certainly relevant, but is it enough to state where we should direct our 'againstness', as Lee Edelman characterises it? Facing the threat of a very real state of emergency and the failure of democratic institutions, do we fight for the burning remnants of democracy in the name of humanism, or do we strive to create a new order? *Against Life* elects for the latter, choosing an unspecified revolutionary order. However, at a time when most of the left is thinking practically about what is to be done, the lack of attention given to the practicability of these ideas leaves us with a troubling gap. Turning against humanism surely has a cost in terms of democratic norms (eradicating them can lead as readily to tyranny as it can to post-humanist egalitarianism), as well as human rights, especially for those today who, to paraphrase Hannah Arendt, lack the right to have rights.

Nitzan Lebovic

Now the party's over

Paul Clements, *The Creative Underground: Art, Politics and Everyday Life* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017). 232 pp., £110.00 hb., 978 1 13888 686 5

As Simone de Beauvoir notes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, the creative process is an event or 'festival' which demands a break with linear time, a de-temporalisation of modernity; a suspension of means-ends relationships where others are subsumed, treated as things. Hence, it also entails a subversion of hierarchies of class and other forms of social division. In place of instrumental, reified relations and their external goals, such an event requires a moment of recuperation of the lateral 'communication' that sustains social hierarchies while transforming these into a synchrony of reciprocity and mutual recognition. This is time out, a carnival of the senses; a transitory, evental experience that is seen as stabilised or ritualised through artistic expression, and for which everyday life provides the setting. A similar conception of the everyday as interruptive ground of creativity both permeates Paul Clements' arguments about art, politics and everyday life and may serve as a way of understanding what he calls 'the creative underground'. The process at stake in this has both the dimension of a break or rupture with the linear temporal structure of modernity and yet, at the same time, involves a (creative) synthesis, a necessary incorporation of the conditions of its production. This is a point adumbrated in his new book, in which Clements – drawing, in particular, on Michel de Certeau's work on everyday life – investigates the rhizomatic nature of the 'counter-culture' as informal networks of aesthetic production which are both heterogeneous and yet articulated.

The Creative Underground addresses, amongst other things, the question of 'outsider art', the role of play and utopian visions, avant-gardism and autonomy and creative resistance, and draws these themes together in a final discussion of how they relate to conceptions of everyday life. In the counterculture, as Clements describes it, 'any grand narrative of linear history or culture is discombobulated in favour of disorganised connections and alliances between social practices and ideas, networks which lack order and chronology'. Such networks are 'nonbinary' and 'mutable' and contain 'strange connections and workings', operating in 'unlikely places', and so on. These are familiar themes to anyone versed in accounts of the open horizontal structure of everyday life. At the same time, Clements' description of this porosity of formal structures draws productively upon Jacques Rancière's arguments with Pierre Bourdieu's influential conceptions of the class-based character of 'taste', and with its assumptions concerning cultural hierarchy and its possible subversion.

As is well known, Rancière and Bourdieu share the sense that formal knowledge is divided on the basis of class and that the connections between areas of understanding remain hidden. For Bourdieu, however, the social scientist remains on the other side of an epistemological break from the discourse of the layperson and thus has privileged access to an invisible *modus operandi* which means that they can totalise social relations in a way that the person in the street cannot. Significantly, in Bourdieu's case, this results in a class-based sequestering of taste and cultural capital, with a reflexive, totalising middle class, on the one side, and a marginalised working class, on the other, sunk in habit rather than stimulated by

imaginative self-distancing. Rancière's riposte to this is to argue that knowledge and class have a performative dimension which is missing from Bourdieu's account and which suggest a patrician approach to the dissemination of knowledge. For Rancière, institutional structures do not precede individuals as frameworks that set limits, but are actively constructed and negotiated by the individuals that they interpellate, including in what he calls the distribution of the sensible (*partage du sensible*). Despite invisible divisions of inclusion and exclusion within the sensible, influences necessarily permeate from one sector to another. In this way, the hidden informal processes of distributions of the sensible contain a politics of equality that undermines the formal hierarchisation of taste, knowledge and experience by indicating a moment of reciprocity and recognition between sectors. Hence, for Rancière, the distribution of the sensible has a double import: it both divides human beings and provides a 'sensory fabric' by which they are tied together. Indeed, it defines 'their way of being together'.

The lateral connections suggested here demonstrate an affinity with the heterogeneous world of those informal networks with which Clements is concerned and with their moment of de-hierarchisation. In the interconnections (rather than simple separation) of the *partages*, things from different sectors link together unexpectedly, such that 'high' and popular culture, for example, may become part of the same mix. As Clements argues, the success of this lateralism will depend on agents' abilities to negotiate the codes and conventions of what Bourdieu styles 'the game of culture'. Yet it nevertheless offers a way of seeing beyond the rigid divisions underlying the latter's conception of taste. The fact that Henry Purcell was a big influence on the music of The Who remains something that Bourdieu 'can't explain'.

Rancière, Bourdieu and de Certeau all identify formal codes and conventions of a 'common language' as a way in which hegemony is constructed and a way of defusing cultural contradictions. A similar idea also appears in the work of Barthes in the form of a closed formulaic language – 'syllogistic' rather than dialogic. Unlikely as it may seem, this language, as Clements indicates, must be itself understood as part of the creative process in that it produces a vacillation or hiatus in meaning when confronted by the heterogeneity of everyday life. The author refers on a couple of occasions to the vacillation of representation – the disarticulation between representation and lived reality which he understands as creating a hiatus through which new ideas and cultural forms can emerge. As Clements argues, the clash between 'representation' and 'reality' can in this way move beyond the abstractions of 'contractual society' and instrumental rationality. It is possible to re-appropriate commodified forms via countercultural movements. As such, the lack of synthesis between commoditised representations and the heterogeneity of the everyday suggests the possibility of an ongoing discursive disorientation, or 'displacement' of existing significations, and an opening onto alternate contesting articulations, a potentially creative moment.

This contrasts, for Clements, with a postmodern 'irony' which would suggest that there is no material basis for any non-identical or critical residuum, nothing foundational for constructing resistance to co-option in capitalist modernity. However, Clement argues, irony here depends precisely on a non-homogenisation of cultural content; that is, it demands the critical stance of the non-identical which is at the same time grounded in the supposedly always already co-opted content. Postmodern irony therefore turns out to be a situated response which paradoxically denies the situatedness and heterogeneity of its target. Clements' discussion of counter-publics raises some similar issues. In their book *Public Sphere and Experience*, Negt and Kluge offer an alternative to the notion of a Habermasian public sphere – in effect, that of a proletarian lifeworld. This is, the authors claim, a domain of marginalised collective experience which is characterised by fragmentation, sense of loss, but also openness, inclusivity, fantasy, multiplicity, contradiction, conflict and difference; that is, experience as *Erfahrung*. Clements argues, in brief, that while such a model may oppose the liberal-bourgeois model of an individualism that would provide an 'illusory synthesis' of individual and collective life, it remains nonetheless subjugated to it. However, arguably, the alienation or displacement of *Erfahrung*, although a sequestration of lived exper-

ience and its articulation, can nevertheless be seen as experience which is still negotiated and voiced, if only through the hiatus created by the illusory synthesis of the individual and collective in the process of institutional displacement. The internal object world of the unconscious, although constituted in part by internalised and reified experience of capitalist modernity, can, according to Negt and Kluge, rearticulate the fragments of which it is made up and project the consequent fantasies onto the world. This collective projection, needless to say, carries echoes of the Benjaminian dreamworld. But, as with the discussion of postmodern irony, there is thus a return of the excluded residuum as an active participant in the constitution *and* creative subversion of modern capitalist forms.

A central part of Clements' argument is that if we think of creativity purely in terms of the ways in which the 'new' or the 'different' presents itself as radically distinctive then we simultaneously assimilate ourselves to a logic of institutional hierarchies of taste, and thus to the codification of creativity within received aesthetic categories. However, as, *inter alia*, Kant, Feuerbach and Adorno have variously argued, distinction, rupture, *Aufhebung* also require a recognition of the positivity of what is sublated, hierarchised. Arguably, it is the lack of this moment of synthesis in many theorists of 'difference' that undermines the intelligibility of their accounts of creativity: to distinguish oneself from any state of being also requires an act of recognition of, or moment of dialectical identification with, that state.

This pinpoints what is really the underlying organising principle of Clements' book: the to-ing and fro-ing of creative activity between appropriation and everyday retrieval. The cultural battles between the bourgeoisie, their agents – the cultural intermediaries – and alternative or oppositional cultural practitioners looks like a kind of cultural ping pong. However, the classifying, homogenising tendencies of formal institutional reception – de Certeau's 'scriptural economy' – in their fetishisation of difference or distinction, ignore the moment of synthesis of the object/product with its existing ground. In this case, the grounding synthesis would be constitutive of the aesthetic outcome. Such a synthesis would be non-identical with the classification or 'name' of the object, and, as such, it forms an everyday residuum beyond the scriptural economy, a sedimented history of the artefact. In this manner, sedimentation produces an asymmetry beyond the ping pong of recuperative cycles and, for Clements, breaks its stasis in a rhizomatic, mutational manner. It is, in other words, the absent presence of context that gives us a way of thinking the moment in which creative synthesis occurs in the lived world of informal and heterogeneous practice.

Howard Feather

Unusual alliances?

Victoria Browne and Daniel Whistler, eds., *On the Feminist Philosophy of Gillian Howie: Materialism and Mortality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). 304pp.„ £85.00 hb., 978 1 47425 412 0

In conversations with students feeling overwhelmed by their studies, I sometimes use the phrase, 'remember that studying is part of life, not the other way around.' While this guidance about how to look after oneself is distinct from the specific experience of living with a life-limiting illness, which Gillian Howie so uniquely addressed in her later work, its intention links with Howie's insight that thinking, practicing and learning are constituents of life, rather than abstracted or disembodied pursuits of knowledge that estrange and disconnect the individual from their lived experience. This rich and vibrant book of writings by colleagues and friends of Howie is motivated by exactly these concerns. Philosophy, art, literature, poetry, film and performative practices are brought together as specific modes of engaging in living, affirmative, ideological, structural and poetic expressions, including the particularity of living with life-restricting or life-limiting illness. Howie's public lecture of 2012, 'How to Think about Death', is the central conceptual and structural text in the volume. A multi-valent and dialogic voice to chapters by Christine Battersby, Claire Colebrook, Joanna Hodge, Kimberly Hutchings, Morny Joy, Stella