

October's tomb

Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2004. 704 pp., 637 illustrations, 413 in colour, £45.00 hb., 0 500 23818 9.

For nearly thirty years the journal *October* has provided the most significant platform for addressing twentieth-century art. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* synthesizes ideas and arguments by four of the journal's key editors. It is a monumental achievement, running to more than 700 pages, that attests to the vast knowledge and sustained commitment to modernism shared by the four (main) authors. Some chapters are brilliant, some are quite batty, but they are never less than engaging. Overall, the book provides ample evidence both for the long hegemony exercised by *October* and for the gradual waning of its influence.

All indications suggest that this book is intended as an introduction aimed at undergraduates and general readers. The one-volume version is divided at 1945 and the two-volume US edition splits at the same date, indicating an orientation to the North American art-history syllabus. To facilitate this pitch, the book is made up of short chapters, each focused on a particular year. This approach provides an armature rather than a straitjacket: twenty-six years go missing; some multiply – there are four versions of '1959'. The individual chapters offer points of departure for reflecting on themes and issues and this structure allows the authors to provide a chronological framework while mapping connections; the excellent cross-referencing system helps a great deal. Each chapter is well illustrated and contains a brief (if tendentious) bibliography. There are also a series of short 'introductory boxes' covering particular theorists, journals, concepts and so on; the book also contains two round-table discussions in which the authors debate issues arising from the individual chapters (one for 1945, the other from the current perspective). Authorship is attributed via initials at the beginning of each section, rather than on individual chapters. This gives the book the sense of a collective project; for those in the know it is easy to detect individual voices, but at two points the displaced attribution is an issue. Organizing the chapters as a series of artistic events does, though, have its costs, because it displaces the charge of historical events: 1917 is Mondrian; 1933 the Mexican muralists. Much

of the attraction of realism, or indeed the avant-garde challenge, is inexplicable without these force fields. This aside, the structure and organization is well conceived.

In the interests of transparency, I should declare my hand: Krauss has said that the book was designed to counter the influence of the Open University modern art course, on which I work. Her assertion may, or may not, be true, but if the book was intended to function as this kind of introduction, I think it is unsuccessful. From the opening pages the reader is confronted with unexplained concepts and ideas – 'paranoid representations as projections of desperate order'. For the uninitiated reader, at least three assumptions would need unpacking from a clause like this. We frequently encounter sentences like the following:

This antipainterly impulse probably originates in the irrepressible suspicion that the matter of painting cannot ultimately live up to the promise of a fundamental psycho-sexual experience of identity, one that would be grounded in the somatic register of the unconscious alone.

You won't find anything like that in Honour and Fleming! Similarly, the four methodological chapters at the start of the book (psychoanalysis; social history; formalism and structuralism; and poststructuralism and deconstruction) don't really fit with a book like this. One gets the feeling that they are included to absolve the authors from having written a textbook. These introductions are, in any case, unlikely to be used: readers will browse this book, reading sections, following a particular career, movement, theme or whatever. Only the obsessive will read it through, as I have, year by year. The bite-size chapters encourage dipping-in. In contrast, the introductions seem clogged and unhelpful. The authors would probably have been better employed providing a rationale for the (often mysterious) selection process underpinning the book; it might also have been worthwhile indicating why they believe twentieth-century art to be overwhelmingly concentrated on Europe and the USA.

The four authors take to the format rather differently: Krauss carries on as normal; Bois seems

badly served by the restraints – under the pressure of accessibility his ‘structuralist activity’ gives way to (intelligent) description; Buchloh drifts towards a gnomic post-Frankfurt School idiom; Foster, particularly when he puts psychoanalysis aside, probably finds the best tone for this kind of work. While the book doesn’t really work as an introduction – the reader needs a great deal of general cultural knowledge and it presents some very peculiar readings as normative – it does distil the accumulated wisdom of *October*, of which there is a great deal on view, into a convenient (if very fat) package.

The authors complement each other and, between them, cover a vast amount of material. Bois, who was formed in classic structuralism, focuses on Matisse, Picasso and abstract art (particularly Mondrian and Newman). Krauss brings poststructuralism (and Bataille) to bear on Picasso, Duchamp, surrealism and sculpture; she also bats for particular favoured artists in the period after 1945. Buchloh, an unrepentant German ’68er, writes on the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. His points of orientation are Adorno and Debord, and he is a champion of Gerhard Richter and recent critical practice (though he ignores the latter in this book). Foster might be characterized as a ‘left postmodernist’, drawn to psychoanalysis (and increasingly to surrealism), though Debord provides another important point of reference. In this book Foster provides the glue holding things together, or, to shift the metaphor, he vacuums up everything left out by the others. In addition to chapters on the avant-garde, Foster covers design and architecture, race and gender; he is also responsible, almost single-handedly, for the last quarter of the century. He emerges very positively from these commitments. This typology is undoubtedly too neat, but it will provide a working guide. However, as I previously indicated, the displaced attributions attest to a small problem. Even Foster seems to have balked at addressing the issues raised by two of the chapters – ‘1933: The Mexican Mural Movement’ and ‘1943: The Harlem Renaissance’. Both chapters are attributed to ‘AD’ – presumably the Amy Dempsey thanked by the publisher. This particular supplement marks the boundaries of a collective vision.

One of the strengths of this book – at least when reading it from beginning to end – is that it allows for a clearer picture of the *October* project. The very different commitments of the protagonists can make the journal seem like an unholy alliance. For instance, in the box on *Artforum*, Krauss notes that *October* emerged when she and fellow editor Annette Michelson split from the former journal. She suggests that their aim was

to sustain the commitment to formalist art in the face of the political turn that had been made by *Artforum* under Max Kozloff and Lawrence Alloway. The title of Eisenstein’s movie was adopted to flag the political repression of formal experimentation. That was a long time ago, and, no doubt, the participants now see things differently, but it sits oddly alongside Buchloh’s and Foster’s advocacy of political avant-gardism and institutional critique. However, three points of common concern emerge strongly from *Art since 1900*. The first – the point I previously thought provided the defining agenda – is in fact the least secure: this is a determinate negation of Clement Greenberg’s story. In part, the *October* project has involved reinstating those aspects of twentieth-century art that Greenberg clipped from *Art and Culture*, principally the practices he characterized as dead ends in opposition to the ‘mainstreet’ or ‘mainstream’. These include Duchamp, constructivism, Dada, surrealism; all of those forms he viewed as ‘far out’ in the postwar context, such as ‘pop’ or ‘minimalism’. Krauss notes, for instance, that when she started working on surrealism, no one had read journals like *Minotaur* or *Documents*.

If not single-handed, *October* played a key role in the rediscovery of avant-garde art, republishing original texts, translating the work of foreign scholars and carrying path-breaking analyses of individual artists. Simply put, *October* redefined the story of modern art. However, at times the inversion of Greenberg can seem pathological. The nadir is probably reached in Krauss’s celebration of Pollock’s horizontality in contradistinction to Greenberg’s account of (vertical) opticality (thankfully, she refrains from the story about sniffing animal’s bottoms in the version on offer here). This negation of Greenberg’s account needs modulating, though. Bois is much more open to formalism – in this volume he draws heavily on Michael Fried’s account of the ‘deductive structure’ – and, increasingly, Krauss seems to be returning to her own roots in American formalism, emphasizing the determining role of ‘medium’ (if not quite Greenberg’s version) in opposition to kitsch. That sounds like a familiar tale.

The second point of convergence is a commitment to the cognitive function of modern art, when much recent art history all too often reduces art to ideology. This engagement takes different forms. In Buchloh and Foster it entails a search for critical projects that evade the logic of commodity culture. Oddly, this orientation sometimes verges on the instrumental (Buchloh’s Adorno, like Peter Bürger’s version, has more than a whiff of Brecht about him). In Bois and particularly Krauss, it can entail a refusal of any social or politi-

cal reading of art works. Poor old Pat Leighton, for instance, has the riot act read to her (again) for connecting cubism and the Balkan war! But even Krauss is inconsistent in her application of this position. For some reason, sexuality and the unconscious don't seem to constitute 'external' frames of reference in the way wars and anarchism are considered to do. And at other moments Krauss and Bois reach for political explanation. I suspect that particular readings have taken on the force of an *idée fixe*: cubism is the prime candidate here, as is the persistent valuation of Bataille over Breton. In addition, this approach has now spawned a whole swathe of pale imitators, all burrowing away on surrealism or whatever; all finding 'critiques' at every turn. Much of the epigones' work seems to have lost the tension that drove the *October* project.

Third, and perhaps most surprisingly, their joint enterprise is underpinned by a resolutely anti-affirmative vision of modern art. This goes for the writers attached to French models and, ostensibly, more formal practices, just as much as for Buchloh, and to some extent Foster, who are closer to negative dialectics and left avant-gardism. Anything that smacks of transcendentalism, idealism or mysticism draws their fire. The effort required to dislocate abstraction from this baggage attests to how central the issue is for them. Art is, above all else, critical. Again, Greenberg



is in their sights here, but the central target is probably the MoMA ratification machine. In this sense, *October* is a profoundly political project that carries the traces of its 1980s' moment. This, for me, is its enduring power.

There are, of course, innumerable other points of shared reference: Duchamp as unquestionable touchstone; an unconvincing account of cubism and semiotics, in which Picasso and Braque emerge as illustrators of Saussurian *bon mots* (interestingly, Foster always writes "'arbitrary" sign' rather than 'arbitrary sign'); an enthusiasm for minimalism and 'institutional critique'; an antipathy to conceptual art (particularly its British forms). Max Bill repeatedly carries the full weight of the avant-garde's incorporation. For some unspecified reason, the 'index' (itself predicated on a very weird reading of Peirce) is always a positive value. Their sense of social history is schematic at best and their understanding of left politics can be poor and not a little aloof. Much of this has the feel of the internal dialogue of a caucus.

In *Art since 1900* these concerns are slotted into an overall narrative, and Buchloh is undoubtedly the central progenitor. This goes as follows. A nascent proletarian public sphere is set against both the totalitarian public sphere and the rise of a mass cultural sphere as the framework or battleground for a political avant-garde (oddly, Kluge and Negt are never mentioned). The readymade registered art's status as commodity and called into question art's supposed autonomy; Berlin Dada and Soviet constructivism shifted this conception to active politics. There can be no retreat from this set of moves, and every attempt to resurrect art without the (political) self-critique of autonomy entails a reactionary retreat – should this include recourse to painting, then this judgement is even more damning. (You almost have to admire Buchloh's willingness to take clear-cut positions: twentieth-century culture is petty bourgeois; European subjectivity comes to an end in the 1930s; abstract expressionism represents a reactionary turn against photography and a reassertion of masculinity; and so on. Twentieth-century art is, for him, ultimately a cipher for German history.) The destruction of the proletarian public sphere by fascism and Stalinism cleared the ground for the total triumph of the mass cultural sphere, in which all values were commodified and spectacularized. Art subsequently operates in this mass sphere and is increasingly fused with it, leading to the withering of its critical powers. In this sense, even art, the last redoubt against the inhumanity of capitalism, becomes progressively untenable.

Adorno's meta-story appears here in a particularly exacerbated form. In part, this is because these writers exhibit little dialectical sensibility. Artworks rarely embody contradictions. Rather, they fall on one side of a division critical/acquiescent, oppositional/incorporated. On this basis, the extremely dubious notion of 'antimodernism' comes to occupy a fundamental place in this book. Almost any assertion of the integral figure, particularly in painting, after cubism, Duchamp and Dada constitutes a 'return to order'. (The exceptions are Heartfield and the surrealists – even Magritte!) *Pittura metafisica* and Leger, American social realism and fascist art, Kienholz and Brodsky: all entail backsliding from the political advances of the avant-garde. All manner of well-meaning attempts to constitute 'relevance' are swept up with outright nasty practices to constitute an antimodernist reactionary bloc. (Whatever one thinks of Socialist Realism – not much in my case – the account on offer here seriously underestimates both its allure in the period and its radical roots.) It is never quite said, but there is a strong sense that much recent art represents another antimodernist return to order. With the exception of the last point, I have a great deal of sympathy for this argument, but stated in this bald manner it is untenable. In this form it is both an undialectical account and, ultimately, a self-defeating one: the effect is to position modernism as the normative culture of the twentieth century. Doing so is fundamentally contradictory, undercutting the claim of modernism to represent a critical resource against the doings of capital.

One can't help but feel that there is an unacknowledged issue of good taste underpinning this narrative. The real demon of the piece seems not to be capitalism, or even fascism, but mass culture. Much of what is valued, in contrast, seems to be dandyism. What is presented as a deconstructionist confounding or ruination of established discourses of power often seems just clever in a New York kind of way. The obvious examples are Duchamp's and Bataille's 'base materialism'. T.J. Clark's account of abstract expressionist 'vulgarity' was aimed precisely against this dandyish moment of taste.

The fusion of Adorno and Debord, or, in Krauss's case, Baudrillard, with the life histories of this group of art critics is, in my view, a deadly trap. In this book, autobiography and critical analysis increasingly collapse. Cut free from its longest chapter *Society of the Spectacle* leads back, beyond Lukács, to 'tragic vision'. These writers seem more and more to confuse their own lack of sympathy for contemporary art with

the capitalist colonization of the avant-garde. They just don't like what the 'young ones' are doing. It is instructive here to contrast this perspective with Adorno's late meditation on new art in 'Vers une musique informelle'. (In this sense, Clark's own itinerary is much closer to *October* than might be imagined.) The *October* crew aren't renowned for their side-splitting jokes and they just don't appear to get the arsing-around involved in much recent art, which they see as irresponsible and juvenile (as if cubism wasn't). It is telling that Mike Kelly and Paul McCarthy figure here under the rubric of 'infantile regression' rather than dumb humour.

Despite continuing to think of themselves as critics rather than historians, *October* has become a historical journal dedicated to excavating the avant-garde's legacies. What was once a key site for the theorization of contemporary practice now carries just occasional pieces on recent art. This trend comes through strongly in *Art Since 1900*. The section on the 1960s is as long as the combined thirty-five years that follow. The last contribution from Bois is dated 1967 (although, to be fair, this always has been his range); Buchloh reaches 1988; Krauss stretches to 1998, but her contributions become increasingly rare in the last quarter of the century. After 1973 more than 50 per cent of the material is written by Foster, including almost everything after 1984. In the final round table, he seems to be trying to pull his co-authors back from an increasingly hysterical assertion of the impossibility of art. Given its decisive role in contemporary art, the scant attention paid to conceptual art is particularly telling. And, surprisingly for thinkers renowned for their commitment to theory, apart from one mention of Negri and Hardt, there is no reference to any thinker after Baudrillard.

The book ends with a rather lame invocation of utopia and a strange hedging of bets on Jeff Wall and Sam Taylor Wood. Sustaining critical value means rubbing taste, including established radical taste, against the grain. This would now require a fundamental shake-up of the canon ratified in this book. I doubt if *October* has the energy for such a task. This is, after all, the fate of all avant-gardes. *Art Since 1900* is a major achievement and much more political in its impetus than many detractors want to acknowledge. But it is the kind of book you write when the dust has settled. In so far as it is a monument, I suspect it is a mausoleum, putting a body (of thought) on display at the moment of its decomposition.

Steve Edwards

Haptocentrism

Jacques Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006. xiv + 377 pp. £45.50 hb., £18.95, 0 8047 4243 X hb., 0 8047 4244 8 pb.

Published in French in 2000, this major late work by Jacques Derrida is both a wide-ranging engagement with the figure of ‘touch’ such as it appears within a specific trajectory of European philosophy and an extended meditation on the work of his close friend Jean-Luc Nancy. The book is centred around a number of interlinking hypotheses: that touch organizes a manifold tradition of thinking which would incorporate, among others, such diverse names as Maine de Biran, Ravaisson, Kant, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze; and that this tradition has given rise to what Derrida calls ‘an *affaire*, a plot, a sort of conspiracy, a philosophical intrigue of touch’, which has been played out along the cultural boundaries that separate France, Germany and England. Derrida also poses the hypothesis that this tradition is continued, complicated and interrupted in twentieth-century thought, most prominently in the development of phenomenology from Husserl onwards and then, specifically, in the work of Nancy such as it develops from the 1970s to the 1990s. Touch, then, allows Derrida to reread the philosophical corpus of his friend as a ‘way of consequently rereading everything’, all of Nancy and ‘the whole philosophical tradition as well’.

Derrida revisits the concerns of his earliest work on Husserl, namely the deconstruction of phenomenological presence and of the concept of origin. He repeats or alludes to key moments in his own thinking over the last thirty years or so: the pharmakon, the impossibility of the gift, haunting and spectrality, the terms ‘dehiscence’, ‘disadherence’ and, of course, ‘*différance*’. Just as a privileging of voice was highlighted in Derrida’s early identification of a phonocentric tradition, and a privileging of word and concept in his diagnosis of logocentrism, so the figure of touch becomes the privileged motif of a ‘tactilist’ tradition or a ‘haptocentric metaphysics’, and once again it is the possibility of presence and its attendant philosophical baggage which is in question:

Touch, more than sight or hearing, gives nearness, proximity – it gives nearby.... In this regard, is it ever possible to dissociate the ‘near,’ the ‘proximate’ from the ‘proper,’ the ‘proprie’ [*propre*]? The proximate, the proper, and the present – the presence of the present? We can imagine all the consequences if this were impossible.

What is at stake here is the question of originary intuition and the manner in which the figures of touch and touching enable it to ground consciousness and constitute a meaningful world of sensible appearance. Derrida’s concern, then, is to interrupt this function of touch, question its conditions of possibility and, in a classically deconstructive manner, reveal them as simultaneously conditions both of possibility and impossibility.

None of this is likely to be surprising to those familiar with Derrida’s work. Yet *On Touching* also develops these themes in new and important ways. In particular, this is a work dominated by the question of originary technicity, technics, or what is also termed ‘technical prosthetics’. In *Of Grammatology* the question of supplementarity, writing and *archi-écriture* was bound up with that of *technē* and originary technicity (and arguably with an implicit critical distance from the Heideggerian thesis on technology). Although indicated in only one slightly elliptical footnote, Derrida here takes up the question of technics developed by Bernard Stiegler’s *Technics and Time* trilogy. In this context, the body which touches, feels, hears and sees – in particular, the ‘body proper’ as thought by phenomenology – is a body which is originally implicated in the interconnections of technical prosthetics. If, for Derrida, there is any originary intuition, it is also ‘the ageless intrusion of technics, which is to say of transplantation or prosthetics’. It is this ‘ageless intrusion’ of technics which interrupts the tactilist or haptic affirmation of the immediacy, continuity and contiguity of contact within conceptions of touch. Interrupted also, then, is the propriety and self-identity of the ‘body proper’ and, with that, the presence of presence. Derrida attempts to think originary technics as that which ‘*suspends* contact in contact and divides it right within tactile experience in general, thus inscribing an anaesthetic interruption into the heart of aesthetic phenomenality’. This in turn

would open up the spacing of a distance, a disadhering, a *différance* in the very ‘inside’ of haptics – and *aisthēsis* in general. Without this *différance*, there would be no contact *as such*; contact would not appear; but with this *différance*, contact never appears in its full purity, never in any immediate plenitude, either.



Thus the condition of possibility of originary intuition, touch and contact – that is, technical prosthetics – is, at the very same time, its condition of impossibility.

Derrida's writing proceeds 'interruptively' by way of a number of tangents which 'touch on' diverse thinkers, with Nancy as the guiding thread that binds all these tangents and disparate figures together. Derrida's response to Nancy is double-edged or ambivalent. On the one hand he is very clear: Nancy deploys the figure of touch or writes in the name of touch against all idealism, all philosophies of subjectivity, and against the tradition of immediacy. In so far as Nancy's discourse ceaselessly engages figures of apartness, exteriority, spacing, partition, dividing, sharing, discontinuity and so on, it distances itself from, or sets itself squarely against, tactilist or haptocentrist metaphysics. At the same time Derrida sees his use of certain terms from the philosophical lexicon of this tradition (and primarily the term 'touch' itself) as drawing Nancy's discourse back into the orbit of what it sets itself against: 'how can one say anything that does not in advance get surrounded, invested, preoccupied, in all historical places of these figures of touch, in their rhetorical circle, in their logical or hermeneutic twirling around?' Derrida reprimands Nancy for this, at times theatrically: 'that's quite enough, give this word back, it's prohibited.' Readers of Derrida's more recent *Rogues* will be familiar with the way in which Nancy

is taken to task for his use of the term 'fraternity' in *The Experience of Freedom*. His use of this term is questioned here also, and put down to Nancy's privileging of 'virility'. Attention is drawn also to Nancy's seemingly unapologetic invocation of the 'proper' in *Being Singular Plural*, and his deployment of theological or Christological language in his 'Deconstruction of Christianity'. All this leads Derrida to question whether Nancy is not simply another idealist among many, or whether his 'Deconstruction of Christianity' is not 'a difficult, paradoxical, almost impossible task, always in danger of being exposed as mere Christian hyperbole'.

Despite Derrida's terminological concerns and the critical gesture which accompanies them, his engagement with the deconstructive gestures of Nancy's writing is extensive and broadly appreciative. In particular the relation of 'touch' to the key Nancean motif of the 'syncope' is given considerable attention. The syncope is the linchpin of Nancy's reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and of Descartes's *Discourse on Method* in the 1970s, and, Derrida rightly points out, although touch is nowhere explicitly mentioned during this period, it is already to some degree at work. A 'syncopated touch' is, as Nancy himself repeatedly reminds us, a 'touch in distance', that which, recalling Blanchot, implies a contact without contact, one which always leaves 'intact' that which is touched. Nancy's

discourse on the syncope implies, then, a distancing and spacing at the very heart of originary intuition, an opening or spacing which subverts the foundational ambition of Kant's first *Critique*, the Cartesian Cogito, or any attempt to offer a metaphysical ground in an autonomous, self-present, self-posing subjectivity.

Nancy's thinking of 'ecotechnics', as developed in *Corpus, Being Singular Plural* and elsewhere, is also proffered as a rich deconstructive resource in relation to the tactilist tradition. Ecotechnics perhaps marks the point of greatest proximity between Derrida and Nancy. Deeply rooted in Nancy's rejection of Heidegger's thesis on technology, Nancy articulates ecotechnics as the manner in which the body, far from being the pretechnical 'body proper' of phenomenology, is always already and originarily inserted into a technical environment. Ecotechnics describes the originary disoriginating insertion of technics into the event of being itself, overturning all logic of the proper which Heidegger would ascribe (in however complicated a fashion) to the event of the giving of being (*das Ereignis*).

Derrida pays particular attention to Nancy's strategic use of the term *partes extra partes*, a term most likely borrowed from Merleau-Ponty. This term describes the way in which material bodies exist in a relation of exteriority each to the other, and the way in which the components or constitutive parts of material bodies likewise exist outside of each other, never occupying the same place, and are thus able to articulate themselves as bodies and come into relation or contact with other bodies. In the structure of *partes extra partes* all is technical connection or a relation to an outside. There is never an instance of originary or pre-technical being, never an inside or pure interiority. In articulating his discourse around ecotechnical spacing and the structure of parts outside parts, Nancy, Derrida contends, 'touches and tampers with the philosophic gigantomachy surrounding intuition and intuitionism – no less'.

Towards the end of *On Touching* Derrida identifies a decisive difference between his and Nancy's approaches, and speaks of 'two irreducibly different "deconstructive" gestures' which mark their discourses. Derrida has throughout his writing persistently repeated the phrase 'if there is any'. Deconstruction, responsibility, justice and so on might all find themselves qualified by an 'if there is any' whenever they are invoked. Nancy, for his part, will say 'there is no *the*' or 'there is not' touching, essence, the technical and so on. For Derrida, Nancy is struggling or wrestling at the limits of what discourse or meaning will allow. He is

not deploying terms in any straightforward manner, but speaking about instances that place themselves outside of, or ex-scribe, that which they seek to inscribe in writing: hence 'there is no "...". Derrida persistently questions whether the 'definite article is already engaged or required by the discourse that disputes it', 'if there is any'.

Nancy repeats certain terms and holds on to them. In so doing he aims to inaugurate new possibilities of meaning, new trajectories of thought. Derrida also repeats certain terms, but, in his ceaseless caution with regard to their baggage and the retention of past traces of signification, will disallow them or place them off-limits. They are too compromised and too tainted, and a different gesture is required to affirm the emergence of the new. This may imply a different understanding of temporality on the part of each thinker. Nancy seeks to affirm an inaugural moment of creation in the spacing of a singular and plural opening. Every term drawn from the tradition is rethought in the light of this. Derrida is always attentive to stretching the present into the past, even as it opens onto a future without identity, and it is the undecidability and incalculability of this future which is affirmed. The dehiscence or impropriety of the present is thought differently by each. In this sense *On Touching* is an indication of the future paths of deconstructive thinking, of deconstruction as a thought which has always affirmed itself as a thought of the future.

Ian James

Neo-Benjaminian historicism

Matthias Fritsch, *The Promise of Memory: History and Politics in Marx, Benjamin, and Derrida*, SUNY Press, Albany NY, 2005. xiii + 249 pp., £43.75 hb., 0 7914 6549 7.

Can a reconfiguration of Walter Benjamin provide the productive context for theorizing affirmative action, reconciliation and memorialization? Does victory in struggle, even when 'free at last', always repeat past suffering in the present success? Could it be otherwise?

Into this charged forcefield appears Matthias Fritsch's book on memory, promise and historical time. It sets before its readers the heavy task of an interminable mourning through which the exclusionary,

amnesiac potential of power structures is to be resisted in perpetuity. In restricting his presentation to a concoction of Marx, Benjamin and Derrida, the figures who would ask him the most difficult questions are fortuitously excluded. Not least of whom would be Nietzsche, for whom the fixed idea of suffering marks the bad conscience of 'unhealthy' modern nihilism. For can a philosophical treatment of memory really absent consideration of strong forgetting. More to the point, the uncharitable manner in which Marx and Benjamin are co-opted prevents their writings from interrupting Fritsch's thematic – no small irony, given what is at stake. In a book concerned to resist 'empty, homogeneous time', the history between Marx, Benjamin and Derrida disappears; ignored, so that all three become interlocutors in abstract, discursive space directed by a syncretistic bent, available to us latecomers, with no deliberation on that privilege. In this regard, this book is symptomatic of academic bricolage which fails to understand how the critique of 'homogeneous and empty' time breaks with 'empathetic' historicism.

Although it is presented as a book on Marx, Derrida and Benjamin, each of the four chapters is organized around the last. The first of these presents the 'Theses on the Concept of History' as a critique of vulgar Marxism in so far as it rejects teleological, progressive totalizing accounts of history. The second, an interpretation of Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, forms a bridge to the third, which concentrates on 'Critique of Violence' and Derrida's deconstruction of it in 'Force of Law'. The fourth and final chapter offers an 'oscillation' between Benjamin and Derrida, where the latter's account of *différential* repetition acts as a supplement to the former:

It is the account of repetition, in its link to *différance* and *l'avenir à-venir*, that delivers the temporality of the past–future relation that we found underdeveloped in Benjamin. At the same time, it affords an albeit precarious distinction between messianism and the messianic (or messianicity) that clarifies otherwise problematic theological ambiguities stemming from the attempt to, as Benjamin put it, 'return a messianic face' to Marx while affirming his secularization of messianism.

In effect, the place of Derrida and Marx here is determined by the contours of a meditation on Benjamin's concept of historiography. For example, there is no place for thinking Derrida's relation to both Husserl and Althusser, whilst Marx, squeezed through the other two, is contorted into an oblique problematic, upon which it is worth dwelling.

If past suffering has a claim to be remembered, how are the sufferings of those now dead remembered? Fritsch opposes any idea of progress in history and rejects the reconciliation premised upon the 'dream of wiping the slate clean': both calumniate the dead in a 'second mortification'. 'Past suffering must be freed from its insertion into a conception of historical necessity, and it must not be subjected to the concept of a just end.' Instead past victims must be given a voice to retrieve something of their emancipatory promise, a past future, that was occluded. Here, 'Benjamin reconceived proletarian resistance to capitalist oppression ... as a non-violent political action that draws on the limits of the political itself, and that is responsive to the forever incomplete voice of the vanquished and forgotten.'

The stress is on the incompleteness of this praxis as it contests 'endism' and 'progress'. It is not just vulgar Marxism that Fritsch takes to be the object of Benjamin's critique, but Marx himself, whose vision of communism – as an end 'retaining all the riches capitalism produces' – precludes mourning the 'real losses of historical development'. Fritsch appears to assume that any totalization of history entails that the suffering located in that history is justified by the meaningfulness of the end-state.

From the perspective of 'Critique of Violence', communism would be merely the subsequent violent imposition in a cycle of law-positing violence. For Fritsch, these drawbacks are exacerbated because its scientific pretension, read as straightforward economic determinism, views the victory of a particular class as guaranteed. Allying Benjamin with Lyotard, scientific representation of history is seen as effacing real suffering (a sentiment reinforced by the Irving libel trial where no first-hand accounts were allowed, only official Nazi documentation). Yet, if for Lyotard an 'exhaustive account' can aid forgetting and potentially removes the possibility of lament, things are more complicated for Benjamin, for whom history is both scientific and a form of 'cultural memory'. Fritsch misses this doubled aspect and hence the nuances of Benjamin's communism. That is:

1. Benjamin does not reject the primacy of the unfolding forces of production (at least in their circumscription of possibility).
2. The totalization of history is not absent from his work – it is found in the central notion of catastrophe. This is the negative trajectory that must be interrupted, with the revolutionary 'emergency brake': the 'pile of debris ... The storm that we call Progress'.

3. Benjamin retains the 'ontological centrality of the working class', a position viewed by Fritsch as 'conceptually impossible and politically dangerous'.

It is in relation to these three aspects that Derrida's 'messianic without messianism' upsets and sidelines the philological separation of 'Critique of Violence' – a fragment of an abandoned anarcho-syndicalist politics – from the 'Theses on the Concept of History', whose 'messianic' is metaphysically distinct from the former's 'divine' (*göttlich*). This Derridean supplement is produced in spite of Fritsch's acute criticisms of 'Force of Law' and its overdetermination by the Heidegger and de Man debates.

It is somewhat paradoxical, then, that Fritsch uses Derrida to return Benjamin to something akin to Marburg Social Democracy. For Derrida supplies two functions:

1. The thought of the trace and the quasi-transcendental condition of messianicity mean that subjects are always already the inheritors of languages, histories and institutions – to which they cannot avoid responding. This general 'responsiveness' is held to resolve certain ambiguities in Benjamin by 'explaining' the originary injunction of the past.
2. More importantly, Derrida demonstrates the 'impossibility' of final accounts of history and opens the possibility of an empty future that 'no person or group could claim to embody or represent'. 'Repetition always defers to an unreachable future the identity it nonetheless promises.' There is no memory that is not violent, in that memory preserves itself only through work which is inevitably an organization and a forgetting.

The result is that, 'if we read Derrida and Benjamin together, an openness to the future beyond horizons is the very possibility of receiving and responding to the messianic claim that the oppressed of history have on us.' Fritsch is well aware of what results: the promise rescued from Marx is rendered unrealizable – it becomes a Kantian, regulative ideal from which to criticize empirical reality. He writes: 'Derrida not only supplies Benjamin with the temporality of the relation between a disenchanted future and memory, but also prevents the former's radical critique of Kantian Marxism and progressivism from leading to a wholesale rejection of all utopian horizons.'

This leaves us in a strange situation. If this is the claim of this book, then why is this Kantian Marxism not the focus? What is Benjamin doing beyond providing an organizing framework for less fashionable thoughts? Moreover, Benjamin has already distanced

himself from the position this book promotes. In the 'Paralipomena to "On the Concept of History"', we find:

Once the classless society had been defined as an infinite task, the empty and homogeneous time was transformed into an anteroom, so to speak, in which one could wait for the emergence of a revolutionary situation with more or less equal equanimity. In reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it its revolutionary chance ... namely as the chance for a completely new resolution of a completely new problem. ... (Classless society is not the final goal of historical progress but its frequently miscarried, ultimately achieved interruption.)

The emptiness of the 'open future' espoused by Fritsch sees 'interminable mourning' as itself revolutionary, a bad conscience which proliferates narratives to contest official history. It is not that it is merely difficult to ascribe to Benjamin an idea of the 'infinitely interpretable layers of history', but rather that this notion is rejected in the critique of historicism. Is this not a form of *acedia*, 'a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart ... which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly' (Thesis VII)? In 'The Image of Proust', enervation is the result of intellectual renunciation that proliferates interpretations.

However, not everything past or old is thereby historical. Historical pasts address the present equivocally and heterogeneously and are not always legible or relevant to 'a moment of present danger'. Historicist 'linearity' holds that time is left behind in its passing out of the present. In contrast, Benjamin's constellation, rejecting empathy, does not merely organize inert, past material in a politically charged way. In light of the comments on second mortifications, how would this not be an instrumental use of the past? Instead, the past returns in the present. *Jetztzeit* ('now-time') names this rare, conjunctural structure.

For Benjamin, 'linear time' is associated with the thought that all history is always available for memoration, appreciation of its richness or retrieval for salutary lessons ('the past will not run away from us'). In this regard, it is disappointing that this book on memory contains no discussion of Benjamin's relation to Proust, and in particular the manner in which memory [*Erinnerung*] and 'remembrance' [*Eingedenken*] interweave *constructive* narrative and *mémoire involontaire*; neither are his two historical works, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and the *Arcades Project*, discussed.

If Proust's *À la Recherche...* is an attempt to 'produce experience synthetically' under damaged

modern conditions, then Benjamin's historiography seeks to produce *historico-political* experience synthetically under conditions of increasing barbarism. Its task is to find, and somehow present, that which the collective has lived through (but which can no longer be assimilated into experience) to produce a charge directed towards changed conditions. As Proust writes, 'we ought to fear ... even the past, which often comes to life for us only when the future has come and gone – and not only the past which we discover after the event but the past which we have long kept stored within ourselves and suddenly learn how to interpret.' In the hope of harnessing this fearful power, Benjamin seeks a 'unique experience' with it, an experience that shocks or strikes, and generates a 'revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past'. Owing to the later importance of Proust, and the early imprint of Sorel, the Bergson of *Matter and Memory* is a necessary way station in the destruction of the received notions of memory and image in Benjamin scholarship, which serve as one of the indications as to how he is read empathetically as *our* contemporary. The unmediated, immediate rendering of Benjamin in our own image is fundamentally historicist. In this respect, Fritsch's book is symptomatic.

Andrew McGettigan

Anti-anti-totalitarianism

Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2004. 304 pp. £50.00 hb., £15.00 pb., 1 57181 428 0 hb., 1 57181 427 2 pb.

This book takes its cue from a puzzling anachronism: in the mid-1970s a concept that had elsewhere fallen into desuetude – totalitarianism – came to dominate French intellectual life, eventually draining the radical impetus of May '68 and ushering in a new kind of Thermidor, turning Paris into what Perry Anderson famously excoriated as 'the capital of European reaction'. Commendably, Christofferson chooses to deactivate two complementary approaches that have long obfuscated this critical juncture. First, the position that, looking to France's tribulations to reaffirm the phlegmatic virtues of Anglo-American civil society,

regards the 'antitotalitarian moment' as a symptom of the country's need to catch up with the only reasonable model for thinking liberty with equality: liberalism (fraternity must, of course, be swiftly dispensed with). Second, the tendency, present in both sympathisers and detractors, to accept the participants' own narrative of the motivating factors behind their peculiar *engagement*: this 'myth of origins of anti-totalitarianism' is effectively dismantled by Christofferson in his meticulous reconstruction of the Solzhenitsyn affair.

To counter both the invidiousness of comparison and the delusions of introspection, Christofferson – in chapters covering the intellectual vicissitudes of French revolutionary politics, the function of *The Gulag Archipelago*, the debate on the PS-PCF 'Union of the Left', dissidence, *la nouvelle philosophie*, and François Furet – combines two axes of investigation: a longitudinal look at the events and initiatives that led revolutionary intellectuals from socialist visions to anti-communist fixation, and a conjunctural inquiry into how a host of varied attitudes and perspectives on the Left came to be condensed into the 'antitotalitarian moment' (roughly from 1975 to 1978) by the electoral prospect of an entry of the French Communist Party into government.

The title of the book suggests a grouping of intellectuals on the Centre or the Right. Yet it is to be understood in a retroactive sense: how and why did intellectuals originally affiliated with revolutionary programmes of emancipation elaborate positions which, in order to exorcise the purported menace of the PCF, dissociated freedom from socialism, laying the ground for a conformist politics of the 'lesser evil'? In this respect, one of the most fruitful threads in *French Intellectuals against the Left* consists in focusing attention on how the discourse of direct democracy played a role in the formation of the antitotalitarian front. Incubated by a certain heterodox Trotskyism (*Socialisme ou barbarie*) and remembrances of council communism, and exacerbated by the crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, notions of direct democracy became a privileged way to attack the PCF *from the left* (not such a hard task, given its passive collusion with the oppression of Algeria), linking the misdemeanours of communist power at home and abroad. Under the guise of *autogestion* (self-management), it endured into the 1970s where, shorn of its insurrectionary traits, it became a significant element in the ideological campaign of the French Socialist Party (PS) for hegemony over the Union of the Left – even gaining prominence in the *Assises* conference of 1974, through which the anti-communist Left sought to gain hold of the party,

eventually failing in the face of Mitterrand's far more pragmatic concerns.

Of equal interest is Christofferson's attention to that amalgam of direct democracy and Maoism which was the Gauche prolétarienne (GP). Born of the unexpected emergence of Marxism–Leninism in the student Left, but tied to the Cultural Revolution by only the most imaginary of bonds, the GP's 'combination of populism, voluntarism and spontaneism', whilst making for an eclectic ideology with at best tenuous links to Marxism, served as a crucial intercessor between the subversive spirit of '68 and the Restoration that was to follow. With their focus on exemplary actions and flashy slogans, the likes of Benny Lévy (alias Pierre Victor) and André Glucksmann already enacted the new relationship with the media that was later to mark the figure of the antitotalitarian intellectual. Moreover, as Christofferson indicates, they provided prominent radical figures, namely Foucault and Sartre, with an organizational referent that was both virulently anti-PCF and sufficiently extreme in its leftist ideology. In Foucault's case especially, the hyper-populism of the GP provided a way of cutting through the ambiguities besetting his discourse on power and political subjectivity, giving rise to a kind of plebeian anti-communist libertarianism still manifest in Foucault's reporting on the Iranian Revolution. In a sense, Foucault later returned the favour by openly legitimating the virulent anti-Marxism of Glucksmann and serving as a kind of respectably radical midwife for the entrance onto the scene of the *nouveaux philosophes*.

The discontinuous genealogy of this direct-democratic discourse, which Christofferson also tracks through the writings of Castoriadis and Lefort (during and after *Socialisme ou barbarie*), the strategic interventions of the journal *Esprit* and the inauguration of the newspaper *Libération*, is undoubtedly crucial for grasping how the coordinates of French anti-totalitarianism could only be provided by a Left discourse which mixed righteous moralism about political action, an extreme – but extremely vague – libertarianism about organization, and an abiding suspicion towards any muscular form of political power. In short, we could say that the antitotalitarian moment

was prepared by the *longue durée* of anti-Leninism. With respect to this facet of the argument, Christofferson's narrative might be faulted on two counts, both of which are perhaps inevitable consequences of the strength of the book: its scrupulously well-documented and persuasive focus on the rise of antitotalitarianism from the vicissitudes of a political ideology (direct democracy) and a specific political struggle (against the PCF's hegemony over the Left).

First, by focusing primarily on the strictly political debates on democracy, Christofferson fails to integrate the sociological debate on the 'new working class' and the post-'68 attention to 'new social movements' – which he nevertheless alludes to – into his account of the rise of antitotalitarianism. In other words, by tracing an internal *political* history of the phenomenon, he does not investigate the correlation of this ideological moment with the shifting terrain of French capitalist society – despite the fact that transformations in the organization of labour and class composition played an integral part in the rise of the theme of *autogestion* in the left of the PS. Second, the focus on the final betrayal of any direct-democratic aspirations with the rise of the *nouveaux philosophes* and Furet's revisionist history of the French Revolution, whilst methodologically correct,

ends up airbrushing out other strands of anti-Stalinist thought that did not collude in the spectacle of antitotalitarianism. Thus, there is little attention throughout to the powerful and coherent critiques of Stalinism provided by a (Trotskyist) Leninist Left, of the kind generously depicted in Birchall's *Sartre against Stalinism* (reviewed by Ben Watson in *RP* 129). Equally, little is said about the anti-Leninism of the Situationists, whose intervention in May '68 was steeped in the council-communist tradition of direct democracy in a far more persuasive and radical manner than many of the so-called anti-totalitarians. On a different note, Christofferson does perspicuously point to the significance of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in trying to formulate a speculative solution to the relationship between subjective liberation and social emancipation, but the influence or force of that attempt remains unexplored. At times, and especially when evoking



the supposed weakness of non-PCF, Left criticisms of the antitotalitarian vogue, Christofferson seems to gauge the strength of opposition by the very meter that the antitotalitarians naturally favoured: media exposure. The fact that Left positions alien both to the PCF and to the *nouveaux philosophes* and their ilk failed to attain critical mass does not mean that the anti-totalitarians had won the argument. Hijacking bandwidth does not necessarily translate into lasting hegemony. On the other hand, the debates within the PCF – namely the Althusserians' involvement in the battle over purging the thesis of the dictatorship of the proletariat – are unfortunately glossed over, despite their potentially revealing relations with the positions of the non-communist Left.

The second axis of Christofferson's analysis, besides the vagaries of direct-democratic thought, concerns the function of the common programme of the Left – with the ominous spectre of the PCF in power – in both catalysing and condensing the energies of antitotalitarianism. The anachronism and analytical debility of antitotalitarianism is here accounted for by the way it was instrumentalized in order to impede the PCF's integration into the political scene. Though, as Christofferson acknowledges in a useful, albeit brief, survey of the concept, the Cold War history of 'totalitarianism' was never devoid of instrumentality, in the French instance it is patently clear that the vicissitudes of its use – even when they involved advocacy for Warsaw Pact dissidence and human rights – were almost entirely dominated by domestic concerns. Whether they took the shape of Glucksmann's bombastic teleology of the Enlightenment (from Plato to Kolyma, 'to think is to dominate'), or Furet's revisionist excavation of the French roots of totalitarianism in the Jacobin terror, the various 'theories' of totalitarianism – for the most part oblivious either to fascism or to Nazism – demonstrated a kind of political narcissism which subordinated an elaboration of the concept to the expediencies of the French electoral calendar. Moving outside of the French context, the reliance of much anglophone post-Marxist thought on a concept of democracy generated within this antitotalitarian vogue still suffers from the poverty and opportunism of its sources.

One of the prize features of *French Intellectuals against the Left* is the meticulous care with which it debunks the 'myth of origins' of antitotalitarianism by documenting the intimate articulation between political events and the rhetorical mobilization of intellectuals. This was not only the case of the 'gulag effect' – where attention to chronology shows that Solzhenitsyn was

only monumentalized *after* the attack on *The Gulag Archipelago* by the PCF, more than a year after the book's publication. It also marked the numerous 'cases' and 'affairs' involving East European dissidents, and especially the rhetorical manipulation of the struggles internal to the Portuguese Revolution in 1975, which Christofferson tracks with admirable care and a wealth of informative detail. Throughout its narrative, the book weaves together a set of investigations into the alignments, affiliations and polemics that criss-crossed an increasingly media-centred intellectual scene. Though their intricacy and exhaustiveness might alienate readers more sympathetic to the broad sweep of cultural criticism, they do provide a welter of material for a sociological, cultural and political analysis of the changing role of the intellectual in twentieth-century France. Christofferson tracks the passage from a kind of self-effacing organic intellectuality under the banner of the PCF to the polemical human rights advocacy of the antitotalitarian intellectual – disaffiliated from any actual political movement, but also, as in the case of Furet (whose biography by Christofferson is forthcoming), a shrewd ideological and academic operator. In this shift, Foucault's 'specific intellectual' might thus be seen as a kind of vanishing mediator. Significantly, Christofferson enumerates the key instruments and accoutrements of this new psycho-social type: petitions, committees, editorial ventures (the case of Bernard-Henri Lévy and the publishing house Grasset is emblematic in this regard), the TV talk show, the newspaper (the founding of *Libération*), the function of journals (*Esprit*, or *Tel Quel*, with its passage from Maoist utopia to American 'polytopia'), and so on. It is a shame in this respect that Christofferson ignores the devastating insights present in Deleuze's caustic portrait of the *nouveaux philosophes*, which identifies their political function with the new *form* of their 'intellectuality', rather than in the second- or third-hand character of their supposed theses.

This book is clearly an indispensable resource for historians of twentieth-century France and French intellectual life, and a fine resource for anyone interested in a political sociology of the intellectual. Its fundamental thesis concerning the political sources of the antitotalitarian moment in the discourse of direct democracy and the electoral opposition to the PCF is largely persuasive – and a welcome antidote to the many distortions that obscure this key reactive shift. But in order to draw some lessons from Christofferson's laudable narrative we need to move beyond his conclusion that the vacuity of the antitotalitarian moment is derived from the 'propensity of French intellectu-

als to universalize and ideologize domestic political debates'. Such a statement tautologically designates as intellectuals precisely those who were able, in many respects due to wide-ranging changes in the structure of French society and academia, to shift the terrain of commitment to the mass media. As I've already intimated, this ignores the comprehensive demolition of the antitotalitarian position, and of the *nouveaux philosophes* in particular, by 'Left' thinkers such as Deleuze, Rancière, Lecourt, Linhart and Badiou. It also entails a very partial take on the nature of the intellectual – it is perhaps one of the book's missed opportunities that it does not really reflect on the tensions and shifts that have characterized this figure in contemporary French history. For what needs to be reflected on – if we take a practice of universalization to somehow define the intellectual and if we accept the conjunctural location of his interventions – is the difference between, on the one hand, the kind of vapid, self-serving universalist posture that marked many of the invocations of dissidence and human rights in the 1970s, and, on the other, the thinking of concrete or singular universality that still preoccupies many of those French thinkers who were thankfully deaf to the siren calls of antitotalitarianism.

Alberto Toscano

Learning the event

Gary Peters, *Irony and Singularity: Aesthetic Education from Kant to Levinas*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005. x + 193 pp., £45.00 hb., 0 7546 3811 1.

Writing a book on aesthetic education today is problematic for a number of reasons. First and foremost, while the phrase 'aesthetic education' may remain resonant for many working in the traditions of continental philosophy or critical theory, it will nevertheless be unfamiliar to those who may have come to philosophy, and in particular philosophical aesthetics, more recently, perhaps via the heady portals of deconstruction, post-modernism, or even 'schizoanalysis'. The notion of aesthetic education, which dates back to Schiller, interweaves currents of humanism and hope that feel alien to the contemporary philosophical climate. It is one of the merits of Peters's book to begin to situate, however critically, the legacy of aesthetic education in relation to figures such as Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Rosenzweig, Levinas, Blanchot, Derrida, de Man and Deleuze, thereby opening up

a series of potential perspectives from which to re-engage with aesthetic education.

A second problem is more implicit and works to destabilize the possibility of such a re-engagement. While it is impossible to deny the impact of many of the great works of philosophical aesthetics – such as the *Poetics*, *Critique of Judgement*, *Birth of Tragedy*, 'Origin of the Work of Art' – both on the history of philosophy and on artistic practice, nevertheless contemporary philosophical aesthetics, particularly as it is practised in the analytical tradition, tends to find itself consigned to the intellectual no-man's land occupied by such disciplines as philosophy of history, philosophy of education, philosophy of science, and so forth. The problem with the texts that make up these disciplines is that they run the risk of being dismissed as more or less irrelevant both by 'pure' philosophy and by those disciplines for which they purport to provide philosophies. For the philosophers, these disciplines are little more than 'applications' of 'pure' philosophy, and as such can add nothing new to philosophy itself. For practitioners, let us say for practising scientists, there appears to be little that can be learned about the day-to-day business of molecular analysis or particle acceleration from listening to the philosopher of science's reflections on scientific epistemology. Who, today, we might therefore ask, could stand to benefit from an aesthetic education? As Peters observes at the start of his book, we appear to have been 'left with a model of aesthetic education that is ill-equipped to engage with the predicament of the artist'. But should we not extend this realization, and admit that the model of aesthetic education is equally ill-equipped to engage with the predicament of the philosopher?

The tension underpinning these problematics, as Peters makes clear, stems from a certain temporality. On the one hand, the purpose of aesthetic education is determined by utopianism, and the principle of the future betterment both of the self and society. Contemporary discourses about art, on the other hand, tend to focus on what Peters characterizes as 'the event of the artwork as it erupts in a "now" which is aporetic in the extreme'. The continuity determining the former discourse, and the process of betterment that is grounded in this continuity, appears to be irreconcilable with the fundamental discontinuity that determines the latter discourse.

Now, it may be observed that this nexus of problems pertains to the contingency of the historical development of the discourses of philosophy rather than to any intrinsic dimensions of aesthetic education as such. To

this extent, we might feel some sympathy for Peters's stated aim of 'sav[ing] aesthetic education from itself, that is to say, from its humanism, its bourgeois utopianism and its ultimate radicalism in the hands of the sixties generation'. In other words, Peters is attempting to slough off those very characteristics of aesthetic education which have come to bear the critical focus of discourses of post-modernism, deconstruction and their ilk. But what would be saved of aesthetic education, once it was shorn of its humanism, utopianism and radicalism? If we embrace the artwork as irruptive event, is it even worth trying to save aesthetic education? Why not consign it to its 'rightful' place as a more or less closed 'event' in the history of philosophy? One way or the other, it seems to me that the force of Peters's project is not fully revealed by the aim which he himself announces for his work.

Another way of understanding Peters's project is in terms of what he calls the 're-aestheticization of aesthetic education'. This would entail going beyond the 'moral, political, religious, and, indeed, pedagogical structures' of the educational dimension of aesthetic education. For Peters, such a process would open up a field of what he calls 'alterity-aesthetics', a field or space within which the 'unteachability' of aesthetics could be acknowledged while simultaneously enabling 'the productive movement of the aesthetic to be traced'. In what might such a productivity consist?

If we return to the source of the notion of aesthetic education, we recall that in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller was writing in the wake of Kant and the French Revolution. The aftermath of the French Revolution was structured by the conflict between the ideal of freedom that inspired it and the actuality of the Terror that overtook it. This conflict can be discerned in the separation of the first and second of Kant's *Critiques*, and the two domains with which they concern themselves – that is, sensible nature and suprasensible nature.

Schiller argues that the significance and value of the cultivation of the beautiful stem from the way in which the beautiful work of art serves to reflect the freedom of the person contemplating the artwork, and specifically the free, unlegislated, interrelation between their sensible and intellectual faculties. It is a virtue of Deleuze's early work on Kant to have revealed how the topologies of the three *Critiques* involve a series of mappings of relations amongst the faculties, in each case leading to a 'common sense' of the faculties serving an interest of reason, under the legislature of one of the faculties, a legislature which itself is determinative of reason's interest. Deleuze then

argues that, in the third *Critique*, Kant still provides a genesis of this legislated accord amongst the faculties in his discussions of judgements of the beautiful, which involve an indeterminate accord amongst the faculties, and ultimately in judgements of the sublime, which involve what Deleuze nicknames a 'discordant accord' among the faculties. It is just this indeterminate accord among the faculties, and in particular the faculties of the imagination and understanding, which Schiller turns to in *Aesthetic Education*. He argues that a 'free-play' among the faculties, and the harmonious but indeterminate accord between sensibility and reason that emerges from this free-play, is able to 'overcome' the divided moral subject which emerges within the pages of the second *Critique*. He goes on to argue that the faculty of the imagination, interpreted as a 'play impulse', is able to strike a balance between the faculties of sensibility and understanding, or, as Schiller interprets them, the sensuous and formal impulses. The resultant balance among the faculties, or impulses, constitutes the so-called 'beauty of the soul' and the formation of a free and moral society.

If we were to align ourselves with Peters's critique of the pedagogical dimension of aesthetic education, then we could question whether it is indeed possible to *teach* or *educate* the faculties into such a free-play. On the contrary, is not this free-play the very ground upon which any aesthetic education could take place? But if we seek to affirm the opening within which the free-play of the faculties, balanced by the free-play impulse of the imagination, is able to occur, what then is left of the programme of aesthetic education as such?

The journey that Peters undertakes involves him in a series of negotiations with the dialectical – and non-dialectical – relations in the aesthetic theories of Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Nietzsche and Rosenzweig, and finally the phenomenological discourses on intersubjectivity of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. This assumes a deeper significance for Peters when he returns to the dialectical nature of the education event. By way of the intertwined displacement of the dialectics of both the classical aesthetic theories he discusses and the educational relation itself, Peters works towards a 'radical irresponsibility of aesthetic education'. This is in part exposed in the problematic relation between Levinas's discourses on aesthetics in *Existence and Existents* and the essay 'Reality and its Shadow', both published in the years immediately following the end of World War II, and his later 'ethical' texts. What links these works is a sustained engagement with a dimension of sensibility that cannot be constrained within the closures of either Husserlian phenomenology or Heideggerian

phenomenological ontology. This sensibility entails a fundamental *singularity* which exceeds any dialectical relation or conceptual universalization. As Peters notes, 'the work always gets in the way'.

Levinas's early aesthetic texts proved troubling to his existentialist peers because they emphasized the irreducible 'disengagement' at the heart of the aesthetic event. It is from this point of departure in disengagement that Levinas ultimately works towards the principles of excessive sensibility, singularity and ethical subjectivity. Would it be possible to construe a relation between this disengagement and the unlegislated free-play among the faculties which is the object of Schiller's discourse? In either case, we might wish to claim that the test of any contemporary work in philosophical aesthetics is whether it contributes to the affirmation of an opening – either temporal or spatial – within which sensibility is not immediately universalized, or is subjected to an interest of reason within which sensibility retains its potential for provoking consciousness. While this may not quite be the conclusion towards which Peters works, it seems nevertheless to accord with the goal of the dislocation and disarticulation of artistic education which Peters argues is the role of aesthetic education. To be sure, neither of these perspectives could be interpreted as a straightforward continuation or salvation of aesthetic education as conceived by Schiller.

Certainly, Peter's book engages with the principle of aesthetic education without 'domesticating' its insights; a domestication, according to de Man, of which the history of the reception of Kant's aesthetics is guilty.

Robin Durie

Dude, where's Yasser?

Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents, New York, 2006. 415 pp. £11.95 pb., 1 58435 032 6.

This volume is the sequel to *Desert Islands* (which collected Deleuze's articles and interviews, 1953–74), gathering the remainder of the uncollected texts and presenting them in chronological order. The French editions did not exhaustively collect all the available texts, omitting a few important early pieces, perhaps most notably Deleuze's one explicitly Jungian article,

'From Sacher-Masoch to Masochism' (1961). The English edition of *Desert Islands* already had the distinction of being the worst translation of Deleuze to date (surpassing *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*). It was riddled with errors of meaning and distorted Deleuze's style and tone ('Sure I do' for *sûrement*, 'cops' wherever possible for *police*). Where he appears musing and thoughtful in the French interviews, in the English he somehow mutates into the Dude from *The Big Lebowski*. In *Two Regimes of Madness*, the Semiotext(e) team appear to have lost the plot further, as not only are the Dudisms even more strident, but the editors have taken it upon themselves to omit one of the texts published in the French version of the book, a short piece from 1983 entitled 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat'. There is no mention of the fact that this text has disappeared. How has a 'radical' publisher like Semiotext(e) ended up censoring a text of this nature for English readers? The piece had already been translated by Timothy Murphy in 1998 in the journal *Discourse*, so its exclusion must be due to the changed political climate.

There are three other texts on Palestine which have been reprinted here, all containing similar thoughts and arguments, so the question is why has this particular one been excluded? What does it say that the others do not? The opening remarks to Deleuze's last text on Palestine, 'Stones', states his general contention throughout these interventions: 'Europe owes its Jews an infinite debt that it has not even begun to pay. Instead, an innocent people is being made to pay – the Palestinians.' Deleuze's interest as a philosopher in Palestine is focused around this large-scale historical problem. More influenced by Arnold Toynbee's view of history than by Marx's, Deleuze sees the Palestinians as a minority who are faced with a highly specific geopolitical 'challenge'. They do not find themselves in a typical colonial situation, but rather in a situation analogous to the American Indians, where their land is evacuated to make room for the settlers. How can a people resist this kind of disappearance?

'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat' is dated 'September 1983', the first anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It contains several claims that are less clearly stated in the other articles. For instance, Deleuze argues as follows:

The conquerors were those who had themselves suffered the greatest genocide in history. Of this genocide, the Zionists have made an *absolute evil*. But to transform the greatest genocide of history into an absolute evil is a religious and mystical vision, it is not a historical vision. It does not stop

evil; on the contrary it propagates it, it makes it fall on other innocents, it demands a reparation which makes these others suffer a part of what the Jews suffered (expulsion, ghettoization, disappearance as a people).

Elsewhere in *Two Regimes* (in 'Pacifism Today'), Deleuze makes similar remarks about the use of the notion of absolute evil in relation to the Holocaust, but only here does he directly relate this 'religious' idea to the continuation of injustice. Deleuze's reasoning here needs a proper analysis, which cannot be undertaken in the space of a review, but from the perspective of his philosophical work it seems clear that he thinks he has discovered in the suppression of the Palestinians an instance of 'repetition' in history. The problem is structured by the repetition and displacement of a debt. One immanent problem with this suggestion as it appears in this short text is that not enough is said about the various displacements generated by this 'repetition'. While Deleuze does say that genocide is not the aim of the Israelis, the sole reason he gives for this here is that the means of physical extermination is secondary to the end of geographical evacuation.

Further on, Deleuze cites approvingly Elias Sambar's suggestion that the complicity of the USA with Israel arises in part because 'the United States has rediscovered in Israel an aspect of its own history: the extermination of the Indians, which there as well, was only in part physical ... In many respects the Palestinians are the new Indians, the Indians of Israel.' Although he makes this latter analogy in one of the other texts on Palestine, the analogy between the USA and Israel is most explicit in the censored piece. He asserts that 'pushing back limits was the act of American capitalism, the American dream', and that this is 'taken up by Israel and the dream of a Greater Israel on Arab territory'. Again, the wheel of repetition and difference is whirring in the background.

The rationale for the title of the excluded piece emerges when Deleuze suggests that the Palestinian resistance movement could not have emerged were it not for the role played by 'a greater historical character, one who, we might say from a Western point of view, could have stepped out of Shakespeare; and that was Arafat'. Like Hegel, Deleuze had a penchant for finding dramatic structures and roles in historical narratives. Were he alive today, he might have compared bin Laden to a character from Shakespeare, or perhaps from a gothic or decadent fantasy. The 'grandeur' of Arafat is in part dramatic: 'In a surrounded Tripoli there is nothing more than the physical presence of Arafat among his own, in a sort of solitary grandeur.'

The serious question to be asked here concerns the precise difference between interpreting history as a drama, and interpreting it as a 'religious or mystical vision'. We are returned to the enduring problem of Deleuze's relationship to the theory of history. He clearly has an idea of history, as distinguished from 'becoming', but it needs to be reconstructed.


Beyond Deleuze's concern with the dialectic of repetition and displacement, however, there is no denying the powerful ethical and political animus driving his writings on Palestine. From an ethical point of view, Deleuze follows Arafat in classing the Sabra and Shatila massacres as 'shameful'. Shame becomes a dominant ethical category in Deleuze's later work. The political aim in these texts is to warn that a solution to the conflict cannot emerge without an independent PLO; independent, that is, of both existing state institutions and Islamic religious movements. He concludes by warning (this is 1983) that 'the Palestinian people will not lose its identity without creating in its place a double terrorism, of the state and religion, which will profit from its disappearance and render impossible any peaceful settlement with Israel.' The 'religious terrorism' to which Deleuze refers here seems to refer to movements within political Islam; he is highly critical of political Islam elsewhere in the book.

There could be a number of reasons why this text has been suppressed from *Two Regimes of Madness*. It would be genuinely enlightening if the editors' rationale could be made public. It is doubtful that it has been excluded because of the possible charge of anti-semitism. Deleuze's ideas about anti-semitism are expressed quite clearly in the accompanying essay entitled 'The Rich Jew'. If anything, the short piece entitled 'Stones' could be deemed more liable to attack from this direction, and that has been printed here. We have seen that there seem to be three main ideas that surface in 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat' which are not spelled out as clearly in the other texts: the criticism of the use of the religious idea of absolute evil in history, the analogy between the Palestinians and the American Indians, and the picture of Arafat as a tragic figure from Shakespeare. It must be one, some or all of these ideas which has resulted in the censorship of the text. Or perhaps we could even take advantage of Deleuze's philosophy and suggest that these three ideas form a problematic 'multiplicity' which cannot be represented directly to English or American readers. There is certainly food for thought here.

Unfortunately, it is hard to dissociate this specific problem of the omission of the Arafat text from the cultural imperialism that runs through the translations.

The youth-culture Americanisms almost completely suffocate Deleuze's style, to the point that you wonder what the strategy of the Semiotext(e) team actually is. One uncharitable interpretation would be that there is some kind of provocation at work. It would be an aggressive affirmation of contemporary pragmatism: we're all Americans now, even cheese-eating French philosophers. Less uncharitably, the translation could simply have been infected with the ubiquitous intemperateness that distinguishes Theory in the Gloveless Age. Why else would a sentence as innocuous as 'non, non, non' be translated as 'Don't be ridiculous'? The only charitable interpretation I can think of is that the Semiotext(e) team are just going all out to make Deleuze accessible for today's Americans. But the problem is that the Dude and his crew now appear to be losing their cool. They're throwing away texts that don't 'play well', when they should be doing the exact opposite and making available texts which ask one to think for oneself. Both *Desert Islands* and *Two Regimes of Madness* need to be re-edited and retranslated.

Christian Kerslake

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Trust

The Tavistock Clinic Training Programmes

**The Development of Psychoanalytic Theory:
Lecture Series (Ref. PC4)**

This lecture series offers a chronological overview of the development of psychoanalytic theory, including

- Two introductory lectures which situate psychoanalysis within a broad cultural and epistemological context.
- Systematic overview of key concepts in the development of Freud's theory.
- A detailed study of Freud's most important papers.
- Contemporary developments, including the work of Anna Freud, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Segal, Rosenfeld and Bion.
- Lectures on epistemology and psychoanalysis and the application of psychoanalysis to the understanding of socio-cultural issues.

The course will be of interest to anyone who would like to further their interest in psychoanalytic theory as well as those who have a professional interest in psychoanalysis.

Appeals both to those who are early on their understanding of psychoanalytic theory and to those who are already experienced but wish to deepen their knowledge of psychoanalytic theory.

To obtain a course outline and an application form visit www.tavi-port.org

Further information

Directorate of Training and Postgraduate Education
The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust
120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA
Tel: 020 8938 2314, Fax: 020 7447 3837
adultadmin@tavi-port.org

A copy of the academic prospectus 2006-2007 is available on request or visit www.tavi-port.org

King's College London

Centre of Medical Law and Ethics



University of London

PGDip/MA in Human Values and Contemporary Global Ethics

This PGDip/MA began in September 2004. You can study it full-time (1 year) or part-time (2 years). We aim to develop more rational thinking about human values and how they apply to the most urgent problems of the world. It is designed to appeal to anyone interested in thinking more deeply about global conflicts, global justice, or the kind of world we will pass on to future generations.

Applications welcome from any of the following:

- Graduates in subjects including philosophy, politics, economics, history or a social science;
- Those with relevant experience in an international aid agency or developing world NGO or government organisation;
- Those from the commercial sector with an interest in corporate social responsibility.

For more information, contact us on:

020 7848 2382 or 020 7848 2434

email cmle.enq@kcl.ac.uk cmle.enq@kcl.ac.uk

web www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/law/research/cmle/