

ment to exploring where channels of resistance might still be forced open. While it is central to Russell's argument that, the machine being 'the material through which we process our bodily experience', bodies are 'as much computational as they are flesh', she refuses to accept this as cause for surrender to certain malign strains of computational power. 'We are standing inside the machine', she writes, and every day we make a choice whether or not to rob ourselves'. Similarly, while acknowledging that it becomes difficult to see the artificiality of gender when submerged within its omnipresent and overwhelming logic, Russell sustains an account of gender as not only as a tired fantasy, but one whose relinquishment will amount to an escape from manifold modes of regulation, management, division of labour, exchange of value and control.

Glitch Feminism, while an invocation of the 'cosmic', is all about 'finding one's range'. As such, it is vitally aware of its own boundaries and limitations. Neither a blueprint for overthrowing global capitalism, nor a set of infrastructure-level demands (in the vein of the Cyborg Manifesto's call for the unionisation of office workers), it rather renews the serious call for new forms of subjectivity that white cyberfeminisms dropped. This is not an alternative to proposing new forms of (secure, de-centralised) digital infrastructure, but rather a pre-requisite for such projects. Proceeding from the self-

constructive power of her earliest chatroom handle, Russell's interest is in nascent performances of selves – gestures of digital self-determination – as necessary forms of world-building. Through her text she enters, like the early-twentieth-century artist of Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), 'the intensity of creating and inhabiting a world with others, a domain of collective bodies, kinaesthetic experience and gestural language'.

In the process of becoming political subjects who enact the requisite 'failure to function within the confines of a society that fails us', the glitched bring into being the kinds of subjectivity that are necessary conditions of the largest anti-capitalist visions – moves towards transforming partially shared agendas such that political unity on the left might one day be more than fantasy or lie. While a latter-day Haraway, to the disappointment of her followers, ultimately draws from intersectionality only a deepening sense of cyclical, inescapable domination, Russell holds liberation on her horizon. Her achievement amounts to what Toni Cade Bambara once affirmed as the very 'task of the artist': if the task is determined by the status and process and agenda of the community that [the artist] already serves', the task for the artist whose community's survival depends upon political change is 'to make the revolution irresistible'.

Amber Husain

All that Hegel allows

Robert Pippin, *Filmed Thought: Cinema as Reflective Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). 312pp., £79.00 hb., £28.00 pb., 978 022667 1 956 hb., 978 022667 2 007 pb.

The course of the relationship between philosophy and film studies never did run smooth. The encounter of these two disciplines, while producing both influential and exciting work, has often been beset by mistrust and misapprehension, ruptures, rejections and partings of ways. For all the promising developments made by the likes of Gilles Deleuze, Alexander Kluge, Miriam Hansen, and others, mutual mistrust remains. In recent years, much of the work attempting to rekindle this interdisciplinary flame has been markedly political, with thinkers

like Jacques Rancière, Alain Badiou and, perhaps most visibly, Slavoj Žižek, exploring cinema as a path to ideological critique: reflecting on the social relations of the present and the modes of being which arise from them.

Beyond his extensive work on Hegel, Nietzsche and the problem of modernity, cinema has remained one of the focal points of Robert Pippin's critical attention across the last decade, during which time he has created a body of work that engages with the possibility of staging a productive encounter between the two disciplines

as a route to reflecting on, and changing, human self-understanding. This has led him to publish books on the American Western, *Fatalism in American Film Noir*, and Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. The most recent addition to this body of work, *Filmed Thought: Cinema as Reflective Form*, continues this line of inquiry at a more general philosophical level than his previous books, taking the question of what kind of philosophical reflection cinema makes possible as the primary object of attention. Specifically: the book asks to what extent cinema can be considered a mode of expression capable of the 'non-empirical exploration of meaning and value'.

Pippin's corpus is drawn largely from canonical and mainstream works of US film: two more Hitchcock films, two films by Nicholas Ray, Terence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* and Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*. There is, in addition, an essay on Pedro Almodóvar's *Talk to Her* and one examining the depiction of action in the work of the Dardenne brothers. The essays themselves comprise a set of discrete and intricate close readings, and as such resist summary. There are however a number of common threads which guide these readings.

Pippin, as one might expect, describes his approach to cinema as broadly Hegelian, specifically: 'Hegel on the link between self-knowledge, agency and knowledge of others'. The epistemological preoccupation evidences Pippin's position as an analytic Hegelian of a neo-Kantian/non-metaphysical persuasion. Pippin's overarching characterisation of film's potential is its ability to present a challenge to what he considers a fundamental principle of Hegelian thought, that: 'there is nothing in principle unknowable, and that the logic of the knowable can be determined'.

Throughout *Filmed Thought*, Pippin's most common touchstone in the film-philosophy canon is Stanley Cavell. Pippin credits Cavell with providing a useful terminology for expressing the Hegelian notion of subjectivity, and, more specifically, the idea that: 'that what it is to know oneself as a subject is wrongly conceived at the outset if understood as some sort of particularly intimate relation between a thinker or agent and itself'. Instead, Cavell argues, any understanding of the subjectivity of the other requires a kind of *acknowledgement*: its dimension is not merely cognitive but ethical. The claims human beings make on one another, and the responses to those claims engendered in experience, are the substant-

ive matter of our knowledge of others.

At the core of Pippin's mode of reading is what, in *The Philosophical Hitchcock*, he terms the 'struggle for mutual interpretability'. This struggle is the one into which human beings are thrust in their relations with one another in trying to know and be known. Part of a film's philosophical work, if it can be said to have any, is its capacity for giving expression to the complexity of this interpretive struggle, plagued by social convention and pretence, anxieties about betrayal and concealment: the tendency toward unknowingness inherent in human intersubjective relationships. The immanent mechanisms of filmic depiction by which film explores the struggle for interpretability, and the manner by which it reveals the criteria underlying it, is the problematic which moves through all the essays of *Filmed Thought*. It is through this struggle that the reflective capacity of cinema is articulated.

Pippin shares with Cavell a resistance toward over-theorisation when analysing works of cinema. As a result, much of the philosophical work is left 'behind-the-scenes' in allusions and footnotes, making *Filmed Thought* both analytically assured and compulsively readable. The essay on Ray's *In a Lonely Place* is perhaps the most explicitly theoretical in the book and is where Pippin most clearly details his affinity with Cavell. Essential to this is the latter's concept of scepticism. Pippin outlines Cavell's delineation of 'passive' and 'active' scepticism: active being the question of the other, of how one can know the true nature of another's inner life, the former, conversely, being the anxiety of 'whether *I am ever truly known* ("as I really am") by an other.' Re-deploying Cavell's arguments under the aegis of the struggle for interpretability, Pippin draws out the deep narrative complexities of Ray's film and the love between Humphrey Bogart's Dix Steele and Gloria Grahame's Laurel Gray. Pippin's reading is both effective and affecting. Most impressive is the manner in which the meta-filmic aspects of the films are drawn into the operative movement of the works themselves. For Pippin, these elements of 'self-awareness' are never devices of fixity, never *merely* ironising the film's narrative content or de-realising its emotive depth, but an integral part of the way those films complicate and develop the question of human relations. In the case of *In a Lonely Place* this includes Ray's deliberate utilisation of Bogart's 'type' in

setting up and confounding audience expectations, and the staging of the murder re-enactment (by a Hollywood screenwriter no less) as a demonstration of audience vulnerability to the conventions of Hollywood and hasty interpretation; conventions which Dix and Laurel are forever contesting, overturning and lapsing back into.

In the early essay on *Rear Window*, Pippin's reflective unfolding entails a convincing re-casting of the stereotypical reading of *Rear Window* as a portrayal of the sinful condition of the cinema viewer as, rather, a distinction between two kinds of viewing: one merely spectatorial, voyeuristic, the other involved, engaged. Here the question of scepticism resurfaces: the first, disengaged, mode of reading, which views the world merely as a set of impressions to be tested, can only lead to futility and cynicism. It leaves the viewer desperate for a definitive truth in a world where any possible proof can always be discounted. The contestation takes a more socio-political turn in Pippin's examination of Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*, which focuses on how the film constructs 'a politics of American emotional life' around the two lovers and the multilayered irony of melodrama. The two

also become stand-ins of two divergent visions of the American dream: Connecticut white picket bourgeois suburbia and unreconstructed Thoreauvian primitivism. Pippin impressively draws out from this a demonstration of how, in Sirk's hands, the very self-narration of America, its deepest understanding of itself, becomes a form of melodrama.

Pippin is keen to avoid any immanentist/contextualist dualism in his mode of reading, asserting that an immanent analysis of film's reflective capacities can illuminate the mechanisms by which the films thematise socio-historical issues, but it is in these moments that the weaker elements of *Filmed Thought* emerge. The analysis of class in *All That Heaven Allows* is limited, staying merely within a question of authenticity and a liberal sociological conception of class as opposed to a structural relational concept of social being. More interesting though are the examples where the immanent depiction of the socio-historical forces within the film might present a challenge to the reflective Hegelian method itself. This is most evident in the case of *Chinatown*.



In his analysis of the unsettling mood pervading *Chinatown*, Pippin unpicks the ways the idea of 'Chinatown' casts its shadow across the film, not merely as a specific place within LA, a confusing web of lawlessness where one has to do 'as little as possible', but as a condition of existence, a word for the ominous and threatening atmosphere of a life gone wrong. Here Pippin draws on Adorno's preface to *Minima Moralia* and the capitalist instantiation of a life that, in some sense, cannot be lived. However, one might argue that Pippin fails to fully accord this incoherence the 'dignity of its notion'. *Chinatown* depicts the ruin of its own world, certainly, but this incoherence, effected by the dissolutive power of the subsumptive accumulatory logic of capital, potentially erodes the possibility for reflection itself. To return to the terminology of viewing in *Rear Window*, the question *Chinatown* poses through this contaminating incoherence is the way in which the historical social relation of capital deforms the reflective, active relation to the world back towards the spectatorial, towards futility.

The ominous collapsing mood of *Chinatown* is acted out at the level of narrative structure, depiction and at the level of genre. It is a film which dissolves the noir genre from within. From Jack Nicholson's Jake Gittes and his bewilderment at the case presented to him and the deliberate narrative incoherence, to the ludicrous cut nose and the preponderance of bright, burning daylight. Gittes, for his part, attempts to instantiate a noir, trying to engage with Evelyn and have a relationship, but is forced back into clumsy detection and proofs, even typecasting Evelyn as a typical *femme fatale*. *Chinatown* immanently, through the very mechanisms of noir, forges a world where noir is no longer possible. Inimical in this regard is the infamous tide pool which is the site of the murder of Hollis Mulwray. Pippin includes this as part of his reading of the film's depiction of life becoming false, a place where 'the source of life now...is the place of death'. However, such inversions of symbolic coding would leave us still in the domain of noir. Instead, what is most important about the tide pool is its *material composition*: that it is tidal and therefore cannot be leveraged into agricultural profit. The point then is not a question of life, death, or life become death, but rather the capacity of the historical materials to elicit an erasure of the

possible meaning of the distinction.

The figure who could and, in the ordinary course of things, should shed some light on all this confusion and doom is Noah Cross, the 'villain' of the film (though such a term seems decidedly irrelevant here). However, the motives for his criminal acts are equally incoherent. The reason he gives for his actions, like accumulation given voice, is simply 'the future'. This future is the force that leaves several people dead, erodes familial bonds and cheats people from their land. Pippin is right in identifying the simplistic nihilism of Cross's 'most people never have to face the fact that at the right time in the right place, they're capable of anything' speech, but he goes on to say that such an emptiness becomes the 'point of view' of the film when the reality is more dispiriting. The film depicts a place where something like the reverse is true: where people constantly have to face the fact that, at the right time in the right place, they are incapable of doing anything. The 'Chinatown' which haunts the characters' minds is a kind of spectre of a universal idea of exteriority, of a place of lawlessness and confusion, a fragment of a past when such a geographical and moral distinction could still be made. Evelyn's denial of the term 'rape' in reference to her relationship with her father, would thereby not necessarily imply an element of complicity, or even the internalised guilt of a traumatic condition, but, rather, that for Cross the term rape has no meaning. Just as there is no longer any identifiable Chinatown, there is no longer any rape or even the incest taboo, there is only 'the future'. The possibility of relating to the world has been swept up by the subsumptive thirst of accumulation. All we can do is watch.

Filmed Thought is an important contribution to film-philosophy that attests to the difficult relationship between the two disciplines. Indeed it puts the difficulty of relationships at the centre of its analysis. Cinema here is not a tool for escapism or empty voyeurism, but reflects and *works* at forcing a confrontation with the complex problem of inter-subjective reality. Perhaps this reflective mode of reading could be 'stood on its head' by examining how the dynamics of socio-historical relations work in tension with the struggle for interpretability, how social forms pervert our impulse to be understood, turning us back towards escapism and spectacle.

Daniel Fraser