb's to capture more accurately the philosophical content of structuralism are to be applauded. Many if not all of the philosophical problems explored by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* – the relation between the space and time of discursive enunciation and the level of the enunciated, the interaction between heterodox forms of theoretical knowledge,

the status of 'science' and its place in history – nag us persistently today. There remains more work to be done on the political implications of the 'early' Foucault, a question largely ignored by Webb, but his book will serve as a useful spur to future research that will, one hopes, more expansively analyse the competing formalisms that fuelled France's turn to the structural.

Tom Eyers

What bodies can do

Michel Serres, *Biogea*, trans. Randolph Burks, Univocal Publishing, Minneapolis, 2012. 200 pp., £17.00 pb., 978 1 93756 108 6.

Michel Serres, *Variations on the Body*, trans. Randolph Burks, Univocal Publishing, Minneapolis, 2011. 152 pp., £17.00 pb., 978 1 93756 106 2.

In the early 1990s Michel Serres proposed that humanity consider writing a contract with nature. The book *Natural Contract* reasoned that while we have implicitly signed a social contract among ourselves by which we make love and war, what is needed today is a contract with nature so that the two sides can negotiate terms of relation. Without such a contract, there is only all-out war with no violation of rules since no rules have been established. Serres then changes metaphors and explains that ultimately this all-against-all will mean our ruin since we live as shipmates upon this singular ship Earth with no other land in sight. Its demise is our own death; and, truth be known, flourishing or not, the Earth will go on without us. Serres thus asks, 'What language do the things of the world speak, that we might come to an understanding with them, contractually? ... [T]he Earth speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds and interactions, and that's enough to make a contract. Each of the partners in symbiosis thus owes, by right, life to the other, on pain of death.' Now, some two decades later, Serres further sketches the language of contractual relations in his latest book *Biogea*. It is a book of bodies, materials and forces told in a mythopoetic language. Typical to Serres's method, the work explores concepts by projecting a relationship between the personal and the global, developing variations of temporal scales, and moving between literal and figurative as modalities of thought. Similar to how Alphonso Lingis explores an imperative or call of things through a sensual phenomenology, Serres uses the human scale of body, time and space by which to imagine the more-than-human that finds its way into our lives.

A lot has happened to our host, the Earth, in the two decades since Serres's *Natural Contract*. Climate change relentlessly persists, as do the forces of human capital which produce it. Serres's hoped-for contract with nature seems more distant than ever. In the opening section of *Biogea*, the scientist-sage called 'old Taciturn' still listens for the forces and bonds and interactions that could make a contract: 'What is it saying? Does it have some meaning? Who is speaking? Can we understand its warning? Will I one day be able to decipher this call from the Earth?' No one listens to the Earth, nor to Taciturn's warnings, since humans are all engulfed in a social contract by, for and about other humans. So Taciturn proceeds to build an ark to save at least his own hide. At this point, and indeed throughout the book, Serres disrupts the narrative with philosophical-poetic autobiographical stories. He recalls his days as a sailor and his youth working with his father, who was a bargeman on the Garonne river. The ebbs, flows and floods of the river shape his early years and sensibilities: 'Their waters have irrigated my life, enchanted my thought, invigorated my body.' As Serres says of sailors and peasants in *Natural Contract*, they are exposed to nature and as such can think human vulnerability to its forces. The dams that reshape the river have killed its vitality, its spirit, which lives on in Serres's body and memory. Human mastery only redoubles the war without laws waged by nature and humans on the Earth. It is 'the race between mutation and invention, between life and knowledge'.

Each section that follows has a similar pattern. From 'Sea and Water', Serres moves across other primal elements: 'Earth and Mountains', 'Three Volcanoes', 'Wind and Atmospheric Phenomena'. He then addresses 'Flora and Fauna' and ends with 'Encounters, Loves'. It is in this final section that he most passionately articulates his method and proposition:

We now know that *Biogea* converses. Scientific or imagined, my brief short stories have tried to make the foreignness, no doubt still unfelt, of these languages heard by building a first megaphone for Gea: seas, rivers, lands, glaciers, volcanoes, winds; then for Bio: rats, wolves and jackals – fauna, apple trees, wisteria, oaks and lindens – flora; lastly by connecting these megaphones to our own encounters and cries.

Because ecological change is beyond human spatial and temporal scale, Serres uses stories as a mode of engaging with these massive and nonhuman or 'foreign' forces, bonds and interactions. The stories are human stories of touch, vulnerability, engagement

with inhuman participants which 'speak just as much and perhaps better than us; they also say, write, sing communicate among themselves, through a kind of reciprocal encoding, a kind of common language, a kind of music, harmonic, disharmonic – I don't know yet – but whose voices I am sure to hear.'

In many ways, *Biogea* is a poetic-philosophical response to the earlier *Natural Contract*. Serres has set particular parameters to this response. There is a good deal of phenomenology throughout – human being-in-the-world and world-making – but the difference from the likes of Heidegger, or even Merleau-Ponty, is that Serres's human world is in conversation with many nonhuman worlds as well. He tries to avoid the long-standing problem of erecting subject-object relations by which the objects are passive or masterfully controlled by the all-too-human subjects and their equipmentality. In an attempt to create more dynamic responsive worlds, Serres instead provides animate descriptions of mountains, rivers, seas, trees, and an occasional animal. In each case he remarks a 'struggling against language' with its abstractions and subject-object relations. He attempts to speak of bodies and parts of bodies and movements by which 'bodies recount the codes of the world'. The problem becomes one of trying to decipher what is meant by codes. One could interpret codes to be patterns of information such as those discerned by various sciences – ranging from geology to biology to cosmology. Yet this too would be a representational language, and throughout Serres struggles against such abstractions of language. He wants bodies that insist, resist and weigh, as Jean Luc-Nancy says in *Birth to Presence*.

In *Biogea*, Serres elaborates, subtly, upon a means of listening and being exposed to 'the language of the world, emitted, received, stored, processed by all things, inert, living, social, you and me included'. Towards the end of the book he puts forward his claim: 'Here is my theorem in full: *the hard does not last, only the soft lasts*.' Through yielding to the Earth we can begin to be in compartment with it, developing a *Mitsein* even over and against any *Dasein*, or, as he says, 'Turn the *against* into a *with*. Caress the rock like a mistress, and it'll help you and offer you holds; light-heartedly, you will climb it.' Rather than an Enlightenment mode of reason and mastery, Serres posits affect, felt bodily relations and a body yielding to its world. The result is conversations with the foreign languages of Gea and Bio, and our being enmeshed in their codes.

The role of the body is even more overt in *Biogea's* companion work *Variations on the Body*. With a Whitmanesque poetic prose, Serres praises the body

as the mode of thinking in the world, the site and origin of thinking, and the modality to which philosophy should turn. Athleticism runs rampant in the work, from diet to regime to coaches and competition. Everything that is needed is already there in the well-trained body: discipline, power, flexibility, depths of attention, risk, trials, adaptability. Where *Biogea* leaves off with the soft over the hard and a promise of being-with the world, *Variations* picks up by deploying the potentials of a supple body and how such a body offers a relatedness to things. In this work, mountain climbing and acrobatics serve as proving grounds for our ways of dwelling. We investigate the world through ‘emergency blankets, tunics, supports or foundations, frameworks, mountain huts, houses interior or exterior to our bodies’, wherein we carve spaces to live, sleep, walk, and work. All of this builds the courage needed to ‘give ourselves over to the world’. The body offers us other ways of knowing: tacit knowledge that cannot be abstracted into rational concepts and attention that comes through years of training the body into corporeal states of readiness where senses are heightened and the mind becomes receptive. The result is a ‘metamorphoses of the enamored body’ by which subject–object relations are loosened and we become possessed as if the things of the world were ‘cast into me’. Serres traces this way of knowing and being as a minor philosophy all-too-neglected. His central figure here is Archimedes, who makes his discovery by being naked and exposing his body to the waters in which he floats. Serres proposes that the body imitates the world around it, then commits itself to its surroundings and in doing so creates something new. Through play, the body imitates, explores possibilities and variations, invents and then rehearses and stores the newly found routines. Towards the end of *Variations*, Serres reiterates the idea of corporeal codes and information found in *Biogea*. The body is a hardware and the array of corporeal routines are software.

Yet, after singing the body electric through much of the book, the computer analogy feels reductive. Our wetware composes biodynamic thought in ways that hardware by its very hardness cannot conceive. Returning to Serres’s key theme, by way of the soft we will herald ourselves into the world. It is not that we will understand the world – since understanding is a far too reductive Enlightenment apparatus (unless we redefine what we can even mean by the term ‘understanding’) – rather a different sort of knowing emerges in which we climb, tumble, soar, traverse and carry ourselves through variations of relatedness to our surroundings, and in doing so learn how to dwell.

In these two books, Serres extends the themes he has set in play for several decades by offering a detailed and poetic engagement regarding how we might sign a contract with nature through dwelling differently than we do today. He writes with the elegance of his mature style and an awareness that his young years are memories. Often he looks back over his life – from barge days to sailing the open seas – and he recalls the capacity of younger bodies. He confesses that while feeling childlike, he is white-haired and older. True to his concern for thinking by way of bodily being, Serres leverages his age as his way of thinking, and while he has got older the central concerns of his work emerge more pertinent than ever. Like Old Taciturn, Serres has built an ark through these books and invites us on board.

In closing, it would be remiss not mention that these two works are handsomely printed by Univocal. Serres’s poetic language of the body finds its correspondence in the material feel of these books. They have all the sensibility of something from a boutique press: they fit well into the hand, are on wonderfully thick paper, have luxurious margins and line spacing, and subtly textured covers. With these finely printed books, the physicality of reading becomes folded into Serres’s bodies, which are suspended in the ‘soft trance’ of learning from the world.

Ron Broglio

A Heideggerian Marx

Laurence Paul Hemming, *Heidegger and Marx: A Productive Dialogue over the Language of Humanism*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 2013. 308 pp., £38.50 pb., 978 0 81012 875 0.

In the ‘Letter on Humanism’, Heidegger famously declared that a recognition of ‘the historical in being’ is a prerequisite for a ‘productive dialogue with Marxism’, which holds ‘a view of history [that] is superior to other historical accounts’. Hemming declares that his book ‘aims to do no more than identify the main strands of thought that might place these thinkers within the same dialogue’. Although this may seem a humble enough objective, the fact that in the sixty-five years since the appearance of the ‘Letter’ so few commentators on either Heidegger or Marx have attempted to take up

the challenge suggests otherwise. Simply laying out the coordinates for such a dialogue is an important and difficult philosophical task.

Hemming's strategy is to demonstrate that Marxian and Heideggerian thinking must be seen as two attempts to respond to the death of God, seen as a metaphysical-historical event, and the concomitant election of the human subject as the central figure of history. While Heideggerian thinking is an attempt to step back from the philosophy of the subject into a different ground, Marx seeks to concretize the Hegelian absolutization of the subject in the form of an actual future state of affairs called 'communism'. For Hemming, the primary difference between Hegel and Marx, in this respect, is that the latter sees the state as an intermediate form, and not as the proper embodiment of absolute subjectivity. The key difference between Marx and Heidegger is, he argues, encapsulated in the word 'humanism'. Whereas in Marx the being of humanity is found in self-willing and self-(re)producing activity that aims at the production of an ideal collective subject, and hence is itself something human, for Heidegger 'the unity of the being of being-human is itself nothing human.' Thus, whereas Marx thinks the fulfilment of history in absolute subjectivity as the normative horizon for the overcoming of estrangement, Heidegger thinks the essence of being as finite, and suggests that a recollective thinking must attend to, and let be, the presencing of beings. It is in the way that each thinker understands *language* that Hemming correctly identifies the widest gulf between them: if, for Marx, language simply is representation, Heidegger identifies thinking with another kind of language which is no longer conceptual, but allows being itself to come to word in such a way that it cannot be reckoned with or represented. For such thinking, being is never a calculable factor for the self-enhancement of a self-reproducing subject. This is the sense of Hemming's subtitle: for Marx, *all* language is the language of humanism, whereas Heidegger recognizes the possibilities harboured in language for non-representational thinking.

The great merit of Marxian thinking, for Heidegger (and Hemming), is that it consummates the history of metaphysics – the essence of which is, for Heidegger, nihilism – by bringing the forgottenness of being in the name of an absolute subject to its most extreme possible conclusion. In other words, Marxism is a crisis in the history of being, and it must be reckoned with by any kind of thinking that wants to usher in what Heidegger terms 'another beginning'. What Hemming has done is to take Heidegger's fragmentary comments on Marx and contextualize them within a

presentation of Heideggerian thinking. As an explication of such thinking, and an account of how Marxism must be understood from this standpoint, the book is an unqualified success. However, the reading of Marx that emerges is one that is, at the very least, contestable.

Hemming is insistent that Marx is primarily a *metaphysical* thinker, and indeed a kind of Hegelian. He identifies a basic continuity throughout Marx's corpus in this regard, and sees the later material as occupying a standpoint more or less identical to that adopted in the earlier, more overtly philosophical texts. In particular, he takes the concept of 'species-being' to be central to all of Marx's thought. It is true that in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 the human essence is understood as the ongoing process of material and social reproduction, in which human beings relate to themselves and to nature in terms of species or universal categories. This is arguably a metaphysically determined essence, if we take it that the idea of human subjectivity as a self-fulfilling process is a precondition for any empirically determinable phenomena. However, the following year Marx and Engels write: 'Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization.' While Hemming takes this passage to be a confirmation of his reading, there seems to me to be a key difference here: the production of the human essence is now taken to be a *fact*, one that is conditioned on the details of human biology. In other words, humans come to be self-producers in the process of self-production, rather than the latter arising out of a pre-existing (or futurally post-determining) human essence.

Furthermore, whereas Hemming acknowledges that communism allows for individual differences, he insists that these differences are rooted in a fundamentally homogenized subjectivity, and thus they remain private. In other words, for Hemming the communist individual is remarkably similar to the ideal *bourgeois* individual in so far as her social self is in fact non-individual, and any differences or distinguishing traits are relegated to the private sphere. This, however, is the logic of consumerism more than a properly Marxian position. That said, whether Marx ever really arrived at a fully coherent and consistent position on this matter is an open question. Hemming identifies a fundamental ambiguity in Marxism between the individual and the collective subject, which he identifies as a legacy of

Hegel. In any case, it seems clear that Marx begins to talk about individuals in a markedly different manner in 1845, when the encounter with Stirner has a pronounced impact on his thinking. Whereas in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* individuals are identified with species-being, apart from which they are alienated abstractions, in *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels write that ‘the domination of material relations over individuals’ has ‘[set] existing individuals a very definite task. It has set them the task of replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances. It has not ... put forward the demand that “I should develop myself” ... it has on the contrary called for liberation from a quite definite mode of development.’ It seems hard to reconcile these words with a metaphysical commitment to a collective subject, or with the privatization of difference that Hemming sees as a characteristic of communism.

If we acknowledge a development in Marx’s thinking after 1844, then the dialogue between Heidegger and Marx would look quite different to the one presented by Hemming. It would then have to be decided whether the later Marx, by seeking to eliminate any overtly metaphysical principles, is not in fact taking the culmination of metaphysics a step further; a metaphysics of subjectivity, after all, does not, according to Heidegger, require a *human* subject, and therefore Hemming’s (and Heidegger’s) reading does not stand or fall with the status of species-being in Marx’s work. On the other hand, if Marx is a truly post-metaphysical thinker, what sort of post-metaphysical thinker is he? Whereas Heidegger seeks to indicate a prospective history beyond metaphysics, for him previous history is firmly founded on metaphysical principles. However, if we take Marx’s more materialist claims seriously, history as the history of being would itself be thrown into question, and would then appear to be an ideological construction.

Hemming outdoes previous Heideggerian critiques of Marx by giving a more convincing Heideggerian reading of Marx than has hitherto been achieved. It may be that what is called for now is a Marxian reading of Heidegger that has the benefit of a similarly penetrating and comprehensive understanding. I don’t presume to know what the results of such a reading would be. But a nuanced account of how value is materially enacted, an account which is mostly lacking in Heidegger, remains important, and this is something that throws the interpretation of history as metaphysics into doubt, as every good Marxist knows.

Christopher Ruth

Escapology

Carl Cederström and Peter Fleming, *Dead Man Working*, Zero Books, Winchester and Washington DC, 2012. 76 pp., £9.99 pb., 978 1 78099 156 6.

Capitalism, the authors of *Dead Man Working* tell us, ‘died sometime in the 1970s’. Yet despite its death it has, they note, survived somehow as ‘the only game in town, more powerful and influential than ever’. Figuring the machinations of capitalism as akin to those of the living dead is in itself, of course, hardly novel. Yet, rather than feasting ‘vampire-like’ on the blood of living labour, this latest manifestation of capitalism’s monstrosity, according to Cederström and Fleming, makes zombies of us all. There is now, they say, a ‘feeling of non-living’ that pervades the experience of work; a condition of interminable misery in which the worker is subjected to a fate worse than alienation. The bleak message running through the greater part of this very brief book is that the bad old days of being overworked and estranged from the products of one’s labour were bad enough, but things now, especially for those working for the modern corporation, are qualitatively worse.

Indeed our predicament is worse even than the ‘desolate picture’ painted by Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi in his YouTube missive ‘Waiting for the Tsunami’, since, according to Cederström and Fleming, we lack even the melancholy hope of the big wave that will finally wipe out our suffering. The problem with apocalyptic thinking – such as Bifo’s ‘Tsunami’, or Žižek’s ‘End Times’ – is that ‘The expectation of some kind of end or conclusion may inadvertently feed into a seductive ideological distortion: the fantasy of release and escape.’ *Dead Man Working* thus sets out to report on this new condition of labour and to critique the illusory nature of our attempts to escape it. It concludes with the authors’ recommendation for releasing ourselves from the unending and non-living world of work.

Cederström and Fleming’s critique of contemporary work will be familiar to anyone acquainted with post-autonomist accounts of ‘immaterial labour’ or studies such as Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Despite the suggestion given, at the book’s outset, that it will develop an argument drawn from ‘speaking with workers in a wide range of occupations’, *Dead Man Working* consists, for a good deal of its length, of a series of short summaries of familiar arguments made by figures such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri or Maurizio Lazzarato, alongside reports of research

on the workplace undertaken by others, such as that conducted by Andrew Ross on the marketing agency Razorfish. The case built against work from such sources rests chiefly on the argument that it is now all-consuming, leaving no space or time in which our identity is untouched by its presence. The ‘dead man working’, they say, ‘appears with the advent of the postmodern “social factory”, in which every waking moment becomes a time of work’: ‘The traditional point of production is scattered to every corner of our lives since it is our very sociality that creates value for business.’ Given the blurring of the times and spaces of work and non-work facilitated by networked and wireless communication technologies, or by the ‘team neighbourhood’ zones of the office, for example, the argument that there is little in our experience remaining uncontaminated by work will ring true for many, as will the tales of employers seeking to mobilize our affective resources for the good of the corporation. Still, it is unfortunate that the authors could not at least contribute more novel perspectives on this rather well-rehearsed discussion than are furnished by their own, typically secondary, exemplars. For instance, the argument that workers are now compelled by bosses to be ‘authentic’, to put their feelings to work for the corporation, is illustrated chiefly with reference to the interactions between prostitutes and their clients as represented in a television documentary by Louis Theroux, about a brothel in Nevada, from 2003.

There are moments in *Dead Man Working* where the possibility of a more original approach is suggested. ‘One has only to turn to academic work’, they write, ‘to see how this involves a substantial change in power relations whereby work becomes a continuous way of life, rather than just something we do among other things’. But this opening onto a more critically self-reflective line of argument isn’t pursued further. One is left to wonder how the research, writing and publication of this book itself might *work* for Cederström, a lecturer in Human Resource Management, and for Fleming, a professor of Work and Organization.

Having outlined their critique of work, and taken sideswipes at sustainability and the corporate recuperation of rebellion along the way, Cederström and Fleming turn their attention to the ‘failed escapes’ through which workers seek release from the all-pervasive world of contemporary labour. These include the phenomenon of ‘adult babies’ dressed in nappies and sitting in oversize cribs, and the echo of this infantilism in managerial techniques such as ‘inner child therapy’. Such reversions to infancy, say the authors, are failed escape strategies since they are driven not by

the ‘pure positive joy of being an infant ... but by the negative push that everything non-infantile represents. In other words, this escape attempt ends up symbolically reinforcing ... the world of adults.’ Attempts to escape through practices of ‘non-being’, exemplified in the popularity of meditation, yoga and the sensory deprivation offered by immersion in flotation tanks, are given similarly short shrift.

Turning to that most desperate search for the release of ‘non-being’ – suicide – the authors consider its work-related manifestations: the recent ‘bankers’ suicide epidemic’, the wave of over sixty employees of France Télécom who took their own lives following the company’s restructuring in 1998, and the succession of workers at Foxconn City, assembling Apple products in a factory in Shenzhen, who have killed themselves due to its unendurable working conditions. Ultimately, argue Cederström and Fleming, such suicides result from a failure to disentangle one’s life from one’s work:

The banker who ends his life when the economy dips is conveying a complete identification with the market and the failing firm ... We could also say that the very first suicide at Foxconn ... could be seen in a similar light. Rather than creating distance between the killing conditions of factory work ... they remain true to the command, and become what they know the company secretly desires them to be: dead.

The formula for an authentic escape strategy, offered by the authors at the conclusion of *Dead Man Working*, is premised on straightforwardly refusing this identification of life with work: ‘separating life from that which has now colonized it ... not mistaking the commonwealth that we produce together for capitalism. Not mistaking life and its conduct for work. Not mistaking the body and its sensibilities for a human resource.’ Appealing and seemingly commonsensical as such exhortations might sound, they read, however, as rather gestural in the absence of any suggestions for a praxis or dialectic through which they might be achieved. Instead, Cederström and Fleming settle for a call for us to embrace the nomadic mobility they read as valorized in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. That Foucault, and later Deleuze himself, subsequently characterized power as now operating precisely *through* its mobilization of subjects across the ‘open sites’ of neoliberalism and ‘societies of control’, and the ways in which this might as such problematize becoming-nomadic as an escape route, is not reflected upon.

Douglas Spencer