

professes neither ‘to approximate nor replicate an ethnographic or area studies analysis’, but some of the book’s strongest elements do just that. For example, one of the most effective and elegant sections uses original fieldwork in the West Bank and observation of disability activists there to brilliantly crystallise the overall argument. However, rather than taking centre stage, this analysis is confined to a brief Postscript. By contrast, an entire chapter is devoted to reproductive politics in Palestine-Israel, even though this analysis is much more dependent on existing scholarship. This reflects a wider difficulty with the text. While the disability/debility distinction is a new and brilliant formulation, the bulk of the theoretical argument is indebted to existing work in disability studies, especially that of Nirmala Erevelles. This means that one of the main potential contributions

of the project was to take this analysis beyond ‘Euro-American framings’ and to explore the new ramifications of this argument when considered in relation to Palestine. Puar appears more than capable of this, perhaps more than she allows herself; yet the book’s startling transdisciplinary and synthetic ambitions mean that it cannot fully deliver the sustained treatment that her chosen empirical context invites and deserves. One should not force this point too far, however. In some ways, this is a great gift to future scholars who should find in the book rich inspiration for further work. A fascinating intellectual agenda has been demarcated, and a prescient window into the politics of the colonisation of Palestine has been opened here.

James Eastwood

## Without further ado

Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetics*, ed. Eberhard Ortland, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017). 376pp., £55.00 hb., £18.99 pb., 978 0 74567 939 6 hb., 978 0 74567 940 2 pb.

Amongst the writings of canonised thinkers, there often exist ambiguous yet generative gaps between those works published during their lifetime and those made posthumously available. The task of bridging these two bodies of work, and according philosophical intent, is one fraught with complications. Questions as to the ‘authentic’ kernel of a thought, the marginal history of a concept or the speculative shape of unrealised work remain open and contestable. The stakes are heightened when, for instance, the border between published and unpublished is complicated by historical dramas and institutional positioning, as in the case of Walter Benjamin, or when archival or private material is said to unsettle otherwise rehearsed conceptual formations, as in the case of Martin Heidegger. When it comes to the work of Theodor W. Adorno, one of the most testing divides is the one that separates his *Gesammelte Schriften* [Collected Writings] from the *Nachgelassene Schriften* [Posthumous Writings]. If it is clear that such a divide cannot settle in either direction each and every dispute, it does, for a Germanophone audience at least, raise the

distinction to the point of articulation. In an Anglophone context, despite the well-known shortcomings of existing translations of major works, it is becoming something of a tradition to pursue those works contained in the latter of these two, his *Nachgelassene Schriften*. The latest book-length work to be published in English falls squarely within this tradition.

Delivered during the winter semester of 1958–59, Adorno’s *Aesthetics* is the eighth lecture course to have been translated and published by Polity, with one other announced (the 1960–61 course *Ontology and Dialectics*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann) and several more (possibly nine) likely to follow. The course documents the fourth of six occasions in which Adorno lectured students on the topic of art and philosophical aesthetics between 1950 and 1968, and, of all six, it is the earliest to have been recorded on tape and transcribed in full (the fifth occasion, delivered during the winter semester of 1961–62, exists as a transcript and will be published by Suhrkamp in the future).

As the book’s editor, Eberhard Ortland, underscores in his German-afterword-cum-English-

introduction, there are several points of theoretical interest in these lectures, three of which he selects as the most prominent. First, Adorno's demanding concept of aesthetic experience, fleshed out from the opening to the closing lectures, as an accompaniment to its use in other works; second, the discussion of Plato's *Phaedrus*, most fully examined in lectures nine and ten, is perhaps Adorno's most express analysis of pre-Modern philosophical notions of beauty; and, third, the references to John Cage in lecture eight, whose work, importantly, Adorno had engaged with during the 1957 and 1958 Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music. The *Aesthetics* discusses each of these to a degree either greater than or different to that found in his wider, published oeuvre, providing richer character to statements that might otherwise remain elliptical, technical or unjustified. In addition to Ortland's list, many readers will find the opening lectures dedicated to artistic and natural beauty, as well as his claims – repeated and qualified – as to art's capacity to help the 'suppressed and suffering to find its voice', illuminating and reassuring. Equally advisable, one should be alert, especially in lectures six to eight, to the categories of construction and expression; to consider the sustained argument against the sufficiency of subjectivist aesthetics, a corrective that remains poignant; to trace his early, although not first, diagnosis of art's historical 'crisis of meaning'; and finally but not exhaustively, to note his attacks on defensive reactions against modern art found in the work of Georg Lukács and Hans Sedlmayr alike. Accordingly, there are a number of conceptual contributions that the 1958–59 *Aesthetics* course introduce into the Anglophone philosophy of art and, if handled correctly, to our understanding of Adorno's positions and thought. Due credit must be granted here both to Ortland's editorial work and Wieland Hoban's translation. Not only does Ortland resist including any pantomime laughter and jeering (compare the *Introduction to Sociology*, edited by Christoph Göttsche), but the endnote editorial commentary and the inclusion of Adorno's lecture notes are worthwhile. And in a situation where no translation can win, Hoban's attempt doesn't lose too badly.

For those unfamiliar with Adorno's lecture courses it may come as a surprise to find that he ap-

pears so engaged with his students, not only insofar as his intellectual demands are matched by patient elaboration and argumentation, but also insofar as the students' problems, questions and concerns often dictate the content of the lectures. As to the growing chorus that sings the lectures' praise as a gentler way into Adorno's written work, they are liable to find the 1958–59 *Aesthetics* an exemplary score. For, in contrast to many of the existing courses, what is historically and theoretically remarkable about the *Aesthetics* is that it is one of the few published transcripts that shows substantial evidence of having been consulted and annotated by Adorno himself. He returned to the transcript during the preparation of later editions of the course and through the period in which he wrote drafts of what was to be posthumously published as *Aesthetic Theory*. The years immediately succeeding this lecture course thus figure heavily in the afterlife of its transcript, for it is this period, as Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann note, that inaugurates early attempts towards *Aesthetic Theory*, formally christened by the first dictation of draft paragraphs in May 1961. Ortland's editing ensures that readers of the 1958–59 *Aesthetics* can participate in this origin story of *Aesthetic Theory* by tracing those passages and thoughts that Adorno felt worthy of marking and marginalia.

Taking this into account, as some prominent commentators have already suggested, it may be tempting to figure the *Aesthetics* as an introduction to, or identikit sketch of, *Aesthetic Theory* itself, a rudimentary but otherwise faithful likeness. As such, the relation between these two texts acts in part as a test case for the wider problem of how Adorno's *Nachgelassene Schriften* is to be thought alongside his *Gesammelte Schriften*. Many of the *Nachgelassene Schriften* editors are acutely aware of this issue, repeating the sediment problems that come with the publishing project. However, too often this is forgotten in secondary philosophical work that furiously grabs at exegesis or an unplumbed term. As regards relating the *Aesthetics* to *Aesthetic Theory*, legitimacy for such a manoeuvre may be sought in their shared intellectual content such that one could turn, for instance, to lectures one and five for some remarks on 'technique' or four and eleven for clarification of the notion of 'ugliness'. Straightforwardly to follow through on this, however,

would be myopic on at least two counts: on one side, it limits the possibility for wider systematic connection and mediation; on the other side, it produces a false conceptual equivocation based on superficial similarity.

In the first instance, it risks distancing the 1958–59 *Aesthetics* from his longstanding writings on musicology and music criticism, as well as the important post-War dispute with Sedlmayr during the 1950 *Darmstädter Gespräch* on ‘The Image of Man in our Time’. It risks severing ties to the extensive 1950s writings that form the 1958 publication of *Notes to Literature I*. It risks forgetting that 1958 marked the year that Adorno was commissioned by the *Schweizer Monatshefte* to write an essay on the sociology of music, signalling what was to become a public dispute with Alphons Silbermann. And, it risks occluding from view the three studies on Hegel delivered on each side of the lecture course. Where *Aesthetic Theory* is concerned, it risks failing adequately to mediate it through the 1960s, through the heavy edits, deletions and revisions that drafts went through, and through that extended set of activities that would interrupt, obstruct and distract from its completion. On this latter point, not only should we have in mind the increasing demands and interests from Adorno’s radicalised students, and the infamous tensions that this brought with it, but also his increasingly public role in German sociological debates and, of course, the intellectual work that went into *Negative Dialectics*. This without mentioning any of the developments in 1960s art practice, music composition and film direction of which he was not unaware.

In the second instance, through a flagrant betrayal of those familiar comments made in the 1969 preface to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – comments that admit the authors’ commitment to ‘a theory which attributes a temporal core to truth instead of contrasting truth as something invariable to the movement of history’ – there is a danger of stripping the two texts of their differing historical context, character and specificity. The *Aesthetics* lectures and *Aesthetic Theory* are not readily equivalent or interchangeable, and the force required to make them so is subtle but decisive. To make a quick conceptual comparison, or to view one as the other made simple, is to

assume a base historical stasis between the respective positions. Equally problematically, one would have to lose a sense that the lectures are informally sequential and, despite being terminated early owing to poor health, generally followed a preconceived argumentative arc. *Aesthetic Theory*, as Adorno himself claimed, is decidedly fragmentary and paratactic. To hastily align the two would be to underestimate the strict argumentative organisation and presentation of the mature work that, however clichéd it might sound, causes such productive interpretative difficulties. Commenting on the editorial challenges that *Aesthetic Theory* presented, Gretel Adorno and Tiedemann remind us that ‘[t]he problems of a paratactical form of presentation, such as they appear in the last version of *Aesthetic Theory*, with which Adorno would not have said he was content, are objectively determined: They are the expression of the attitude of thought to objectivity.’ To overlook this is to forego Adorno’s thought itself.



In an aphorism positioned against the mediation of two thinkers, Friedrich Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science* that ‘seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes.’ His comments, aimed at those with ‘no eye for the unique’, critique a variation of a familiar conceptual-methodological flaw: the false attribution of identity in an unwitting denial of the dissimilar. Although the work of mediation (*vermitteln*) does not necessarily conform to the error of reduction in the way Nietzsche wants to claim, losing sight of a thinker’s thought by only recognising resemblances does. Strik-



ing, *mutatis mutandis*, at the issues at hand, there may then be some merit to viewing Adorno as two separate thinkers, neither reducible to the other. More accurately, by reading the *Aesthetics* as elementary movements toward *Aesthetic Theory* and not a crude form of it, more may be gained in thinking their systematic connection through argumentative disjunction than there would be in suturing them together. To undertake this one would have to inquire into the problems Adorno encountered, for instance, in the notion of world-feeling (*Weltgefühl*), to account for the relative demotion of the role of co-enactment (*mitvollziehen*), or to register any other remarks that were abandoned or deemed insufficiently defensible to be included in *Aesthetic Theory*'s drafts. In reverse, one could treat the *Aesthetics* as a prompt to consider the absence in the lectures of his claims on the double character

of art as autonomous and *fait social*, and the various post-1959 conditions that would ensure its introduction. Perhaps providing a better model for thinking the *Nachgelassene Schriften* and *Gesammelte Schriften* relation, any attempts of this sort would enrich its philosophical content by way of the necessary intellectual history and division. But the temptation to trade having to labour over Adorno's written prose for the comparative ease of turning to his lectures persists, and with it the danger that patient interpretive work will be sacrificed in the process. Whether such a sacrifice is executed for the sake of pedagogy or to soften the welcome to a general audience, obscuration or avoidance of intellectual difficulty harbours nothing more than the base theoretical conservatism contained in an injunction to digestible reception.

Louis Hartnoll

## Rebellious admiration

Clare Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2018). 304pp., £80.00 hb., £19.99 pb., 978 0 82236 998 1 hb., 978 0 82237 003 1 pb.

Clare Hemmings is one of the most innovative and original voices in contemporary feminist theory. Her work cuts across disciplinary boundaries and is largely concerned with an ongoing and wide-ranging critical reflection on the production of 'feminist theory' as a field. *Considering Emma Goldman* offers a continuation of this project in a new and provocative direction. In her previous book, *Why Stories Matter*, Hemmings focused on the pervasive historiographical assumptions underlying feminist theory's interpretive framing of feminism's past, present and future. In *Considering Emma Goldman*, Hemmings switches her focus to addressing the theoretical impasses and sites of political struggle that continue to shape feminist and queer theory in the present. At the same time, *Considering Emma Goldman* is also a personal project – a critical reflection on how Emma Goldman partly inspired Hemmings to become a feminist, and how she continues to animate Hemmings' conflicted if committed relationship to feminism. Hemmings' attachment to Goldman also allows her to take more

seriously than she did in *Why Stories Matter* the powerful lure of the past or lost object. Here, nostalgia gets its due, albeit renamed as wonder. Finally, *Considering Emma Goldman* is an experiment in thinking through how a figure of the feminist past – in this case, one not easily or entirely claimed by feminism – can be both resource and method for accessing the complexity and messiness of feminism as a political project with a multivalent history and a varied set of ideas.

The kaleidoscopic approach of the book draws upon three distinct archives: the 'subjective' archive of Goldman's letters and political writings, the 'critical' archive through which Goldman's work has been interpreted, especially by feminist critics, and the feminist and queer 'theoretical' archive with which, and against which, Hemmings reads Goldman. Most provocatively, Hemmings also offers, in the fourth chapter, an example of what she calls the 'imaginative archive', in which she presents a series of letters written by Almeda Sperry, a correspondent, friend and