

Lennon, a professor of English at the University of South Florida, claimed in his earlier book, *Boxcar Politics: The Hobo in U.S. Culture and Literature, 1869-1956*, that flight, escape, migration, was ‘a distinct form of resistive politics.’ Such an argument is now absent. In like manner, one of the few places where the ‘merging of the political with the aesthetic’ appears acceptable to him is when,

in the work of Yazan Halwani, the aim of art is ‘to unite Beirut’. We might ask: unite against what? The question of graffiti in times of crisis is also the question of culture, which continues to pivot on whether culture means preserving identity or risking its loss, the defence of a familiar position or the dialectical cultivation of the human.

Kyle Proehl

Mannerism’s metamorphoses

Sjoerd van Tuinen, *Philosophy of Mannerism: From Aesthetics to Modal Metaphysics* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022). 240pp., £85.00 hb., 978 1 35032 248 6

Mannerism has often been ignored in the field of art history. It has been seen either as that which does not correspond to classical art, in the sense of a divergence from it, or sometimes has been read in relation to the Baroque. The question that follows, and probably these are questions proper to the field of art history, is whether mannerism is a historical period or a style which can then be read in moments across history. If it is a style then the historical period corresponding to it would indicate an accumulation or circulation of these styles when they become the rules of production of art. This is much clearer with the Renaissance where the perfection of the human body and its relation to nature is represented in a specific form – the use of perspective and Alberti’s rules of construction, of not only the pictorial space but also elements that would occupy this space – are specified. However, mannerism appears to be an anomaly in this attempt of art history to provide it with specific rules and hence it also resists historical periodisation. This is because it is the practice that exceeds thought and hence rules are not sufficient to formalise the work.

Sjoerd van Tuinen rightly points out that Vasari’s book on the artists is called *Lives* rather than *Rules*. It is this way of practice of construction that he seems to be interested in because this, I think, also relates to his main attempt in the book – to not provide new ways to understand mannerism but new ways to perceive and live manneristically. Hence, it would be wrong to think of *The Philosophy of Mannerism* as a book of art history, though matters related to art history are sufficiently discussed,

but rather it is a book of philosophy – that is, what we understand from Gilles Deleuze as that which concerns itself with the creation of concepts. It is through philosophy that it is possible to think of the singular as opposed to the generalities of art history. It is this thinking of singularity which allows for the discovery of a novelty within the historical moment itself, because singularities, though emerging from history, cannot be reduced to the history itself. So the task is, as van Tuinen argues, ‘to combine mannerism as historical conjuncture with mannerism as a torsion of historicity that takes the form of afterwardness (*Nachträglichkeit*): a history deferred and redoubled in relation to itself.’

This step helps us to think about the relation between mannerism and modernity – in the sense of why it is important to consider mannerism in thinking of modernity and in what ways it helps us in thinking about modernity. This remains a contemporary question not just in thinking about the present but also the future. It is true that the present situation of the Anthropocene perhaps is closer to mannerist art or that period of the sixteenth and seventeenth century where the attempt to overpower Nature is at a threshold, concerned not with the will of humans to overcome nature but in realising that nature has its own will. In this way, the mannerist artists like Archimboldo show how both nature and art (in the sense of artificiality as opposed to nature) are all *becomings* – one flowing into the other, such that this clear distinction is no longer possible. Excluded from art history and modernity, mannerism also depicts the situation of mod-

ernity in an oblique way – like a 'convex mirror.' It guides modernity although denied a part in its history. However, the point is not to go for a postmodern turn which would acknowledge this exclusion through something like the 'end of history'. Contemporary artists or rather 'artisans' depict a different way of thinking this, what the author calls 'metamodern', understood as among things – where practice is within the immanent material itself:

Instead of the modernist 'new', the avant-gardist 'tomorrow', and the postmodern 'end of history', contemporary practice inhabits an a-synchronous present that we can call metamodern, where meta is understood in its etymological sense of 'among' a heterogeneity of (material, technical, social, political, digital) practices which, in their disjunctive togetherness, express and construct the contemporary.

As mentioned earlier, the author's aims are not restricted to thinking about mannerism in the arts and to finding its contemporary ramifications but also to consider ways or *modes* of being: to perceive manneristically but also to live in a mannerist way. This concerns the question of ontology and here we move towards 'modal metaphysics' – this is where van Tuinen reads early modern philosophers like Leibniz and Bruno but also modern philosophers like Henri Bergson, William James, Alfred North Whitehead, John Dewey, Étienne Souriau and Gilbert Simondon.

The author adopts an intriguing method in dealing with this diverse range of material. The book, divided into six chapters, hinges on the separation of manner and matter. Chapter 1 deals primarily with questions of art history and also shows what philosophy can provide art history. While mannerism remains a problem for art history, through philosophy we have a concept of mannerism, and it is through this gesture that we move from mannerism as an 'aesthetic object' to an 'aesthetic fact'. The second chapter provides us with the conceptual tools required to think of such a transformation. Deleuze and Guattari's work proves to be significant in thinking of a reversal of Platonism – to think without a model. The overturning of the logic of Platonism is not to reverse the hierarchy of the Idea and the object but rather to think difference as constitutive in all repetitions, that is, to think beyond representation. Modernism posits classical art as a break designating a unified style to it and in this way also legitimises it but this history is redoubled by

'a continuous series of metamorphosis of mannerism'. Mannerism is a latent transformation or translation of this original difference which makes our past ahistorical.



In this sense, van Tuinen's attempt is also to conceptualise mannerism such that it is both adequate to its historical time but also as an Event whose reverberations can be found across history. It is here that the concept of 'secondness' is important. Being second with regard to an established situation, mannerism is also a condition of the new and comes with a power of repetition which shows a new relation between matter and manner. However it is not only this incompleteness but also a thinking of different modes of existence and it is with Souriau that the author argues for the pluralism of modes of existence which is the basis of any modal metaphysics, with a totality that exceeds these various modes.

It is a different reading of Leibniz that we find in chapters 3 and 4. Leibniz, the mannerist philosopher *par excellence*, situated between classicism and modernism, becomes a personification of the concept of 'secondness'. Leibniz provides us with a new theory of individuation and this separates him from the classicist Descartes. Leibniz's monad envelops the world, that is to say we cannot conceive an individual having attributes but have to

rather think of predicates or events already enveloped in this individual. It is also that these monads in the world only understand a portion of it and hence we find a separation in Leibniz between this world of events (possible) and the existence of individuals (real). For Leibniz, God already creates the best world where the monads are compossible; God does not create Adam the sinner but the world in which Adam sins. The author contends it is 'manners' which brings the possible world and real individuals together. In the next chapter van Tuinen reads the concept of the *vinculum substantiale*, which remains a problem in the Leibnizian system, as a 'singularity or speculative problem.' The *vinculum* which is both a relation and a substance makes the Leibnizian system also think of divergences and contingencies. It seems that this reading provides us with a way to think of composition in the sense of a becoming or an incorporeal transformation and also leads to a new relation between theory and praxis, which is essential for any modal philosophy. This is also possible because of Leibniz's specific use of principles, which, as Deleuze notes, are 'reflexive.' The new world which is a witness to the fall of a theological foundation cannot be guided by a Law, but now principles must be invented for any object, and hence there is a proliferation of principles. In this sense, acoustics become essential rather than a narcissistic optics – to think of the echo or vibration.

The last two chapters reimagine the notions of art and artist through a mannerist reading. Art must be thought as design, which against both the Classical and Platonist version does not separate between the idea as transcendental and matter as immanent and separated from the Idea. Rather than stabilising, the mannerist conception reveals what appears beneath this stable design. This shifts the desire of the artist to be the second God by creating from 'nothing' and an artwork becomes only a realisation of forces which brings the three modes of matter (what), idea (why) and artist (who) in a surexistential mode of substantial union (how). It is this form of art or design that can be found in works of contemporary artists who now have to be understood as the 'cosmic artisans'

who combine matter and manner, art and craft like that of alchemy where the desire is not towards reproducible knowledge but rather a speculative one.

Deleuze's interest in Leibniz incorporated the Leibnizian world, that is the Baroque world, into a thinking of Leibniz. In his 1980 seminar on Leibniz, we discover this interest – what is the world of Leibniz or rather what world does he create through his concepts? The same desire can be found in Sjoerd van Tuinen's book and this guides his study of the history of philosophy and of art. Our world, as Deleuze notes, is not the Leibnizian one but rather the world of Mallarmé and Nietzsche, a world of divergences, a game of chance. It is in this recognition that a philosophy of mannerism remains contemporary: to think of composition not as a capacity of God nor a property of nature but to understand it as artists do, where it remains immanent to the material without coinciding with it, where it is possible to think of disparate elements together. Such a philosophy also demands a creation of a world, and of existing in it. Our world which is 'a superdiverse world of incessant transformations' is where modality becomes the basic building block. Modal individuation gestures towards a situation where the subject and object are not discernable, and the political implication of such a project perhaps is in consideration of the question of labour in its division. The author's reference to Marx's idea of the division of labour in a communist society and its connection to Souriau's notion of modal individuation must be taken seriously in its political force where the question of existence through various modes takes the form of 'AND' rather than 'IS.' This indicates a new thinking of labour through a new understanding of existence as 'not substantial and analytic but processual and synthetic.' This also demands that we think of a new kind of subject. Separating himself from Classicism, and aligning with Mannerism, it seems that the author stands against a Cartesian subject based on a duality. So is this new subject of mannerism an interiorised one like something Deleuze conceives in Leibniz? This perhaps remains to be thought.

Debjoyti Sarkar