REVIEWS

A differing shade of green

Adrian Parr, *The Wrath of Capital: Neoliberalism and Climate Change Politics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013. 224 pp., £20.50 hb., 978 0 23115 828 2.

This book is a welcome addition to the spate of recent books on the ecological and resource calamities currently facing the planet. Unlike so many others – one thinks in this context of authors as disparate as Bill McKibben and Richard Heinberg – Parr analyses the crisis in the context of global inequality and social injustice. Her analysis is firmly rooted in a Marxism that allows a more comprehensive grasp of *why* and *how* the current state of affairs has developed. She makes it clear that the worsening state of the environment is the effect of global capitalism; the crisis therefore cannot be effectively addressed within the parameters of capital. She does not propose, as do so many, the mere importance of individual initiative, without any contestation of larger economic and social injustices that are inseparable from the workings of the neoliberal order. Counting on individuals alone to solve the 'environmental problem' is itself a symptom of the overarching problem: the current ideological triumph of a relentless capitalist neoliberalism, grounded above all in the supposed wants and needs of the (consumerist) individual.

In eight closely argued chapters, Parr presents the interrelated crises currently facing us: climate change; flawed carbon-offset schemes; population growth and income inequality; looming water scarcity; looming food scarcity and expanding worldwide hunger; the food-industrial complex, with genetically modified food and factory-raised animals; the green city movement and attendant social inequality; and the oil industry and its lamentable, indeed apocalyptic, environmental record. Typically, authors focus on individual responses to these problems: for example, changes proposed include eating less meat; driving less or not at all; living in a compact city; recycling, dumpster diving, and so on. Only if a significant portion of the world population decides on these changes, individually or in small groups, will the world somehow be 'saved'. Heinberg, for example, in *The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies* (2003), recommends a radically restrained (constrained?) lifestyle as a way of enabling humanity to survive longer with a much smaller carbon footprint – necessary if we are to continue to 'flourish' as the amount of available oil diminishes on a regular and predictable basis. He doesn't tell us how to get there from here, though, other than through, presumably, the reading of his book and the activation of our individual consciences. McKibben, in *Deep Economy: Economics As If the World Mattered* (2007), proposes a small-community ethic as a way of living a healthier life: growing one's own food, driving less, and so on. McKibben sees the ideal social unit as that of a small community, but his solution ultimately entails people voluntarily, and presumably individually, choosing to live in progressive small towns or the countryside: rural Vermont is his home, and apparently his ideal. It's unclear how one can live in Vermont, however, if one is living in poverty in a major urban centre, or in rural India.

I mention these two authors not to condemn them, but to indicate the difficulty that lies before any progressive social/ecological critic who does not firmly tie his or her analysis to a critique of global capitalism. As Parr makes clear, one can indeed make individual choices, but how individual is individual? How individual can any choice be in the current economic regime? The individual will always be the creature of larger market forces and logic. The individual's response, then, will always have to be framed in a larger, inclusive, political context, *as* political action.

Here I would point to chapter 6 of Parr's book, 'Animal Pharm', which focuses on agribusiness as it is currently constituted. McKibben's solution to the woes of junk food, unhealthy meat, fast food, genetically modified food – all harmful both to the human body and to the environment in general – entails the voluntary withdrawal from the current regime, and participation in community-supported agriculture schemes (CSAs), backyard gardening, the support of small local organic farmers, and so on. All laudable, to be sure: anyone who has read Michael Pollan knows that eating good food can certainly improve one's life. Parr, on the other hand, stresses some obvious problems with small community reform that somehow never seems to get beyond 'identity politics' – that is, beyond the improvement of the lives of *certain types* of people (vegans, foodies, small-town

inhabitants, farmers, 'creative class' types, etc.) rather than *all* people. She notes, for example, that 'ethical food choices cannot be separated from the material conditions determining food production and modes of subjectification (race, class, gender, species).' Most vegans have soybeans as a central part of their diets, and yet 'soybean production is responsible for the razing of large parts of the Amazon rain forest that is facilitating the institutionalization of North–South power relations.' Hence, 'the vegan approach runs the risk of facilitating the culture of consumption that capitalism advances.' She then goes on to cite the intolerance of certain vegan groups when it comes to people who have tried veganism and rejected it, for health reasons. This would seem to be the nub of the problem: the vegans constitute themselves as a special interest/identity group, they feel confident about it, but they quickly become exclusivist, seeing others as not quite up to their moral or ethical standards. They have to, because they don't have any overarching political standards, based on rigorous social and economic analysis. The irony is that they are themselves fully caught up in the individualistic consumerism that is the very heart of the 'society of the spectacle'. Omnivorous capitalism, in other words, works through both individual oppression and exploitation but also through a kind of personal thralldom to consuming not just reified or fetishized objects but all the images packaged and sold by an ever-resilient capitalism. In the case of vegans, singled out by Parr, a seeming revolt against capitalism is immediately reappropriated by it: if we reject meat as individuals and go to the local wholefood stores to buy soybeans we have merely switched consumable signs; we have not radically changed our activity as passive consumers and supporters of the neoliberal regime. Identity politics is not even politics; it's consumerism as social action. The new signs are contestatory only as signs; thus they are the problem (elements of the 'spectacle'), not the solution. This is the genius of ever-renascent capitalism: it mutates endlessly, always capable of reappropriating contestation, no matter how seemingly radical, and turning it to its own (exploitative) ends. The vegan feels superior eating soybeans; meanwhile, the Amazon rainforest is stripped for profit.

This example is extended in the following chapter, 'Modern Feeling and the Green City'. The current 'greening' of the city, from Parr's perspective, is capitalist business as usual, with a green tint. Her example is Chicago, where a massive energy efficiency initiative has been undertaken, thanks to the efforts of Mayor Daley. But, obviously, Chicago's transformation has less to do with 'saving the planet', in the noble abstract, than it has to do with turning the city into an economically efficient and lifestyle-friendly metropolis that will attract the 'creative class' types that nowadays are held to be the salvation of agglomerations in the age of knowledge-based industries. As Parr writes,

> The green roof on Chicago's City Hall is just another code, alongside other codes such as the LEED-rated buildings, housing voucher schemes, bicycle paths, and so on and so forth. What grounds all of these codes and the shifts they undergo over time is the axiomatic of capital, for in all cases capital serves as the justification for urban development and change.

As with the vegans, the walkable-city types are less concerned with social justice than with establishing their own turf in the most pleasant parts of the gentrified city. And, though Barr does

not stress it, gentrification itself is really the index of the failure of the 'greening' ideal of the city, because it merely replicates social inequality under the guise of urban efficiency. When neighbourhoods are 'revitalized', when the LEED-style amenities are introduced, those who are not 'creative class' hipster geniuses are forced out, and the neighbourhood, which indeed becomes more pleasant to live in, also becomes unaffordable for most people. Gentrification and green urban renewal seem to be locked in a tight embrace; how would one go about separating them?

If I have a criticism of Parr's book, it is in the lack of specifics she provides in response to this type of question. If we are to do away with consumerist individualism, what, in practice, will replace it? Will people *individually* choose to undertake a sustainable project that is more socially just and inclusive? How is this sort of individualism different from that put forward by more traditional eco-critics? Will they be spontaneously convinced to do so through their reading of Marx? Or is there a need for some overarching governmental decision-making, somehow under the aegis of Marxism? Parr criticizes neoliberalism for holding that 'individuals, not governments or historical forces, are personally responsible for their own successes and failures'. But does that mean that only a government – presumably with the right political orientation – could be capable of implementing what she would take to be 'successes'? Will people, then, need to be convinced to do the right thing – and be educated in all this – by the government? Which government? Elected by whom, and with what (and whose) money?

Of course change from the top has been tried already: in the Soviet Union, in Cuba, perhaps in Venezuela. The results, to put it mildly, have not always been resoundingly successful. Cuba scores high in the green sweepstakes – energy consumption is low per capita, and yet the population is highly literate and generally well educated, and on that score at least has a good quality of life. Not many other countries can make this claim. (It generally seems that one can make one claim, or the other, but not both.) And certainly Marx has a central role in Cuban political education. But how many Cubans would voluntarily retain their current system if given the choice? Conversely, throughout the world, liberation and freedom are associated with a more 'prosperous' lifestyle, which features, as in China, the purchase of automobiles and other far from carbon-neutral devices (fetishes?). How, then, is a proper education to be carried out, worldwide, following the values that Parr espouses? How to convince everyone, including those poor whose definition of progress is consuming more, that there must be a fairly low-lying ceiling to their consumption? Who will do this convincing? What role will constraint play in it? Say what you will, part of the genius of capitalism is to make true believers out of people – make them consumers – while all the while motivating them by convincing them that *it is entirely in their interest*. Capitalism has solved the problem of motivation, if not much else. Marxism and its various avatars have never come close. How in short do you get people to feel solidarity with *everyone*, when everything in the global culture persuades them to think first of themselves?

This problem can be flipped around. How do you convince those without that the concerns of those with – concerns having to do with the need to curb overconsumption – are legitimate? If those without are focused, inevitably, on consuming more, how can they respect those who are generally critical of enhanced consumption? Here, I think, Parr ignores some of the value of more traditional eco-criticism. No matter what, that kind of writing does critique consumerism; perhaps not the way she wants it to, but it does 'deconstruct' it. The green city is a largely carless city, while the car is perhaps the key consumer item in the US economy – witness the desperate governmental efforts to save GM in 2009. A critique of non-sustainable culture is therefore also necessarily a critique of capitalism, whether it realizes it or not. De-emphasizing a large carbon footprint is de-emphasizing consumer capitalism as we now know it. Rather than making eco-theory entirely subordinate to Marxist theory, it would perhaps be more effective to consider how the two are (or must be) overtly linked. In other words, rather than making light of greening the city efforts – all those yuppie bike paths, and so on – Parr might see how a green critique is inseparable from a Marxist critique. Marxism without the green is a Marxism precisely unconcerned with issues of energy efficiency, the carbon footprint, and so on. We saw, throughout the twentieth century, where such Marxism leads. (Consider, for example, the environmental record of the former East Germany.) Perhaps Parr needs to realize that the yuppie environmentalists are not the only ones who need to broaden their thinking. In point of fact there are people who bring these strands – social and environmental justice – together most effectively – I am thinking, for example, of the beautifully detailed writing of the Indian eco-activist Vandana Shiva, who is both a champion of social justice and a committed environmentalist. Reading Shiva's work one is never

in any doubt of the necessary coordination of the two impulses, of the how and the why.

Rather than a simple flat-out critique of greening as seemingly inevitable cooptation, Parr could then tell us what her model of the green city would be. How can we imagine a green city in which the poor are not simply forced out of liveable and walkable neighbourhoods? What would a non-gentrified environmentally responsible neighbourhood look like, and (above all) how do we get there? How can a refusal of a car-centric transport system challenge larger capitalist (global) structures by keeping more money in the community? How can living outside the confines of the automobile be more satisfying – when one can play rather than drive? How can people of all walks of life live better through the food they grow in their own plots, and on the bikes they ride? How do global green concerns, in conjunction with a Marxist critique of capitalism, lead towards, rather than away from, greater social equality? Parr's book, because of its global sweep, is a necessary first step in any elaboration of an environmentally enlightened Marxism. She would argue in effect that that is the *only* Marxism – and one can only concur. One cannot separate environmental and social justice: they are intertwined. But how to get there from here?

Allan Stoekl

The machine is an ethic

Alexander R. Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012. 170 pp., £45.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 978 0 74566 252 7 hb., 978 0 74566 253 4 pb.

Historical questions of break versus intensification are unavoidable in the so-called information age. Does post-Fordism really replace Fordism in the overdeveloped world, or does it represent a stage of expansion both geographically and in terms of types of commodity? Do networks do away with the old sovereign and disciplinary power centres, or do they intensify their reach and penetration into all aspects of social and cultural life? Have video games really supplanted cinema as the cultural dominant of the age? Given the binary responses that such questions invite, it may be that the information age itself, for which the electronic digital computer provides both a technological substrate and a logical endowment, necessitates a return to fundamental questions of the relationship between criticism and history. Or, to take the more severe route, it may be that because the digital promises to do away with history altogether – a prospect that foregrounds the fundamental relationship between digitality and capital – it becomes all the more necessary to locate ways of first grasping and then overturning its aesthetic and political hegemony.

Such considerations are at the heart of *The Interface Effect*. For all of the foregrounding of 'windows, screens, keyboards, kiosks, channels, sockets, and holes' in the Preface, and for all of the discussion of varied cultural artefacts, from *World of Warcraft* to Jodi to *24*, this is fundamentally a book about critical method and history. Or, to expand this formulation in a manner suggested by Galloway's use of the term 'the control allegory' to group the various artefacts with which he engages, *The Interface Effect* deals with the aesthetic and critical principles with which one might represent and respond to the transition from (thermodynamic, decentralized) disciplinary societies to (communicational, distributed) control societies that Gilles Deleuze began to theorize in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Viewed as a book on method, a central organizational principle becomes clear: each chapter addresses the ways in which control necessitates a reconsideration of some of the approaches and terms that have been central to the critical analysis of culture over the past hundred years or so. The Introduction ('The Computer as a Mode of Mediation') uses a comparative appraisal of cinema and the computer, the media forms fundamental to discipline and control respectively, as a frame though which to consider two ways in which media technologies might be critically analysed. These are the concept of media and that of modes of mediation, and the distinctive critical traditions that the two encapsulate define two different possibilities for the study of media forms. Placing the concept of media at the centre of one's critical analysis necessitates a focus on form and structure, and precludes any political injunction; in such studies '*techne* is substrate and only substrate'. From here Galloway develops a critique of formalist approaches to new media, centred on Lev Manovich but applicable to any number of other writers from the late 1990s onwards. Focusing on modes of mediation, however, allows for a mode of analysis which views '*techne* as technique, art,

habitus, ethos, or lived practice'. Favouring this second approach Galloway is able to make the bracing claim, central to the book as a whole, that 'if cinema is, in general, an ontology, the computer is, in general, an ethic'. The computer is an ethic, Galloway argues, because it can only model worlds based on human action, or input, and as a result of this mediates humans (and all other objects in the world) so that they are reduced to abstract definitions configured according to the possible, predetermined inputs they might provide.

> As an ethic, the computer takes our action in the world as such as the condition of the world's expression. So in saying practice, I am really indicating a relationship of command. The machine is an ethic because it is premissed on the notion that objects are subject to definition and manipulation according to a set of principles for action. The matter at hand is not that of coming to know a world, but rather that of how specific, abstract definitions are executed to form a world.

In other words, it is not quite right to say that the computer is a formal medium, and thus declare that formalism is the appropriate way to approach it. Rather, the computer is a *formalizing* medium – literally, it cannot address a world that is anything but entirely formalized – and because of this it must be approached through the meeting point between world and formal model. This is the real significance of the interface in Galloway's book; not a screen or mouse, but the zone in which diachronic objects and identities meet the pure synchronicity of code.

Galloway's theorization of the computer as a mode of mediation offers rich possibilities for the critical analysis of the digital. By shifting focus onto the interface between action and formalization that computing machines afford, for example, it presents a nuanced way to approach the problem of so-called immaterial labour. For all of the inventive deployments of this theoretical frame that constitute the remaining chapters of *The Interface Effect*, it may be that this opening move is its most valuable contribution. Chapter 1 ('The Unworkable Interface') considers the relationship between art, theory and politics through the prism of cybernetic, networked logic. The defence of allegorical reading presented in this chapter, drawing on Marx and Freud, rests upon a mapping of play onto the historical phenomenon of digital mediation as a political-economic logic. Here the historical stakes of the book are restated though an association between play, labour and the decline in efficacy of a certain strain of critical analysis perhaps most closely associated with the 1970s' work of Deleuze and Guattari:

> [T]he present analysis is not particularly rhizomatic or playful in spirit, for the spirit of play and rhizomatic revolution has been deflated in recent years. It is instead that of a material and semiotic 'close reading' aspiring not to reenact the historical relation (the new economy) but to identify the relation itself as historical.

In Chapter 2 ('Software and Ideology') Galloway restates the central claim of the Introduction in terms of ideology, drawing on Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's 2005 essay 'On Software, or the Persistence of Visual Knowledge' to argue that the logical structure of software makes political interpretation the only appropriate mode of analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 ('Are Some Things Unrepresentable?' and 'Disingenuous Informatics') consider the problems posed to representation by the network-centric logic of control, drawing on a range of examples from the infamous 'McCrystal PowerPoint', a system-dynamic model of the Afghanistan war, to Frank Gehry's design for the Ray and Maria Stata centre at MIT, to the television series *24*. Finally, a Postscript ('We Are the Gold Farmers') considers the problems posed to identity politics and theory by the mediatic mode of the computer, which

can only deal in rigorous definition and the casting of positively measurable action into algorithms and logical structures.

Given the deftness of the critical framework Galloway develops and applies in *The Interface Effect*, a pair of interlinked areas appear worthy of greater discussion than they get within the book; the first is capitalism, and the second is material history. Galloway nods to both subjects repeatedly, but discussion tends to be focused at the twin levels of critical-theoretical method and close analysis of the above-mentioned range of cultural artefacts. The process of mediation that Galloway identifies with the computer – the mode of viewing in which all objects and identities within the world are flattened into formal models – appears identical to the abstract and abstracting function of capital described by Marx (see, for example, the first volume of *Capital* and the concluding pages of Ernest Mandel's 1976 introduction to it). An analysis of the way in which both the digital mode of mediation and the electronic digital computer are historically imbricated with the progression of capitalism would add a great deal to the theoretical and methodological debates the book develops. Equally, the book makes regular reference to cybernetics, and it strikes me that an examination of the historical development and dispersal of this postwar interdisciplinary method would allow for an essential engagement with the question of how applying the computational mode of mediation to the social began to appear both possible and desirable to certain political and economic interests in the second half of the twentieth century.

In other words, it may be that the hollowing out of history by information-age capitalism necessitates a bipartite historical response, a bringing together of two approaches to the past of culture that have until now appeared diametrically opposed: on one hand, the historicist method found in Marx and developed through the analysis of cultural objects by thinkers such as Fredric Jameson, and on the other hand, close engagements with material objects and archives associated with Friedrich Kittler and the field of media archaeology. Galloway develops a theoretical framework for the first part of this equation, and hints at the second part: developing the synthesis that would allow for the historicity of the digital to be fully confronted is a project that remains to be completed.

Seb Franklin

Only occasionally

Andrew Gibson, *Intermittency: The Concept of Historical Reason in Recent French Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012. 326 pp., £70.00 hb., 978 0 74863 757 7.

In his 1969 work *The Infinite Conversation* Maurice Blanchot wrote of 'the new space … from out of which … the unknown announces itself and, outside the game, comes into play'. This emergence of the unknown, the 'vertigo' of new space, may be produced in, among other things, 'life through desire', 'through the refusal of the Unique', 'through the accord of a relation without unity' and, in what is one of the central preoccupations of Blanchot's book, 'through the affirmation of intermittency'. As its title indicates, the concerns of Andrew Gibson's book on the concept of historical reason in recent French thought are not so distant from those of Blanchot. Interrogating the thought of intermittency in recent French philosophy Gibson aims to explore 'the way in which certain kinds of newness enter the world'. Like Blanchot, he is interested in affirming the possibility of something which in history exceeds history, stands outside of it and interrupts it. As with Blanchot, this interruptive or intermittent conception of historical becoming, what Gibson also calls an 'anti-schematics of historical reason', emerges as a critique of, or as a challenge to, the Hegelian–Kojèvian understanding of history and its totalizing schema of dialectical mediation, overcoming and synthesis in an instance of unity or completion (e.g. the existence of the state). The key imperative here is, as Gibson affirms, citing Corbin, that we 'give reason other regulatory ideas than totality', or, as Blanchot might have put it, that some fragmentary excess be affirmed that does not depend on the whole or totality, but 'says itself *outside* the whole, and after it'.

Yet, as one might expect given the group of thinkers Gibson brings together in *Intermittency*, his emphasis is not exactly identical with that of Blanchot. This is also a book which is, more specifically, 'about the occasional interruptions of diurnal history by unprecedented unexpected and unparalleled events for the good'. Of the five philosophers interrogated – namely, Alain Badiou, Françoise Proust, Christian Jambet, Guy Lardreau and Jacques Rancière – four began their

careers under the influence of Althusser or Maoism (or both). The specific preoccupation with the 'good' here betrays a tilt towards Badiou's philosophy in particular, and marks an attempt to salvage an affirmative thought of political becoming from the melancholic remainder of a historical experience which is now stripped of any revolutionary project or hope of universal and enduring egalitarian transformation. In this context Gibson's readings of each of the five thinkers in hand amounts, at one and the same time, to a series of variations on the motif of intermittency and an attempt to supplement these in order to confer on it the more coherent outlines of a theoretical structure or concept. So Badiou gives us a philosophy whose task is both to distinguish the good and to think the event, that punctuation of history by the void, which may, from time to time but above all rarely, locally and singularly, give us something worthy of the name politics and the possibility of emergent universal truths. Jambet gives us a thinking of metahistory, of the instant which interrupts historical time as pure and simple singularity; Proust the thought of intermittency as a relation between the interruptive event and its historical remainder; and Lardreau a philosophical articulation of the Lacanian Real as that which turns back on the discourse which bars it in order, once again, to puncture, interrupt, throw into hiatus. Lastly, Rancière's conception of the distribution of the sensible offers a thinking of intermittency based on the precariousness of material life, its erratic, aleatory and insecure status. In different ways each of these philosophers show that such intermittent interruption is only possible on the basis of what might be termed the insistence of the void and as an effect of the void. In Jambet's terms interruption occurs as 'an experience of the historical Abgrund … of historical indetermination'. It is the ontological groundlessness of historical existence which means that it can remain neither static nor stable, but by the same token also cannot unfold according to any eschatological or teleological logic, nor any dialectical process of mediation and totalizing synthesis.

Gibson's book succeeds very well in achieving its dual ambition: to explore the central importance of the motif of intermittency in recent French philosophy, but also to think it consistently in the initial outline of a coherent theoretical structure or concept. He is an extremely attentive and perceptive reader of each of the philosophers he treats and is always able to make judicious criticisms of each and to take his distance in such a way that his own supplement to their philosophical positions emerges with a good degree of distinctness and originality. Yet, by his own admission, a relatively short volume such as this 'cannot hope comprehensively to pin down the theoretical structure that emerges', and a number of questions are raised during the course of Gibson's analysis and synthesis of his five thinkers.

Most pressing among these, perhaps, is the question of the void itself, the 'historical Abgrund', its status and the nature of its interruptive effects. For why, it might be asked, does the insistence of the void and its puncturing of the fabric of history necessarily produce 'unparalleled events for the good'? For Badiou, the Platonist, the answer is clear: the empty set, the void, the inconsistent multiplicity of being can only be consistently thought and said mathematically, and axiomatic thinking derived from mathematics tells us that an event is only an event if it arises from the void, from outside of the structured specificity of a historical situation and as a generic truth or universalizable value: a good. For Gibson, who tacks alongside but does not appear entirely to embrace Badiou's Platonism, historical reason is logically deduced as an immediate effect of the void and of the ungrounded or absolute contingency of existence. Yet if the void is ontological and contingency absolute, then this is so independently of our axiomatic or logical reasoning and it may be just as easy to imagine the puncturing of history from the outside as traumatic and catastrophic as it is to affirm it as an event of 'reason and good'. Given the importance of Lacan to some of the thinkers treated here, some negotiation or analysis of the void – or the barred Real which turns back to puncture discourse – as potentially traumatic in its insistence and effects is perhaps needed here. In this context it is arguable that Jambet's Gnosticism, his dualistic sentiment of existence, and Badiou's Platonism colour the overall argument of Gibson's book. Here all that is, all that is historically determinable, emerges as a fallen remainder, a world 'in which the good has never prevailed, other than very fleetingly'. The world is 'implacably hostile to thought', the source of all that is 'bad', and it is only in the other of the world, in abstract reason as an effect of the void, that the good may be discerned and from which it may emerge, albeit rarely and fleetingly, into worldly existence.

Despite Gibson's nuanced qualifications relating to the event as always being 'in composition' with the specificity of historical situations, one wonders whether the dualistic sentiment, the Gnostic tonality and Platonic flavouring of his argument do not reveal a certain circularity of thought: reason deduces the void, therefore reason is an immediate effect of the void and the intermittent, rare and punctive events produced from

the void will necessarily yield instances of reason, of rational and universal good. Perhaps Badiou can just about circumvent this circularity by insisting on the primacy of ontological decision (made in favour of mathematics) and on the axiomatic method of thought that flows from this. Yet while the predominance of the mathematical paradigm for Badiou is clear, this is not so for Gibson. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of his book is the way in which it accords a privilege and pre-eminent status to literature, and specifically to modern literature, in the historical experience of intermittency. 'Literature and art', Gibson argues, 'have been the key modern custodians of a conception of historical reason as intermittent', and in each chapter the philosophical analysis is accompanied by a literary or artistic exemplar: Orwell, Flaubert, Wordsworth, Rimbaud, Kleist, Rossellini and Sebald. Here Gibson shows himself to be an acutely perceptive and engaging reader of the canon of literary and aesthetic modernity. Yet, arguably, the privileging of a literary paradigm does not address or resolve the question of the circularity of historical reason which has been discerned here.

Setting aside the 'dualistic sentiment' and the privileging of a certain kind of abstract reason, one might wonder whether both the fallen remainder of historical becoming and the rare and fleeting events for the good might not be understood as different aspects of the given multiplicity of existence rather than as two opposing principles. Do we need the good to be an abstract 'hypothesis' (e.g. of communism) that sits in opposition to a fallen world? Might it not arise from a certain attitude maintained towards, but also arising from within, the given ungrounded multiplicity of existence itself? In this context there is arguably a highly developed tradition of French thinking in relation to the ontological void, groundlessness and absent totality with which Gibson's book does not really engage, not even by way of contextual background. Georges Bataille, one of Kojève's most significant contemporary critics, is mentioned briefly; Jean-Luc Nancy's thinking of the unworking of community and interruption of grounding historical myths not at all. Other names could be mentioned in this regard but perhaps the most significant omission is the name of Maurice Blanchot himself, not least because Blanchot, like Gibson, gives literary writing a somewhat exorbitant privilege in relation to the saying, thinking and affirmation of intermittency. Gibson briefly affirms the importance of Simon Critchley's 1997 book *Very Little … Almost Nothing* to his own thinking – a book largely devoted to Blanchot – but other than this oblique and vanishingly minimal reference, there is no mention of him at all. This is a shame because such a reference might have enriched his argument relating to art and literature and allowed the book as a whole to resonate beyond the group of thinkers it gathers together. At the same time, however, such a resonance testifies to the ongoing importance of the philosophical thematic of intermittency in recent French thought. Despite, or perhaps because of, the questions it provokes, Gibson's book is a highly original contribution to the field.

Ian James

Totum and taboo

Giacomo Marramao, *The Passage West: Philosophy after the Age of the Nation State*, trans. Matteo Mandarini, Verso, London and New York, 2012. 288 pp., £19.99 pb., 978 1 84467 852 5.

'The *totum* is the totem', writes Giacomo Marramao. And apparently he means it, since this is the last thing he writes in Chapters 6 and 9 of *The Passage West*. What he means by it, however, is less apparent. Apart from the Latin – and *totum* simply designates 'all' or 'the whole' – part of the difficulty is editorial. *The Passage West* is Matteo Mandarini's translation of the second edition of Marramao's *Passaggio a Occidente. Filosofia e globalizzazione*. The first edition (2003) included nine chapters, as opposed to the second edition's ten. In its first print run, then, the *Passaggio* ended with this lapidary, if vague, proposition: 'The *totum* is the totem.' In the second edition, as in Mandarini's translation, this period becomes a pause, opening onto a tenth chapter that takes confusion as its title – 'After Babel' – and then produces it. (For those not up on their scriptures: 'The name thereof was called *Babel*, because there the language of the whole earth was *confounded*.') By the time this twenty-page appendage is got through, and regardless of whether Antonio Negri's 'Afterword' is scanned afterwards, we have forgotten Marramao's proscription – which, again, is this: 'The *totum* is the totem.'

The *totum*–totem idea is nothing like Marramao's only preoccupation in *The Passage West*. In his preface to the first Italian edition (which Mandarini includes here), Marramao warns us that the book is 'organised radially', by which he means that it is at once a 'theoretical map' and a 'circumnavigation' of the theoretical globe this map represents. But the going will be rough, since Marramao's 'circumnavigation'

takes its coordinates – he immediately specifies – from seven 'thematic epicentres'; that is, earthquakes. (There will be no sighting of a new 'Pacific' in these pages.) Marramao's 'epicentres' are indicated by these seven couplets: 'identity/difference, politics/law, sovereignty/global era, gift/exchange, democracy/community, tolerance/recognition and Europe/post-national public sphere'. The *totum* does not make up even half of one of these 'thematic epicentres'. So perhaps Marramao's *totum*–totem formula refers to a theoretical *hypocentre*, rather than an epicentre? Or perhaps his 'theoretical map' is itself a representation of – the *totum*? Regardless, Marramao's *totum*–totem idea is clearly not at the centre of a work which, by design, has no centre. *The Passage West* is not a thesis-book, but a – at many points, innovative – 'cartography of problems'. Marramao's decision to repeat his *totum*–totem formula at the close of both 'Universalism and Politics of Difference' (Chapter 6) and 'Europe after the Leviathan' (Chapter 9) nevertheless signals its peculiar relevance to his whole 'cartographic' programme, and without prejudice to his pages on Voltaire or Paul Valéry, on the 'entropy of the Leviathan' or the 'incalculable concentrations of global money', it is his *totum*–totem idea I will pursue.

The Algonquian word *totem* has been literary currency in Europe for a century this year – or last. In his 1913 collection, *Totem and Taboo*, Freud refers to 'the new work of E. Durkheim: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life: The Totemic System in Australia*, 1912'. It could be Durkheim in 1912 that Marramao wants us to hear in 'totem'; he never specifies. But I surmise that it is, in the first instance, Freud's definition of the word in 1913 that we should press into service. Although Freud is lazily rephrasing here a couple of sentences from Sir James Frazer's 'The Origin of Totemism', he writes that the 'clan totem' is

> the object of veneration of a group of men and women who take their name from the totem and consider themselves consanguineous offspring of a common ancestor, and who are firmly associated with each other through common obligations towards each other as well as by the belief in their totem. Totemism is a religious as well as a social system. On its religious side it consists of mutual respect and consideration between a person and his totem, and on its social side it is composed of obligations of the members of the clan towards each other and towards other clans.

If this is what 'totem' means, then Marramao's *totum* represents this: an 'object of veneration' that implies lineage and political origins; a vector of 'belief' (Freud's *Glaube*) or 'mystic union' (Frazer); and a source of interdiction and injunction – that is, taboo – within a clan and 'towards other clans'. And if we modify Marramao's dictum in light of this, we could perhaps say: 'The *totum* is the *organizing symbol*.'

Marramao seems to lament a 'symbolic deficit of [European] politics', and he suggests – contentiously – that rights discourse per se is not 'a sufficient condition for the production of … symbolic identification'. But he does not relate this perceived deficit of the symbolic to his concern with the totemic; nor is it clear what positivity – if any – he assigns to the symbolic. For instance, in Chapter 1 'symbolic identification' puts us in the company of Islamic Ultras like bin Laden (whose improbable mood is 'nostalgia'); and in Chapter 9 'symbolic identification' is the *tic* of European neo-nationalists (who appear to have no distinguishing affect). Hardly positive, then. Yet there is none of this bad odour when, in Chapter 8, Marramao predicts 'a *symbolic inversion* of the logic of identity', now that – with a fond glance at Gilles Deleuze – the 'insidious ridge' of metaphysics has been surmounted. Still: is the positivity of this 'symbolic inversion' a positivity of the symbolic, or of its reversal? Is the *inverted* 'logic of identity' to be 'symbolic'? There is no answer to this in *The Passage West*.

'Totem', on the other hand, is simply blackballed. Marramao's 'totem' is negative, because primitive. He registers its atavism by means of the repeated expression 'totemic mask', where this mask is what sustains a 'metapolitical illusion' of unity or identity, and specifically a unity or identity of the People. Along with the totem, Marramao evokes the perversity (or phantomaticity) of the 'fetish'. We have, for instance: 'the fetishization of the Collective', 'a collective Identity or Fetish', and 'the universalist and monist fetish'. (So if the *totum* is totem, the *universum* is fetish?) But whereas this fetish motif flares out, Marramao's use of 'totem' recurs, and is directly attributed to Hans Kelsen – an acquaintance of Freud's who hailed *Totem and Taboo*, in print, as an 'exceptionally brilliant' analysis of totemism. (Hence my choice of Freud.) Of course, the fact that Kelsen writes this in the pages of Freud's journal *Imago* (1922) – and then in translation, in Ernest Jones's *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (1924) – could suggest flattery. Yet Kelsen's use of Freud is serious, and when Freud issues a response, in the second edition of his *Group Psychology* (Leipzig 1923), it is not to Kelsen's praise, but to his 'understanding and shrewd *criticism*' (as Étienne Balibar has noted).

While he is doubtless aware of it, Marramao does not mention the Kelsen–Freud connection. What Marramao does mention is that he takes the phrase 'totemic mask' from Kelsen's 1920 essay *On the Essence and Value of Democracy* – and this, from what I have seen, cannot be the case. Kelsen writes of a Bolshevik 'tendency to primitivism' (*Tendenz zum Primitivismus*) in that essay, but there is no trace of totemism *proprie dicta*. Marramao's 'totemic mask' seems to date back, rather, to Kelsen's 'Demokratie' paper in volume V of the *Schriften der deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie* (Tübingen 1927). And here – *pace* Marramao – what the 'totemic mask' conceals is not the refractory disidentity of a People (Kelsen's *Volk*), but rather a 'fictive identification' of the People with its representatives. Kelsen's 'totemic mask' (*totemistische Maske*), in 1927, is a specifically 'democratic mask' (*demokratische Maske*), and the illusion it sustains is not demotic unity, but democratic freedom.

Kelsen's 1927 discussion is less relevant to Marramao's *totum*–totem idea, however, than what we see in his previously mentioned 1922–24 piece, 'The Conception of the State and Social Psychology, with Special Reference to Freud's Group Theory'. In this piece Kelsen, like Freud in 1913, cites Durkheim's 1912 work – and here, there is no question of flattery. 'Durkheim's "*méthode sociologique*"', he writes, 'is simply the application of a naïve substantialistic … point of view to the observation of human behaviour.' Kelsen believes that Freud's totem-analysis, unlike Durkheim's, 'has exposed the psychic root to which both the religious and the social bond goes back', namely: 'Divine and social authority … are both but different forms of the same psychic tie that – psychologically – simply is *authority itself*.' For Kelsen, then, *auctoritas* is the 'psychic root' of the totem. He concludes from this that 'the totemic system is just the politics of primitives', since in a 'primitive totemistic' clan, as in 'modern politics and law', the distinctly totemic element is a depiction of the *source* of social organization (i.e., authority) – be it 'the combining of a multitude of individuals into a unity' (clan), or a 'system of legal and compelling norms' (*Rechtsstaat*) – as a tangible and substantial entity, that is to say, 'as a "real"'. Totemism results from (and in) a 'technique of … hypostatization', while statist totemism, specifically, posits 'a supra-biological creature': the state. Or said differently: 'The state is … a deity-idea.'

This is Kelsen in 1922. In March of the same year, Carl Schmitt publishes his *Political Theology*, where he notoriously maintains that 'all the trenchant concepts of the modern theory of state are secularised theological concepts', and then concedes: 'Kelsen has … stressed since 1920 the methodical relationship of theology and jurisprudence.' The archaic crux of this 'methodical relationship', for Kelsen – in conversation with Freud, as we have briefly seen – is the totem. From the clan-sacrifice to 'the "post-Leviathan" polyarchy' that Marramao addresses, the juridically organizing symbol – however crass, however abstract – is *totemic*. A jackal or a snake can serve as totem. Shamash or Yahweh, Jupiter or Christ Pantocrator, Allah or Shiva can serve as totem. A Virgin Queen or Mortal God can serve as totem. And perhaps – in the teeth of Marramao's warning – the *totum* can serve as totem.

For Marramao, it seems, the *totum* is taboo. He calls for 'the political *forma mentis* of Europe' to jettison the post-1789 ideal of a juridical *universum* ('all, whole'), as perhaps it will. But if it does so, I suggest, Europe will inevitably institute a new style of *legum feudalium*; that is, will codify – in Marramao's stinging phrase – a 'logic of contiguous ghettos'. This is not what Marramao and other left-reactionaries want, but this is what 'a multiple and "hybrid" conception of law' will get them. For the *totum* or *universum* is the only symbol whose juridical arc and logic are not that of a ghetto. The *totum* is the only totem that is not tribal, and hence whose rhetoric of a totemic 'ancestor' and 'obligations' (Freud) is not, in essence and effect, a 'ghetto idiom' (Marramao). In post-Magellan terms: imperial Rome was a ghetto, the Baghdad caliphate was a ghetto, the Inca monarchy was a ghetto. No pre-Magellan ideograph, icon or 'deity-idea' possesses

the necessary elevation to arc the globe in a juridically enlightened manner.

Marramao's 'cartography of problems' in *The Passage West* is artful and masterfully sourced, and Mandarini's translation is convincing; but the work suffers from Marramao's demur at revolutionary, Enlightenment universality (despite a spirited paragraph on page 159). Marramao cautions us against the *totum*–totem, yet the menace of the Golden Dawn's *sigma*-totem, the Islamists' *ummah*-totem or the capitalists' surplus-totem is not that they are totems – but precisely, that none of them subserves and elevates the *totum*. Wherever a juridical totem betrays the *totum*, the taboos it enforces (or reinforces) will betray the ideal of a juridically elevated 'world-modernity'. And as leftists in Tunisia and Egypt are depressingly aware, wherever the 'rights of man'-totem of 1789 – the Enlightenment *totum* – is subordinated, revolution will install reaction.

On 20 December 2012, it was an enlightened 'totemism' that resulted in the United Nations ban on female genital mutilation. This resolution met no resistance in the General Assembly, and, however ineffectual on the ground, a new juridical taboo, at least – a taboo charged by the ideal of a juridically elevated *totum* – has universal sanction. As Marramao insists, the post-1789 juridical *totum* is a totem; but this totem is not taboo.

David Van Dusen

Just enough

Kate Schick, *Gillian Rose: A Good Enough Justice*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012. 181 pp., £60.00 hb., 978 0 74863 984 7.

Kate Schick's short book joins Andrew Shanks's *Against Innocence: Gillian Rose's Reception and Gift of Faith* (2008) and Vincent Lloyd's *Law and Transcendence: On the Unfinished Project of Gillian Rose* (2009) in registering the welcome fact that Gillan Rose's until recently often neglected œuvre remains a vital resource for thinking through the philosophical, political and ethical dilemmas confronting social theory today. Schick's argument 'makes the case for the timely intervention of Rose's thought' in order to explicate a conception of justice that steers a course between the Scylla of liberal universalism with its discourse of abstract rights and the Charybdis of postmodernism with its embrace of difference and irreducible particularity. Tracing Rose's Hegelian–phenomenological determination of this dualism enables a critical, committed engagement with questions of justice in concrete political circumstances by grasping how law and reason, whilst inevitably partial, can nonetheless learn the injustice of their 'justice' as it confronts its unintended consequences. As Schick presents it, the impossibility of achieving a perfect justice on account of inevitably partial and situated agents does not preclude ethical action – it rather alerts us to the risk and anxiety that is coterminous with such action. This argument is framed within the terms of Rose's later work: the opponents of liberalism's legislative universalism embrace alterity, messianism and the particularisms of identity politics, which is 'melancholic' in its despair over the destruction of modernity's promise to realize an order of universal justice. In response, Schick advocates Rose's 'inaugurated mourning': working through the loss by re-cognizing its consequences and preconditions in the partiality of positing or legislative reason and resuming, thereby, pursuit of the 'good enough justice' of the title.

The book is divided into two: Part I focuses on Rose's 'speculative philosophy', the 'core themes' of her work that are rooted in her 'idiosyncratic' readings of Adorno and Hegel; Part II focuses on Rose's 'speculative politics' as the themes are 'applied' to contemporary thinkers and what Schick construes as the central debates in social and political theory. The first of the key themes, 'diremption', indicates the 'brokenness between universal and particular, law and ethics, actuality and potentiality' consequent upon bourgeois society's institutionalization of the discourse of rights and formal positive law in the midst of unacknowledged yet presupposed material inequalities and antagonisms. Schick makes clear that for Rose 'the dualisms pervasive of modern thought reflect the underlying antagonisms of social and political relations' whilst the antinomies of Kantian and post-metaphysical thought, alike, reinforce these dualisms without grasping their determination. In elucidating the second theme, Schick points to Rose's 'speculative dialectics' as the philosophical means of capturing the dynamic identity in non-identity of the torn halves of modern freedom. This is the 'comprehension' (the third leitmotif of Rose's thought) which is the recognition 'at the core of speculative politics' of our formation by, and complicity in, these dualisms. Hence, in order to break out of this self-enclosure, wherein (for instance) the attempt to secure an apolitical 'innocence' would reinforce the very 'Protestant' inwardness which is the

corollary of bourgeois society's external ruthlessness, Schick advocates Rose's commendation of 'anxiety and risk' – the fourth theme: a matter of acting 'without guarantees, for the good of all – this is to take the risk of the universal interest'. As Schick states it,

> taking the risk of the universal interest requires listening to particular pain and suffering and reflecting upon what these might mean, more generally, for institutions and law. In this sense it implies a radical democracy, where groups of people challenge settled norms at various levels: sub-state, state and super-state. It requires giving voice to those who are dispossessed and ignored within current systems of power. It challenges the tidy, liberal categories and forces re-thinking, rather than blind acceptance of what has gone before. It does not throw out existing laws and institutions; it works both within and without these existing structures to hold them accountable to those ideals they profess to uphold and to advocate change where they marginalise and discriminate.

The philosophical basis of this thought is discussed in Schick's rehearsal of Rose's critique of Adorno in her *Melancholy Science* (1978), and the radical rereading of Hegel in *Hegel Contra Sociology* (1981). The latter is correctly identified as Rose's fundamental work – it is here that the Hegelian–phenomenological model of consciousness's transformation through the labour of reason's self-adequation is set out, the *centrality* of the idea of 're-cognition' in this labour made clear. Rose's account of Hegel is for Schick 'the key to understanding her later, more overtly political interventions in theory and practice', more fully explicated in *The Broken Middle* (1992), where, rather than cleaving to one or other of the terms of the opposition, demonizing or hallowing abstract universality or absolute difference, community or singularity, we abide in the 'brokenness of the middle', attendant to what Schick nicely glosses as 'the web of norms, practices and institutions in which we find ourselves and the ways in which they foster recognition and misrecognition'. The second part of the book engages contemporary debates, in which this abiding in the broken middle can 'profoundly disturb' the assumptions and categories of contemporary theory. Schick turns to *Mourning Becomes the Law* (1996) to consider, in turn, the question of responses to historical trauma; the way in which a 'good enough justice' is illuminated by the debate between cosmopolitanism and identity politics and, finally, the alternatives of political realism and messianic utopianism. Thus, Schick commends what Rose termed 'inaugurated mourning' as the means of working through historical traumas which are otherwise instrumentalized by states via a narrative of victimhood and innocence or treated by postmodern intellectuals as an 'ineffable trauma' beyond comprehension. Instead of this 'melancholic' perspective, Schick follows Rose in urging comprehension of the trauma through its situation in historical time and within the context of its social and political institutionalization. In the debates between a liberal cosmopolitanism and its advocacy of legal equality as the redress against injury and exclusion and those affirming particular identities resistant to incorporation into the abstract regime of rights, Schick deploys Rose's 'aporetic universalism', whereby the partiality of the universal is experienced by those whom it excludes (due precisely to its framing within the rigid dualisms of political modernity), yet the ethical form of the universal is not thereby abandoned. Here Schick aligns Rose with Bonnie Honig's cosmopolitanism in the latter's account of a 'productive politics of immigration' as it gives rise to re-cognition of the other and self, revealing the insufficiency of the institutional and cultural contexts within which the encounter takes place and involving risk-taking in the challenge to prior identities and the constitution of new agencies. Lastly, Schick addresses the opposition of the 'realism' characteristic of International Relations theory identified with Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau, with its 'tragic vision of politics', to the 'utopianism' of contemporary radical left thought, with its conceiving of a 'non-place' which preserves the possibility of transformation even in the midst of catastrophe – a 'messianism' springing from Benjamin and running through the work of Derrida and Žižek. Here Rose is conceived as standing against both temptations; her 'project is a progressive project that takes on the political by doing the difficult work of the middle', as Schick reiterates. Whilst the engagement with realism is somewhat muted, Rose is deployed to demonstrate that this messianism is the refusal of 'an agonisitic engagement with the present, one that remains with the "difficulty of actuality"', a counsel of despair born out of a refusal to grasp law, reason and politics as formed and re-formed by the diremptions of modernity, within which we act and recognize ourselves. Schick concludes by underscoring Rose's project as one that seeks to 'rehabilitate reason', showing how it is the very partiality of reason, the aporia of 'universalism', the failures of recognition, that are the index of rationality and its contextualization within the institutional forms of modern law and social and political actuality.

Schick's account is an engaging presentation of Rose's thought addressed to readers new to her work.

However, one wishes that it were not so brief: a lengthier, more thoroughgoing exegesis of Rose's thought would have enabled the reader to gain a clearer idea of Rose's sources and itinerary. Throughout its 150 pages, Schick adheres closely to the Rosean idiolect, with the effect that one yearns, on occasion, for less reiteration and more decryption. In addition, the reader is likely to be nonplussed by Schick's summary of Rose's critique of Adorno ('not sufficiently Marxist') in light of her subsequent trajectory and the disappearance of Marx from Schick's pages thereafter, just as one may wonder by what criterion the works from the 1990s are judged 'more overtly political' than the earlier texts focusing on Adorno and Hegel. A reader familiar with Rose and sympathetic to Schick's project can concur with this reading, but the text alone does not substantiate it (and the criticisms of Anthony Gorman, absent – as are any voices critical of Rose – from the bibliography, would indicate that it is not an open-and-shut case even among 'Roseans'). Furthermore, Schick's admission that 'my characterizations of poststructural and postmodern thinkers are inevitably partial and function as straw people against which to situate Rose's thought' is unfortunately reminiscent of Rose's own violent treatment of post-structuralism in her *Dialectic of Nihilism* (1984): a text which Schick ignores but which, for all its brilliance and perspicuity, erected unnecessary barriers between Rose and potential interlocutors. The chief point of criticism, however, bears on the very 'unRosean' approach which guides the second half of the book as a whole: Schick's 'applying' 'key themes' of Rose's work to contemporary debates in a way that follows Rose's 'aporetic sensibility'. Rose herself would surely have baulked at such 'methodological' language and its external and arm's-length treatment of the phenomena. Throughout the book Schick properly emphasizes Rose's attention to 'specific historical configurations', just as she states 'for Rose attention to diremption is not focused solely on the *experience* of brokenness, it requires attention to the structures of misrecognition that facilitate and sustain trauma, exclusion and injustice'. Hence, it is surprising that Schick's construal of 'speculative politics' looks to impose on 'contemporary debates' an interpretative schema abstracted from Rose's writing rather than attend to the structuring of (mis)recognition arising from the diremption of state and civil society – which is basic to Rose's 'speculative dialectics' as it grasps the abstractions determining modern ethical life (and which justifies Schick's claim that Rose's later work is more explicitly political in orientation). Thus Schick's 'thematic' approach prevents her from exploring 'immanently' how the separation of state and civil society is constitutive of International Relations discourse, how the re-cognition of genocide and historical trauma, the symbolic violence of cosmopolitan universalism, the realism of self-interested sovereign powers all presuppose (and reinforce) the dualisms conditioning social and political modernity – human and civil rights, state and nation, citizen and bourgeois, and so on – within which justice and injustice are structured. This is disappointing in the light of Schick's own disciplinary formation, yet it serves to remind one that Rose's work is an untapped source for researchers in this field.

Writing in the aftermath of Rose's death, Martin Jay reflected how, despite a remarkable body of work, 'her influence has been relatively modest'. *Gillian Rose: A Good Enough Justice* provides evidence of the singular power of attraction of Rose's thought in its capacity to think through the dualisms conditioning social-political actuality and to afford resources for ethical action. Like the books by Lloyd and by Shank, Schick's demonstrates the degree to which Rose's work is gaining a new readership across disciplinary divisions. As with those commentaries, Schick's is an account which is partial in its attention to a particular facet of Rose's thought, introductory in its aims and largely exegetical in style. This does not invalidate the result by any means but it does suggest that Rose's work is now owed a sustained and critical treatment if its full range and depth are to be retrieved and its powers of comprehension tested.

Simon Speck

Go figure

Miguel de Beistegui, *Aesthetics after Metaphysics: From Mimesis to Metaphor*, Routledge, London and New York, 2012. 203 pp., £80.00 hb., 978 0 41553 962 3.

This book is an account of what de Beistegui terms the *hypersensible* dimension of art, the dimension which unfolds outside the space that stretches between the sensible and the supersensible, and which has been overlooked by the tradition of the metaphysical aesthetics of mimesis – a tradition which is diagnosed as running from Plato to Adorno, the focus of which has remained confined within this space. Rejecting the claim that the philosophical significance of art consists in its capacity to relate the sensible to the supersensible, the image to the idea, de Beistegui seeks to reconfigure the philosophical conception of the role of art beyond truth, asserting, by means of the category of the hypersensible, the importance of the sensible on its own terms and in its own right, rather than locating its import in its capacity to be, as it were, prototypical of conceptuality.

De Beistegui characterizes the operation of the work of art between the impression and the idea as metaphorical, introducing 'metaphor as the image that opens up the time and space of art, the time–space of the hypersensible'. 'Far from being reducible to a mere trope', he argues, metaphor consists 'in the ability to recognize something in something else, and see the beauty of an object in a different object'. It is 'the schema – or, better said perhaps, the hypotiposis – of the hypersensible, that is, as the operation that reveals or opens up that space and time, hidden or folded in the space and time of ordinary perception and cognition'. Metaphor, then, is understood not as 'a trope amongst others, or perhaps the trope that encompasses all tropes', but as 'something altogether different – not a mere rhetorical figure, but a clue to "how things work"'.

The book's first half offers an account of the relationship between aesthetics and (Platonic) metaphysics, of the establishment of the Platonic mimetic schema within which Aristotle, Kant, Schopenhauer and Hegel remain confined, and from which Adorno is unable to escape, and of the 'intimations of the hypersensible' that can be found in Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze. The second part offers an elaboration of the aesthetics of the hypersensible and of metaphor beyond the metaphysical, mimetic paradigm, and of encounters with literature (Proust, Hölderlin) and the visual arts, particularly sculpture (Chillida). Both these narratives are persuasively argued and of compelling interest with respect to the questions they open up, as well as to their specific claims. However, this praise also requires a number of caveats. These include, for example, the fact that de Beistegui is comfortable discussing Chillida's sculpture in terms of ὕλη [*sic*] and μορφή – 'matter' and 'form' – without acknowledging or addressing Heidegger's objection in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' to the metaphysics of madness presupposed and reinforced by this schema. Similarly, he argues for 'the truth of expressionism, and a superior form of realism, which identifies the difference to which the impression points, and is thus able to see one thing, moment, or state in another' in opposition to 'the realist lie, which believes that it can depict reality "as it is"', and the idealist illusion that 'the work of art is a mere transition or mediation between the sensible and the supersensible' – these are, respectively, the realist and idealist interpretations of the 'mimetic paradigm' – without referring to or discussing Adorno's attempt to reconfigure the relationship between expression and mimesis beyond the dualism of form and expression in *Aesthetic Theory*.

Similarly, in reading the characterization of Adorno as a limit-case who fails to escape the mimetic paradigm of Platonic metaphysics, I repeatedly found myself wanting to object, firstly, that it is precisely the exploration of the limits of metaphysics that is at stake in Adorno's negative dialectic, the attempt to reorient conceptuality towards the non-conceptual on which it depends, and, secondly, that this characterization neglects the very moments within Adorno's own thinking that not only acknowledge the task of breaking through the deception of constitutive subjectivity with the force of the subject, but also, at the very least, point beyond this metaphysical schema. On the one hand, this objection feels in a very real sense unfair both to de Beistegui and to Adorno – to the former in that he acknowledges that this is precisely the task to which Adorno dedicates himself, to the latter in that it exposes itself to the danger of implying that Adorno's immanent critique of Western metaphysics is only of significance or interest to the extent that it provides the resources to go beyond the very constraints that this project of immanent critique seeks to discover. Such an objection, that is, runs the danger of reducing

in advance the attempt better to understand metaphor and non-metaphysical aesthetics to a contest that is to be played out within a very narrow set of limits, and on a very specific set of terms.

On the other hand, these are precisely the terms on which de Beistegui's investigation proceeds, and the limits that his book establishes and polices. Adorno's aesthetics is repeatedly and consistently characterized in terms of failure: he 'does not manage to extricate himself from' the state of permanent crisis into which he throws mimesis, 'such is his unquestioned commitment to the very terms, concepts, and metaphysical framework that produced the theory in the first place'. Similarly, 'by attempting to overcome the limits of the Platonic–Aristotelian schema with the concepts, distinctions and oppositions of metaphysics itself, and, most importantly, by anchoring his aesthetic theory in a concept of truth, the presuppositions of which he fails to question sufficiently radically, Adorno ultimately fails to carry out a genuine overturning of the schema in question, and to recognize the hypersensible as the specific dimension of art and distinguish it from "spirit" or "truth"'. And while 'failure' is an interesting, productive and appropriate optic through which to read both Adorno's writings on art and artworks and his philosophical project more generally, the resonances of the term remain largely unexplored.

Perhaps the most interesting and resonant feature of de Beistegui's account is his radically open concept of metaphor, or, to put it in his terms, the 'meaning of metaphor' which is 'drawn from the works of Proust and Hölderlin' – a meaning which both allows the consideration of non-literary artworks through the lens of metaphor and, at least as importantly, offers a way of examining literary metaphor outside the paradigms of linguistics. However, I am not sure of the extent to which de Beistegui's consideration of Chillida's sculpture requires the lens of metaphor. For example: 'As in Hölderlin's late hymns, which increasingly privilege water and flows, rather than the *Heimat*, as the true locus of poetry, Chillida's emphasis on place and the indigenous is offset by the place of water in his work, and by a fluid dynamic that resonates with the logic of metaphor.' It is not clear to me quite how this 'logic of metaphor' relates to metaphor even in de Beistegui's expanded sense of the ability to see the beauty of an object in a different object. Indeed, this particular analysis seems to remain within the rejected aesthetic paradigm of representation and mimesis. Moreover, the emphasis on the 'meaning of metaphor' and how it 'can help us understand the visual arts too' seems itself already to be a concession to the orientation of the sensible towards the supersensible, a feature of the mimetic schema from which de Beistegui is so keen to escape.

The strength of de Beistegui's interpretative lens, its ability to open the concept of metaphor beyond the confines of the linguistic, seems to come at the cost of the ability to analyse less complicatedly literary metaphors. On reading that metaphor is not 'reducible to a mere trope' or a 'mere rhetorical figure' I find myself wondering if what these phrases imply – that we already know how mere tropes and mere rhetorical figures function, and that such questions are not, or no longer, of any particular interest – is indeed the case. It seems that there is a risk here that metaphor, as I understand it, gets pushed out of the frame. Indeed, something that I was surprised and disappointed not to find in this philosophical study of metaphor – particularly in the light of its discussion of how 'Derrida recognizes something like the irreducibility of metaphor within the philosophical, or the sensible within the ideal, without exploring the operation of metaphor for itself – at least until "The *Retrait* of Metaphor"' – was a more sustained discussion of and reflection on the way in which philosophical writing acknowledges, confronts and discusses its own metaphoricity, the metaphors in its own sentences, and the role they play in the relationships of these sentences to philosophical ideas.

It is perhaps telling that of the eighteen metaphors that I counted in the book's first paragraph, five (challenge, overcome, oppose, push out of, force out of) are taken directly from the language of often physically violent struggle and contest, establishing a context in which at least another six (avoid, mislead, point to, signal, leave behind, explore) take on resonances of the exploration and traversing of a terrain of battle by a troop of combatants whose task it is to communicate with one another in order to avoid being deceived and to seek out or escape combat at the appropriate moments. To adopt the mood, or the trope, or the rhetorical device, or the argumentative strategy, or (as I think I prefer) the procedure of six of the seventeen sentences of this opening paragraph, that of the rhetorical question: What is the nature of the contribution that these military images make to de Beistegui's argument? What would change if the competition and confrontation were resolved in play? What would happen to his account if it were rewritten in the vocabulary not of a battle, but of a love affair?

To raise questions of these kinds is, once again, perhaps unfair, and, perhaps more crucially, remains within and serves merely to endorse and emphasize

the very combative, oppositional and confrontational mode which I not only target but also desire to call into question. It is of course near meaningless to acknowledge the difficulty of achieving this, for doing so would require a thorough rethinking, refashioning and rewriting of the ways in which we practise philosophy, and perhaps not only philosophy. Moreover, this desire cannot distract from the fact that within this review I have remained firmly within this paradigm, however critically: expressing the longing to escape is by no means equivalent to, or even necessarily a step towards, performing or enacting the change in attitude that would be necessary in order to do so. I thus end by emphasizing that my interrogation of Beistegui's metaphors is not meant simply as an act of fault-finding with his account of the aesthetics of metaphor. My hope is rather that it might contribute to a process in which the interrogation, questioning and cross-examination of metaphor might give way to an aspiration or programmatic commitment to a sort of reflective affinity with it in which philosophical enquiry seeks playfully and cooperatively to try out some of the things it learns from its encounter with metaphor.

Josh Robinson

Defeatism of critique

Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2012. 376 pp., £26.95 hb., 978 0 26201 689 6.

'Philosophy', Adorno famously wrote in 1966, 'which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed.' For Adorno, this described philosophy's contemporary situation as one in which it falls prey to a 'defeatism of reason' that develops from the reproach of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: that philosophy has only interpreted the world without being able to change it. Thus lacking either a theoretical or practical coincidence with the moment of its own realization – or with reality in itself – critical philosophy is constrained 'ruthlessly to criticize itself'. Among those who see Wittgenstein and Heidegger as common inheritors of Kant's critique of reason, some may construe both as seeking not simply to abandon the call for practical change, but rather to continue it in something like the problematic and interrupted sense that Adorno invokes. Lee Braver's new book provides a clear and sometimes convincing image of a way in which both philosophers' 'critique of theory' is being progressively canonized within 'analytic' and 'continental' philosophical circles today. It is also entertainingly written, thoroughly researched, and constitutes a useful guide to the extant literature on Heidegger and Wittgenstein. However, from the perspective of Adorno's call for philosophy's self-criticism, many readers will find it neglectful of those aspects of their projects that are most deeply engaged in criticizing prevailing forms of consensual behaviour and belief, thus insulating their reception from the more challenging critical and political implications of their thought.

Braver presents as his 'overarching thesis' the claim that Heidegger and Wittgenstein 'end up with similar views because of their agreement on … spade-turning, lowest-level convictions'. In particular, Braver sees the most significant source of both thinkers' ideas as residing in 'the idea that we are finite creatures and that everything about us must reflect this fact'. This imperative, Braver suggests, entails that we must thus recognize that 'traditional theories' have involved a practice of philosophy 'that is fundamentally inappropriate for creatures like ourselves'. As a result, Braver sees both Heidegger, in his 'incessant readings of the canon', and Wittgenstein, primarily in his later critique of his own views in the *Tractatus*, as 'calling for the end of philosophy' by challenging 'the way philosophizing suspends our ongoing engaged behaviour in the world, with its tacit knowledge of how to use words and interact appropriately with different types of entities, [in order] to take up a disengaged theoretical stance'. (In fact, this is not clearly true; in the later Wittgenstein's *Blue Book*, for example, he speaks of his own practice as perhaps 'one of the heirs to the subject which used to be called philosophy', but this is far from a direct call for its end.) Such a stance, according to Braver, leads us to assent to 'bizarre pictures and theories' that tend to take us away from what we already know in our everyday, pre-theoretic behaviour and practice.

It is what is depicted as this fundamental agreement in Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's critique of 'disengaged theory' that *Groundless Grounds* then seeks to develop, locating in each an ambition to replace this 'theoretical' attitude with a 'therapy' or 'cure' which consists largely in reminding us of those aspects of our everyday behaviour and comportment of which we are already masters. Braver follows Rorty in seeing their 'developmental arcs' as crossing one another: the early Wittgenstein representing a 'dream of transcendence' that the later Wittgenstein abandons, while the later Heidegger, abandoning *Being and Time*'s

'phenomenological approach', regresses, on Braver's reading, to 'a form of Nietzschean elitism' which emphasizes the privileged attunement to Being's call of a 'great few' poets and thinkers. In accordance with this, Braver focuses most of his positive exposition on the *Philosophical Investigations* and *Being and Time*, especially Division I.

Chapter 1 discusses Wittgenstein's project in the *Tractatus* as one of discovering a 'proper symbolic notation' which would allow us to 'look upon the face of logic itself' and thereby put an end to philosophical confusions rooted in mistaking the form of our own language. The later Wittgenstein is then read as abandoning this project for a 'very different one' that emphasizes, rather than a 'single true form' of logical structure, an irreducible plurality of linguistic practices grounded in the 'tacit skill' of speaking a language. (In understanding Wittgenstein's development in this way, Braver notably rejects the 'new Wittgenstein' interpretation, according to which the *Tractatus* is not defending a set of substantive metaphysical or semantic theses.) In the second chapter, Braver treats the later Wittgenstein and early Heidegger as agreeing in their shared critique of a particular 'conception of being' that privileges the existence of 'meaning-objects' which contain their own possibilities of logical combination, or objects 'present-at-hand' (Braver treats the two as roughly equivalent). Here, the *Tractatus* is seen as embodying a 'Logical Stoicism' that 'relieves the logician of the burden and responsibility of making up her mind', in that the use of words is seen as an 'accidental appendage to their meaning, which resides outside of time and independently of human knowledge or application'. Since meanings simply apply themselves in this way, we are relieved of responsibility for the consequences of what we mean; the position thus tends towards a 'fatalist resignation' or 'logical bad faith' similar, according to Braver, to the way Dasein tends to avoid considering death on Heidegger's account. In his remaining chapters, Braver, in turn, reconstructs Wittgenstein's private language argument and parallels its conclusion to Heidegger's accounts of 'being-in' and 'being-with', which Braver sees as embodying a 'social anthropology' according to which we are inherently social; considers the nature of thinking, and renews the interpretation of both philosophers as engaged primarily in the critique of 'disengaged philosophical contemplation'; and, finally, explores the nature of 'ground', emphasizing the idea of 'groundless grounds' as ultimate bases for our thought and understanding that do not themselves have further rational bases, returning to the theme of 'original finitude' as a counter-concept capable of weaning us off the 'preconceived expectations created by our search for Truth'.

Many of the main features of Braver's interpretation will be familiar from the work of such interpreters as Rorty, Dreyfus, Guignon and Taylor. Braver's exposition of it here sometimes comes at the price of omitting themes and issues that might appear to be central to their thought. For example, there are no substantive discussions of Heidegger's views on time and temporality, or of the ontological difference between Being and beings, while *Ereignis*, the watchword of Heidegger's late philosophy, receives barely a mention. Similarly, there is no sustained discussion of the late Wittgenstein's distinctive view of language and the possibility of our gaining a 'perspicuous overview' of our linguistic practices. Instead, Braver consistently assimilates the late Wittgenstein's conception of these practices to Heideggerian positions that are explicitly meant to apply primarily to *pre-* and *non-*linguistic habits and comportments. On the interpretation that Braver offers, Heidegger and Wittgenstein are chiefly critical of a style of past philosophical thought conceived of as more or less unitary in its basic methodological commitments throughout the history of philosophy (with the possible exceptions of Aristotle, Hume and Nietzsche) and, as such, universally ignorant or repressive of basic facts about us as humans. This produces, however, a somewhat awkward assimilation of the *objects* of critique in each case. For instance, while Heidegger is presented as criticizing the entirety of the past philosophical tradition since Plato as embodying the stance of disengagement and abstraction which *Being and Time*'s analysis of 'Being-in' is seen as correcting, the relevant critical object in Wittgenstein's case is generally, according to Braver, the views of logical form, symbolism and structure expressed in the *Tractatus*. It is doubtful, though, whether the claims of the *Tractatus*, marked as they already are by a deep methodological critique of traditional philosophical problems, as well as clear rejections of Cartesianism, epistemology, and the whole conception of philosophy as a body of doctrine rather than a method of clarification, can really be assimilated to 'traditional' philosophy in this way.

At the same time, it is unclear why anyone who is not already in the grip of the organizing assumptions of this traditional style of philosophical practice should care about the thought of either philosopher. In particular, Braver presents ordinary, unreflective or habitual practice and action as unproblematic in themselves, and holds that reminding ourselves of their contours is sufficient cure for the 'confusions', 'incoherences' or

'inappropriateness' of abstract, 'disengaged' thought. (It is unclear whether this critique is meant to extend beyond specifically philosophical praxis to touch on the 'disengaged' thought of, for example, empirical science or literary criticism.) In fact, however, there are good textual and interpretive reasons to think that both philosophers intend their critical considerations of language, thought and reality to challenge normal patterns of belief and action. First, of course, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger famously considers the inauthenticity and tendency towards falling that is characteristic of the belief and practice of *das Man*; and in the later Heidegger, it is clear that a broad consideration of the history of Being understood as a history of 'ordinary' and broadly shared interpretations provides the most general ground for criticizing the contemporary dominance of technological thought and practice. Notoriously, too, the late Heidegger's invocation of the possibility of a future transfigured with respect to our relation to Being takes the form of his call for a renewal of, precisely, 'thinking'. Yet this is a call which Braver does not discuss except to assimilate it to an 'elitism' of poets and thinkers, or construe it as a call for passivity in the face of Being's deliverances or of 'what most appeals to us'.

Similarly, Braver sees Wittgenstein's two main lines of sustained and radical critique in the *Investigations*, the so-called 'private language argument' and 'rule-following considerations', as developing, respectively, the claim that the 'private ostensive definitions' to which certain philosophers have appealed must be meaningless and a 'charting [of] a particularly virulent distortion introduced by philosophical contemplation' which reveals nothing 'profound' but rather shows only 'the folly of philosophy'. Although this interpretation is fairly widespread, there are alternatives. For example, if one finds congenial the spirit underlying Stanley Cavell's remark, in *The Claim of Reason*, that Wittgenstein, above all, attempted to show 'that the justifications and explanations we give of our language and conduct, that our ways of trying to intellectualize our lives, do not really satisfy us', one will not be able to construe the 'we' and 'our' invoked here as referring simply to philosophers, traditional or contemporary, or their peculiar modes of discourse or thought. And if Cavell is correct in further suggesting that 'what directly falls under [Wittgenstein's] criticism are not the results of philosophical argument but those unnoticed turns of mind, casts of phrase, which comprise what intellectual historians call "climates of opinion", or "cultural style" and which, unnoticed and therefore unassessed, defend conclusions from direct access', then it is clear that any interpretation which, like Braver's, construes this criticism as satisfied simply by the enjoinder to return to the 'normal, ongoing activity' of pre-theoretical practices conceived as innocent in themselves is missing what is in fact a major aspect of the critical and transformative potential of Wittgenstein's thought.

A stated goal of Braver's book is to build a 'load-bearing bridge' between Heidegger and Wittgenstein with the hope of enhancing 'dialogue between analytic and continental thinkers in general'. A major strength of Braver's earlier book, *A Thing of This World*, was the way it offered to do so by situating a series of continental thinkers with respect to Dummett's framework for discussing realism and anti-realism. Unfortunately, though, it is not clear, for at least two reasons, that the present book contributes as much to furthering the achievement of this commendable goal. The first is the contemporary marginalization of Wittgenstein himself within prominent analytic departments. Although the relationship of Wittgenstein to the analytic tradition is certainly complex, there are today, regrettably, few Wittgensteinians (let alone Heideggerians) at these 'top' departments, and Wittgenstein's work (at least, beyond the *Tractatus*) is not as much discussed there as that of more recent philosophers such as Saul Kripke and David Lewis. Thus it is far from apparent that Braver's decision to take Wittgenstein as representative of analytic philosophy for the purposes of an attempt to facilitate discussion between leading representatives of the traditions will effectively serve that goal. Second, to the extent that there *is* an established 'mainstream' interpretation of Heidegger, Wittgenstein and the relationship between them, it is, in fact, very much (as has already been noted) along the lines of the reading Braver presents in the book. This reading, with its emphasis on the critique of 'disengaged' and abstract thought, and the varieties of therapy to be found in a return to uncritical *praxis*, tends ironically to facilitate the increasing academicization of the two philosophers, both so resistant, in differing ways, to the prevailing practices of academic philosophy of their time. It does so, at least in part, by neglecting the more challenging critical and political implications of their thought. It is thus not clear that Braver's book, in so far as it adopts this reading, can contribute much to producing the kind of discussion between the analytic and continental traditions that we most need to have if we are to develop the most important insights of both traditions into the structure and problems of our shared ways of life today.

Paul Livingston

Coupling

Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Badiou and Deleuze Read Literature*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010, 213 pp., £80.00 hb., £21.99 pb., 978 0 74863 800 0 hb., 978 0 74864 905 1 pb.

It is possible to imagine a book on Deleuze, Badiou and literature methodically examining every reference to a literary figure in the two philosophers' work, while matching up those references to the two philosophical systems, both defined in a fixed, precisely individualized and contrastive way. Such a book might well be worthwhile, but what Jean-Jacques Lecercle has done is far more interesting, using the Deleuzean concept of disjunctive synthesis as a heuristic tool to explore a number of interlocking paired areas: Badiou and Deleuze as philosophers, readers of literature and thinkers with ideas on aesthetics; literature and both modern French and analytic philosophy; and literary criticism and linguistic theory and their approach to language and literature. As its name implies, disjunctive synthesis is an operation between two terms or elements in which there is simultaneous connection and divergence. A much more dynamic, nuanced and variable relationship or mapping can then emerge than is possible with simple separation or fusion. Lecercle gives a very lucid explanation of this, but what is more important is that disjunctive synthesis has been fully internalized, along with the Deleuzean concept of correlation, to become the guiding principle of intellectual investigation and organization in the book. This means a certain problem is avoided: books on modern French philosophy can sometimes subtly undermine their subject by adopting the very strategies that this philosophy is trying to leave behind.

Disjunctive synthesis has an elastic or sprung quality because of the complicated interaction between concurrent and successive forces of attraction and repulsion. Mappings or analyses based on it produce somewhat unexpected branchings, which nevertheless become part of a picture that emerges as remarkably complete, slightly like the way interlocking words grow outwards in a game of Scrabble while exhausting the stock of letters. An example of this in Lecercle's book is how the modernist taste of French philosophers leads to an extended discussion of the latter as themselves modernist philosophers. The argument is particularly well sustained with regard to Deleuze, though rather less successful in the case of Badiou, mainly because the exact nature of his modernism has not really been fully grasped. More generally, this type of analysis or mapping encourages a transformation of binary into triadic figures. An instance of this is how one starts with the notion that French philosophers think about literature and language in one way, and analytic philosophers in another. However, because Deleuze evolved a sophisticated theory of language, certain affinities can be found between, for example, his ideas and those of Austin and Grice, two philosophers whose concepts were absorbed into pragmatics, an important area of study in Anglo-Saxon linguistics.

The only chapter where the argument is too evidently binary is on Badiou, Deleuze and the fantastic. Admittedly, there is an asymmetry here in that *Frankenstein* is explored very interestingly in relation to the Badiouesque event, in what is possibly the most sustained section on Badiou in the book, while *Dracula* is shown to be Deleuzean in a number of key ways but not in terms of his concept of the event. At the same time, Lecercle also develops his own original extension to Badiou's concept of the event: the artistic work can simultaneously initiate a truth procedure in its own evental field and present an event from one or more of the other three evental fields, politics, science and love. This shows how the dual disjunctive syntheses between Deleuze and Badiou and literature and philosophy are able to yield rich results, going beyond rigid positions to the complexity of the problematic field itself. However, the marked opposition between *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, partly inherited from Caillois and Todorov's approach to the fantastic and the marvellous, could have been supplemented with a middle term, for example Gautier's 1836 *La Morte amoureuse*, which obliquely presents the event of the French Revolution in a more Deleuzean way than Shelley and exploits the subversive potential of the vampire in a much less reactionary way than Stoker.

Two other Deleuzean concepts central to Lecercle's book are the strong reading and reading for style. There is a very full definition of a strong reading at the beginning of the chapter on Deleuze and Proust, but the concept is also applied to Badiou's 1997 book *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, in which the latter is compared to Deleuze's readings of other philosophers where he seems to turn them inside out in an apparently disrespectful but in fact profound way. The comparison is seemingly paradoxical because, of course, Deleuze's followers hated Badiou's book. Yet it also functions as an example of disjunctive synthesis. Both philosophers produce strong readings of other philosophers. Badiou is, however, the more conflictive and polemical – as Lecercle says, he captures Deleuze – while with the latter, there is a process of 'becoming other' with the

philosopher he is reading, so he is eventually able to reformulate the latent philosophical problems, not simply repeat the reified solutions. There are complexities, however, when this is extended to readings of literature. Theoretically, Deleuze does not distinguish between the capacity of literature and philosophy for thought, even if the use of affect and percept by the former and concept by the latter can in practice seem at times to privilege philosophy. Badiou, by contrast, sees literature as belonging to an evental field – the arts – where one can have direct access to truth, while philosophy can only 'compossibilize' truths that have emerged elsewhere. Lecercle deals thoroughly with these complexities, especially in chapters on Badiou and Mallarmé, and both philosophers and Beckett, as well as in the chapter on Deleuze and Proust. There are some valuable sections on Deleuze, in particular on how passages or characters from Beckett's novels contribute to the development of the concepts of the larval subject or machinic assemblage, as well as on how Beckett's late television plays provoke Deleuze to further thoughts on what lies beyond language when it is exhausted but is still language. The treatment of Badiou is slightly less convincing, although Lecercle has clearly mastered the material by and about the philosopher in a very thorough way. The problem is that one sometimes has a sense of arguments detailing what Badiou is *not* going in circles around what he might actually *be*.

The Deleuzean concept of style is mainly explored in the chapter on Deleuze and Proust, which is one of the most coherent in the book. *Proust and Signs* is an early work from 1964, but substantial additions were made to it in second and third editions in 1970 and 1977. Lecercle approaches it via Deleuze's later non-linguistic, non-signifying semiotics developed in conjunction with Guattari, in particular citing a passage from *Cinema 2*. This enables him to connect the ideas concerning Proustian signs to Deleuze's later concept of non-subjective style, where essence is embedded in matter, subject and object are combined, and there is the perspectival aspect of the Leibnizian monad without, however, any residual aspect of transcendence. In general, Lecercle has a better feel for how Deleuze reads literature than he does for Badiou, although he does recognize that the latter can have striking insights. For example, about the way Badiou deals with Mallarmé: fumbling with syntax and meaning until a kind of hallucinatory idea arises from within the quasi-inchoate matter of the text. (One can also do something like this with certain sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets, such as Sponde and Marvell.) Lecercle, however, overestimates the reductive quality of the philosopher's approach: something like a function is being produced, remembering that Badiou has a mathematical background, and science is another evental field. Functions do not simply solve problems: they can be projected back on to nature

and radically alter one's peception of it. Furthermore, Badiou's first love was theatre not philosophy, and playwrights usually write for a specific type of theatre. Serious French theatre in the twentieth century often prepared text 'for itself' in a very careful way 'at the table', but in performance there was an interactive and/or disjunctive relationship between that text and the bodily or scenic elements. This was particularly marked in the productions of Vitez, who staged one of Badiou's works. More generally, there was a complex tension between a pure theatricality of a broadly symbolist, expressionistic or surrealist kind and a puritanical, anti-theatrical intellectualism in most aesthetically progressive Western theatre in the twentieth century, where there was always an attempt to avoid an easy bourgeois naturalism, or what Grotowski called 'courtesan theatre'. This is the precise area where one should situate Badiou's modernism. There is a possibile affinity between this type of theatre and Deleuze's approach to cinema.

It is a tribute to this book that it makes one think as much about philosophies of the subject and the event as it does about language or literature. The challenge to the autonomous subject generated by the 'French philosophical moment' encouraged fresh becomings of those who found themselves between, or displaced from, categories (such as the present author, who is transgendered, or, say, a Sindhi Hindu after Partition when the whole of Sind was incorporated into Pakistan). It also made one realize that the autonomous subject, individual or collective, can in itself be an impediment to advancement. It was Deleuze (or Deleuze and Guattari) who developed a very different 'subject', a pre-individual, a-subjective singularity, and linked it to a concept of a virtual Event, where counter- and alternative actualizations are always possible, and there is a real sense of literal manipulation of new connections on a plastic surface. Deleuze's holistic flow is attractive, but one cannot avoid the feeling that a more profound rupture, even violence, may be necessary for genuine change. This is where Badiou is important. His philosophy is much more than a slightly peculiar materialist amalgam of Plato and Mao, inasmuch as it tries to understand a radical element of disjunction at the heart of continuity: revolution invades it and causes a break but also renews it in such a way that it carries on, except that it does so from a new beginning, with the emergence of a newly constituted subject. Of course, there is a problematic field beyond the positions of these two philosophers, and it is a measure of Lecercle's achievement that he provides regular glimpses of it throughout his book.

Guy Callan-Nardina Kaur

Who comes after the crowd?

Christian Borch, *The Politics of Crowds: An Alternative History of Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012. 348 pp., £60.00 hb., 978 1 107 00973 8.

The language of community, publics, minorities and citizenship infuses the contemporary discourse of liberal governance. If crowds seem by and large to have disappeared from the liberal political imagination, replaced by local communities and active citizens, Christian Borch reinstalls the crowd at the heart of sociological and political discourses of modernity. Drawing on an extended canon of sociological thought, Borch reconsiders the problematization of crowds from nineteenth-century crowd psychology through developments in German and American sociology in the twentieth century to the figure of the multitude in Hardt and Negri's twenty-first-century manifesto. The book traces a series of modifications of 'crowd semantics': disciplinary frontiers, intradisciplinary struggles and historical conditions are brought together to account for the rise and decline of crowds as analytical objects of predilection for sociological research. Le Bon's anti-socialist, conservative view of crowds remained a fixture of sociological thought well into the twentieth century. From the 1930s to the 1960s, the sociological literature on crowds shifts to the problematic of masses, mass society and mass culture. The latter half of the twentieth century then brings about a rekindling of sociological interest in the crowd and a positive rereading of crowds as rational actors. Yet, when these debates shift again from crowds to social movements, they entail the effacement of crowds as a trope of sociological research. The shifts in the sociological debates also reveal an interesting temporal relation between crowds and other signifiers of collective action: classes and masses. Crowds both pre-date classes (at least in the Marxist semantics that Borch discusses) and are superseded by masses. The shift from crowds to masses also means a different type of sociological analysis: from the crowds as social and political actors to societal dynamics and depoliticization. Mass society and mass culture replace the activism of crowds, as

the passivity of masses is enmeshed in developments of consumerism and spectacle.

It is in this move to recast the whole history of sociology from the perspective of crowds that resides one of the major strengths of Borch's approach. In this light, sociological debates can be read as a struggle with the legacy of le Bon and Tarde. Borch's 'alternative history of sociology' brings to light unexpected erasures, alliances and similarities between sociological theories and debates. For instance, the recent revival of Tarde in sociology pays little if any attention to Tarde's comments on crowds, or the similarities between le Bon's and Tarde's views on crowds and suggestion in social interactions. As Borch writes: 'Tarde's negative characterization of crowds was followed by a general pessimism regarding the possible solution to this problem of violent, criminal and irrational crowd behaviour in modern society.' Borch's comments are a cautionary note for what Laurent Mucchielli has called the 'Tardomania' of contemporary social sciences. Even more unexpectedly, Borch draws out similarities between the two prominent adversaries of sociological thought, Durkheim and Tarde, in their reflections on crowds. Resonances of le Bon continue to inform much of the sociological engagement with crowds, and run even through Marxist vocabularies of collective action. Even as le Bon is castigated for his anti-socialist and conservative assumptions, his 'suggestion doctrine' percolates analyses beyond both his time and the French context. Sorel's recasting of le Bon's account for the purposes of class struggle and revolutionary action is perhaps the most explicit connection that is drawn in the book between Marxism and nineteenth-century crowd psychology.

Despite various attempts to modify the 'crowd semantics', which are traced through Weimar and American sociology, it is not until Canetti's *Crowds and Power* that crowds appear as political subjects. Objects of fear and unease, crowds had so far attracted sociological attention given their power of destruction of social order or liberal subjectivity. For Borch, Canetti ruptures the Le Bon–Tarde legacy in crowd theorizing by drawing on a 'vocabulary of freedom and emancipation'. Rather than irrational, disorderly and violent, the crowd is heterotopic, an alternate space of equality and freedom which is opposed to the inequality and domination of social and political order. Yet Canetti makes little inroad into the disciplinary debates of sociology. Particularly in its dominant American guise, sociology proceeds to reframe crowds in terms of 'collective behaviour', which can be analysed in relation either to a society's normative make-up or to economic rationalities of action. Borch's analysis of the final erosion of the sociological interest in crowds turns to historical sociology and the vocabulary and research agenda of social movements literature, both of which hyper-rationalize crowds. Moreover, Charles Tilly's historical sociology renounces the very vocabulary of crowds and masses. Paradoxically, the depoliticization of crowds that le Bon attempted to enact appears to have come full circle, the crowd replaced by the well-contained and organized social movements.

The periodization of 'crowd semantics' is, however, fraught with tensions. Periodization is notoriously difficult and the argument about the marginalization or effacement of crowds from sociological research requires constant caveats through the book. Surowiecki's 'wisdom of crowds' and Reicher's models of crowd action, though in different registers, are stark reminders of the continued relevance of crowds for sociological research and liberal governance. The field of sociology is messier, criss-crossed by struggles which periodization can only tenuously capture. These struggles are fought over the 'right' political names for collective action. Borch is right to name classes and masses as two of the political names that are proposed as alternative solutions. Crowds, classes and masses inhabit a common temporal horizon, in which the distinctions drawn are political. One would need to at least add 'the people' to this list. Alongside crowds, the attendant vocabularies of mobs, plebs, rabble, swarms, gangs or hordes are indicative of heterogeneous facets of collective action as the quintessential problem of politics. Heterogeneous political names point to the struggle over the power of collectivity against dreams of social order.

How does sociology do politics? *The Politics of Crowds* canvasses a fascinating 'sociological politics of crowds', a disciplinary problematization which at times crosses or undoes its own disciplinary boundaries. Yet, in a few brief comments, Borch also intimates that sociology does politics differently, as it is enmeshed in the truthful regimes of the social world. The sociological field is constituted not through struggles over its object and distinctiveness from other fields; it is also constituted through its capacity to formulate truthful responses to social and political problems. Sociology is no stranger to the use of crowd vocabularies in financial markets, in military strategy or in policing practices. Any return to the crowd in sociological theory would need to start from placing the sociological field within the field of power.

Claudia Aradau