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Debating Ground Zero

Architects, planners, ideas

Anthony Vidler

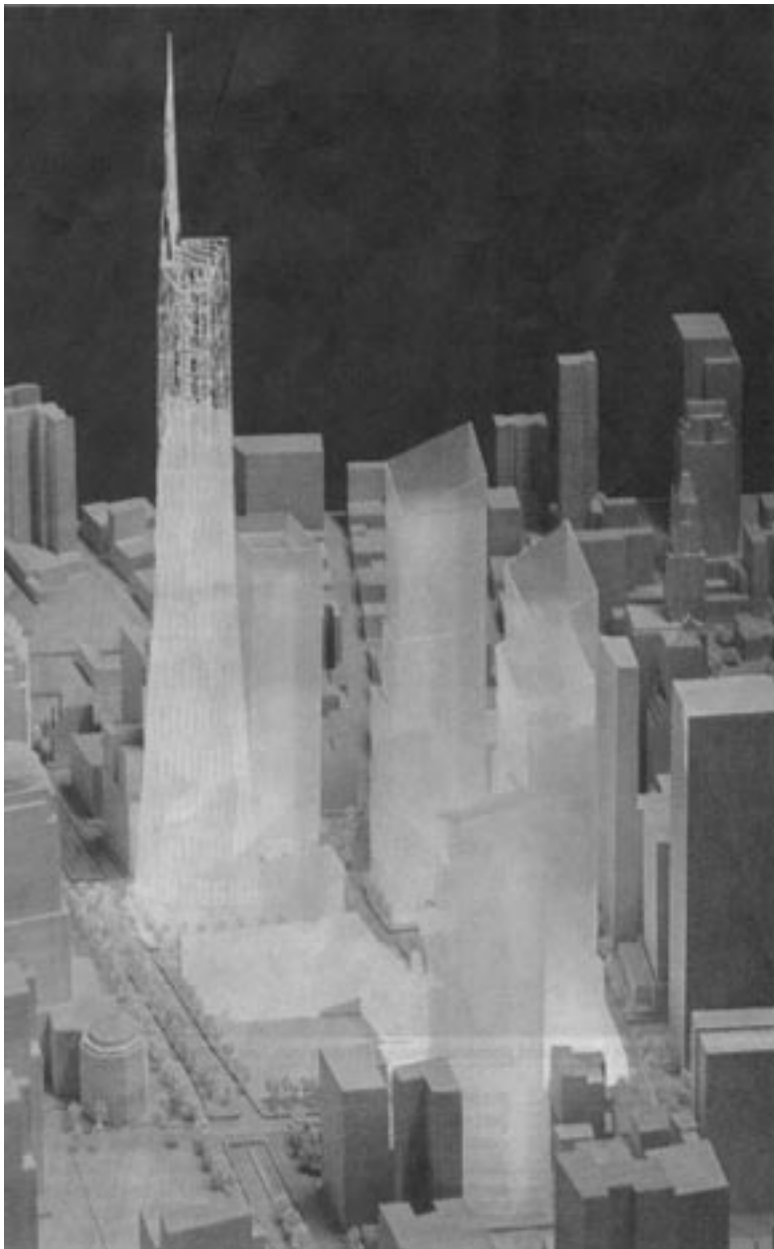
The story of architecture's role following the destruction of the World Trade Center (WTC) in September 2001 is on the one hand long and extremely complex, and on the other brief and simple. The long version involves numerous groups including architects, engineers, planners, developers, public officials at the national, state and local levels, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the newly appointed Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), public interest groups including the families of the victims, and many more. The short version, confirmed by recent events, has held true throughout the difficult and extended process of planning and design.

The short story is that just before the tragedy, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, under whose auspices the World Trade Center had been built and managed, had leased the buildings to a developer, Larry A. Silverstein, who in turn had appointed the architect David M. Childs, a principal of the office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in New York to study the renovation and upgrading of the buildings. As the story stands at present, Childs is still Silverstein's architect and adviser for planning the site, has redesigned Building Number Seven, which is now under construction, and has released his design for the tallest structure on the site, named at some point during the long story 'Freedom Tower'. This design is officially credited as an 'idea' provided by architect Daniel Libeskind, 'given form' by David Childs. Childs will probably remain the architect of record for this building, which will be built if Silverstein recoups enough insurance money. Meanwhile the Port Authority has efficiently reopened transit stations on the site, and has pushed ahead in reconstruction below ground level. Other buildings on the site will be designed, and possibly constructed by architects like Santiago Calatrava, Jean Nouvel, Norman Foster and others. This is the story that many critics had assumed would prevail from the outset.

The long story, which will not be fully documented for some time, offers a different spin on these facts. It runs like this. Immediately following the disaster, George E. Pataki, the Governor of New York State, under whose jurisdiction the Port Authority lies, together with that of Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor of New York, established the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation to coordinate all aspects of the rebuilding effort. The Corporation then commissioned six preliminary planning studies from the New York architectural firm of Beyer Blinder Bell and others, including architects Peterson/Littenberg. At the public unveiling of these plans in July 2002 there emerged an unexpected groundswell of public opposition, supported by architects and critics disappointed by the apparently lacklustre nature of the designs. It was at this moment that it became clear that what was needed was, rather than a 'dull' plan, an image of inspiring architecture, one that would be fitting to the momentous task of rebuilding,

memorializing, and responding heroically to the attacks – or that was certainly the tenor of the reaction. Accordingly an ‘ideas’ competition, dubbed an ‘Innovative Design Study’, was launched in October 2002 by the LMDC, which called for teams of architects, engineers and planners to put forward their notions of what a reconstructed WTC would look like. Following a call for proposals, some six teams were selected by an independent jury out of 406 submissions. To these, the LMDC added a seventh team, that of Peterson/Littenberg, the original consultants. The six teams comprised single firms – Norman Foster and Partners, Daniel Libeskind Studio, and (interestingly enough) Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) – as well as dramatically new collaborations fabricated for the occasion with names like THINK Design, United Architects, and the ‘Home Team’ with New York architects Richard Meier, Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey and Steven Holl. The results of this second stage were unveiled in December 2002 with great fanfare in the World Financial Center Winter Garden adjacent to the site, and public debate began to assess their merits.

The projects were distinguished among themselves by their identification with one or another modernist avant-garde architectural language, with the exception of Peterson/Littenberg’s, which was formulated in a ‘thirties-something’ style favoured by the New Urbanists. Norman Foster proposed twin high-tech towers leaning towards each other at



the summit – the ‘kissing towers’ as they were dubbed, as if the original WTC were engaged in a love-fest. Meier–Eisenman–Gwathmey–Holl proposed a large-scale grid building, which was variously described as a waffle-iron or a griddle, but which in its incompletion also resembled the shards of the WTC façade as they had come to rest on the ground. This was perhaps the only project seriously to consider the ground plan of the site, through to the river, as well as refusing, in its sober abstraction, the high-volume rhetoric of ‘aspiration’ and memorialization common to the other schemes. The Skidmore team proposed a virtual forest of towers, each slightly warped with respect to the other, as if a large-scale cornfield were blowing in the wind. United Architects designed what they described as a ‘cathedral’ with four huge towers bending towards each other above Ground Zero, to form a Gothic-style crossing in glass and steel. The THINK group proposed several different schemes, later edited into one, the central motif of which was an open-lattice tower with various cultural institutions inserted at different levels. Unkind critics dubbed it the ‘skeleton’. Finally, Libeskind designed an expressionist complex around the

‘bathtub’ or concrete foundation of the WTC towers, with the retaining ‘slurry’ wall revealed as a memorial site. Just before the final judging, the Skidmore Owings & Merrill team pulled out of the competition, no doubt fearing a conflict of interest with David Childs, Silverstein’s architect.

In the event two projects were selected by the LMDC for further development – the THINK Design group’s ‘World Cultural Center’ tower and Libeskind’s dramatic ice palace called ‘Memory Foundations’. Rumour has it that the committees of the LMDC favoured the THINK group’s solution to the end, recommending it to the Governor with near unanimity. The Governor, however, perhaps mindful of the victims’ families’ need for memorialization over renewal, preferred the insistent narrative of memory propounded by Libeskind, and proclaimed him the winner. No doubt his adoption of a Caligari-style language, with angular and crystalline surfaces spiralling upwards towards a new tower – the Freedom Tower as he called it – proved especially symbolic of destruction and trauma.

The issue then arose as to what precisely the role of Libeskind’s dramatic design was to be in the process of rebuilding. After all, the competition was for ‘ideas’ regarding the planning of the site, not for the eventual architect of the reconstruction. Silverstein still had his architect, and made it clear that he intended to keep him; the Port Authority had already begun work to shore up the foundation walls of the site below ground, work that was already negating Libeskind’s notion of revealing them for perpetuity. After much legal wrangling and public and private negotiation, Libeskind was appointed ‘Master Planner’ for the site, and asked by Pataki to collaborate with David Childs on the design of the tallest tower indicated in the Libeskind plan. The difficulties of this ‘spirited’ collaboration, as the architects themselves called it, were enthusiastically documented in the press as the architects wrangled over the form of the tower. Following various highly publicized battles, a solution was brokered by Governor Pataki, and released on Friday, 19 December 2003.

The unveiled tower is markedly different from that originally envisaged by Libeskind, and takes the form of a torqued structure, conceived in collaboration with the engineer Guy Nordenson, topped by an open lattice containing an energy-producing wind farm, and a spire that somehow tried to add a Libeskind stamp to the final effect. Libeskind’s guidelines, in his role of ‘Master Planner’, had been adhered to, but it was Child’s architecture that finally prevailed. The final design was, indeed, remarkably similar to that suggested to Childs immediately after the collapse by architect Richard Dattner, and later elaborated by Nordenson for a group project sponsored by Herbert Muschamp in the *New York Times Magazine* in September 2002. The only remaining question is whether Pataki will be able to fast-track the construction process in time for President Bush to lay the foundation stone at the Republican Convention in August 2004.

Thus, despite all the architectural hype surrounding the process, and the real (and passionate) involvement by the public in the discussion of architecture over the last few months, business is as usual in New York. In this sense, the shortest story of all would tell of the destruction of two gigantic towers, already in 1964 the all-but extinct dinosaurs of the modern skyscraper age, and their subsequent rebuilding forty years later, even taller than before, a rebuilding unthinkable outside the context of the emotional and financial response to the tragedy.

What, then, of the extraordinary publicity and apparent public interest accorded architecture during this process? Prepared by the ‘Bilbao effect’, and by other signature buildings used to rekindle interest in cultural institutions, the press, followed by the public, seized on the symbolic role of architecture as an easy way to image and respond to the difficult post-9/11 conditions. And it is true that architecture, at least for the moment, has had an unprecedented position on the front page. The more than 100,000

who flocked to the Winter Garden to view the seven proposals, glittering and translucent behind their vitrines, like so many mannequins in a department store window, were truly interested; and certainly public expectations for the winning design to be built were raised high. Perhaps too high if it is now perceived that the design as conceived by Libeskind bears little relation to his chosen scheme; if all the rhetoric that surrounded it, rhetoric of memory, memorial, freedom and light – supposedly embedded in its forms – were seen to disappear beneath the pragmatism of developer's architecture.

To this point Libeskind has played (publicly at least) his part and backed the scheme, but it is evident that if he had harboured any hopes of emerging as the architect of record, these are now dashed, as are any remnants of his original idea. With the 'Wedge of Light' having proved unfeasible, the bathtub filled by transit structures and reinforcement, the 'spiral' of towers looking more and more truncated each day, and the only remaining expression of his angled and chamfered Freedom Tower an easily detachable 'spire' raised solely in order to make this (for a moment) the 'tallest' building in the world, he emerges actually and legally as the 'Master Planner' he was appointed to be, rather than the Master Architect he aspired to be. The loss for architecture is not so much that the final tower will be without qualities – as a single building it will demonstrate all the elegant efficiency characteristic of SOM – but that the coherence intimated by Libeskind's original design will vanish.

And therein lies the debate: should architecture continue, as in the past, to give form to single 'masterpiece' objects, or is there a role for the architecture of urban design that might, as also in the past (witness Rockefeller Center), give shape to neighbourhoods? The conclusion of the WTC experience would seem to reinforce the former role: the disappointment would lie in its having, for a brief moment, offered the possibility of testing the latter.

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Anti-Oedipus – thirty years on

Éric Alliez

I, for my own part, made a sort of move into politics around May 1968...

Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*

This title was suggested to me some months ago by my best enemy – or my best fiend, to paraphrase Werner Herzog – who also happens to be a very good friend: Alain Badiou. It was originally intended for a lecture I was to deliver under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Philosophy which Badiou recently set up at the École Normale Supérieure. The idea was to use the occasion to pursue our dispute – or *chicane*, to use a favourite expression of Badiou's – a dispute instigated by the publication in 1997 of his book *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*.

Let it be noted in passing, since I have been invited here under the sign of a *Radical Philosophy*,* that this dispute prolonged a problematic which I had previously addressed in an intervention entitled *Of the Impossibility of Phenomenology: On Contemporary French Philosophy*, first published in 1994.¹ That intervention was directed at the institutional partition of the philosophical world into two blocs, phenomenological and analytic, and also sought to counter the repercussions of this division within France. In the book I showed that, ever since Husserl, this partition has been governed by an axiom of complementarity between the 'phenomenology' of the failure of logical formalism and the 'analysis' of the collapse of intentionality, in its theological reality as well as its philosophical impossibility. On this basis, let me suggest that a philosophical field *with a grip on the present* – in other words, *contemporary philosophy as an ontology of the present* – could be and must be thought starting from the idea of a maximal ontological tension between Deleuze and Badiou. In my view, Deleuze and Badiou constitute the extreme polarities of the contemporary domain of French philosophy, as the latter articulates its materialist necessity into singularities and multiplicities.

But we are indeed 'Thirty Years On' and a kind of fallout from a version of the contemporary 'made in Austria' (but not only, since it was also a question of the postmodern dictatorship of the curator), leading to my eviction from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (where I had taught since 1997), forced me to decline Badiou's generous invitation.

Badiou's invitation could not but engender a stark and cutting quarrel. As you know, in his book Badiou erects an image of Deleuze as a metaphysician of the One, whose essential *monotony* – *in itself indifferent to differences*, subtracted as it is from the 'inexhaustible variety of the concrete' and from the anarchic confusion of the world – can and indeed must lead us to dismiss the works coauthored with Félix Guattari, beginning with *Anti-Oedipus*. It is only after having carried out this operation that it will be possible, according to Badiou, to re-establish the truth of Deleuze-Thought against its ambient image, the image of Deleuze as the advocate of a liberation of the anarchic multiplicity of desires. But it is also, and inevitably, only once Deleuze has been reduced to the monotony of the One that one will be able to oppose this 'truth' to the *Nouvelle Alliance Deleuze-Guattari*, to paraphrase the original French title of Prigogine and Stengers's *Order Out of Chaos*.²

Badiou's operation cannot but pose a serious problem, on two levels whose difference is entirely relative.

First, at the level of Deleuze's trajectory, given that Deleuze himself presents his encounter with Guattari – in a horizon of life and thought opened up by May '68, what he called 'an irruption, of a becoming in its pure state'³ – as the reality condition for the constitution of *his own* philosophy. (Hence the necessity of returning to what happens between *Logic of Sense*

* This paper was written for and delivered at the *Radical Philosophy* conference held at Birkbeck College, London, 29 November 2003.

(1969) and *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) – which is what I will do all too briefly at the end of this article.)

Second, at the strictly speaking political level, whose essential ambiguity in Deleuze is condemned by Badiou. In Badiou's eyes, this ambiguity is corroborated by the fact that politics as such is not endowed by Deleuze with any kind of theoretical autonomy, thereby leading to the permanent threat of a spontaneous deviation or drift (*dérive*), embodied by what he dubs the '*anarcho-désirants*': what Lenin long ago branded with the name of 'leftism' and which tends to reduce Deleuze's declared vitalism to the last incarnation of Romanticism – in other words, into a natural mysticism of the vitalist expression of the world, as Badiou asserted in his review of *The Fold* from 1989.⁴ But, in this case, it is the very unity of Deleuzian thought that finds itself gravely compromised after *Anti-Oedipus*, precisely to the extent that the latter was, as Deleuze remarked, 'from beginning to end a book of political philosophy'.⁵

What is more, it is hard to fathom how the biomachinic conception of desire in *Anti-Oedipus* – which depicts desire as coextensive with the lines of flight of the social domain – could ever translate anti-humanism into, as Badiou writes, 'the infinite and inhuman resource of the One', in which 'everything is always "already-there"'.⁶ Unless, of course, we wish to argue that Deleuzian leftism was nothing but a pure opportunism and that 'Mitterrandism' revealed the underlying truth of this 'soft rebellion' – to speak like Guy Lardreau in his anti-Deleuzian pamphlet,⁷ a text inspired through and through by Badiou's decisionism.

In an article replying to some objections that his book did not fail to provoke, Badiou makes the following remark: 'How is it that politics, for Deleuze, is not an autonomous form of thought, a singular section of chaos, unlike art, science and philosophy? This point alone testifies to our divergence, and everything could be seen to follow from it.'⁸ In light of this remark, it might be interesting briefly to return to the dispute, taking our cue from the way it was prolonged by Badiou in the two books of politics that follow his *Deleuze*, books in which what is at stake is investing singularity qua operator of universalism; in other words, addressing the question: 'What precisely is a universal singularity that is valid for everyone?' These two books are *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* and *On Metapolitics* – a *metapolitics* of the dethronement of difference which is to be opposed to the *micropolitical* principle that presides over the question of 'becoming-revolutionary'

in Deleuze–Guattari following *Anti-Oedipus*. Having said that, it is imperative to remark straightaway that what Badiou's Paulinian allegiance rejects is precisely the anti-Oedipal affirmation of desiring production as *the social power of difference within a becoming-minoritarian*, as well as the manner in which this desiring production refuses, de jure and de facto, the principle of a separate sphere for politics. No wonder, then, that Badiou's *Saint Paul* advocates 'love' as that which militant faith is capable of, when the latter seeks to extricate itself from the 'living autonomy of desire'. By the same token, the theorem of the militant amounts to a subjective fidelity to the event of separation from the world, sustained by the universal communication of a subtractive foundation which can conceive of desire only as a Lack of the Law, in order to impose upon the subject, by way of a process of subjectivation, the universal grace of Signifier. Let us recall, in this regard, Saint Paul's famous pronouncement, from Romans 7 (7–23): 'I have known sin only through the Law.' Whence the following theorem: Lacanian psychoanalysis is the symptom of the refoundation of universalism, when philosophy puts itself under the metapolitical condition of creating the event of Nothing addressed to All.

What is of greatest importance here is less the predictable and stringent alternative vis-à-vis Deleuze and Deleuze–Guattarianism (immediately collapsed into one another, as is only right, within the dispute) than the prescriptive character of this universalism of the Subject-of-Truth declared by Badiou *for all, and for everyone* who seeks the elimination of the *leftism of the party of desire* (to speak like Guy Lardreau, who is wholly faithful to the other party, the party, I quote, 'of lack, of the One, of knowledge, of war'⁹). I say 'prescriptive' because the universal is as such *the truth of the subject who declares the void of being* – from which Badiou knows how to draw *immanently* all the necessary consequences. After his *Deleuze*, it is no surprise that the militant objective of Badiou's *Saint Paul* is to unfold the logic of the break vis-à-vis the movement of vitalist affirmation by demonstrating *the inconsistency of becoming* with respect to *the excess of the Real over reality*. This can only be grasped via a Lacan who posits the Real in the predication of the no (*non*) and of the name (*nom*) as subject-intervention.

As the founder of the figure of the militant, 'Paul's unprecedented gesture is to subtract truth from the clutches of communitarianism'. How extraordinarily contemporary! By involving the *for all*, the break of universal singularity with regard to the *identitarian singularity* of a closed subset is bereft of an alterna-

tive, given *its* description of the present state of the ‘communitarianization’ of a public space fragmented into closed identities delivering so many new territories over to the market. Moreover, Badiou cannot write these lines without also inviting Deleuze to this wedding between capitalist logic and identitarian logic, a wedding whose stakes are precisely to refuse emancipatory reality to any kind of *becoming-minoritarian*, as Deleuze remarked – ‘exactly’, Badiou says, ‘capitalist deterritorialization needs a *constant* reterritorialization’. The exactitude to which Badiou refers is entirely nominal, and ultimately represents a complete misunderstanding of Deleuze, since the reterritorialization of capitalism is no longer practised upon this *absolute* form of deterritorialization without any assignable limit, whether external or internal, a form of deterritorialization that capitalism can only put to work by subjecting it to the expanded reproduction of its own immanent limits.

Furthermore, *becoming* is no longer related to flows of desire that flee, flows that cause the process of capitalist valorization itself to flee – for Badiou becoming turns out to be purely and simply the occasion for the ‘mercantile investments’ to which it gives rise. This ultimately leads Badiou to accept the point of view of Capital, fully aware that desire reduced to the primitive accumulation of identitarian reterritorializations under the name of ‘communitarianism’ is no longer Capitalism and Schizophrenia – it’s Capitalism and Paranoia. *The minoritarian is frozen into the identitarian*. As Badiou writes: ‘What *inexhaustible potential* [*devenir*] for mercantile investments in this upsurge – taking the form of communities demanding recognition and *so-called cultural singularities* – of

women, homosexuals, the disabled, Arabs!’¹⁰ Recall that Deleuze and Guattari’s question is that of a political ontology of (‘almost imperceptible’) becomings which never cease to undo the sedimentation of identities (‘the primacy of lines of flight’) and to produce ‘strikes’, sudden variations that affect every system by not allowing it to become homogeneous, variations as unpredictable to the sociologist as they are to the militant. Thus, as Deleuze remarks in *Dialogues*, there also exists ‘a revolutionary-becoming which is not the same as the future of the revolution, and which does not necessarily happen through militants’.¹¹ This is because the constructions of the militant tend to cut themselves off from the ‘socio-cultural’ expressions of the world and from the propagation of the molecular becomings of real multiplicities. Or again: *Badiou contra Deleuze is Durkheim contra Tarde*. Except that the times have clearly changed, and the Deleuze resists better today than the Tarde did yesterday.¹²

Everything I’ve said up to now is intended less as an (excessively prolix) introduction to this article placed under the sign of a *Radical Philosophy*, than as a first *response* to the question: What has become of *Anti-Oedipus* today, thirty years after that ‘furious article’ published in the aftermath of ’68 by Badiou, under the combative title: ‘The Flow and the Party’ (‘Le flux et le parti’)?¹³ In terms of the concerns it mobilizes on the intra-philosophical plane as well as on the non-philosophical one – with regard to the real multiplicities of the anti-capitalist movement and its collective assemblages (in their difference from political ‘organizations’, not least Badiou’s own *Organisation politique*) – everything points to the conclusion that *Anti-Oedipus* has *never stopped resisting, feeding*



on the very repression which it has never ceased to provoke. This is true on both levels, intra-philosophical and non-philosophical; two levels which are ultimately one, if the principle that presides over the writing of this book-flow is the one which was perfectly summed up by Michel Foucault in the Preface to the American edition, in a formula that bears a stunning affinity to the sensibility of Félix Guattari: 'Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action', in the desire that the 'process of overturning the established order' may deploy itself within political practice in an ever more intense way.¹⁴

Now, in the constant *vis-à-vis* Deleuze advocated by Badiou as the defining trait of his metapolitics, we clearly witness a return of the repressed – to wit, the return of the *Anti-Oedipus*, a text which he never stops countering with his own politics of Being and Event, after having purged politics from Deleuzian 'philosophy'. But we also observe, inextricably, a total disavowal of the Deleuzo-Guattarian thesis concerning desire, the thesis that '*desire only exists when assembled or machined [machiné]*' and that one cannot 'grasp or conceive of a desire outside a determinate assemblage, on a plane which is not preexistent but which must itself be constructed', in a process of liberation *which never unifies parts into a WHOLE*. Here we must quote the lines with which Deleuze introduces this statement. He writes: 'it is objected that by releasing desire from lack and law, the only thing we have left to refer to is a state of nature, a desire which would be natural and spontaneous reality. We say quite the opposite: *desire only exists when assembled or machined*.' Whence the conclusion that desire '*is constructivist, not at all spontaneist*', and the following question: 'How can the assemblage be refused the name it deserves, "desire"?'¹⁵ (Allow me to recall that the concept of 'desiring machines' will turn into that of 'assemblages' pure and simple after the *Kafka* book, which can be regarded as a bridge between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*). This is the key thesis of *Anti-Oedipus*, according to which there can be no Expression (of the play of the world) without the Construction of assemblages of desire or 'desiring machines', which free Life in the *processual (and non-totalizing)* identity between production and product. This identity is precisely opposed to:

1. The 'natural mysticism' initially denounced by Badiou under the name of Deleuze, ignoring the fact that Deleuze himself will only evoke a 'plane of Nature' to convey better the point that we are dealing with 'a nature which must be con-

structed with all the fabrications of the plane of immanence' (in other words, the irrelevance of the nature/artifice distinction undermines this naturalist expressionism).¹⁶

2. The 're-accentuated Platonism' into which Badiou wishes to dissolve Deleuze by registering the production of differences under the heading of simulacra (in other words, a constructivism deprived of ontological reality).

Yet inversely, as well as reciprocally, and this time against the grain of the mathematical ontology of Badiou, which declares the indifference of truth to the flow of the world, Construction without Expression is *void* of any real becoming, of any *real-desire* whatsoever. So that if 'the objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself', 'desiring production is one and the same thing as social production'¹⁷ – by virtue of the biopolitical identity between Expression and Construction, an identity which gives body to the theory of machinic desire and the affirmation of a *universal contingency*, according to which: 'In desiring machines everything functions at the same time, but amid hiatuses and ruptures, breakdowns and failures, stalling and short circuits, distances and fragmentations, within a sum that never succeeds in bringing its various parts together so as to form a whole.'¹⁸

This explains why *Anti-Oedipus* adamantly affirms that 'we cannot accept the idealist category of "expression"'.¹⁹ After all, production as process overflows its notion by relating to desire qua immanent principle – not the principle of a given/giver of flows which it would *naturally or spontaneously* express, but rather of a flow-cut system that desire *engineers*, in such a way that the cut implies what it cuts, as a *universal continuity expressed from an artificial 'Nature'* towards *schizophrenic productivity*. Lacking this continuum, this *real* implication of the world singularized and *mechanically engineered* in each of its cuts-flows, the cut would count as a section (*découpe*), which is to say a separation (from 'common' reality),²⁰ in accordance with the principle of a post-existential *decision (decidere: to separate)* constantly put forward by the Lacanizing philosopher (the Real as the indifference of the pure event). As Deleuze and Guattari write, 'It is not at all a question of the cut considered as a separation from reality'. With *Anti-Oedipus*, the ontological monism of Deleuzian biophilosophy becomes the biopolitical fact of the machinic system of cuts and flows, which relates the univocal plane of the living to desire as a 'universal' process of production. We thereby move from biophilosophical expressionism – such as it implies (after Spinoza) production qua affective

affirmation in immanence, and (with Bergson) the creative affirmation of the full differentiating reality of the virtual – to biopolitical constructivism, which allows one *in the present* to invest the created from the point of view of creation. It is this passage which makes it possible to understand Deleuze's assertion, in the interview on *Anti-Oedipus* (reprinted in *Negotiations*), according to which up to that point he had worked 'solely with concepts, rather timidly in fact. Félix had talked to me about what he was already calling "desiring machines".... So I myself thought he'd gone further than I had [*c'était lui qui était en avance sur moi*].'²¹ In this phrase the *advance* of *Anti-Oedipus* is played out, the advance of a machinic ontology over the transcendental, as the latter is developed into a structuralism (of the kind that makes its appearance in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*).²² The machine will be defined on the basis of the cut–flow system which introduces production into desire by guaranteeing its real (and non-'symbolic') primacy qua immanent constitutive process.

Unparalleled, except perhaps by the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*, it is the masterful opening chapter of *Anti-Oedipus* which links the philosophy of multiplicity – employed as a vital substantive that 'goes beyond the multiple just as much as the one' (contrary to the kind of reading which will be offered by Badiou) – to the politics of desiring production, a politics that can be understood as the anoedipal reality condition of philosophy, between capitalism and schizophrenia. This all comes down to 'schizophrenizing' philosophy by treating writing as the machinic expression of constitutive desire, an expression that carries the real to the point at which it is effectively produced in bodies that are both biological and collective, and imply the constitution of a field of immanence or 'body without organs' (BwO) defined by zones of intensity, thresholds, gradients, flows and so on. (The BwO is to be considered as the very body of desire, as its purest Expression, so absolutely inseparable from what it can do that it relates back to an unliveable power, a power which is as such the pre-condition of every real experience of desire, driven by the necessity of Constructions that cuts the BwO *in itself*.) Whence the 'generational' effect of this immense provocation – which no longer dissociates ontological production from the being of the micropolitical expression–construction of singularities – upon the way of thinking of a lifestyle from which the intellectual Left and the political Left and extreme Left have yet to recover.

The project laid out in *Anti-Oedipus* begins by subverting the Freudo-Marxism which was fashion-

able at the time, by confronting structuralism head on (lines of flight are primary qua process, contrary to structure conceived as the static genesis of the unconscious and the *socius*, and implying a complete determination of singular points), before moving on to criticize the philosophies of 'resistance' by establishing the biopolitical primacy of desire qua 'conjugation and dissociation of flows' against the Foucauldian thesis of a biopower whose *dispositifs* would in some sense be constitutive. (Coming first, as they do, 'lines of flight ... are not phenomena of resistance or counter-attack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization [*points de creation et de deterritorialisation*]').²³) Biopolitics is thereby affirmed as the infinite tension that affects a process of constitution which is launched against all the strata of organization that block becomings, which cause them to fall back on an anti-production that functions from the inside out (the psychoanalytic Oedipus, a State which turns into the Entrepreneurial State of the society of control) – and all this, not in the name of any kind of spontaneism or marginalism, but, *on the contrary*, by virtue of the dynamic of real multiplicities, as it is determined by the plane of immanence of desire qua social and intellectual power of production–creation. In this respect, and in accordance with the principle of a universal history revisited in 'Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men' (the longest chapter in *Anti-Oedipus*), it is legitimate 'to understand retrospectively all history in the light of capitalism';²⁴ a capitalism which does not put to work the decoded and deterritorialized flows it organizes and axiomatizes without, by the same token, liberating the forces of desire animating it, forces it must counteract by reintroducing the most merciless transcendence into the immanence of a person who has been rendered 'private' (which is to say 'deprived') in order to keep these forces in a bound state.

It follows that a fantastic death instinct always threatens to transform the Oedipal triangle – which invests the social reterritorialization of 'democratic' capitalism into an 'intimate' territoriality of the paranoid type – into a 'micro-fascism'. Whereas the investment of 'the transverse multiplicities that convey desire as a molecular phenomenon',²⁵ a phenomenon which constitutes the subjective-machinic essence of production, is affirmed in the *flight* and secession from the order of *representation*, which organizes representation into an exterior and an interior (into social reproduction and political representation, on the one hand, and infinite subjective representation, on the other). 'Leaving, fleeing, but by causing more flights'²⁶ through a pragmatics of collective assemblages which

overturns the apparatuses of blockage and control, imposing upon them schizzes that turn against capitalist anti-production and undermine the state's forms of sovereignty. The fact that this schizoid investment of the non-separated ensemble of the social field is tantamount to a reopening of historicity in the production of new, common modes of life, points to the caesura vis-à-vis any utopian communitarian project, and highlights the difference between the 'schizo' and 'becoming-revolutionary': a difference between 'the one who flees' and 'the one who knows how to make what he is fleeing flee'. For, as Deleuze–Guattari declare, 'the schizo is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process – in terms of which the schizo is merely the interruption, or the continuation in the void – is the potential for revolution.'²⁷ This is a potential which is



just as much anti-state as anti-party, as is obvious when *Anti-Oedipus* 'schizophrenizes' the Marx who was fascinated by the machinic economy of deterritorialized flows, when it overflows any 'structural' form of Marxism in order to instigate the flight of capitalist machinery on the basis of a *rupture of causality* which is also a *passage to the limit*, expressing the ontological event of the desire-that-produces (in) a *de-individualizing* subjective mutation. It is this reversal of power, tantamount to a reopening of the possible, which is invariably accompanied by a 'collective exile' ('desire is an exile', Deleuze–Guattari write)²⁸ that

takes place within the very time wherein one experiences the constitutive character of desiring production at the level of new social, intellectual and scientific forces, such as they define the machinic society of the General Intellect (to return to the key expression of the *Grundrisse*, in which is played out the 'Marxism' that Deleuze and Guattari lay claim to – as well as their convergence, on this point, with Negri).

These are so many elements whose acute resonance with the new cooperative spaces created by the anti-war and alternative-globalization multitudes, with becomings-minoritarian which proceed by 'inclusive disjunctions' without any resulting totality – leads us to affirm that the actuality of this work of political philosophy (and anti-philosophy), which refuses to propose any 'political program'²⁹ whatsoever, is today given in and by *the vitality and constructivist vitalism of the movement itself*. What is at stake is the collective perception and evaluation which are in a certain sense implied by Deleuze's 'cooperation' with Guattari. Couldn't we say that *Anti-Oedipus* effectively seals the moment in which Deleuzian biophilosophy becomes biopolitics, by shifting onto the plane of immanence the relative deterritorialization of capital in order to render it absolute and attain the critical point of the liberation of immanence in the here and now? In so doing, *Anti-Oedipus* would effectuate the juncture with this 'new people' which poses *in vivo* the expressionist–constructivist revolution of desire as the infinite movement of Constitution *in-the-making* against a Capital whose limit draws ever nearer. To put it in other words, it is *for* and *by* these new generations – to which Deleuze and Guattari never stopped referring in the interviews they gave at the time of the book's publication – that *Anti-Oedipus* determines, on the basis of the thesis of a constitutive desire, *the constitutive relationship of contemporary philosophy to non-philosophy*. That is what thirty years on and most often – how could it be otherwise? – by a kind of negative determination,³⁰ continues to be referred to as the *Pensée-68*, 1968-thought: because *it* instigates the becoming-non-philosopher of the philosopher, whereby non-philosophy becomes in the present 'the earth and people of philosophy';³¹ because *it* imposes becoming as the concept deploying itself through the power of a 'milieu', wrenching history away from itself in order to create the new, rather than reproducing death on an ever more expanded scale.

Here lies the greatness of Deleuze, when he indicates the 'turn' of *Anti-Oedipus* as the moment of the constitution of a philosophy – his own constitution, caught up and freed by the New Alliance with Guattari

– which does not work through concepts alone, but moves beyond the pure form of the determinable ‘in thought’.

This is what the philosopher christened the *ridiculousness of the abstract thinker* in the *Logic of Sense*, when it was a matter of attaining ‘this politics, this complete and utter guerilla’ required by the schizoid irruption of the Body without Organs, which came to ‘tear the structuralist surface’ of the ‘psychoanalysis of sense’, thereby leading it to a ‘progressive and creative disorganization’ inscribed ‘in the physical presence of bodies’.³²

That is what *Anti-Oedipus* tells us thirty years on: that we cannot oppose the Hyperstructuralism of a Badiou with any kind of ‘weak’ (*debole*) Post-structuralism making room for a spontaneous democracy of desire and its pop-philosophical flights of fancy – but rather with a Biopolitics of Multitudes whose socially constitutive character is the ontological fact that sustains the constructivism of desire. The latter prohibits, *in vivo*, any projection of these questions into a ‘philosophical eternity’ or into a ‘politics of Grace’ under the guidance of the militant.

Translated by Alberto Toscano

Notes

1. Éric Alliez, *De l'impossibilité de la phénoménologie. Sur la philosophie française contemporaine*, Vrin, Paris, 1994.
2. I. Prigogine and I. Stenger, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*, Bantam, Toronto, 1984.
3. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. M. Joughin, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 171.
4. Alain Badiou, ‘Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*’, trans. T. Sowley, in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, ed. C.V. Boundas and D. Olkowski, Routledge, London, 1994, pp. 51–69.
5. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 170.
6. Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. L. Burchill, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 2000, p. 12.
7. Guy Lardreau, *L'exercice différé de la philosophie. A l'occasion de Deleuze*, Verdier, Lagrasse, 1999.
8. Alain Badiou, ‘Un, multiple, multiplicité(s)’, *multitudes* 1, 2000, p. 196; translated as ‘One, Multiple, Multiplicities’, in *Theoretical Writings*, ed. R. Brassier and A. Toscano, Continuum, London, 2004.
9. Lardreau, *L'exercice différé de la philosophie*, p. 84.
10. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. R. Brassier, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2003, p. 10 (my emphasis).
11. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, p. 2.
12. See Éric Alliez, ‘Tarde et le problème de la constitution’, preface to Gabriel Tarde, *Monadologie et sociologie*,

Synthélabo, Paris, 1999; as well as the special dossier in *multitudes* 7, 2001.

13. In *La Situation actuelle sur le front de la philosophie*, Cahiers Yenan No. 4, ed. A. Badiou and S. Lazarus, Maspéro, Paris, 1977, pp. 24–41. See also the opening passages of Badiou’s *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*.
14. Michel Foucault, ‘Preface’, in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Viking, New York, 1977, pp. xiv, xii; French text in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. 3, Gallimard, Paris, 1994, pp. 134–5.
15. *Dialogues*, pp. 96, 70. See also p. 103: ‘Desire is always assembled and fabricated [*machiné*], on a plane of immanence or composition which must itself be constructed at the same time as desire assembles and fabricates.’
16. *Dialogues*, p. 98.
17. *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 26–7, 30.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
20. Deleuze and Guattari write unequivocally that ‘these breaks should in no way be considered as a separation from reality’, *ibid.*, p. 36.
21. *Negotiations*, p. 13.
22. See Gilles Deleuze, ‘How Do We Recognize Structuralism’, written in 1967 and published in 1972, in which Deleuze writes: ‘Structuralism cannot be separated from a new transcendental philosophy’; in Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974*, trans. Michael Taormina, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles and New York, 2003, pp. 170–92.
23. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Athlone, London, 1988, pp. 530–31, n39. See the letter that Deleuze sent to Foucault in 1977, published in 1994 under the title ‘Desire and Pleasure’ (now reprinted in *Foucault and his Interlocutors*, ed. A.I. Davidson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997, pp. 187–8). In this text he writes: ‘if *dispositifs* of power are in some way constitutive, there can only be phenomena of “resistance” against them’. Deleuze will oppose to this the primacy of lines of flight which ‘imply no return to nature, they are points of deterritorialization in *agencements* of desire’.
24. *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 140.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 315 (translation modified).
27. *Ibid.*, p. 341 (translation modified).
28. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
29. This is the conclusion of *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 380.
30. Let us not forget that one of the coauthors of the book *La Pensée 68* – Luc Ferry – is currently France’s Minister of National Education.
31. This theme is developed in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchill, London, Verso, 1994, in the chapter entitled ‘Geophilosophy’.
32. See Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, ed. C.V. Boundas, trans. M. Lester with C. Stivale, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990, series 13 and 22. On the very singular status of *Logic of Sense* in Deleuze’s oeuvre, allow me to refer to my ‘The Body without Organs’ Condition, or, The Politics of Sensation’, in *Biographie der Organlosen Körper*, ed. É. Alliez and E. Samsonow, Turia + Kant, Vienna, 2003.

Fixing meaning

Intertextuality, inference and the horizon of the publishable

Rachel Malik

What is reading? Recent attempts to characterize it have conceded, and in many cases celebrated, its elusiveness as an experience. In Michel De Certeau's words, reading, unlike writing,

takes no measures against the erosion of time (one forgets oneself and also forgets), it does not keep what it acquires, or it does so poorly, and each of the places through which it passes is a repetition of the lost paradise.¹

Reading fails or escapes 'ordinary' measure and record: what we acquire is largely lost, left behind, forgotten. The work of de Certeau himself and other cultural historians such as Roger Chartier has given substance to the ephemerality of reading.² The elaborations of modes of reading (aloud or silently, intensively or extensively, privately or collectively), of the social and psychic character of the reader, of the significations of design and typography have made valuable contributions to rendering reading rhetorical. In congruent work on other media (the new audience studies is one example) it is again the subject and her practices that emerge most strongly.³ What remains elusive is the character of reading as a general *process*.

De Certeau assumes that reading, like writing (echoing Barthes), is an intertextual process, a work of textual transformation, a remaking of the text read. And across many fields of cultural study this is the presumption. But again, there is little attempt to specify exactly what this process is. 'Not decoding' is the general answer, or not decoding in any simple singular sense. Yet the notion of en-de-coding – never definitive or determining – still overshadows the understanding of the reading process. Popular formulations, such as not decoding, recoding, resignification attest as much, and so in their different ways do the various attempts to introduce into discourse an uncodable dimension, of which Kristeva's semiotic is one example. There seems to be neither need nor will to conceive reading as also some other kind of process.

The derivation of intertextual reading from intertextual accounts of writing or production creates another problem. De Certeau naturally twins reading and writing: reading is the hazy inverse of writing. More commonly, the two collapse into each other: writing is 'only' re-reading, reading is (re-)writing. Barthes insists on their likeness, though never (quite) their identity, but in many contemporary accounts the distinction has all but disappeared. Intertextuality has become almost exclusively associated (positively or negatively) with the fundamental unfixity of meaning and the freeing of the reader (now 'active', now a 'producer') from the determinations of Romantic authority and structuralist logic, while the text itself dissolves into innumerable and ever-shifting contexts.⁴

What I want to propose here is an account of reading that takes intertextuality as the condition of language and signification, but formulates it to include a process very different from en-de-coding, *inferencing*. Inferencing, which treats the text as evidence for interpretation rather than the instantiation of meaning, is central to explaining the interpretation of the like-but-unlike texts and genres that constitute the intertextual text. But as a concept inferencing is also suspect, part of the tradition of Anglo-American pragmatics that is highly (and rightly) questionable, that after all includes Austin and Searle; and, for many, a tradition exploded by Derridean writing and/or citationality.⁵ However, I will argue that inferential pragmatics identifies key weaknesses in intertextual accounts, whilst intertextual theories can transform the concept of inference as it is understood in pragmatics. My first two sections sketch the central axioms of intertextual and inferential theories, each in their own discourse, so foregrounding the conceptual mismatch between them: inference, as conceived in pragmatics, cannot simply make good the failings of intertextuality. Therefore the third and fourth sections stage a critical confrontation between them, in which each is examined through the lens of the other.

Inferential theories disturb some of the central assumptions of intertextual accounts and force questions about the interpretative process that are usually ignored. Intertextual theories transform the field and concepts that pragmatics operates within, including inference. The account of reading that emerges assumes as its condition multiple interpretative possibilities, a position shared by inferencing and intertextuality, but it focuses on the ways in which the processes of production and reception order and delimit them, on how meanings are *fixed* (where signification is understood as dynamic between fixing and unfixing). This distinctive focus on fixing contests the assumptions of both traditions, identifying a shared problem. Neither pragmatics nor intertextual theories adequately considers how the processes of textual *production* fix meanings. Whilst studies of film, television and new media have taken the institutions and processes of production as part of their object, the same is not true of the book and publishing. Barthes dismantles Romantic authorship, but the author is only one figure and writing (in the narrow sense of composition) only one of the processes that constitutes the Work.⁶ A Romantic understanding of textual production persists: composition remains the privileged process that orders all others. These are the usual terms in which the relations between ‘writing’ and ‘publishing’ are understood, implicitly or explicitly: other production processes (editing, design, marketing, production) exist to make the text public. These processes may modify, improve, diminish or destroy it, but the priority and precession of writing are never troubled – a weak concept of publishing as publication. In my final section, I will propose an alternative conception of publishing, as preceding and constitutive of the contingencies of both writing and reading.

Intertextuality

‘Intertextuality’ is frequently banalized (comfortingly reclaimed as allusion or ‘the study of sources’) or hyperbolized (the text is always a radical transformation of its pre-texts, always fundamentally fragmentary). Kristeva’s neologism both builds on and transforms Bakhtin’s dialogic, which in turn builds on and transforms Voloshinov’s concepts of multiaccentual sign and verbal interaction. Voloshinov’s critique of Romantic and ‘abstract-objectivist’ models finds its counter in the multiaccentual sign which articulates a movement of convergence (users share the same language) and divergence (their social interests are differential, conflictual) in all language use: ‘differently oriented [class] accents intersect in every ideological sign’.⁷

This movement is paralleled in the complex historical rhythms of verbal interaction: the ‘utterance’ (‘however weighty in itself’) is always part of a complex chain that responds to and anticipates (confirms and/or contests) others. Bakhtin retains and extends the problematic figuring of print as speech and sound (‘polyphony’, ‘orchestration’, ‘double-voiced discourse’), but also stabilizes and transforms the multiaccentual sign into an intersection of languages that instantiate the heteroglossia.⁸ The dissonant dynamic of Voloshinov’s model is reconfigured in the relations between heteroglossia and all the attempts to posit and enforce a unitary language. Working within the contradiction of language as both mine and the other’s, the dialogic word becomes the dynamic condition of language and meaning, always positioned between and participating in the relations between this particular use and others, previous and prospective. Kristeva draws out the full implications of the text as process and production (‘productivity’) and the role of a constitutive textual context. Her focus on the speaking subject – a psychic subject who is constituted in and against language – aligns subjectivity with textuality, as co-constitutive processes. Her first formulation of intertextuality in *Le Texte du Roman* marks a distinctive displacement of the dialogic, definitively formulating the speaking subject within the text and giving a new emphasis to the relations between textual practices. The text is a permutation of texts, no longer voices.⁹ The fifteenth-century proto-novel she discusses incorporates a wide range of texts and genres: moral precepts, Latin citations, epic and courtly love poetry, and blazons or street cries. These have particular meanings and values within the General Text (Culture), but their conjunction in a new space produces new meanings: texts and genres are permuted, resignified.

Here, in contrast with contemporary accounts of intertextual reception, there is no collapsing of writing into reading. Writing is clearly a process that includes reading, most explicitly in Kristeva, and in Bakhtin’s account of evaluation within meaning production. But there is no dissolution of the one into the other. Within this tradition there is also a commitment to explaining the processes of textual production. Most importantly, these accounts develop a strong concept of textual context. Text and context are dynamically bound within history and society as a whole. The text is at once inseparable from context, present within it and constitutive of it, and distinct: it permutes what it configures. Further, the complex chains of verbal interaction, the heteroglossia and the General Text all articulate the contestation between dominant and

subordinate social forces, making contexts multiple and socially conflictual. This emphasis on 'the text of history and society' and conflictual social relations inscribes an important difference between this lineage and the apparently similar concept(s) of iterability and citationality, which are neither the production nor the effect of conflictual social relations and socially contested meanings.¹⁰ The character of history is also distinctive. In Voloshinov, Bakhtin and Kristeva the sense emerges – often implicit and never fully explicated – that historical meaning is temporally complex.¹¹ Voloshinov's distinction between immediate and 'broader' contexts, Bakhtin's accounts of the historical forms of the dialogic and the heteroglossia, and Kristeva's text, composed of contemporary and anterior signifying practices, open up the possibility of theorizing text and context as historically complex: meanings can endure. This contests the localizing tendencies of historicism, where text and reader are conceived in terms of an absolute otherness and context is always and only change. Whilst contemporary theories of intertextual reception tend to focus almost exclusively on a process of unfixing, in Voloshinov, Bakhtin and Kristeva meaning is always understood also as a process of fixing. Bakhtin's account of the poetic and monologic and Kristeva's account of the relations between semiotic and symbolic instance how within this lineage meaning is always a dynamic between fixing and unfixing.

Intertextual theories of production do not share the core problems in intertextual accounts of reception, but there are inherent difficulties facing any attempt to formulate intertextual reading. Kristeva's account of the novel and its signifying logic is shaped by the gram, the 'sign' finally set loose and surpassed, and by a specifically modernist writing. As with Bakhtin, aesthetic preferences and historically distinctive rhetorical strategies become conflated with the general conditions of language and meaning. The ambiguous status of Bakhtin's 'dialogic' as condition of language and as specific cultural and political value is a topos.¹² But beyond this, there is a contemporary tendency to formulate dialogism or intertextuality in general in the terms of a small set of its historical varieties, where the rendering of multiple 'voices' or languages is at its most concentrated and explicit. Barthes' specifically modernist writing exposes the limited plural of realism in *S/Z*, but also effaces narrative (rendered as a code of potentially paired actions – opening and possibly closing – that seemingly have little or no cumulative or connective effect).¹³ A further move treats these privileged varieties not as dissident practices but as the

empirical reality of all signifying practice(s). Fiske's formulation of the mass broadcast text as producerly (the televisual equivalent of Barthes' writerly) is one instance.¹⁴

Radical transformation, intertextual 'density', and explicit and extensive fragmentation are better understood as elective forms of a general condition of intertextual *variation*. In many, perhaps the majority of texts, intersection and permutation are ordered by a dominant signifying practice (usually a genre). Gothic is a frequent visitor to nineteenth-century realist novels, but the uncertain moment of the fantastic usually give way rapidly to a reading that understands the Gothic signifier in realist terms. This suggests the need for a stronger (intertextual) concept of narrative and, more generally, for a reassessment of genre. This occupies a problematic place in intertextual theories which challenge any formulation that posits a one-to-one relation between text and genre. Bakhtin and Kristeva's analyses suggest a radical redefinition of historical 'genres' (such as the novel), now conceived as specific permutations or of languages (varieties, registers, genres). But Bakhtin most explicitly is also in flight from the implications of genre as an institutionalized conjunction of signifying possibilities. 'We speak only in definite genres', he says, nevertheless resisting the stability of situation and subject that this formulation presumes.¹⁵

Pragmatics, inference and relevance

Pragmatics is predicated on the differences and discrepancies between linguistic form and the meanings of utterances; between sentences composed exclusively of linguistic properties and the meanings produced by them in specific situations. Various questions follow. Are these differences contingent or constitutive features of communication and how might we explain them? If utterance meaning is not wholly encoded in the utterance, is it encoded elsewhere, for example in features of the situation? If so, how do hearers decode such meanings, which must involve non-linguistic knowledge?¹⁶ Are there, then, 'pragmatic' rules or principles governing utterance interpretation? But, on the other hand, is non-linguistic meaning encoded at all? Are there other processes that might govern utterance interpretation? Are these specific to communication or more generally cognitive? The constitutive gap between coded meaning and interpretation is formally familiar to much of contemporary cultural and literary theory but it does not necessarily follow that interpretation is fundamentally unconstrained, 'open' and various, as is so frequently assumed. How meaning is

disambiguated, determined or resolved is the central question.

The relations between language form and language use furnish the materials for a wide range of topics and programmes in philosophy and linguistics. But within this field, it is possible to delineate a strong pragmatics, pledged to describing and explaining communication, in which accounts of inferencing are central. Within this tradition, the gap between form and meaning is constitutive. Austin's and Searle's speech acts and Paul Grice's writings on non-natural meaning and implicature are two canonical examples. In inferential accounts, utterances provide evidence for an interpretation, and in strong accounts such as Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's Relevance Theory – the centrepiece of this discussion – *no more than this*. This clearly gives distinctive content to the other concepts it presumes and formulates. Context, defined as the knowledge that speaker–hearers use in communication, specifies and determines the utterance; and its deployment is central to any account of the interpretative process. If the utterance is defined as radically underdetermined by its linguistic meaning (as it is in Relevance), the range of possible interpretations necessarily expands, and any account of the process must specify how a particular set of interpretations is selected from a wider range. This usually leads to a strong distinction between utterance meaning and speaker meaning. For Grice, as for Sperber and Wilson, the goal is to explain *speaker* meaning: the difference between 'the meaning in general of a "sign"' and 'what a particular speaker or writer means by a sign on a particular occasion'.¹⁷ The speaking or interpreting subject of pragmatics is polarized in familiar terms: s/he may be always-already social, but in the tradition of strong pragmatics I am exploring s/he is fundamentally an individual.

Inferential accounts of communication treat utterances as evidence *for* meaning (rather than the encoded instantiation of it), evidence which is put together with other evidence (contexts) as 'premisses' in order to derive conclusions, better known as interpretations. Grice, treated by many as the founder of inferential approaches, coined the term 'implicature' to capture the difference between logical and natural languages. Implicature has a relation to the verb *imply* but is distinguishable from the counterpart logical category of 'inferring'.¹⁸ Pragmatics follows Grice in arguing that inferencing cannot be characterized as a formal deductive procedure and is more akin to induction. But there is a fundamental difference between formal logic as such and pragmatic inference, where the

'premisses' that the utterance and context supply are routinely subject to radical disjunctures of form and meaning. At the same time, accounts of inferencing are everywhere shot through with the like–unlikeness of logic and communication. For Grice, the nonsequiturs, irrelevancies, redundancies and ellipses that characterize ordinary conversation are, in the main, only apparently disorderly. In truth, they are evidence of a principle, the Cooperative Principle, which underlies ordinary conversation:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.¹⁹

This overarching principle governs four maxims that connect the speaker with the spoken. These pertain to the quantity of information the speaker supplies (neither too much nor too little), its truthfulness ('try to make your contribution one that is true'), its relevance ('be relevant'), and how it is said (the speaker should avoid obscurity, ambiguity and be brief and orderly).²⁰ Despite the imperative form, Grice is well aware that speakers do not always or often behave in this way. The maxims are not an elaboration of the Principle: it is the Principle itself that, actually and not ideally, governs conversation. What a speaker says may be literally untrue or irrelevant, but the hearer assumes that the Cooperative Principle is still operating and produces an interpretation in accordance with it:

Tony: Where's Richard?

Helen: There's a silver Vespa parked outside Mark's.

Helen's reply does not directly answer Tony's question and seems irrelevant. But if Tony assumes that Helen is being Cooperative, he will access the knowledge that Richard has a silver Vespa (which Helen assumes he knows) and produce the implicature that Richard may well be at Mark's. There is no conventional (or coded relation) between Helen's utterance and Tony's interpretation (conclusion). The interpretative process is inferential. Grice's definition of conversational implicatures is structured by a contrast with a definition of logical deduction. A conversational implicature can be cancelled (unlike a logical inference); it can be true even though the utterance which proposes it is false (and vice versa).

Whilst Grice is suspect even within the limits of post-analytic philosophy, his influence on pragmatics has been considerable, and a wide range of modifications and developments have been proposed. Most of these have operated broadly within a Gricean paradigm,



but Sperber and Wilson, whilst acknowledging Grice's contribution, broke radically with his model, in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, a book which has excited considerable interest, much of it highly critical, since it appeared in 1986.²¹ The book is characterized by a rhetorical boldness – both in the force of its own claims and in its outright dismissal of many of the sacred cows of pragmatics. More than fifteen years later, Relevance theory remains highly controversial: *the* answer to communication, cognition and 'everything', or the emperor's new clothes. Relevance is the focus here because Sperber and Wilson claim that inferencing is the central process in *all* interpretation, whilst most other accounts, Grice's included, view it as contingent. The theory aims at a full explanation of all types of verbal communication and considers a wide range of utterance types, 'parasitic' or 'literary' as well as 'ordinary', in a bid to demonstrate its power. Relevance therefore provides a single strong model of inferential interpretation through and against which intertextual accounts can be read.

Most simply, *Relevance* proposes that one process (a specific type of inferencing) and one principle (relevance) can explain our understanding of anything from the smell of gas to a complex metaphor.²² Semiotics usually treats language as a model for other signifying systems, but Sperber and Wilson classify linguistic communication within a taxonomy of cognition that foregrounds its distinctiveness. Unlike other phenomena which may be cognized, it is intentional and ostensive; unlike other forms of deliberate and ostensive 'stimuli' that communicate, it deploys a code. However, verbal communication involves more than the decoding of a linguistic signal: there is a gap between the semantic representations yielded by decoding and the thoughts communicated by them which en-de-coding cannot explain. Utterances are always

interpretations of thoughts, and the hearer's interpretation is always an interpretation of an interpretation. Communication can at best guarantee a similarity of representations between communicator and audience and 'failures ... are to be expected'.²³ This proximate and contingent characterization of communication challenges existing accounts of inferencing in their predominantly Gricean mode. There, inferencing is contingent and subordinate to

decoding, which also serves as a model: rules and premisses are conceived as shared and applied. Sperber and Wilson contest this formulation. Conceived as evidence or premiss, an utterance has a multiplicity of possible conclusions (interpretations). How are some and not others produced as interpretations; why does interpretation 'stop'? For Sperber and Wilson, it is the conclusions that the speaker intends that the hearer must identify.

The rather punishing technical detail of Sperber and Wilson's characterization of inference is not relevant here, but a few points require noting. Inferencing is 'less a logical process than a form of suitably constrained guesswork'.²⁴ It is a general thought process that is spontaneous, nearly instantaneous and unconscious; it is constrained by speed and, in the case of verbal communication, the helpfulness of the source. The process should be judged in terms of success or failure and not validity or invalidity, a move in line with Austin and Searle and against Grice. Whilst not deductive as a whole, it does make use of deductive rules which effect an economy of information storage.

An account of the rules of inference, however explicit, does not explain why individuals process information or how they reach one set of conclusions rather than another. It is relevance that governs the inferential and interpretative process. But 'relevance' bears little or no resemblance to any ordinary sense of the word. For Sperber and Wilson, humans are efficient information-processing devices whose overarching aim is to improve their knowledge of the world. Relevance governs the efficient human's cognitive relations with the world: something is relevant in so far as the cognitive gains justify the 'costs'. From this standpoint, old information is not worth processing and completely new information requires too much expenditure for too little achievement. But new information proc-

essed in relation to old can be cost-effective, giving rise to modifications of context or 'contextual effects' which are used to measure achievement–efficiency relations and define relevance: 'other things being equal, the greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance'. The first Principle of Relevance states: 'Human cognition tends to be geared towards the maximization of relevance.' The Second or Communicative Principle is grounded in the first: 'Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.'²⁵ The utterance has to be relevant 'enough' to be worth the effort of processing, but no more than this. Sperber and Wilson distinguish themselves from Grice very explicitly. 'Understanding and being understood' is the only 'common goal' that speaker–hearers share. Grice's maxims are a set of norms which communicator and audience must know and follow. Relevance is not a general principle but a particular presumption which is communicated by and about every particular act of communication. It is not simply 'followed' and could not be violated.²⁶

Interpretation is a process of hypothesis construction. Which of the many possible assumptions communicable by the utterance or text – Sperber and Wilson make no distinction – are actually intended by the communicator? Relevance governs every aspect of the process. The choice of contexts is determined by relevance and not, as we might intuitively assume, the other way round. Context, the knowledges that hearers deploy in interpretation, is not fixed but a 'variable'. There is an immediately given context – those assumptions mobilized or/and produced by the previous utterance interpretation – but this is merely an initial context which can be variously developed. Accessibility of context is likewise determined by the effects–effort ratio of relevance. As soon as an interpretation or 'conclusion' confirming the initial presumption of relevance is produced, the process of hypothesis construction stops.

Decoding subserves inferencing. An initial decoding of the utterance produces a number of semantic representations that correspond to all its possible senses. But these are 'incomplete logical forms i.e. at best fragmentary representations of thoughts', and require completion into a fully propositional form. This process is inferential and includes reference assignment, disambiguation and the specification of vague terms. Sperber and Wilson coin the term 'explicature' to capture the result of this process. An explicature is an explicitly communicated assumption 'that leads to an overall interpretation which is consistent with the principle of Relevance'. From Grice they retain the

term 'implicature', which is any assumption which is intentionally but not explicitly communicated. The speaker assumes the hearer can access certain assumptions, use these as a context in which the explicatures of the utterance are processed, and derive particular conclusions:

Peter: Would you drive a Mercedes?

Mary: I wouldn't drive ANY expensive car.²⁷

The main explicature of Mary's response does not directly answer Peter's question. But it does allow Peter to access encyclopaedic knowledge about cars, including expensive ones, which includes the information that a Mercedes is an expensive car. This could yield the implicature that Mary wouldn't drive a Mercedes and, perhaps, not a Rolls Royce either, and that she disapproves of ostentatious displays of wealth.

Relevance extends the scope of pragmatic enquiry to the zone of what is explicitly 'said', the interpretation of which can no longer be assumed. What is said is radically more underdetermined than pragmatics generally and Grice in particular acknowledge. As Robyn Carston, a key proponent of Relevance, puts it: 'not only does linguistic meaning underdetermine what is meant and what is said underdetermine what is meant but '[l]inguistic meaning underdetermines what is said'.²⁸

Inference reads intertextuality

Inferential theories expose the intellectual inertia at the heart of intertextual theories of reception: the treatment of reading as rewriting, an inability to think beyond en-de-coding, however critically it is reconfigured, or to formulate explicitly how contexts operate in the interpretative process. By contrast, pragmatics understands the processes of production and interpretation as clearly distinct. Sperber and Wilson's characterization of communication as ostensive–inferential crystallizes the difference: utterance production involves the making manifest of an intention to communicate; interpretation involves the identification of a communicative and informative intention. These distinct processes are united by relevance as principle. My point is not that Relevance is definitive, far from it, but that it formulates interpretative procedures so rigorously. Inferential interpretation is always an *active* process of *production* in very specific terms. The procedures of reference assignment, disambiguation and enrichment 'add to' the utterance as evidence. 'New' information or knowledge, not coded in the utterance or its explicatures, is produced by conjoining the 'explicated' evidence of the utterance with contextual

assumptions to produce implicatures. If inferencing is admitted into the process, it follows that in an important sense the active productions of reading are banal, because they are always-already present in the process: any attempt to formulate critical or dissonant reading must start from this assumption, rather than treating it as a contingency.

Intertextuality formulates the meanings of a text as simultaneously underdetermined – its meaning are never self-contained or fully resident within it – and overdetermined – the text and its meanings are an intersection and permutation of multiple signifying practices. Codes are rendered in one sense less stable – strict repetition or identity is impossible – but it is still coding, best understood (if imperfectly) as *recoding* which shapes meaning, even though its semantic effects are multiple, potentially contradictory and unpredictable.²⁹ Yet there are processes that not even a reconfigured decoding can explain. How do readers interpret the relations between texts within a text, specifically the differential and competing values they inscribe? How do readers constitute the relations of similarity and difference between the text being read and other texts?

In the film *Wall Street*, the corporate trader-raider Gordon Gecko shares his credo with a rapt audience of shareholders: ‘Greed is good’. One of the senses of this utterance is that Gecko believes what he is saying. His previous statements and actions are immediately available contexts that leave no room for irony. But the utterance means more than this. Gecko is also implying that his audience shares his belief, though they do not wish to acknowledge it openly, and that they should go public. These are implicatures and are not coded into the utterance. They rely on the viewer understanding that what Gecko *says* is controversial and that it overturns a familiar moral doxa which is present and displaced in his evangelistic discourse. Such implicatures are proposed by the intertextual character of the utterance. This suggests an intimate relation between (at least) a certain class of implicatures and intertextual interpretation, but also that some implicatures are properly speaking utterances – or, better, texts – and should be treated as such. The hearer or reader mobilizes or constructs an intertextual relation between two or more utterances. The oppositional or contesting utterance that is a central category in Bakhtin, Kristeva and Barthes is a ‘negation’ (understood here in a discursive rather than a grammatical or logical sense) of another utterance, which is proposed as a strong textual context for constructing implicatures.

Intertextuality, in redefining both text and its con-

texts (of both production and reception) has blurred their boundaries, making it increasingly difficult to identify the text that is read either as concept or/and as empirical object. The textualization of context, perhaps currently most visible within new historicism, and the textualization of the reading subject as a ‘site’ of textual knowledges and their transformation are certainly valuable but have also led to an impasse in accounts of the interpretative process. This is nowhere more acute than in ‘new’ audience studies. Is it possible to distinguish between text and context? (And should we even want to?) For some, this blurring of the boundaries is a welcome last nail in the coffin of textual determinism. In the words of Lawrence Grossberg,

Not only is every media event mediated by other texts, but it’s almost impossible to know what constitutes the bounded text which might be interpreted or which is actually consumed.³⁰

And there are those, for example David Morley, who are unhappy about the slippage and ‘this new emphasis on intertextuality’, and concerned lest text – as concept – be ‘dissolved into its readings’. Grossberg’s formulation of intertextuality transposes an abstract definition – intertextuality as the ontological condition of text and textuality – to the plane of the concrete: the particular text and the (particular) reader’s interpretation, which Morley repeats in the negative. Morley also seems to identify intertextuality with an *excess* of polysemy, an uncritical concept which apparently cuts loose both textuality and reader from social relations.³⁰ Strong inferential accounts focus a particular set of questions about text–context relations. If all utterances are to be understood as evidence from which hearers derive ‘conclusions’ (interpretations), then the process must specify how and why certain knowledges, or contexts, are mobilized in the interpretative process and others are not, why certain interpretations and not others are produced, and why the interpretative process ‘stops’ – given the multiplicity of inferences that can be derived from any utterance (the last is central to Relevance). Sperber and Wilson’s account of the process of context selection and use is dynamic, ‘open to choices and revisions throughout the comprehension process’.³² The interpretation of contestational utterances is a clear instance of this dynamic aspect: the implicature that makes possible the classification of the utterance as a contestation is constructed during the interpretative process.

At the most general level, Relevance provides an account of how text can and does ‘become’ context

via the interpretative processes of explication and implicature, but the two always remain distinguishable. Sperber and Wilson also draw attention to the status of the knowledge deployed in interpretation: the relative ‘strength’ or ‘weakness’ with which assumptions are held by the hearer. Utterances may strengthen or weaken, to the extent of contradicting and cancelling, certain contextually accessible assumptions. This is suggestive for thinking about the relations *between* contexts within specific acts of reading, central to intertextual interpretation. For example, a plurality of markers of a particular genre can make possible not only the mobilization of various assumptions such as ‘this is a romance’ and so forth but, because of their ‘density’, strengthen that context. A genre shift can act to mobilize another context and may weaken an existing one. Sperber and Wilson are also specifically interested in the differential ‘accessibility’ of contexts within a given situation of utterance (accessibility formulated in terms of the effects–effort ratio of Relevance. But even if we bracket their formula, ‘accessibility’ has a general salience for any attempt to theorize interpretation as intertextual. If we equate the totality of a reader’s textual knowledge with context, we are indeed faced with the question of the text ‘unbound’; but if instead we insist on the need to hierarchize a reader’s knowledges, asking which are most, more, quite, less likely to become contexts within a particular situation of reading, we specify contingency as a gradient rather than a single term opposed to a factitious necessity.

Intertextuality reads inference

I have so far sought to represent inferential accounts within their own terms, indicating only where Relevance appears to depart from the axioms of a language philosophy that we now know first and best through a Derridean intertext. The overarching concept of ‘communication’, inference itself, raising the spectre of a logical model of natural languages, the absence of textuality as a fundamental explanatory concept, and interpretation understood as resolution, where intention is not reasserted but simply and pre-critically assumed – these are the most familiar markers of this discourse. The ‘plain speaking’ of Sperber and Wilson, with its echoes of Grice and Oxford philosophy, and the cognitive lexicon of Relevance, where utterances are ‘stimuli’ and human beings are ‘efficient information-processing devices’, can easily be dismissed as tendentious. I am trying to show that intertextual interpretation can only be adequately understood if it encompasses inferencing, but also that the concept as it

exists in Relevance (and in other less extreme accounts) demands substantive critical reconstruction.

Both Grice and Sperber/Wilson acknowledge only two conditions of communication: a language (conceived as a code – a single grammar – or a set of conventions according with majority usage) and its individual users. There is nothing else. This concept of language, which is implicitly a uniform, inclusive national language, is fatally vulnerable to a Bakhtinian critique, in the light of which it must be reformulated as heteroglossia. There is no *single* system or set of agreed uses, only multiple and conflicting modes of signification. Second, there is no place here for genre, register and other kinds of ‘code’, understood as *textual* practices which shape utterance meaning and the interpretative process, even down to its smallest units. The disavowal of the textual is common in Anglo-American pragmatics. Grice’s maxim of manner is the marker of this within his theory, the place where the how of meaning is confined and permitted to have



an effect.³³ Relevance seems to be different: there is no zero degree of style, no naive distinction between form and content. ‘Style’ is a natural property of utterance arising ‘in the pursuit of relevance’. But this manoeuvre masks the same resistance to the textual, generally evidenced in the kinds of short examples explanatory pragmatics prefers. In this way, genre and other codes are rendered invisible, though not always, as this example from *Relevance*, contrasting three possible responses to Peter’s question, unwittingly attests:

- (a) Peter: Is Jack a good sailor?
- (b) Mary: Yes, he is.
- (c) Mary: ALL the English are good sailors.
- (d) Mary: He’s English.³⁴

Sperber and Wilson never consider that the phrase ‘a good sailor’ is potentially ambiguous (not only ‘good at the skill of sailing’ but ‘doesn’t get seasick’) – surprising given the general pragmatic attention to ambiguity and its frequent deliberate use. This is not a case of oversight: there is a code at work backgrounding the ambiguity. It is not of a kind that Sperber and Wilson

would acknowledge, but it is a code nonetheless, one that conjoins nationalities with particular skills or attributes, positive or negative: Americans have no sense of irony, Italians are sentimental, and the English are... This cancels the seasickness sense of 'good sailor': it is not an adequately strong attribute. Further, the name Jack mobilizes the figure of 'Jolly Jack Tar', the personification of English seafaring excellence, and strengthens the first sense further. The ways in which textuality both produces and fixes meaning are disavowed. The affirmative in Mary's last two replies is certainly an inference, but one governed by *textual* relations.

The Relevance understanding of both context and the subject is shaped by the same liberal discourse that resists the textual as the inscription of the constitutive sociality of language. It is a discourse shared with much pragmatic thinking, but as in so many things Relevance goes one further. Communication is conceived as a coincidence of self-interest: the speaker wishes to communicate, the hearer wants to recognize her communicative intention. Inferential theories are naturally predisposed to assume that knowledge is significantly shared by speaker-hearers, who therefore converge on premisses and conclusions. This is Grice's implicit position, but it is not available to Sperber and Wilson, who insist on the idiosyncrasy of individual knowledge. 'Idiosyncrasy' is the concept that is supposed to register the complexity of knowledge relations, while keeping culture and the social from making too much difference. But *Relevance* is not consistent in its treatment of individuals as predominantly idiosyncratic. It minimizes the possibilities of knowledge differentials and variations by dwelling on the special case of speaker-hearers who are always-already intimates: a couple at a party, a picnic, a walk in the country and so on. This pervasive intimacy banalizes the social and cultural heterogeneity of the knowledges mobilized in interpretation. A speaker simply knows that the hearer knows what osso bucco is (this is a real example) and can make a pretty reasonable guess that s/he has read *Sense and Sensibility* (so is this). The interpretative impact of socially and culturally specific knowledges is therefore virtually invisible in accounts of the interpretative process. Peter and Mary, the imagined suppliers of examples for *Relevance*, are a very particular kind of subject. Mary is a lawyer, Peter is a surgeon. Both of them cook; they enjoy Italian food and have a favourite Italian restaurant. They take walks in the country, holiday in rural France and can 'get by' in French. They read Jane Austen and are familiar with the Romantic valoriza-

tion of nature. Peter and Mary are not 'everyperson' any more than they inhabit a neutral 'everyday'. They are bourgeois subjects whose cultural knowledges and values are explicitly English, and again, in a class-specific sense, European. Through them, social specificity is naturalized, and the knowledges and codes of a particular class fraction are displaced as determinants of interpretation by a process that naturalizes similarity.³⁵ Voluntary and equal relationships between speaker-hearers are offered as a synecdoche for the totality of speaker-hearer relations.

Inferencing needs to be situated within an intertextual model where context and subject are constitutively social and textual, and social relations are conflictual. Within intertextual theories, the concept of culture as competing sets of signifying practices opens up the possibility of registering and examining the complexities of social and cultural identity in a highly nuanced way. But this complexity cannot be reduced to idiosyncrasy. Inferencing as process has to be configured within a constitutively contestational culture: one that is always dialogic, always producing difference and antagonism as well as commonality. Relevance conceives the overarching cognitive task as the adding of more, more accurate information that is more easily retrievable and above all *consistent*.³⁶ But as social and – Kristeva's distinctive contribution – psychic subjects, we may and do resist knowledge in a multiplicity of ways, including knowledge that conflicts with or contradicts what we know. The repeated processing of 'old information' (which Sperber and Wilson cannot see the point of processing) should come as no surprise either. Nor can Relevance handle the commonplace that we hold all kinds of assumptions that conflict with or contradict one another. The relations between 'assumptions' – or better 'statements' – are not governed by a singular set of logical rules but by the discourses that constitute them: any statement is always-already ordered in terms of its relations with others.³⁷ What is important are the boundaries between discourses, the rules by which statements are included or excluded and ordered as series. Within such a framework, there is every reason why subjects will entertain 'assumptions' that conflict or contradict one another without resolution. And every reason why subjects will converge on certain patterns of inference and interpretation and diverge on others. Convergence is not the effect of a naturally shared knowledge, any more than divergence is evidence of mere technical failure.

Relevance is also committed to the pragmatic common sense that interpretation is a process of reso-

lution, a process that appears to be in contradiction with intertextual theories. Yet if inferencing is, as I am arguing, central to (intertextual) interpretation, the question of how and why interpretation ‘stops’ or continues cannot be ignored. For Sperber and Wilson, the conjunction of intention and relevance secures resolution: interpretation stops when the speaker’s informative intentions have been identified, which in turn coincides with sufficient contextual effects. This reliance on intention has been challenged from within pragmatics, but the charge is usually one of extremism: intention as such is left undisturbed. As hearers and readers, we can and do ascribe intentions to writers and speakers, but these cannot be separated from the text as pragmatics generally supposes. A plethora of signifying systems constitute the intentions that texts inscribe. The intentionalism of Relevance derives from its individualism but also serves to control the anarchic interpretative consequences of that basic commitment. In conditions of radical textual instability, the notion of an originating subject can underwrite the possibility of communication. Intention is the substitute for the constraining force of social relations inscribed in the conditions of communication – in the text, in the subject, in the situations and practices of reading. All these modalities delimit and order the interpretative process, suggesting why it might stop or indeed continue, but they are unacknowledged by Relevance. Communication is not a subset, however specialized, of cognition; rather, cognition is a mode of ‘communication’.

Inference is indeed central to interpretation, which cannot be conceived exclusively as some critically reconstituted form of en-de-coding. The concept is clearly necessary to understanding how readers interpret the competing and differential values accorded to the texts within the text being read, and the like–unlike relations between these texts and others. However, inferencing is not governed by a singular logic and a singular pragmatic (or cognitive) principle. Patterns of inference are shaped by genres and discourses, not ‘premisses’ and ‘conclusions’. But if no pattern of inference, no interpretation, is necessary in this sense, nevertheless contingency is graduated. Some interpretations are highly likely, others barely possible, and a range of possibilities lies in between. Interpretative processes require situation within a model which takes account not only of the well-furrowed ground of reading knowledges, practices and situations, but of the processes and practices of textual production. Grice and Sperber/Wilson, in common with much explanatory pragmatics, focus on speech, Bakhtin and

Kristeva (and Barthes) on writing. But this predictable divergence masks a common underlying repression: print, or, to avoid the suggestion of a ‘neutral’ medium, *publishing* as a constituent in both the production and interpretation of meaning.

Shared problems and the horizon of the publishable

Grice and Sperber/Wilson are only doing what comes naturally to pragmatics. The canonical speech situation, positing two speaker–hearers who are co-temporal, co-spatial and co-present, is the default condition and paradigm of communication and is justified in familiar terms. Speech (in the terms defined by the canonical situation of utterance) precedes ‘writing’ and presumably all other media; it is the ‘parent’ of all other forms. Speech, or more specifically conversation, is both natural and normal: it is the everyday, spontaneous, mode of communicative practice to which all other kinds can be opposed. In pragmatics, there is no understanding of speech, writing and print as historical categories and practices whose constitutive relations are now radically interdependent. Print technology made possible, and its development within specific conditions made actual, a process of linguistic standardization that has had massive impact on the practices of speech and writing. There are many forms – the novel and the newspaper, to take the least contentious examples – as well as a plethora of genres, which are precisely the consequent of this conjunction of technology and historical conditions. Intertextual accounts of meaning expose the fundamental flaws of the canonical speech situation: there are never only *two* ‘speaker–hearers’, even in conversation. By the same token, utterances cannot be punctually timed or mapped and their meanings elicited according to the local co-ordinates of the ‘now’ and the ‘here’. The meaning of any utterance is only explicable in relation to the utterances that precede and might succeed it, binding it to a complex chain of ‘thens’ and ‘theres’.

Beyond this, there is a profound naivety in the categories of co-temporality, co-spatiality and co-presence, which are all objectifications of a presupposed commonality between speaker–hearers and their communicative ‘willing’. Co-temporal and co-spatial speaker–hearers may have radically different understandings of the spatio-temporal location in which they converge. The complex of social and cultural modalities which shape identity – including politics, class, gender, generation, religion, a sense (or sense of loss) of ‘home’, with all the complexity that migration

introduces – intersect with one another and with a set of dominant histories and geographies. Living in England, I cannot avoid ‘royal time’ any more than the Christian time in which it is imbricated. This is the ‘baseline’ complexity of face-to-face communication, which the canonical speech situation evades by displacing its assumptions of commonality onto the ‘non-controversial’ coordinates of the co-temporal and the co-spatial.

Theories of intertextuality have congruent problems. Bakhtin’s work on ‘speech’ genres makes some general distinctions between speech and writing, and Kristeva is interested in the transposition of the spoken into the written, but in neither do print and publishing emerge as specific technologies, processes and practices.³⁸ Barthes perhaps does most to shatter the private autonomy of writing, insisting on the text as a process everywhere scored by history and society. Here, the book is at once conceived, correctly, as an attempt to fix meaning and challenged as a set of boundaries, foreclosing its possibilities. Barthes’ ‘work’ is aligned with the book, ‘occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example)’ or in bookshops, catalogues and exam syllabuses.³⁹ Text, as method, cuts across works, ‘cannot stop on a library shelf’. For Derrida,

The idea of the book which always refers to a natural totality is profoundly alien to the sense of writing.... If I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book, as it is now under way in all domains, denudes the surface of the text.⁴⁰

The reality, resisted here but not effaced, is that the production of meaning is always and simultaneously a movement both towards and away from its fixing, however provisional and unstable: text after all ‘cuts across’, divides, even where it does not respect canonical boundaries. But this fixing which must be part of intertextuality, of writing, is usually neglected or refused. The book, reconceived, is one of the sites where these relations between fixing and unfixing can be explored. The book is no longer imagined as boundary and stasis that seeks to constrain the ever-multiplying volume and movement of language, but as a site where publishing processes – ‘writing’, editing, design, marketing, production – intersect and conflict. Barthes approvingly cites Mallarmé, ‘wanting the audience to produce the book’, but authors don’t write books: composition is only one process.⁴¹ Barthes insists, quite rightly, that we rethink the temporality that governs the relations between writer and text. But the temporal relations which govern how we think

about writing and publishing also require rethinking. Publishing, or rather the horizon of the publishable, precedes and constitutes both what can be written and what can be read.

The book has become a renewed site of theoretical interest over the last twenty or so years – within cultural history, literary studies and also in the narrower fields of book history and textual studies, specifically in debates about the theory and practice of textual editing. Alongside these is Gérard Genette’s *Paratexts*, the only sustained attempt to think the book, or better the edition, as an intertextual apparatus.⁴² The limits of these engagements are instructive. Genette offers a richly nuanced account of the pragmatic function of everything from titles, signatures and prefaces to formats, series, epigraphs and notes, but his basic distinction between text and paratext marks his pre-established limit. Whilst the paratexts of the edition operate as explicit reading contexts that orient and adapt the text for different readerships, the text itself is ‘dumb’.⁴³ Residual Romanticism creates an ideal separation between text and the market: the paratext is not only threshold but boundary. Within this formula, publishing is necessary modification or ‘adaptation’ (his preferred lexeme), acting on a text that always precedes it: publishing is publication.

This absence of process is not a feature of the ‘new’ textual studies, where the ‘new’ signifies both new historicism and, more usually, a generic post-structuralism. Where once critical editing practices were underpinned by an anxious narrative of textual decline and ‘corruption’ – the lamentable but inevitable wear and tear of reproduction and circulation – the territory is now occupied by the topoi of unfixity and contingency.⁴⁴ Thus, a symptomatic critique of traditional scholarly editing may expose the variational crux (is Hamlet’s flesh too ‘solid’ or too ‘sullied?’) as the carefully managed moment which acknowledges as atypical and aberrant what is in fact the everyday condition of meaning and interpretation. Alternatively, textual editing seeks to find ways of marking contingency in editions that represent the text as ongoing process, foregrounding the apparatus and the editor’s status as ‘reader’ (rather than agent of purgation). Such work is valuable in that it foregrounds the constitutive role of editing practices and their historicity. But textual studies cannot suggest a general form for the book and publishing, replicating as it does the common sense of intertextual accounts of reception: the binary of necessity versus a monolithic contingency. The acknowledgement that editing practices delimit interpretative possibilities is quickly

passed over in favour of the contingencies of editorial practice as represented in different editions of the same text and their variable signifying effects. More specifically, the focus of textual studies (on literature, fiction, the publishing histories of individual texts and critical editing) is too narrow a ground to work on. Jerome McGann exemplifies this, at once stressing the 'social and institutional conditions' under which texts are produced and reproduced and asserting that texts 'always stand within an *editorial* horizon' (my emphasis), which he then glosses as the horizon of the text's production and reproduction.⁴⁵ Thus editing is mistaken for publishing as a whole.

It is the horizon of the publishable – what it is plausible to publish in a given context – that constitutes texts, writerships and readerships. The horizon of the publishable is neither singular nor autonomously defined by the industry. The publishable is defined by the relations between publishing and other institutions – commercial, legal, political, educational, cultural – and most obviously other media. Within publishing itself there is a range of horizons. Some correspond to particular genres or categories, others cut across these – celebrity publishing for example. Within this formulation, particular publishing categories can be specified according to the horizons which distinguish them: the role of educational institutions and discourses in children's publishing, the relations between publishers and museums and archives in illustrated art books, between academic publishing and higher education, and between romantic fiction and public libraries. Others have a more extensive range and force. The publishing horizon of many genres, from biography and autobiography through many categories of popular and literary fiction, is increasingly shaped by the horizon of possibilities of other media. The publishable must be malleable in a range of media forms: versionable as adaptation, extractable and/or abridgable for newspapers and magazines. The horizon of the publishable is not the utilitarian counter to Romantic or post-Romantic formulations of the creative process. It is not the logic of the industry orienting the writer's work for the market. Writing is not opposed to publishing: composition is one of its processes. It has its own specificity but it is not of a different order. Composition does not precede publishing. This is not merely an effect of contemporary cultural production, where processes are frequently co-temporal and an apparent logic of sequence is reversed: books are marketed and publicized before they are composed, or at least completed. More fundamentally, the horizon of the publishable constitutes what it is possible to write

and, significantly, how it is written, marketed, edited, designed and produced. Publishing always precedes 'writing'.

Publishing processes are always instantiated as particular practices and their relations. The editing practices of classics are very different from those of contemporary fiction, travel memoirs from guidebooks, and so on. In literary and intellectual publishing, the writer usually has greater freedom and sanction, and the compositional process a more constitutive role, than probably in any other mode (it is paradoxical that critiques of authorial intention have focused so attentively on the atypical). Illustrated books as a general category make a particular conjunction of design and production the dominant. Celebrity publishing subordinates composition, editing, design and production to marketing and publicity. This suggests a stronger, more stable concept of genre than intertextual theories usually admit. Genres – institutionalized conjunctions of signifying possibilities – are constituted in the relations between the totality of production practices, where one is usually dominant (and their relations with the other institutions that together define the horizon of the publishable). Practices may cohere or conflict, and the publishing category and text may be constituted in divergent or contradictory ways. Thus the contemporary editing practices that shape the literary classic define the literary text as both transparent and opaque. A familiar notion of the literary – a zone of settled meanings and values – intersects with a range of discourses that privilege accessibility and presume opacity. The increasingly elaborate editorial apparatus of classics proposes interpretative and reading possibilities shaped by both these definitions, but there is a resolution (of sorts) on the side of transparency. Endnotes, above all, secure the boundaries of the literary as the un-noted. Notes offer the contextual enrichments of scholarly hindsight, and recuperate the meanings of forgotten and marginal 'technical' languages and 'dialects', but they do not trespass on the ground of the literary, which remains unmarked and legible – because, essentially, 'classic'.

So conceived, the edition is no longer merely the material form that the reader encounters but a site where publishing practices intersect. These co-constitute the text within networks of intertextual relations or (inter)textual contexts that propose how we should read. The reading practices proposed by the edition often pull in different directions, and the tensions may be decisive – textual contexts and interpretative possibilities may be radically divergent and conflictual. But the tensions may also be, often are, trivial,

insignificant. Interpretative possibilities are many and rich, but interpretations are for the most part few and sparse. The formal echo with pragmatics is only that. Intertextuality constitutes a multiplication and transformation of interpretative possibilities that are all but invisible to pragmatics, a transformation that renders a recast inferencing all the more important. The richness of interpretative possibility does not wither away in a defining moment of pragmatic resolution. But ‘texts’ – and reading – are constrained, fixed, by the horizon of the publishable in ways that neither pragmatics nor intertextual accounts acknowledge.

Notes

1. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p. 174.
2. See for example, Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. L. Cochrane, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994; Robert Darnton, ‘First Steps towards a History of Reading’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1986; D.F. Mackenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, Panizzi Lectures, 1985, British Library, London, 1986.
3. See, for example, Jon Cruz and Justin Lewis, eds, *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception*, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1994; Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, Routledge, London, 1992; Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life*, Routledge, London, 1994.
4. A concentrated early formulation of this position, which implicitly or explicitly informs much thinking in cultural studies is Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero*, Macmillan, London, 1987.
5. Jacques Derrida, ‘Signature Event Context’, trans. A. Bass, in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. P. Kamuf, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1991.
6. Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’ and ‘From Work to Text’, in *Image Music Text*, selected and trans. S. Heath, Fontana, London, 1977.
7. V.N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1986, p. 23.
8. Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘Discourse in the Novel’, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. M. Holquist and C. Emerson, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981, pp. 262–72. See also Ken Hirschkop, ‘Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory’, in Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd, eds, *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989, on the unresolved place of an individuating concept of intonation in Bakhtin.
9. Julia Kristeva, *Le Texte du Roman*, Mouton, The Hague, 1970; ‘Word Dialogue Novel’ and ‘The Ethics of Linguistics’, in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. L. Roudiez, trans. L. Roudiez, T. Gora and A. Jardine, Blackwell, Oxford, 1981; ‘The System and the Speaking Subject’, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. T. Moi, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.
10. Derrida, ‘Signature Event Context’, pp. 102–3.
11. Complexly historical in the terms formulated by Louis Althusser, most explicitly in ‘The Object of Capital’, chapters 4 and 5 of Althusser and Étienne Balibar’s *Reading Capital*, trans. B. Brewster, New Left Books, London, 1977.
12. See, for example, Tony Crowley, ‘Bakhtin and the History of Language’, in Hirschkop and Shepherd, eds, *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, on the deprivileging of historical context in Bakhtin; and Ken Hirschkop on the way ‘novelness’ is built into Bakhtin’s dialogic from the start, in *Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
13. R. Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. R. Miller, Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, p. 19.
14. John Fiske, ‘The Moments of Television: Neither the Text nor the Audience’ in E. Seiter et al., eds, *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, Routledge, London, 1989.
15. M. Bakhtin, ‘The Problem of Speech Genres’, in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. V. McGee, University of Texas Press, Austin, p. 78.
16. The contrast is with knowledge of language: syntactic, semantic and, potentially, pragmatic. ‘Non-linguistic’ knowledge makes no explicit claim about how other types of knowledge (logical, cultural etc.) are represented and is not to be confused with pre-linguistic or pre-discursive knowledge.
17. Paul Grice, ‘Meaning’, in *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1989, pp. 216–17.
18. Grice, ‘Logic and Conversation’, in *Studies in the Way of Words*, pp. 21–5.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7.
21. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986. A second edition was published in 1995. The important addition is a ‘Postface’ which sketches developments in Relevance theory and proposes certain revisions, specifically to the Principle of Relevance itself, noted below. On critical responses, see in particular Stephen Levinson, ‘A Review of Relevance’, *Journal of Linguistics* 25, 1989, pp. 455–72; and Mary Talbot and Peter Mey, ‘Computation and the Soul’, *Semiotica*, vol. 72, no. 3/4, 1988, pp. 291–339.
22. Sperber and Wilson never capitalize relevance when they are discussing its operation. They do capitalize it when they are discussing the First and Second Principles of Relevance. I have followed their notation in both cases. Therefore when I speak of ‘Relevance’, I am referring to the theory as a whole.
23. Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 45.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 270 (Postface).
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 268 (Postface), 162.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 184, 182, 194.
28. Robyn Carston, *Pragmatics and the Explicit-Implicit Distinction*, Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1998, p. 19.
29. She goes on to define novelistic enunciation as an inferential process by which different types of language are drawn together. This formulation is certainly suggestive, but it is too vague to function as a definition of intertextuality as an inferential operation and also seems to

- claim the inferential process as something specific to the novel. See 'The Bounded Text' in *Desire in Language*, p. 36.
30. Lawrence Grossberg, 'The In-difference of TV', *Screen*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1987, pp. 28–45, p. 33.
 31. David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 27–8.
 32. *Relevance*, p. 137.
 33. Manner is the only maxim which generates detachable implicatures. The other maxims (the 'content' maxims) generate non-detachable ones. This assumes that 'it is not possible to find another way of saying the same thing (or approximately the same thing) which simply lacks the implicature' ('Further Notes on Logic and Conversation', p. 43). Grice seems to assume that that it is possible to say 'the same thing' in a different way without impacting on the implicatures produced – the effect of his naive form/content distinction, which makes manner the special place where form matters.
 34. Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 219.
 35. Grice's examples also presuppose a shared social and cultural world, but if anything it is narrower than Sperber and Wilson's: professional, gossipy and frequently sexist – 'X is meeting a woman tonight' is his first example of a Generalized Conversational Implicature in 'Logic and Conversation' (*Studies in the Way of Words*, p. 37). The world of the Oxford Common Room, perhaps, the 'common' of which shares something with his notions of shared or common knowledge.
 36. Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 47.
 37. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith, Tavistock, London, 1972; and 'The Order of Discourse' in R. Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, Routledge, London, 1981.
 38. Kristeva's analysis of the way that the proto-novel re-signifies the blazon – a spoken or indeed shouted genre – which is transposed or translated into 'laudatory description' is one clear instance of this interest. *Le Texte Du Roman* also thematizes 'the coming of the book' in a more general argument about secularization.
 39. Barthes, 'From Work to Text', pp. 156–7.
 40. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, corrected edition, 1997, p. 18.
 41. Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 163.
 42. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. J. Lewin, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.
 43. Genette, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1982.
 44. On the 'new' editing, see George Bornstein and Ralph G. Williams, eds, *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1993; and Philip Cohen ed., *Devils and Angels: Textual Editing and Literary Theory*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 1991.
 45. Jerome McGann, 'Literary Pragmatics and the Editorial Horizon', in Cohen, ed., *Devils and Angels*.

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Remembering Adorno

John Abromeit

In his sociology of religion, but also in his analyses of bureaucracy in modern societies, Max Weber analysed the process by which ideas that aim for qualitative change, for a transvaluation of values, are worn down in the historical process, codified and routinized by interpreters, gradually brought back into line with the status quo. Building upon Georg Lukács's early analyses of reification, which reinterpreted Weber's theory of rationalization in terms of Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism, Theodor Adorno would prove himself to be one of the most astute analysts of such processes of 'adjustment', which would expand and intensify in the twentieth century. Adorno's own theory was driven in large part by the increasingly difficult task of escaping the levelling tendencies of a society dominated by the logic of the commodity, but he also clearly recognized that his own efforts would be only partially successful: 'No theory', not even his own, 'escapes the market any longer.'¹ The adjustment of the dialectically transcendent ideas of Adorno and his colleagues has been described as the transformation of Critical Theory into the Frankfurt School.² While the concept of Critical Theory has become practically meaningless – particularly in the Anglo-American world – the concept of the Frankfurt School has become a convenient label to designate one of the many theoretical tendencies competing on the market today. It is not entirely clear who belongs to the 'school' or what exactly it stands for. In the past decades many have taken a trip to the city of Frankfurt itself in hopes of clarifying this question. But upon arriving in the mini-metropolis on the Main, asking a taxi driver to be taken to the 'Frankfurt School', as some bewildered visitors have done recently, will lead only to a wild goose chase. Theodor Adorno Platz, on the other hand, really does exist. But prior to this year, one would have discovered there only a large war memorial from 1925, a concrete ping-pong table, and several benches – often littered with empty cans of beer – all surrounded by some overgrown hedges. Just a few days before what would have been his hundredth birthday in 2003, the city of Frankfurt finally decided to improve the miserable state of Adorno's official site. Beer cans were picked up, hedges trimmed, ping-pong

table removed and the war monument was replaced by an artistic memorial by the Russian artist Vadim Zakharov in the form of a large desk with several of Adorno's principal works on top of it.

The city of Frankfurt and the federal state of Hesse have been reluctant to support nonconformist cultural causes in the past. The budget of the Frankfurt Film Museum was slashed several years ago, which prompted Adorno's friend and well-known representative of the New German Cinema, Alexander Kluge, to write several letters in protest. More recently, the city government has threatened to cut the funding for what is without doubt the most innovative cultural undertaking in Frankfurt today, namely William Forsythe's avant-garde ballet.³ Such continuing conspicuous neglect of Adorno would not, however, have been possible during his centenary year, for the city has realized that the 'Frankfurt School' has become an internationally recognized label, one that they literally cannot afford to ignore. In fact, the city has in the meantime charged full-steam ahead. The face-lift of Theodor Adorno Platz has been just one part of a much larger 'Jubiläum' the city has dedicated to its exiled son this past year. For example, the Institute for Social Research, which has since come to represent the ideas of the so-called second and third generations of the Frankfurt School, organized a three-day international conference on Adorno's work. Considering what the 'second and third generation' members of the 'Frankfurt School' have written about Adorno in the past two decades, it is difficult to imagine that this conference was motivated by anything more than *Pflichtbewusstsein* (consciousness of duty).⁴ The conference thematized Adorno's not so surprising disappearance from academic discussions in Germany in the past decades. But far from merely confirming that Adorno's thought belongs to the past, this academic neglect of Adorno and the other Critical Theorists also confirms their own deeply ambivalent attitude towards academic specialization, with its affirmative tendency towards insularity and insufficient self-reflexivity. But not all of the centenary events were driven by a concern with the city's image and/or performed reluctantly out of a mere sense of duty. Several other conferences and talks were

organized that called into question the numbing effects of ritualized memory and made an attempt not merely to think *about* Adorno, but to think *with* him about contemporary issues. Furthermore, several new studies of Adorno's life and work were published last year, including two new intellectual biographies that take seriously the task of working through Adorno's impressive and manifold legacies.* These two biographies will be the subject of the following remarks.

A *Künstlerroman*

Detlev Claussen begins *Theodor Adorno: Ein Letztes Genie* (*Theodor Adorno: A Last Genius*) with a discussion of two potential problems that leap immediately to the attention of anyone familiar with Adorno's thought. Is the genre of biography really an appropriate way to approach Adorno's work? How can one justify using the concept of genius to describe Adorno, when he was so critical of this typically bourgeois fetishization of art, the individual and production? Claussen explicitly mentions Adorno's objections to biography, but justifies his own undertaking in terms of letting Adorno's work speak for itself. He claims to eschew any attempt to interpret Adorno's work merely in terms of biographical details, thereby observing Adorno's own lifelong rejection of psychologism and sociologism. Claussen invokes Goethe as the quintessential *bildungsbürgerliche* model of the genius and integrated subjectivity, and his portrayal of Adorno's life contains elements of a *Bildungsroman*.⁵ While Claussen insists that the concept of the genius 'really does apply to Adorno', he also stresses throughout the book the 'non-identical' character of Adorno's development, even the negative consequences of certain instances when Adorno succumbed to identity thinking, such as his rigid rejection of jazz. Claussen stresses certain transformative phases in Adorno's life, but its different periods never coalesce into a meaningful whole. In other words, Adorno's life is portrayed more in terms of a tragic *Künstlerroman*, such as *Anton Reiser* or *The Green Henry*, in which the artist never fully succeeds in reconciling himself with society, than as an edifying *Bildungsroman*, such as *Wilhelm Meister*, in which the protagonist achieves peace with himself and his world at the end.⁶

The metaphor of the *Künstlerroman* also proves apt in relation to Adorno's childhood, which is the topic of Claussen's first chapter. In contrast to many of his future friends and colleagues, Adorno's family origins

did not lie in the sphere of production but were instead a mixture of an increasingly threatened existence in the sphere of circulation, on his father's side, and lower-middle-class artistic, even bohemian, existence on his mother's side. As Claussen shows, Adorno's childhood was by no means typically bourgeois, in so far as art – music, to be precise – was not reduced in his unorthodox family to mere cultural capital or a pedagogical tool; it was instead the daily nourishment of the young Teddie, which sustained the remarkable development of this 'hothouse plant', as he would later describe himself.⁷ Claussen also makes some interesting observations in his first chapter on the history of Frankfurt and the history of the Jewish community in Frankfurt and the surrounding area, and how it influenced Adorno's childhood. He shows, for example, how the rising incidence of anti-Semitic violence in the Hessian countryside in the mid-nineteenth century probably led Adorno's grandfather to relocate their wine business from the provincial Dettelbach to the burgeoning trading centre of Frankfurt, which had by far the highest percentage of Jews of any city in Germany at the time. It was the only city in which it was possible at the turn of the century to erect a memorial to Heinrich Heine. Heine continues to play a minor, yet important, role in the remainder of Claussen's narrative, particularly in his emphasis on the impossibility of explaining Adorno's – or Heine's – work solely in terms of its 'Jewish origins'. It was in fact the anti-Semites who insisted upon classifying Heine's work as 'Jewish'. As Adorno would point out later in a trenchant essay on Heine, the increasingly chauvinistic versions of ethnic and nationalist 'identity' that developed in Europe and elsewhere in the nineteenth century – which relied upon the exclusion of putative 'foreigners', such as Jews – had fatefully ignored one of Heine's central insights, namely that 'transcendental homelessness' had become universal in the modern world.⁸

In the second chapter, Claussen examines the various contexts of Adorno's development in the 1920s. His re-examination of the circumstances that led to the founding of the Institute for Social Research will be familiar to most, and his lengthy panegyric to Hermann Weil seems gratuitous and one-sided.⁹ But his description of both the betrayal felt by many young intellectuals at the capitulation of their older counterparts in the face of World War I, and the

* Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: Ein Letztes Genie*, Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2003. 479 pp., €26.90 hb., 3 10010813 2. Stefan Müller-Dooch, *Adorno: Eine Biographie*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2003. 1032 pp., €36.90 hb., 3 51858378 6. Page references appear in brackets within the text.

ongoing restrictively conservative state of the German universities in the 1920s, provides an important and often overlooked key to understanding the origins of Critical Theory. Despite his meteoric rise from student to lecturer to professor and director of the Institute for Social Research, Horkheimer never abandoned his deep suspicion of the academic conformism that dominated even relatively liberal universities in Germany at this time, such as Frankfurt. It was this same conformism that made academic careers extremely difficult or impossible for Adorno, Benjamin and Kracauer. In this sense, Claussen is correct to stress the vital importance of an extra-academic ‘peer group’ for Adorno’s development at this time. But his sociological acumen verges on sociology when he views Adorno’s work in this period as driven primarily by a desire for community, his theory as an ersatz religion. While Adorno was unquestionably drawn to the theologically inspired work of Bloch and Benjamin, his commitment to radical Enlightenment was also strong, as even a



cursory reading of his first *Habilitationsschrift* on ‘The Concept of the Unconscious in the Transcendental Theory of the Soul’ (1927) reveals.¹⁰ Like Horkheimer, Adorno was interested in using psychoanalysis as a weapon against the uncritical and irrationalist apologists of the unconscious. The de facto rejection of this study by Hans Cornelius, who was on the left-liberal fringe of the German university system at this time, certainly contributed to Adorno’s subsequent theoretical turn away from Horkheimer towards Benjamin.

Chapter 3 leaps over the 1930s to a series of short ‘Übergänge’ (transitions) which examine some of Adorno’s key relationships while he was in exile in the USA. It focuses mainly on Adorno’s complex relationship to Thomas Mann. Claussen succeeds – where others have failed¹¹ – in providing a balanced portrayal of Adorno’s admiration for Mann and his contributions to *Doktor Faustus*. There is no question that Mann

respected Adorno’s formidable artistic and intellectual powers, but this respect was – as was so often the case among those who came to know him personally – tempered by reservations about Adorno’s extreme narcissism, which was inseparable from his genius, but was frequently overbearing at the same time. As Horkheimer’s wife, Rosa Rieker, once put it, ‘[Teddie was the] most immense narcissist to be found in both the Old and the New World’ (372).¹² But Claussen’s discussion of the charged relationship between the two men moves beyond the merely personal to reflect upon the displaced position of art at a time when both German and bourgeois cultural continuity had been called deeply into question. This situation led to many paradoxical expressions of ‘the non-identical’ – the title of the chapter – in the work of both Mann and Adorno. Adorno saw in Mann a living embodiment of ‘that German tradition ... from which I received everything, including the strength to resist tradition’ (149). Claussen characterizes Mann as a ‘Bourgeois artist

[who] experienced the present as an epoch of debourgeoisification [*Entbürgerlichung*]’ (169). Adorno viewed the role of critical intellectuals such as himself as ‘the last enemies of the bourgeois ... and the last bourgeois at the same time’ (169). As Claussen convincingly argues, these reflections upon the status of tradition in their own work became particularly acute for exiles like Adorno and Mann in the United States, a country

Adorno perceived as the embodiment of ‘a completely pure form of capitalism ... without any remnants of feudalism’ (258), and a ‘radically bourgeois country’ (167).

These reflections on both the central significance of his ‘American experience’ for his work, and the contradictory ‘nature’ of *Bürgerlichkeit*, continue throughout the remainder of Claussen’s book.¹³ His examinations of Adorno’s friendships with Hanns Eisler and Fritz Lang also centre on these themes. Like Adorno, Eisler studied music in Vienna in the 1920s, but unlike him he succeeded in winning the recognition of Schoenberg and was not forced to relinquish his career as a composer. Thus Claussen portrays Eisler as Adorno’s unidentical *Doppelgänger*, an embodiment of the ‘artist, who is no longer supported by the bourgeoisie. The artist as critic of the bourgeois society, from and in which he nonetheless must live’ (185).

Claussen uses the discussion of Fritz Lang to criticize the misconception that Adorno was a rigid defender of *Kultur* against the blandishments of popular entertainment. He shows that Lang served as Adorno's inside man in Hollywood, and provided him with the insights he needed to criticize the instrumental attitudes of the studio bosses and their lackeys, not the entire film genre or the very notion of entertainment. While Claussen's demonstration that Adorno was not the *Spassverderber* (spoilspoort) that he is usually taken to be – that he criticized the culture industry as an 'intellectualization of amusement' (201) – hits the mark, his characterization of Adorno as a 'passionate movie-goer' (199) overshoots even Adorno's legendary penchant for hyperbole.

The next chapter examines Adorno's 'Frankfurt Transfer', but largely in terms of its preconditions in the USA. In other words, Claussen returns here in greater depth to Adorno's 'American experience' in order to explain Adorno's ambivalent attitude to returning to Germany after the war. Adorno's aversions to the United States come out more clearly in this section. Claussen discusses Adorno's stubborn resistance to jazz, explaining and criticizing it in terms of a compensation for his own thwarted musical ambitions and an excessive desire for continuity and identity in his damaged life in exile. On the other hand, Claussen also criticizes those who cite Adorno's overwrought critique of jazz as a convenient excuse to dismiss his critical social theory as a whole. Claussen

points out, correctly, that Adorno's critique – however ones judges it – viewed jazz merely as a symptom of much deeper social-psychological phenomena, and this is what Adorno demanded be taken seriously, not just the musical merits of jazz from a purely aesthetic standpoint. He also reflects at length in this chapter upon a figure who might be considered a second, more distant, 'unidentical brother' of Adorno, namely Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld is used mainly as a foil, to illustrate those aspects of the 'American experience' which Adorno refused to assimilate. While Claussen does stress the crucial importance of Adorno's exposure to professional, empirical social science in the USA, he is also careful to highlight Adorno's obstinate refusal to remake himself completely in the American melting pot. From Adorno's perspective, Lazarsfeld's American re-education worked a bit too well; thus, rather than emulate his example of 'entrepreneurial initiative' (217), Adorno chose to return to Frankfurt after the war, in no small part because he preferred 'the security of an existence as a civil servant' to the 'freedom of a market organized as a culture industry' (246).

The identical and non-identical moments in Adorno's friendship with and intellectual development vis-à-vis Horkheimer provide one of the unifying themes of Chapter 5. Unlike Müller-Doohm, who portrays Adorno's relationship to Horkheimer as one of gradual, but continual confluence (sealed by a 'double liaison' with Gretel Karplus and Max Horkheimer on 8 September 1937, when Horkheimer served as best man at Adorno's wedding to Karplus), Claussen clearly recognizes the 'ups and downs' in the prehistory of this remarkable friendship. After the de facto refusal by Hans Cornelius of Adorno's first *Habilitationsschrift* in 1927, Adorno drifted away from Horkheimer in order to pursue passionately his theoretical elective affinity with Walter Benjamin. Horkheimer reacted sceptically to Adorno's inaugural lecture as a *Privatdozent* on 'The Actuality of Philosophy', and did not extend an explicit invitation to Adorno to join the Institute in exile after the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933. The two of them did not speak for a year and a half, and, even though Horkheimer soon renewed his efforts to bring Adorno back into the Institute's orbit, he continued to remain sceptical of several of his projects, refusing to publish essays by Adorno on Husserl and Karl Mannheim, even after the 'double liaison' in 1937. Horkheimer did, of course, ultimately choose Adorno, rather than Marcuse, to co-write the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but Claussen shows how Adorno, nonetheless, 'struggled his entire life for the



recognition of the older man' (265). Claussen recognizes that Horkheimer had already reached his theoretical apogee in the 1930s, while Adorno still suffered from a certain political *naïveté* that went hand in hand with his 'aesthetic Left-radicalism' from the 1920s.¹⁴ Claussen gives Horkheimer and Adorno's 'American experience' credit for curing Adorno of these last remnants of *naïveté*, which did not, however, diminish his theoretical radicalism. Adorno returned to Frankfurt also because it was where he spent his childhood, which remained an important source of the negatively formulated allusions to utopia in his writings. Whereas Horkheimer 'was looking for a possibility to retreat' (308) after the war, Adorno first came into his own in the Federal Republic in the 1950s.

The 1920s and the 1950s were separated by the civilizational rupture of Auschwitz. In his final chapter Claussen demonstrates how – virtually alone among his peers – Adorno fully registered this unfathomable shock and how it moved to the very centre of his Critical Theory. He does this by creating another 'palimpsest' of Adorno's life, reconstructing in detail the development of Adorno's most important intellectual relationships. In what can be seen as significant contribution to the history of the Frankfurt intellectual milieu in the 1920s,¹⁵ Claussen reconstructs the dynamic force field within which Adorno's Critical Theory took shape, among the attraction and repulsion to the ideas of Kracauer, Lukács, Rosenzweig, Buber, Horkheimer, Bloch, Benjamin and Brecht. He then shows how this intellectual force field developed in the 1930s and 1940s and how Adorno's mature Critical Theory emerged from it in the 1950s.¹⁶ His most significant contribution is his finely sketched portrait of Adorno's relationship to Bloch, which has often been overlooked in the secondary literature.

It was with Bloch, not Benjamin or Horkheimer, that Adorno shared the intimate *Du* in the 1920s and 1930s. Adorno moved away from Kracauer and Horkheimer towards Benjamin in the late 1920s, 'but also in this friendship Adorno seemed to miss something that he could share only with Bloch – music' (328). Benjamin reacted allergically in the early 1930s to Adorno's operetta about Mark Twain, whereas Bloch was able to understand the utopia of a 'non-bourgeois notion of maturity' (331) that it expressed. But Bloch's reduction of utopia to a principle remained too abstract to accommodate the catastrophic historical experiences of the twentieth century. Brecht's, Eisler's and Lukács's positions in the 1950s also led to a 'disappearance of Auschwitz behind a rationalistically constructed Marxism' (388), according to Claussen.¹⁷

Apart from Horkheimer, who had already passed his theoretical prime by this time, Adorno turned to poets such as Samuel Beckett and Paul Celan to find an adequate expression of the traumatic historical situation. Claussen concludes the final chapter with some reflections on Adorno's relationship to the protest movements of the 1960s, which represent a working through of Claussen's own past, since he was, like his friend Hans-Jürgen Krahel, one of Adorno's students who was active in the SDS at the time. Claussen criticizes the radicalized students' unmediated appropriation of the Critical Theorists' positions from the 1930s and the spread of a 'Left-radical attitude as conformist fashion' (44). On the other hand, he also demonstrates that Adorno stood solidly, if cautiously, behind the protesting students – until they began disrupting his own lectures.¹⁸ As elsewhere in his study, Claussen approaches this crucial and complex subject as an *Aufklärer* [Enlightener], criticizing widespread pre- and misconceptions and offering new insights with engaged and serious scholarship.

The Composer as Critical Theorist

Stephan Müller-Doohm's *Adorno: Eine Biographie* is nearly twice as long as Claussen's book, which has advantages and disadvantages. It enables Müller-Doohm to examine certain aspects of Adorno's life and work in greater detail. He devotes more space, for example, to exploring Adorno's personal life. If you want to learn about the less than egalitarian domestic arrangements Adorno had with his wife, Gretel Karplus, or about Adorno's various lovers, Müller-Doohm's study is the place to go.¹⁹ Müller-Doohm also devotes more space to short synopses of Adorno's work. One could debate the usefulness of any three-page summary of *Negative Dialectics*, but you won't find one in Claussen's study. In this and his linearly structured, more or less comprehensive narrative of Adorno's life and work, Müller-Doohm's study is a more traditional intellectual biography than Claussen's. And, despite its greater length, Müller-Doohm's study reads more quickly than Claussen's. Müller-Doohm's polished prose usually draws the reader along quickly, whereas Claussen's mimetic approach often captures and conveys the intellectual and emotional density of Adorno's own prose, which presupposes a high level of previous knowledge and constantly demands that the reader stop, reflect and reread. Müller-Doohm's book will be more appropriate for those less familiar with Adorno's work, which is not to say that this thoroughly researched study does not break any new scholarly ground.

Müller-Doohm's study is structured chronologically and divided into four main sections. The first addresses Adorno's family background, his childhood and youth. Müller-Doohm begins with a detailed portrait of Adorno's Corsican grandfather, Jean-François Francesco, who settled in the Frankfurt suburb of Bockenheim without speaking German and struggled to make a living as a fencing instructor. Thus his daughters, Louise and Agathe, who would become Adorno's 'two mothers', grew up in very modest surroundings. After Francesco died in 1879, his musically gifted wife attempted to improve her family's financial situation by organizing public concerts with her daughters, which soon earned them the reputation in the local press of being '*musikalische Wunderkinder*'. But despite Müller-Doohm's more detailed examination of the humble background of Adorno's family – particularly on the maternal side – he still describes it as typically bourgeois. Müller-Doohm cites the Institute's later *Studies on Authority and Family* to support this claim. Whereas bourgeois society is dominated by the principle of competitive self-interest, the family supposedly provides 'a haven in a heartless world', a separate sphere in which everyone is committed to the happiness of the other, which leads 'to a premonition of better human condition'.²⁰ Adorno did indeed benefit from the extraordinary solicitude of not just one but two 'mothers' and the unwavering beneficence of his father, but the artistic – even bohemian – tendencies in his family, and its social standing, leave no doubt that it was not typically bourgeois in many respects. Claussen is more attentive to these fine, but significant differences from the more solidly bourgeois backgrounds of Horkheimer, Pollock and Felix Weil. Thus it comes as perhaps no surprise that Siegfried Kracauer, whose origins were more humble than Adorno's, became Adorno's first extra-familial mentor. Müller-Doohm devotes much attention to this crucial relationship. But because significant portions of the Adorno–Kracauer correspondence are still off limits to publication – Müller-Doohm was forced at the last minute by Reemtsma foundation, who owns the rights to the Adorno–Kracauer correspondence, to retract several quotations – neither he nor Claussen was able to move substantially beyond what readers of Kracauer's fictionalized account of his relationship with Adorno in *Georg* have known since the belated publication of that novel in 1973.²¹

In the second part, Müller-Doohm examines Adorno's years as a student and lecturer. Apart from a relatively short but influential stay in Vienna in 1925 and frequent trips to Berlin in the late 1920s,

he spent these years in Frankfurt. The discussion of the vicissitudes of Adorno's musical apprenticeship in Vienna is the highlight of this section. He provides a finely sketched portrait of Adorno's relationship to one of Schoenberg's most respected composition students, Alban Berg. He explains why Adorno was unable to win the recognition of the greatly admired pioneer of atonal and twelve-tone music,²² but his 'unconditional recognition' of Berg was handsomely rewarded; Adorno began a friendship with him that 'intensified continually over the following months and



years' (126–7), documented by 136 letters from 1925 to 1936, from which Müller-Doohm draws extensively and profitably in the further course of his study.²³ Whereas Claussen uses Adorno's father's wine business to introduce the pronounced sensualist dimension of his temperament, Müller-Doohm argues that it was Berg's sophisticated hedonism, and the 'sensuality of Vienna life' more generally, which taught Adorno how to enjoy himself. Müller-Doohm also includes detailed discussions of Adorno's own compositions and musical writings during this period. For example, Müller-Doohm illustrates concretely how Adorno 'took the step from a concert and composition critic to a musical theorist with his texts from the early 1930s' (176). He emphasizes repeatedly and convincingly that composition was every bit as important as philosophy for Adorno at this time (182). This also helps explain Adorno's increasing distance from Horkheimer in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Like his philosophical mentors, Kracauer, Bloch, Benjamin and the young Lukács, Adorno's concept of philosophy was more closely related to his aesthetic concerns than to Horkheimer's model of empirically founded interdisciplinary social research. Müller-Doohm makes this point with a comprehensive, if occasionally sloppy, discussion not only of Adorno's philosophical writings from this period but also the seminars he offered as a lecturer in Frankfurt in the early 1930s.²⁴

The third part of Müller-Doohm's study examines Adorno's years in exile: in England from 1934 to 1938 and in the USA from 1938 to 1949. The strengths

and weaknesses of the more traditional intellectual biographical approach can be seen clearly in his treatment of Adorno's development in the 1930s. His continuous and comprehensive narrative occasionally gets bogged down in excessively detailed descriptions of Adorno's quotidian life, or repeats material that will be familiar to anyone who is not a newcomer to Adorno's work. But the more personal approach pays rewards at other times. The description of the disastrous effects *Kristallnacht* had for Adorno's father – he was wounded and thrown in jail for several weeks, his business was largely destroyed, and the endowment for his business was confiscated (399) – illustrates the direct and personal threat that the Nazi terror posed even to those like Adorno who had escaped; it also drives home Müller-Doohm's larger argument about Adorno's gradual loss of political naïveté in the 1930s. Müller-Doohm also conveys Adorno's devastation at the death of Walter Benjamin, who – despite his increasing proximity to Horkheimer – was still Adorno's most important interlocutor at this time. Adorno's immediate reaction to Benjamin's death speaks volumes about his own appropriation of his work: 'With this death, philosophy has been robbed of the best that it could possibly hope for' (402).²⁵

Müller-Doohm also highlights the strong presence of Benjamin in the subsequent period of intense work with Horkheimer on *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in order to develop an original, if flawed, interpretation of its conception (411f. and 429ff.). He argues that there were two competing tendencies at work during the crucial, formative phase of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. On the one hand, Adorno wanted to develop a critique of some of the most basic concepts of Western rationality, which was deeply influenced by Benjamin's ideas of the entanglement of myth and modernity and his negative philosophy of history. On the other hand, Horkheimer wanted to work out the universal and transcendental norms implicit in language use in order to reformulate a concept of reason that could provide a new foundation for Critical Theory (409–13). In the end Adorno's interests prevailed over Horkheimer's. While Müller-Doohm is correct to emphasize that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is more representative of Adorno's work as a whole than Horkheimer's, his attempt to read Habermas's efforts to develop a linguistically based normative foundation for Critical Theory back onto Horkheimer fail to do justice to the complexities of his position at the time.²⁶ This part concludes with a penetrating examination of Adorno's relationship to Thomas Mann, in which Adorno appears in an even more positive light than in Claussen's study.

In the final and lengthiest part of the book, Müller-Doohm provides a comprehensive examination of Adorno's life and work after his return to Frankfurt in 1949 until his death in 1969. His assiduous attention to little-known sources often enables him to place Adorno's work in a new light. For example, he reveals the special importance that Adorno accorded to his essay on Kafka within his work as whole, by drawing on an obscure letter that Adorno wrote to the editor of a German newspaper in which the essay was first published (538). Müller-Doohm's discussion of Adorno's *Jargon of Authenticity* is also illuminating. He explains clearly why Adorno refused to engage Heidegger's philosophy directly, 'on his own terms' as it were, and chose instead to attack the *leere Tiefe* (pseudo-profundity) of the Heideggerian jargon that formed an integral part of the sanctimonious religion of *Kultur* that arose in Germany in the 1950s.²⁷

Müller-Doohm patiently documents Adorno's professional life in the postwar period. His innumerable public lectures and radio appearances, his willingness to work with other leading German scholars, and his professional activities all demonstrate that Adorno was by no means an outsider in the Federal Republic. As elsewhere, Müller-Doohm does not neglect Adorno's personal life. He illustrates not only Adorno's numerous friendships with artists and other intellectuals – such as Samuel Beckett, Alexander Kluge and Ingeborg Bachmann – but also the numerous places to which he was drawn intellectually and/or emotionally bound, such as Paris, Rome, Sils Maria and a small town in the Bavarian *Odenwald* by the name of Amorbach, where Adorno had been going on vacation since he was a child.²⁸ There is even a short chapter near the end that attempts once again to dispel the stubborn stereotype of Adorno as an elitist curmudgeon by examining his love of hosting dinner guests, playing the piano together with a partner, going to the zoo – a passion he shared with Marcuse – and his general 'weakness for the ironically playful' (711).

Bourgeois or civil society?

Müller-Doohm's and Claussen's discussions of Adorno's development in the postwar period parallel and complement each other in many respects, but on two important and related subjects they diverge significantly: in their portrayal of Adorno's attitude towards democracy and his relationship to Jürgen Habermas's work. Even on these subjects the differences are a matter of degree, but one that reveals a significantly different approach to Adorno's work and to the tradition

of Critical Theory as a whole. Müller-Doohm portrays Adorno consistently as an ardent defender of democracy in postwar Germany. As a result of the war, the rise of an authoritarian state socialism in the Eastern bloc and his 'American experience', Adorno came to a greater appreciation of parliamentary democracy. Although Müller-Doohm does not completely overlook Adorno's analysis of the 'objective violence' (586) of 'social relations', his emphasis lies more on the putative normative underpinnings of Adorno's critique, which allows him to emphasize Adorno's proximity to Habermas, and to portray Habermas as a – if not *the* – legitimate heir of his Critical Theory (586). In several places, Müller-Doohm argues that Habermas is an important – if not the only – inheritor of Adorno's Critical Theory; in fact, he even hints that Habermas's theory may have rendered Adorno's theory obsolete in certain key respects.²⁹ He also affirms the recent thesis that Adorno and the other members of the 'Frankfurt School' were part of a belated 'intellectual founding' of the Federal Republic in the postwar period.³⁰ Müller-Doohm does discuss Adorno's famous statement from 1959, 'I view the continued existence of National Socialism *within* democracy as potentially more dangerous than the continued existence of fascist tendencies *against* democracy' (584), but he downplays its importance and broader implications by linking it to a specific discussion about the state of democracy in Germany at that time. Furthermore, in the few places where the concept of 'bourgeois society' (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) shows up in his discussions of Adorno's work, it is used in a positive, normative sense (587). In all of these respects, Müller-Doohm's study could be seen as a routinization and normalization of Adorno's Critical Theory, in the Weberian sense, mentioned above.

While Claussen also heavily emphasizes Adorno's presence in the German public sphere in the postwar period, and – like Müller-Doohm – stresses his uncompromising critique of actually existing socialism, one does not find in his study a discussion of a normative concept of democracy in relation to Adorno's work. One does, however, find a complex – even contradictory – discussion of the concepts of *bourgeois* and *bourgeois society* in relation to Adorno's life and work. In this respect, Claussen remains closer to the materialist underpinnings of Adorno's own thought, by not losing sight of the socio-historical and social-psychological conditions which play such an important role in determining the parameters of abstract or proceduralist 'democracy' in any given society.

But in Claussen's study there seems to be a contradiction between two different determinations of the concept of bourgeois society. On the one hand, he makes use of a *historical* concept of bourgeois society as a phenomenon that was limited to the long nineteenth century³¹ and characterized by conspicuous class differences that manifested themselves in both material and cultural terms. On the other hand, a *philosophical* concept of bourgeois society also appears in Claussen's work, to describe a larger, epochal phenomenon that was by no means limited to the long nineteenth century.³² It is clearly this philosophical concept of bourgeois society to which Adorno refers when he speaks of the United States in the twentieth century as a 'radically bourgeois country'. Like Hegel, Adorno is convinced that bourgeois society has been responsible for the introduction into world history of certain progressive principles – subjective freedom being perhaps the most important – which have become necessary conditions of any further attempts to bring about a more just and emancipated society.³³ Nevertheless, as Claussen sees more clearly than Müller-Doohm, Adorno also refused to turn a blind eye to the unbroken dynamic inherent in bourgeois society and the fateful consequences of which it had already proven itself capable.³⁴

Yet it is precisely this critical, philosophical dimension that has been lost in recent discussions of the concept of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. In the wake of the collapse of state socialism in the East, many commentators rediscovered the concept of civil society as a way of describing the emancipatory transformations in these societies.³⁵ The English version of the term – *civil* society – lent itself well to an interpretation which drew more on a Kantian than a Hegelian or Marxist determination of the concept – that is, one more or less untouched by any systematic reflections on political economy.³⁶ Civil society was read in undialectical terms as that which lay outside the state – the public sphere, voluntary associations, free market economy. This position often went hand in hand with an explicit refusal – what Adorno might call a *Denkverbot* (prohibition on thinking) – to reflect upon the political-economic dimensions of the concept, under the pretext that theories such as Hegel's or Adorno's which rely heavily upon a concept of social totality are no longer possible. Habermas's work contributed to this trend, in so far as he too distanced himself from Adorno's critical concept of bourgeois society, and drew instead upon Kant, Weber and Luhmann to develop a conception of modern society as a system of pluralistically differentiated value spheres, not one

of systematic domination. Habermas's early criticisms of the welfare state as a form of 'power' that colonized the 'lifeworld', and his interpretation of the new social movements in terms of anti-statist outgrowths of civil society, reinforced this tendency. Even though Habermas has modified his position substantially in the past decade, the ongoing influence of his early work and the retranslation of Anglo-American discussion of civil society into the German context have led to the virtual disappearance of the critical concept of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*.³⁷ Habermas's work was indeed important as a *philosophische Westanbindung*³⁸ in the postwar period, which contributed to burying once and for all – let us hope – the reactionary anti-Western and anti-democratic traditions that had been so important for the German Right. But since it has become clear that German democracy no longer stands on shaky ground and that since 1989 the form of 'radical bourgeois' society represented by the United States has become the dominant force in the contemporary world, might a reconsideration of Critical Theory be more timely than a historicizing approach to the so-called 'Frankfurt School'? It would go beyond the parameters of this article to examine the contentious relationship of Habermas's theory to the older tradition of Critical Theory, but some of his own more recent positions seem to indicate that he too is aware of the shortcomings in his earlier work for an appraisal of contemporary conditions.³⁹ In this respect, Claussen's argument that Adorno's and Habermas's theoretical differences are greater than their similarities, and that Adorno's work has yet to receive the hearing it deserves (e.g. 379 and 400) may prove to be more prescient than Müller-Doohm's stress on their commonalities and his insinuations that Habermas's work may have supplanted Adorno's in most important respects.

Developments in the United States and around the globe since Adorno's death appear to have confirmed Adorno's more critical view of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. In a talk he delivered in Rome in 1966 on the concept of 'Society', for example, he argued that:

All society is still class society as it was at the time when this concept appeared; the excessive pressure in the Eastern bloc countries makes clear that it is no different there. Although Marx's prognosis of pauperization over a long period of time has not been proven true, the disappearance of classes is an epiphenomenon.... Subjectively concealed, class differences grow objectively due to the constant progression of the concentration of capital.⁴⁰

It would not be an exaggeration to say that these tendencies have accelerated since Adorno's death. But, as Claussen points out, a purely rationalist Marxism, *à la* Brecht or Lukács, is not adequate to the task of grasping the irrational rationality of bourgeois society. The psychoanalytic and social-psychological dimensions of Critical Theory – which have also been largely emasculated by Habermas⁴¹ – also remain as relevant as ever. The steady drift of democrats and social democrats to the Right in the past few decades and their unwillingness to thematize the negative moments inherent in the global 'civil society' have created a vast reservoir of voters susceptible to the irrational parables of right-wing populism. Arnold Schwarzenegger's recent election as the governor of California can be seen as the most recent manifestation of this increasingly widespread trend, one which cannot be fully understood without the social-psychological categories developed by the Critical Theorists. If Schwarzenegger's election in California can be seen as symptomatic of the persistence of sado-masochist character structures in American society, as one recent commentator has argued,⁴² then one could make a case, based on arguments put forth by the Critical Theorists in the 1930s, that we are still living in the bourgeois epoch.⁴³ As Claussen points out, Adorno and Horkheimer often spoke of the twentieth century as an epoch of transition,⁴⁴ but perhaps both of their arguments were premature. Schwarzenegger's election and the broader phenomenon of right-wing populism bring to mind Walter Benjamin's eighth thesis on the philosophy of history:

The current amazement that the things we are experiencing in the twentieth century [and now the twenty-first!] is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge – unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.⁴⁵

Benjamin's words were written in a more ominous period, the irrationalist and populist dimensions of Schwarzenegger's victory warrant renewed reflection on the political-economic and social-psychological dimensions of bourgeois society which have been neglected in recent debates. Are we still living in the bourgeois epoch? How can we conceptualize the identity and non-identity of bourgeois society? Without Critical Theory, to whose collective development Adorno contributed so much, we will not be able to answer these questions.

Notes

1. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton, Continuum, New York, 1973, p. 4 (translation amended).
2. See, for example, Alex Demirovic, *Der Non-Konformistische Intellektuelle: Die Entwicklung der Kritischen Theorie zur Frankfurter Schule*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1999.
3. On Forsythe's ballet, see the website of the Frankfurt Ballet (www.frankfurt-ballett.de), in particular the section marked 'articles', which contains several essays on and interviews with Forsythe.
4. Both Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth have repeatedly articulated fundamental critiques of Adorno's philosophy in the past two decades. Habermas argues that Adorno, like the post-structuralists, fell into an aporetic 'self-referentiality of a totalizing critique of reason', which eliminated any possibility of providing a much needed normative foundation for Critical Theory. See, for example, *The Postnational Constellation*, trans. Max Pensky, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2001, pp. 130 and 141, respectively. Honneth follows Habermas's criticisms of Adorno in most respects. He places more emphasis on the putatively obsolescent elements of productionist philosophy in Adorno's work. See, for example, Axel Honneth, 'Adorno's Theory of Society: The Definitive Repression of the Social', in *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans. Kenneth Baynes, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1991, pp. 57–96.
5. The term *Bildungsbürger* arose in nineteenth-century Germany to describe those portions of the middle class that defined themselves in terms of education, usually based on the humanistic model of classical education. The *Bildungsroman* – novel of development or education – evolved as a genre in nineteenth-century German literature. It usually focused on the stages of maturation of a central figure, often ending with his reconciliation with himself and/or society at the end. *Bildung* more generally refers to typically nineteenth-century humanistic ideal of education as ennobling of the character, and contrasted to education as mere utilitarian training.
6. The *Künstlerroman* was a subgenre of the *Bildungsroman*, which focused on alienated artists who usually did not succeed in coming to terms with themselves and/or society in the course of the novel. On the genre of the *Künstlerroman* and its relation to the *Bildungsroman*, see Herbert Marcuse, 'Der Deutsche Künstlerroman', in *Schriften*, vol. 1, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1978.
7. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott, Verso, London, 1974, 1993, p. 161.
8. For Adorno's reflections on Heine and 'transcendental homelessness' – a concept that plays a central role in Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* – see his essay 'Heine the Wound', in *Notes on Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, pp. 80–85.
9. If 'political reaction was not an option for Hermann Weil' (102), as Claussen claims, then why did he serve as a military adviser to the Kaiser during the war? Is parvenu conformism really enough to explain this? Felix Weil, not his father, was the decisive person in securing the funding not only for the Institute of Social Research, but also for a number of other progressive artistic and intellectual projects in Weimar Germany, such as the Mailik publishing house and the Piscator Theater. To finance these projects Felix Weil drew upon not only his inheritance from his father but also a substantial inheritance from his mother's family. In addition, Felix Weil would not forget later in his life one of the most important sources of the surplus value that was used to finance the Institute for Social Research and other projects. His father dealt primarily in Argentinian grain, and Felix became one of the leading experts on the Argentinian economy and workers' movement, a lengthy study of which he published in 1944 as *The Argentine Riddle*. Very little work has been done on Felix Weil; his fascinating unfinished memoirs lie unpublished in the Frankfurt city archive. It seems that he, not his father, is in need of more scholarly attention.
10. The *Habilitationsschrift* is a second dissertation required in order to gain permission to teach at a German university. It is too simple to dismiss this writing as an empty academic exercise, as Claussen does. For even though Adorno would soon reject its main argument, its fundamental impulse – to place psychoanalysis in the service of radical Enlightenment – would remain powerful for the rest of his life.
11. See, for example, Michael Maar, 'Teddy and Tommy: The Masks of *Doctor Faustus*', *New Left Review* 20, March/April 2003, pp. 113–30.
12. For a provocative examination of some of the subversive aspects of narcissism in a Promethean society, see Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1955, pp. 144–56.
13. On the topic of Adorno's relationship to the United States, see Claussen's essay 'The American Experience of the Critical Theorists', in J. Abromeit and W.M. Cobb, eds, *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, London and New York, 2004, pp. 51–66; Martin Jay, 'Adorno in America', in *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, pp. 120–37; as well as Adorno's own essay 'Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America', *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, ed. D. Fleming and B. Bailyn, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1969.
14. Oddly enough, Claussen does not mention Adorno's unfortunate piece on Baldur von Schirach here, or elsewhere in the book. See Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, pp. 281ff.
15. Claussen places himself here in the company of the other leading intellectual historians of this period, such as Wolfgang Schivelbusch (see, e.g., his *Intellektuell endämmerung: Zur Lage der Frankfurter Intelligenz in den Zwanziger Jahren*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1982) and Martin Jay (see, e.g., his *Permanent Exiles*).
16. See, for example, Claussen's interpretation of *Minima Moralia* in terms of this dynamic force field (p. 342).
17. In this regard, Adorno did indeed remain indebted to Walter Benjamin, particularly his early study of *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* (trans. J. Osborne, Verso, London, 1998), from which Adorno drew the inspiration for the following words at the end of *Minima Moralia*, 'consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror-image of its opposite' (p. 247).
18. For a more detailed description of Claussen's understanding of the Frankfurt SDS, and their relationship to the Critical Theorists and their role within protest movement as a whole in Germany, see 'Der kurze Sommer der Theorie', in Detlev Claussen, *Aspekte der*

- Alltagsreligion: Ideologiekritik unter veränderten gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen*, Neue Kritik, Frankfurt, 2000, pp. 154–63. On the relationship of the Critical Theorists to the Protest Movement more generally, see the three-volume study, Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail 1946–1995*, Rogner & Bernhard bei Zweitausendeins, Frankfurt am Main, 1998.
19. Müller-Doohm states, for example, that after their marriage in 1937, Karplus had to learn how to clean the house, because Adorno refused to do any housework (348 and 356). She also often served as a secretary for Adorno, recording discussions between him and his colleagues or transcribing his letters or other written work. Müller-Doohm also mentions some of the lovers Adorno had, particularly later in his life. A slightly different picture of Adorno's relationship to Karplus emerges in a recent documentary film, *Theodor Adorno: Papst der Linken*, made by the German radio station Südwestrundfunk. In it, Regina Becker-Schmidt, a professor of sociology at the University of Hanover and former assistant of Adorno, stresses the fact that Adorno was never explicitly sexist and that Karplus, too, had other lovers. These amorous adventures, which they did not conceal from each other, did not affect their profound emotional loyalty to one another, according to Becker-Schmidt. Here, once again, it seems that Adorno (and Karplus) did not feel overly obliged to uphold rigidly the conventions of bourgeois 'normality'. Becker-Schmidt also stresses Adorno's recognition of his own deep intellectual debt to Karplus. Without her help, not merely as his secretary, but also as an invaluable critic and interlocutor, much of his work would not have been possible.
 20. *Studies on Authority and Family*, quoted by Müller-Doohm, p. 44.
 21. Kracauer's novel *Georg*, which is set in Frankfurt in the period immediately after World War I, describes the homoerotically charged relationship between the sheltered and precocious fourteen-year-old Fred and his twenty-four-year-old tutor Georg. As was the case with Adorno and Kracauer in real life, the relationship between Fred and Georg gradually evolves beyond the initial regular mentoring sessions to a close friendship, such that, for example, the two of them go on vacation together. As appreciative as Fred is of Georg's friendship, it is clear from the beginning that Georg is more invested, both emotionally and erotically, in the relationship than Fred. Thus the relationship in the novel remains essentially Platonic, despite Georg's occasional overtures to Fred. On the further development of the relationship between the two of them, see Martin Jay, 'Adorno and Kracauer: Notes on a Troubled Friendship', in *Permanent Exiles*, pp. 217–36.
 22. Schoenberg was critical of Adorno's compositions and particularly his writings on music from the very beginning. He was concerned that Adorno would scare people away from atonal and twelve-tone music with his heavily philosophical conceptual apparatus. Schoenberg's antipathy to Adorno ended up costing him his position as the co-editor of the Viennese musical journal *Anbruch*.
 23. See *Theodor Adorno, Briefe und Briefwechsel*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno Archive, vol. 2; *Theodor W. Adorno/Alban Berg: Briefwechsel 1925–1935*, ed. Henri Lonitz, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1997.
 24. Among the latter was a daring seminar on Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* book, which had been rejected just a few years before by the very department in which Adorno was now teaching. The student protocols from this seminar, and others Adorno offered during this time, have since been published by the Theodor Adorno Archive. See *Frankfurt Adorno Blätter*, vols I and IV, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main, 1992.
 25. Adorno's insistence upon the *philosophical* import of Benjamin's work – especially the epistemo-critical prologue to the *Trauerspiel* book – is evident from his early lectures on 'The Actuality of Philosophy' and 'The Idea of Natural History' and his study of Kierkegaard all the way through to the methodological reflections in the Introduction and the 'Meditations on Metaphysics' in *Negative Dialectics*. For an examination of Walter Benjamin's work from a philosophical perspective that was heavily influenced by Adorno himself, see Rolf Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1973.
 26. While it is true that Horkheimer was devoting himself more to reflections on language at this time, the reflections upon the universal and 'transcendental' implications of language use, upon which Müller-Doohm focuses, represent only one tendency within his thought as a whole and cannot, in any case, be separated from his materialist theory of history and society. For Horkheimer's understanding of language during this time, see Gunzelin Schmid-Noerr, 'Wahrheit, Macht und die Sprache der Philosophie: Zu Horkheimers sprachphilosophischen Reflexionen in seinen nachgelassenen Schriften 1939 bis 1946', in A. Schmidt and N. Altwicker, eds, *Max Horkheimer Heute: Werk und Wirkung*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, pp. 349–70. See also Hermann Schweppenhäuser's essay in the same volume, 'Sprachbegriff und sprachliche Darstellung bei Horkheimer und Adorno', pp. 328–48.
 27. Müller-Doohm and Claussen both argue that Adorno's 'American experience' resulted in a further disenchantment in his eyes of the emphatic concept of *Kultur*. As Müller-Doohm writes, in the early 1930s the politically naive Adorno still 'entertained the hope that the traditional elites of the aristocracy and educated middle class would oppose inhumane political tendencies based on their appreciation of art. He believed, for example, that the music of someone like Gustav Mahler was so moving that anyone capable of grasping its substance would be safe from the influences of anti-Semitic propaganda' (p. 263). But in the post-war German context, Adorno viewed this revival of the concept of *Kultur* as an 'alibi for a lack of political consciousness' (Müller-Doohm, p. 502). It was this phenomenon that provoked such sweeping statements from Adorno as 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric', and 'All culture after Auschwitz, including its urgent critique, is garbage.' See also Claussen, pp. 228ff. and 244ff.
 28. As part of the Adorno centenary, there has even been a book published just on Adorno's emotionally charged relationship to this small town, which had roughly the same meaning for Adorno as Cabourg (alias Balbec) for Marcel Proust: Reinhard Pabst, ed., *Theodor W. Adorno. Kindheit in Amorbach: Bilder und Erinnerungen*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2003.
 29. Habermas's central objection to Adorno's Critical Theory, particularly in its mature form, as articulated in *Negative Dialectics*, is that Adorno remained trapped within the obsolescent paradigm of consciousness philosophy. Müller-Doohm alludes unambiguously to Habermas's

- arguments: 'Thus if epistemology and not social theory were primary, did Adorno view *Negative Dialectics* as the last effort of a venerable subject-object philosophy? Or did he believe he had succeeded in overcoming the aporias of consciousness philosophy?' (666). See also his remarks on p. 739.
30. See Müller-Doohm, p. 587. For the audacious – and fundamentally misguided – argument about Critical Theory providing the foundations for a belated, intellectual grounding of the Federal Republic, see C. Albrecht, G.C. Behrmann, M. Bock, H. Homann and F.H. Tenbruck, *Die Intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik: Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule*, Campus, Frankfurt am Main, 2000.
 31. 1789–1914. See, for example, Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World 1914–1991*, Vintage Books, New York, 1996, p. 6, where he distinguishes between a long nineteenth and a short twentieth century (1914–1989).
 32. Already at the beginning of the long nineteenth century, Hegel recognized the rise of bourgeois society as the defining characteristic of modern society. But he also recognized the contradictions – prior to Marx's much more detailed elaboration of the mechanisms behind them – inherent in bourgeois society, which he decried as a 'system of ethical [*sittliche*] order split into its extremes and lost'. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1967, p. 123.
 33. In relation to the United States, for example, Adorno once wrote: 'any contemporary consciousness that has not appropriated the American experience, even in opposition, has something reactionary about it.' Quoted by Martin Jay in 'Adorno in America', p. 123.
 34. As Claussen aptly puts it, 'Nothing negative remains external to Adorno's theory' (p. 293).
 35. See, for example, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1992.
 36. One of the most important ways in which Hegel's objective idealism differed from Kant and Fichte's subjective idealism, was in the former's conscious appropriation and critique of the literature on classical political economy that emerged in England and Scotland in the eighteenth century. In the *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx recognized that Hegel 'stands upon the basis of the modern economy, i.e. upon the political economy of his time', but modern interpreters have recovered this key insight into Hegel's work only in the past few decades. See, for example, Birger Priddat, *Hegel als Ökonom*, Duncker und Humblot, Berlin, 1990.
 37. The emergence in German in the past decade of terms such as *Zivilgesellschaft* and *Zivilcourage* clearly reflects this tendency.
 38. Literally, a 'Philosophical attachment to the West', *Westanbindung* was the term used in the postwar period to signify the anchoring of the Federal Republic of Germany with the Western Atlantic community of 'democratic' nations.
 39. For example, Habermas has retreated from his earlier criticisms of the welfare state. In a recent article, which was co-signed by Jacques Derrida, Habermas names the welfare state as one of the most important historical achievements of the twentieth century and one that should define European 'identity' in contrast to the neoliberal American model. See Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, 'Unsere Erneuerung. Nach dem Krieg: Die Wiedergeburt Europas', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 125, 31 May 2003, pp. 53–4. Habermas has also emerged as a critic of the excesses of neoliberal globalization. See, for example, 'The Postnational Constellation and the Future of Democracy', in *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2001, pp. 58–112. Habermas has also distanced himself recently from some of the more extreme implications of the linguistic turn. He has developed a critique of '*Sprachidealismus*' and, with the introduction of a concept of 'weak naturalism', has revised his earlier reduction of *Wahrheit* (truth) to *Wohlbegründetheit* (being well-justified or well-grounded), at least in relation to theoretical (if not practical) reason. See his *Truth and Justification: Philosophical Essays*, trans. Barbara Fultner, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, pp. 1–51 and 237–76. Habermas has even reintroduced a positive concept of human nature, which pushes him closer to the position of the older Critical Theorists of 'mindfulness of nature in the subject'. Habermas recognizes that human beings too are a part of nature and that, in this case in particular, nature can and should not – as he maintained in his earlier work – be approached from a purely instrumental standpoint. Habermas insists that the nature all humans share – the foundations of their 'species being' – serves as the ethical prerequisite for any further forms of moral reflection. See his *The Future of Human Nature*, trans. Hella Beister, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003, esp. pp. 16–22 and 37–44.
 40. Theodor Adorno, 'Gesellschaft', in *Soziologische Schriften I*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1972, p. 15.
 41. Habermas reads Freud primarily in terms of restoring self-reflexivity to the positivist-dominated sciences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See 'Selbstreflexion als Wissenschaft: Freuds psychoanalytische Sinnkritik', in *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1968, pp. 262–99. For a critique of Habermas's abandoning of psychoanalysis in favour of cognitive psychology, see Joel Whitebook, 'The Suspension of the Utopian Motif in Critical Theory', in *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1995, pp. 79ff.
 42. See Mike Davis, 'Weisser Hass und dunkle Träume. Gestresster Mittelstand: In Arnold Schwarzenegger haben die kalifornischen Bürger den Helden ihrer Macht-fantasien gefunden', *Die Zeit* 43, 16 October 2003.
 43. In his pathbreaking social-psychological contribution to the Institute's collective *Studies on Authority and Family* (1936), Erich Fromm argued that the sado-masochistic personality – one who identifies with the strong and holds the weak in contempt – was the dominant character structure brought forth by modern, bourgeois societies. Horkheimer works out the historical foundations of this argument in his important essay, 'Egoism and Freedom Movements: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Epoch', in *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G.F. Hunter et al., MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1993, pp. 49–110.
 44. Horkheimer even gave a collection of his essays from the postwar period the title: *Gesellschaft im Übergang*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1972.
 45. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1968, p. 257.

'Human'

Louis Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*, ed. François Matheron, trans. G.M. Goshgarian, Verso, London and New York, 2003. Ixii + 318 pp., £40.00 hb., £15.00 pb., 1 85984 507 X hb., 1 85984 408 1 pb.

Martin Halliwell and Andy Mousley, *Critical Humanisms: Humanist/Anti-Humanist Dialogues*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003. 233 pp., £49.95 hb., £16.95 pb., 0 7486 1504 0 hb., 0 7486 1505 9 pb.

How are we to understand humanism today? Whilst the rhetoric of 'military humanism' continues unabated, philosophical thinking about the politics of humanism, post-humanism, trans-humanism and anti-humanism has reached something of an unhappy standstill. When not buried in dubious varieties of ethical discourse regarding biology or genetics, or displaced by an unstable *mélange* of psychoanalysis and philosophies of alterity, debates surrounding the term 'humanism' appear to have almost evaporated. Contemporary thought seems to be characterized both by a vague theoretical anti-humanism stripped of its political charge, and by a misguided post-Foucauldianism that seeks to avoid the question of 'man' or humanism altogether, wary of its unseemly and best-forgotten history.

Every form of humanism runs the risk of essentialism, or so we are told, and from justifications of colonial acculturation to Stalinism's 'everything in the name of man', the history of the abuse of the term is damning indeed. Thus, it appears, we must either accept our 'post-human future' (with some caveats, naturally) or transpose the question into religious registers or ever-deeper ontological recesses (Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' has a lot to answer for in this respect). In the wake of all these prohibitions, whether implicit or explicit, it is all the more pressing to seek ways of thinking about humanism and anti-humanism that are attentive to the specific manner in which these terms were originally problematized as well as the political possibilities they determined. In other words, to attempt to answer Dominique Janicaud's enquiry: 'why did the "question of man" quite suddenly in the 1960s, especially in France and in somewhat polemical terms ... crystallize into a critical reflection upon humanism?'

This extensively annotated collection of Althusser's studies from 1966–7, culled from François Matheron's edition of the *Écrits Philosophiques et Politiques*, is an essential document for anyone interested in the emergence of the 'humanist controversy'. (Goshgari-

an's lucid and helpful introduction contextualizes the complex series of debates from this period, including Althusser's relationship with the PCF, Garaudy and Stalinism.) The essay entitled 'The Humanist Controversy' from 1967 was written as a follow-up to Althusser's two short but explosive essays in *For Marx*: 'Marxism and Humanism' and 'A Complementary Note on "Real Humanism"'. In it, we find Althusser setting out the problem in a characteristically crystalline manner:

all of us sense that, riding on the small change of a few concepts or words that are now being sorted out, is the outcome of a game in which we all have a stake, of which this 'discussion' of Humanism by a few philosophers is an echo, close to hand and infinitely remote: the way we should understand Marx, and put his ideas into practice.

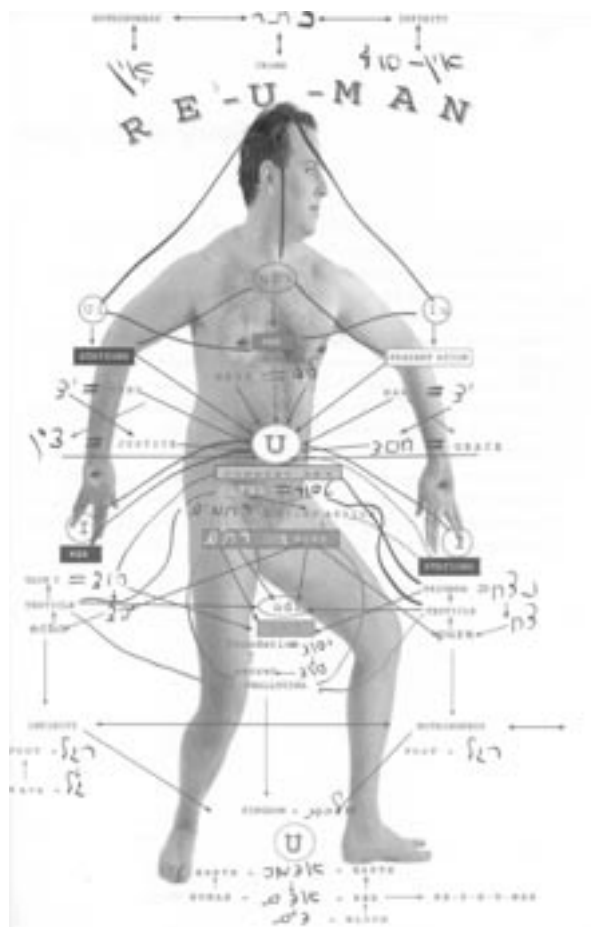
This is precisely what has been forgotten in the current bandying around of humanist and anti-humanist rhetoric: that Althusser's original claims were formulated in terms of the question of reading, and, more specifically, of reading Marx. The long essay 'On Feuerbach', taken from a 1967 course, allows us to confirm the extent to which an intricate and powerful analysis of Feuerbach underlies Althusser's notorious 'Bachelardian' claims regarding the 'ruptures' at the heart of Marx's oeuvre. The contemporary recourse to the rhetoric of anti-humanism, often accompanied by an ambiguous nod to Althusser and Foucault, wilfully neglects the conditions necessary for Althusser to formulate his reading of Marx, historical as well as philosophical. Furthermore, it overlooks Foucault's own attempts to distance himself from Althusser, whilst nevertheless acknowledging the inescapable character of many of the same questions – subjectivation, the emergence of the problematic of 'man', theories of discourse, and the rest.

Althusser himself admits that at the time of writing the two earlier pieces on humanism he must have touched 'an extremely sensitive spot in the present

ideological, if not theoretical conjuncture'. His 'precise thesis', which he repeats here, is that whilst Marx, around 1843, may have added society and politics to Feuerbachian formulations, there was no theoretical innovation in Marx's work until the lengthy rupture occasioned by the 'Theses on Feuerbach' and *The German Ideology* and the setting out of the conceptual foundations of *Capital*. Furthermore, Marx had to struggle for a long time to break with the theoretical humanism of Feuerbach (interestingly, it is Althusser who repeatedly points out the importance of Feuerbach for Marx, something that is often overlooked). Theoretical humanism, he writes 'is the theoretical disguise of run-of-the-mill petty-bourgeois moral ideology.... Man is, in essence, the diversionary tactic of a reactionary ideology.' Furthermore, it is not 'the essence of man' or 'the human genus' that becomes the science of history for Marx, but rather 'the history of the forms of existence specific to the human species'. In Marx and Engels, this involved forging concepts of the mode of production, productive forces and relations of production, ideological superstructure, determination in the last instance by the economy, and so forth. It is precisely this entirely new 'continent' of thought that Althusser claims to be theoretically anti-humanist, or rather 'a-humanist'. This reiteration of earlier claims also involves a refinement of Althusser's identification of a 'break' in Marx's work, such that 'the break is never anything more than the beginning of an event of very long duration which, in a sense, never ends'. Almost forty years later, Althusser's claims continue to be taken up in an impoverished and caricatural way, something he predicts with accuracy: 'The verdict is in: I sacrifice "genesis" to "structures". I am in line for this endlessly repeated trial [*procès*].' This collection should hopefully go some way to undermining this simplistic, though common, approach to his thought.

Attention to the specificities of the 'controversy' is certainly lacking in the *Critical Humanisms* collection, which is structured under chapter headings such as 'Romantic Humanism', 'Pagan Humanism' and 'Technological Humanism'. For a collection that claims to present a survey of humanist/anti-humanist 'dialogues' there is no single reference to Althusser (though several to Foucault): a somewhat mystifying omission given both his influence and his specific insistence upon this debate. Instead, we are presented with an attempt to reclaim a form of post-theoretical 'baggy humanism' – an awkwardly named and suspiciously eclectic rubric for a series of non-chronological lineages that try to preserve the claim that 'The human ... is too amorphous to be easily defined, and to try

to name it in a prescriptive way is paradoxically to be anti-humanist, because it denies individuals the role of interpreting for themselves what being human means.' This is all well and good, but to ignore the entire panoply of reflections on humanism that attempt precisely to avoid reducing the debate to one about 'individuals' and 'definitions' (and we must include strands of radical Enlightenment thinking, Feuerbach, Marx, Althusser here) is to run the risk of evacuating any positive political role for humanism that would be opposed to the current neoliberal abuses of the term. Furthermore, by failing to pose the 'anti-humanist' aspect of the dialogue more pointedly and, in the end, reducing every philosophical position to some sort of shallow humanism of one kind or another (even



Lyotard and Baudrillard are described as being 'interested in the revelation of "the human" as something that we can have an idea about, but which exceeds thought and ultimately cannot be presented'), the book fails to indicate what might be of real worth in the critiques of humanism that exploded in the 1960s, particularly in France.

Nevertheless, via some unusual associations ('Romantic Humanism' runs from Shakespeare to Marx to Cixous; 'Spiritual Humanism' runs from Walter Benjamin to Martin Luther King to Kristeva),

the *Critical Humanisms* collection does sometimes rise above the shallow allusiveness to which it seems condemned. (Who, exactly, benefits from such necessarily condensed discussions of the twenty-four thinkers included in this collection?) The chapter on 'Civic Humanism' that runs from Wollstonecraft to Habermas to Stuart Hall introduces some important questions about the relationship between the state, its citizens, and Enlightenment ideals of human nature. It concludes that, 'while cultural politics continues to focus its attention on the rich, irreducible field of "identities, interests and values" that constitutes culture, practical politics may indeed get ignored'. Unfortunately, there is little follow-up to this discussion of 'practical politics', other than a fleeting reference in the conclusion to Naomi Klein, where she is somewhat perplexingly positioned as an 'immanent transhuman' thinker, since the story she tells about technology is critical ('US-biased advertising' on the Internet) as well as positive (you can organize protests more easily). As

timely and influential as Klein's analysis may be, there is little to suggest that without a more critical take on questions regarding such unfashionable (*pace* Žižek) notions as ideology, universality and political action (the central terms of the humanism/anti-humanism debate as originally conceived), we will not end up with technological euphoria masquerading as emancipation. This is not entirely sufficient when we are daily informed that the bombing of other countries is a thoroughly 'humanitarian' action. The question of whether to reclaim the rhetoric of humanity in the name of a new universalism, or to ditch such terms altogether in the wake of their historical redundancy, is thus a crucial one. It can only be addressed by a serious examination of the writings of those thinkers that posed it in this way in the first place: Feuerbach, Marx and, as the strength of the *Humanist Controversy* collection demonstrates, Althusser.

Nina Power

Three-point turn

Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism*, Continuum, London and New York, 2003. xiii + 154 pp., £55.00 hb., £15.99 pb., 0 8264 6802 0 hb., 0 8264 6803 9 pb.

The challenge of Bergsonism has been configured in various different ways during the recent resurgence of interest in Bergson's work over the past few years: John Mullarkey (1999) has emphasized the challenge to any theory that claims to be a 'first philosophy' through Bergson's refutation of static foundations; Keith Ansell Pearson (2002) has emphasized the challenge to the 'being' of the human through a thinking of Bergson's concept of the virtual; Gregory Dale Adamson (2002) has emphasized the challenge to science's knowledge claims through Bergson's conception of knowledge as a form of action rather than speculation; and in the collection *The New Bergson* (1999) the traditional interpretations of Bergson's philosophy as a kind of vitalism, spiritualism or phenomenology are themselves challenged. What all these 'challenges' have in common is that they take up and advance Bergson's work in order to emphasize what relevance Bergsonism may still have to contemporary philosophical debates. Within this climate of affirmation and redirection of Bergson's work to a range of different philosophical enterprises what, then, constitutes the specificity of Leonard Lawlor's contribution?

In his preface, Lawlor makes clear that he is following his 'own line' through Bergson's work by linking two books that Bergson himself did not: *Matter and*

Memory (1896) and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932). The latter book, in its focus on processes of social differentiation, was conceived by Bergson as a continuation of his project in *Creative Evolution* (1907), which focused on processes of biological differentiation. The almost complete absence of any consideration of *Creative Evolution* constitutes both the distinctiveness and the extreme difficulty of the challenge of Bergsonism as Lawlor constructs it. In fact there are three challenges, corresponding to the book's three chapters, and each is rooted in a particular concept that Lawlor identifies in Bergson. Hence, the concept of the image, from *Matter and Memory*, provides a challenge to phenomenology, the concept of memory, also from *Matter and Memory*, provides a challenge to ontology, and the concept of sense, the identification of which distinguishes Lawlor's reading of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, provides a challenge to ethics. Lawlor then supports the challenge to ethics in an appendix that provides a rare and much needed thing: a detailed and sustained engagement with *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

A second appendix provides a translation of Jean Hyppolite's 1949 essay 'Various Aspects of Memory in Bergson'. This essay is valuable in its own right as

an examination of Bergson's conception of memory, emphasizing the indivisibility of a personal past, its role in the creation of the present and its ontological independence from the present. In essence, Hyppolite's essay emphasises the aspect of Bergsonian memory – that it is not a psychological record of past action but an ontological condition of present action – that will come to characterize Deleuze's Bergsonism. It is also specifically relevant to the book it is appended to, for Lawlor acknowledges that he relied heavily on it for his reading of *Matter and Memory*.

The first chapter develops the challenge of Bergsonism to phenomenology through an engagement with Bergson's concept of the image. Lawlor recalls Derrida's definition of 'presence' in phenomenology as presence to consciousness, and points out that this is equivalent to what Bergson calls representation. For Bergson, consciousness is not *of* something, but *is* something. Lawlor distinguishes the Bergsonian image from both 'things' and representations by prioritizing a term that is often passed over by Bergson scholars: vibration. The concept of the image is a part of Bergson's demonstration of the reality of matter as an indivisible continuity like consciousness, and it is essential to this indivisibility that images are conceived of in terms of vibration rather than location. Lawlor emphasises this activity of images (he gives the example of the activity of a perceived colour as vibrations of light) as a model of perception that does not decompose the material vibration into two localized elements, thing and representation. In this way Bergson allows perception to remain an indivisible material process, rather than an immaterial reproduction.

In the second chapter, Lawlor develops the challenge of Bergsonism to ontology through an engagement with Bergson's concept of memory. He reminds us of Heidegger's charge that, like Nietzsche, Bergson merely reverses Platonism without twisting free of it. Rather than a challenge to ontology, though, Lawlor aims to find in Bergson a satisfaction of the Heideggerian criteria for ontology. He does this by arguing for a primacy of memory in Bergson, through a long discussion of Bergson's 'cone' symbols from *Matter and Memory*. The 'pure memory' that the cones symbolize is analogous to the unconscious, in that it is a complete personal history, always infusing the present through a 'rotation' and 'contraction' of the whole, a kind of focusing – sometimes towards the current situation, but sometimes capriciously. Lawlor makes a sufficient case that Bergson does twist free of Platonism, by not simply reversing it into a subjectivism in the present, but conceiving of an ontological being of

the self as memory, in the past. Unfortunately, in this Lawlor goes too far towards reintroducing the barrier between consciousness and matter that his explication of the vibrations of images in Chapter 1 had started to overcome.

At this point we can see Hyppolite's emphasis on memory tempt Lawlor away from, and limit somewhat, his appreciation of Bergsonian perception. When Lawlor claims Bergson defines being with this personal past, this is actually a reference to Deleuze's *Bergsonism* and far from Bergson's own conception of being, which is produced in the mutual interpenetration, in the present, of the past (as memory) and the future (as perception). Lawlor perhaps overemphasises the cone diagram of pure memory, whereas Bergson explicitly 'corrects' his purely theoretical conceptions of perception and memory by showing how the two interpenetrate and mutually reaffirm one another. The concept of the motor-diagram by which Bergson explains this interpenetration is not discussed by Lawlor, and the constant implication of memory in matter in *Matter and Memory* is underemphasized.

In Chapter 3 Lawlor presents the challenge to ethics through a concept of sense, opposing the 'common sense' that works with reference to practical action to the affective sense that is the source of that action. Hence, the *alterity* of common sense is referred to the original *alteration* of sense, to which Bergson's method of intuition gives us access. However, Lawlor only applies intuition to memory – that is, to the inner but not the outer continuity of the self – and he says we must be cautious of Bergson's concept of sympathy because it 'suggests intersubjectivity'. This is one of several instances where even a glance towards *Creative Evolution* would facilitate a much stronger presentation of Bergson's philosophy, for therein sympathy suggests a pre-subjective continuity between individuals, and hence provides a basis for an external, as well as an internal intuition. The relevance of all this to ethics is that a Bergsonian ethical enterprise would seek experience at its source, before what he calls the 'turn' at which it becomes subjective. It would identify and understand experience in terms of the vibrations of matter and memory. A difficulty of Lawlor's priority of memory, then, is the implication that this pre-subjective experience can be sought in memory alone. In principle, though, the challenge to ethics that Lawlor identifies holds good, and is also a challenge to humanism (although Lawlor doesn't say this), for the ethic is not based on human common-sense experience, but on the sources of that experience, the pre-reflective sense from which it emerges.

The appendix provides Lawlor's most interesting encounter with Bergson, as he leaves aside his problematic interpretation of *Matter and Memory* and elaborates in detail a Bergsonian ethic in terms of the pre- and post-representational emotions of joy and pleasure that Bergson describes in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. A Bergsonian ethic would be based not on human experience, but on the identification of the sources of that experience. Lawlor evokes a range of terminology in order to distinguish Bergson's ethical potential, describing the tension between habituation and the emotions which follow

and resist it, the two frenzies (aphrodisia and asceticism) that the necessity of sexual reproduction gives rise to when pre-representational *joy* is habituated into representational *pleasure*, and the difference between the charlatan's purely representational fabrication of mythical and static religious narratives and the mystic's dynamic pre-representational love of all creation. Lawlor's appendix sustains a detailed and intuitive pursuit of Bergson's thought which surpasses that of the preceding chapters.

Michael Vaughan

Enemy of the state

Mark Neocleous, *Imagining the State*, Open University Press, Maidenhead and Philadelphia, 2003. vii + 174 pp., £50.00 hb., £15.99 pb., 0 335 20352 3 hb., 0 335 20351 5 pb.

With the rise of 'new times' during the 1980s, the emergence of new objects of theoretical and political concern (consumption, identity, globalization) and the final collapse of historical communism, theoretical reflection on the state by the Left waned. This was also perhaps an effect of the ideological anti-statism of neoliberal regimes. Prior to that, under the influence of Althusser and Gramsci, state theory had been one of the most dynamic areas within the Marxist tradition. Interestingly, there are signs that we may be witnessing a 'return of the state' in left political theory, revitalized by new perspectives, including the Foucauldianism with which Poulantzas (perhaps Marxism's most persistent state theorist) was involved in a headlong collision. Mark Neocleous's book is part of this revival; it also represents something of a 'cultural turn'.

Imagining the State builds on three previous publications: *Administering Civil Society: Towards a Theory of State Power* (1996), a study of the ways in which states constitute, fashion and manage civil society (rather than merely represent or resolve its contradictions); *Fascism* (1997), a study in reactionary modernity and state form; and *The Fabrication of Social Order: A Critical Theory of Police Power* (2000), a study of a general state function, policing, as well as a specific apparatus, and its role in the fashioning and control of wage labour. Following in the footsteps of Corrigan and Sayer's interpretation of Marx's and Weber's political writings (*The Great Arch*, 1985), Neocleous regards states, although absolutist in origin, as essentially modern bourgeois social forms, founded on violence and, however democratic, tendentially fascist. Statecraft has become autonomous

and developed a logic specific to itself. Neocleous is also interested in what states say (or 'state'); more specifically, in what they say they are, and in what they say they do. In this sense, *Imagining the State* is a work of ideology critique, a study of the capitalist state's self-presentation.

Neocleous reminds us of Bourdieu's warning against the danger threatening all critiques of the state form: that the concepts deployed may in fact be statist concepts, ways in which states have politically and philosophically imagined themselves. Neocleous takes this warning seriously, for such symbolic replication is precisely *Imagining the State's* key concern: it develops a critique of the state by way of its imagining, and it tackles it, via Hobbes's *Leviathan*, by engaging, on the one hand, with a key statist image (the state as an artificial person) and, on the other, with one of the most important of statist juridico-political concepts – sovereignty. Sovereignty has been written about extensively in recent years, by philosophers such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida, but in a way that either ignores the state form and/or has the idea of sovereignty stand in for it. The importance of *Imagining the State* is that it reconnects sovereignty back to the state through an analysis of the metaphors of corporeality.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first investigates the way bourgeois ideology imagines the 'body of the state'. Here Neocleous reads *Leviathan* in the context of the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the 'disorder' produced by an emerging bourgeoisie and private property in land. The idea of 'the body politic' connotes unity and order and functions as a strategy of containment as the idea

of sovereignty shifts from the body of the absolutist monarch representing God on earth to that of a secularized, abstract state involved in both external and internal relations. The key conceptual transformation here is a new temporalization of sovereignty that, in overcoming death, makes the 'body of the state' perpetual (as in the formulation 'The King is dead, long live the King'). Monarchy was thus reconfigured so that 'the body of the king had become an omnipotent political body-machine, an inhuman body with a force and will of its own'.

Chapter 2 sketches a second shift that is crucial to Neocleous's argument with followers of Lefort, for whom the modernization of state sovereignty involves a process of *disincorporation*, and the return of the body politic is, therefore, a sign of totalitarianism. This is important because of the continuity between liberal democratic and fascist states that Neocleous wants to establish. It involves an extension of the sovereign body metaphor of the abstract state to society as a whole: this is the 'social body', based on the creation of citizenship through the incorporation of 'the people' (Rousseau) and of labour (Abbé Sieyès) into the democratized nation-states of Europe following the French Revolution. The final section of this chapter is dedicated to exhibiting the medicalization of the social body by both fascist and liberal democratic states, in order to protect what turns out to be 'grotesque' – a body full of holes, shaped by exits and entrances to be policed. Here, Neocleous echoes Agamben's definition of fascist biopolitics as one designed to secure the biological future of a people.

But the sovereign state is much more than a grotesque body for bourgeois ideology; it is an 'artificial person' (Hobbes again) that thinks – has a 'mind' – and acts as 'the possessor of knowledge ... engag[ing] in an immense labour of organization, standardization, recording and reordering ... of the social body'. Neocleous sets out the core of his argument in Chapter 3, where he discusses the 'personality of the state': a created entity which turns against its creators. This is the political space in which sovereignty works. It is the site of a possible theory of state fetishism modelled on the parallels between the commodity form and sovereignty. Neocleous, however, turns to another parallel, that between the corporate personality of the state and the emergence of the company (or corporate) form 'as the legal personality of capital'. From this perspective, capital and state share a common corporatism, their 'fictive' legal identities endowing them a kind of subjectivity. (As Balibar has suggested, here the fictive is at its most real.)

Each chapter has the same structure, combining engagements with the history of the statist imaginary (a kind of genealogy of the corporate form) with criticisms of contemporary state practices: security and information systems (the state is 'an epistemological project' for Neocleous), the production of the figures of the foreigner, the refugee and the illegal immigrant (the state dehumanizes those who do not belong, as non-citizens), the violence of cartography, as well as a liberal politics organized around the defence of a state-defined privacy. All are implicated in this 'corporeal model', which, moreover, Neocleous insists is 'a dead end for any critical politics of radical transformation'. For all its historical research and philosophical interpretation, *Imagining the State* is thus a pedagogic text directed at the present.

To conclude, two brief criticisms. First, the state forms discussed in *Imagining the State* all seem to be nation-states. (The final chapter discusses how all communities constituted by states are mapped, territorialized and nationalized to produce a 'home'.) But, just as Benedict Anderson says very little about the state in his account of nationhood in *Imagined Communities* (1983; 1991), Neocleous says very little about nations in his account of statecraft. This is particularly important for his final reflection on globalization, where the slippage between state and nation-state impedes a discussion of the emergence of non-national state functions. Nations are intimately connected to the constitution of 'peoples' and may thus have illuminated the discussion of citizenship and of what Neocleous refers to as the 'social body' as it emerged from the French Revolution. Furthermore, are we not now witnessing an abstraction of the sovereign state away from the nation, reterritorializations of sovereignty both upwards (transnational) and downwards (regional)? This is the kind of question that lies behind much of the recent discussion of sovereignty, but it is one that is resisted by many of the Marxist Left, such as Ellen Meiksins Wood. This suggests a further question: what does such resistance say about the statist imaginary of that Left?

Second, how does contradiction appear in and constitute this statist imaginary? Althusser insisted, for example, that all state apparatus are sites of class struggle. Neocleous only discusses the idea of imagination briefly, as bourgeois ideology, but the question that emerges here is: if the metaphors of the sovereign body are *constitutive* of state form (including its subjects), does this mean that this imaginary is a fundamental part of the state? A positive answer would perhaps require an expanded definition of what states

are, along the lines suggested by Gramsci's notion of hegemony. But this would have entailed an engagement with state theory, which is notable for its absence. Neocleous opts for relevance instead.

John Kraniauskas

Paradigm found?

Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis, eds, *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002. xxvii + 298 pp., £20.50 pb., 0 8166 3294 4.

The intellectual clash between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas in the early 1970s dominated much of the political debate among Marxists in that period, and continued to do so for some time after. Being labelled an 'instrumentalist' or a 'structuralist' became an important signifier of political identity, almost as important as membership of this or that particular party. The fact that this distinction, and the debate itself, was always a little artificial given the different targets each writer initially had – Miliband was trying to challenge Anglo-American pluralism, and Poulantzas the official communist tradition – is perhaps less relevant than the fact that here, again, was another set of labels either to wear or to throw around accusingly. But the intensity and importance of that debate has now worn off. Who reads Miliband or Poulantzas today?

The editors and contributors to this collection clearly do. 'Paradigm lost' is how the debate is presented, as though it needs to be retrieved from history. Most of the chapters began life as papers for a conference on the two writers, held in 1997 and sponsored by the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College, New York. So perhaps even those still interested in the debate sensed something a little Byzantine about it.

With the air heavy with the smell of ancient texts, this collection appears to have two related starting points. On the one hand, it rests on the assumption that in fact very few of us do read either Miliband or Poulantzas, and that this is our loss. (On both scores they are probably right.) On the other hand, there is an implicit assumption that state theory has been in such decline since the debate between Miliband and Poulantzas that it is more or less dead, to the extent that 'the main goal of the collection of essays here is to assist state theory in its resurrection'. This is

surely wrong. Far from being dead, there has been a fair amount of Marxist 'state theory' since the 1970s. Some of it has been excellent, some good, and some poor. Some of it has travelled so far down roads paved by bourgeois social science that it has been neither particularly productive nor politically useful (just consider the mass of literature now available on 'international relations'). Most of it, of course, hasn't been particularly concerned about describing itself as 'instrumentalist' or 'structuralist'. But if, as Leo Panitch notes in his essay, the popularity and decline of state theory are directly related to the vicissitudes of class struggles and political conditions, then reconsidering one classical debate might well be useful in learning something about our own times.

The debate between Miliband and Poulantzas centred around the nature of the capitalist state. In *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) Miliband argued that the capitalist class is engaged in a particular relation with the state, rendering the state an *instrument* for the domination of society. The state, on this view, is a committee for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie. In reviewing the book and, in the process, beginning the debate between them, Poulantzas suggested that Miliband nowhere deals with 'the Marxist theory of the state as such'. In other words, while Miliband may well have been successful in debunking the bourgeois myth of 'the pluralist state', his position was in direct conflict with that developed by Poulantzas, which points to the relative autonomy of the capitalist state as its distinguishing characteristic. For Poulantzas, the divisions internal to the capitalist class are embedded within the structure of the state, providing structural limits to state activity. Poulantzas argued that the 'Marxist theory of the state' has to deal with precisely this relative autonomy of the state from any class or class fraction.

It is fair to say that although the editors and authors of this book seek to revisit the debate, to open up the question of its relevance today, and thus somehow to 'referee' between Miliband and Poulantzas, the latter comes out the 'winner' – the book presupposes Poulantzas's suggestion regarding the theory of the state and constantly highlights Poulantzas's insights. Where it is a question of which writer provides more insights for today's debates, Poulantzas virtually always comes out on top: for example, in his 'extraordinary prescience' at characterizing authoritarian statism as a project implicit in the bourgeois state form and his approach to globalization, which is 'theoretically more sophisticated and strategically more relevant' than much of the contemporary globaloney around. Where

it is a question of relative strengths and theoretical sophistication, Poulantzas is also held up as the more thoughtful and insightful of the two writers. But then if, as it often appears here, the 'choice' between Miliband and Poulantzas is, in a sense, the 'choice' between the *Manifesto* or *Capital* as the grounding for a Marxist political theory, then Poulantzas is bound to win. It is also clear that what drives the collection is a strong sense among the authors that Poulantzas deserves to be more widely read than he is; one doesn't get the sense that they feel the same about Miliband.

What is resurrected in this book, then, is less a paradigm and more Poulantzas's conception of the Marxist theory of the state. In one way this is entirely fair: Poulantzas's theoretical sophistication meant that he was far more attuned than Miliband to some of the subtler issues in political theory and the seemingly contradictory practices of the capitalist state. But in another sense it merely replicates the artificiality of the original debate and runs the risk of underplaying just how crucial Miliband's work was in developing the critique of pluralism (and, one might add, the myth of parliamentary socialism – of which virtually nothing is said here). In that sense, the idea of a 'paradigm lost' is a little far-fetched – certainly as far-fetched as the idea that one really does have to choose between the *Manifesto* and *Capital*. Rather, what emerges from the book is a salutary reminder of a powerful set of texts which could well be revisited for their use as strategic tools for the development of Marxist thought on the state.

Mark Neocleous

If dogs could fly

Ben Watson, *Shitkicks and Doughballs*, Spare Change Books, London, 2003. 228 pp., £10.00 pb., 0 9525744 8 9.

Ben Watson has an alter ego, Out to Lunch (OTL), who has published a string of excellent, high-energy, ranting poetry and related material. OTL was conceived in the time of punk, and has continued down the years to evince a fondness for a home-made fanzine style of collage and contrarihood. Ben Watson himself is the music critic familiar from *The Wire* and elsewhere, and the author of several high-class raids on the inarticulate nature of most cultural and ideological critique, notably *Frank Zappa: the Negative Dialectics of Poodle-Play* (1994) and *Art, Class and Cleavage* (1998). It was only

a matter of time, I suppose, before the two personae collided, or at any rate colluded. Now it has happened: Ben Watson has written a novel starring (among many others) Out to Lunch. All the old favourites of both writers are here – negative dialectics of poodle play, esemplastic zappology, quantulumcunques on materialist esthetix, not to mention sliverfish macronix and the expansive Thong Rind notebooks – but all revamped as fast-talking porno-fictional adventure.

Shitkicks and Doughballs, as it is evocatively called, is 'the sordid and shocking tale of one man's journey through erotic humiliation, Marxist political philosophy & gourmet curries', and at first glance seems to be a rewrite of the passionate critique of *Art, Class and Cleavage* (hereafter ACC) as Camden Town nightmare s/m indulgent picaresque fantasy. And so, in a way, it is. The cast of characters will be familiar to many readers already: some slightly disguised, like Stewpot Hauser, Professor Semen Froth, Egg Tingleton or Iain Sinkle, many others more opaque or (just as likely) completely transparent, they flit in and out of the disconnected sections of the narrative like fragments of argument, which is mainly what they are. OTL is probably the most argumentative character in the whole of fiction, and can't meet anyone without happily trumpeting his contempt for their views, except in the case of a few partially or completely right-headed characters whose ideas turn out to be close to his own. In this he is complicit with his author, whose satiric method is closely allied to OTL's outlook. The satire contains stock figures, transgression of genre, and an insistent, utterly confident tone. This is Wyndham Lewis rewritten for the latter days, a combination of *Tarr* and *Apes of God* cranked up with Burroughs and s/m fun, ending up like the *Apes of God* in a spectacular party that brings all the narrative strands together in a sparkling set-piece finale heralding the birth of the Cleavage promised by Materialist Esthetix.

Merleau-Ponty once said that the novelist's job was not to discuss ideas systematically but to give them the same sort of independent life as things have, and this novel certainly throws itself into the business of making ideas concrete. A fair amount of the text also recycles passages or arguments from ACC, though not always straightforwardly. The novel, for example, begins with OTL contemplating (a person's) cleavage in an art class, a procedure which signals one aspect of Watson's transformation of argument into fiction while at the same time drawing attention to the polyvalence of the terms themselves. The word 'cleavage' itself can be argued to return thinking to the concrete in a way that terms such as 'dialectics' never can. It has a



deep-rooted historical existence in the language (or rather the various contradictory senses of 'cleave' do: cleavage itself entered the language early in the nineteenth century as part of the new geology that provided the conceptual vocabulary that in turn made possible the thought of Marx, Darwin and Freud) and a range of reference which allows for multiple intersections with actual lives. Or, as we are told at one point fairly early in the book,

In suggesting Cleavage as an organizing principle, Esther Punck wishes to provide criticism with a focus learned from revolutionary politics and sexual arousal: the rift in the boredom from which we learn! Instead of looking for an ideal representation of our values, a trophy to atrophy on the mantel-piece, we want to penetrate the cracks and fissures that cleave the edifice.

And equally, I suppose, our task as readers is to cleave to every cleft in *Cleavage*, challenging it and denying it to see what happens. So metaphors and their re-literalization, from art class to arse-licking, provide some of the narrative buzz of *Shitkicks*. More comes from its sheer exuberance and an exultant fictionality which allows for unbridled juxtaposition of philosophical, political and aesthetic positions, as in the knee-trembling exchanges at the seminar in Chapter 3. Among other pleasures, there is the spectacle of OTL using a rolled-up copy of *Radical Philosophy* itself as a megaphone to trumpet the principles of materialist esthetix. (This reminded me of the cartoon strip inserted into *Radical Philosophy* 3 which concluded its attack on the pretensions of the newly founded journal with the cry 'When Radical Professionalism makes its essentially conservative appearance, the guardians of the Status Quo rejoice!!!')

The dominant tone of the novel stems from its insistence on conjunction and disjunction as a mode of critique alongside a continuing recourse to sexual response. Rather like the recaptioned photos in the issues of *Internationale Situationiste* (the famous Asturian Miners one, for example), which were designed to create 'subversive bubbles of thought', Watson's pitiless parodying of Kantian Marxists relies on manufactured incongruence for its effect. The congruities, whether measured (occasionally) or excited (more frequently) are mediated by the narrator, who is usually the author, though there are moments like Proust's narrator's naming himself as Marcel which complicate the relation between Watson and OTL. Some passages of narrative are in the first person, for instance, and the distance between Watson and Lunch is curiously elastic. Nor does Watson eschew self-conscious narrative interventions, as in 'Gamma noted with relief the arrival of a break in the text' when he needs to switch his attention elsewhere. Flann O'Brien is not a tutelary spirit to the book, but it does have a (coarser) philosophic wit to it as well as being quite funny, or at least jokey, in parts. And it is extremely readable. It reads like a proper novel, written by a real writer (which Ben Watson clearly is), with complete and admirable fluency. A bit surprising, that, when there are so many chunks of what ought to be indigestible intrusions, of more or less gaudy or persuasive polemic, from ACC or Marx or somewhere, but even the stuff about Josef Dietzgen turns out to be quite adequately riveting as part of the ongoing sexual/intellectual story. In fact I think this is what stops the novel from tipping over into Stewart Home territory. The penumbra of self-justifying argument that surrounds Home's glib production of consciously

trashy, free-association occult-porno novels of post-punk social critique is marginally more interesting than the actual experience of reading them. They are conceptual art without the digestive work that produces real, nourishing rubbish. *Shitkicks and Doughballs* is a more substantial read than Home, and the problem of incorporating thought into engaging narrative is dealt with much more effectively. Its relation with the tradition of the philosophical or artistic novel is less problematic than it looks, and Watson's novel can take its place in the tradition beside writers as disparate as Sartre, Diderot, Robert Pirsig, Kierkegaard, Hesse, Unamuno, Iris Murdoch and the Marquis de Sade, as well as William Burroughs and Wyndham Lewis.

Yet Watson is aggressively opposed to the banalities of what he calls the Popsicle Academy, as he made clear in *ACC*; there he argued that the banalities of reductive analysis are simply unrealistic. 'What kind of "realism" results from supposing that human beings have no unconscious drives?' he asked, and went on to claim that 'totality must be reserved for the totality of everything in the universe, wielded as concept rather than dressed up as system': thus

[Iain] Sinclair's schizophrenic art tears up the contract of novelistic realism in order to lay bare a reality that scotches the liberal 'we', inviting instead a prurient, voyeuristic, guilty gaze. Materialists are not afraid to face reality, and therefore welcome any psychic drives which rend the tissue-skin on which the picture's painted.... Nihilism in art is a precondition for a politics that can allow the working class to speak.

Shitkicks is his attempt to put that theory into practice as an act of literature, pulling in related arguments, such as that 'sex must happen within society.... The sexual act is no more biological – and no more social – than eating lunch'. Like Trotsky, one of the book's hero-reference points (others include Dietzgen, Sinclair, Zappa, Schwitters, Marx, Wyndham Lewis, Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, Derek Bailey, Hegel, Joyce and Fourier), Watson sees everything as symptomatic and thus in need of analysis, which he carries out on the model of a Benjaminian theory of correspondences, determined to 'collate the hot points of the culture, not cleanse a field and issue title deeds'.

Some readers may come away from an encounter with *Shitkicks* uncertain about the relative positions it accords ethics and epistemology; others may want to argue with its anti-Kantian stance. But its boldly sloganizing attempt to re-imagine cultural critique and revolution and simultaneously to insist on the post-populist readability of its *Finnegans Wake*-like verbal

cartooning has produced a comic-strip complexity located within an uncertainty about what to make of the book in our hands. If it recalls Joyce and Wyndham Lewis, it does so without the modernist insistence on experiment creating new forms of investigative writing. Watson has described Iain Sinclair as creating a prose that is 'a permanent show trial of the poetic impulse', and the obsessive quilting of his own cultural 'hot points' combined with a sort of schizo-paranoia (or Zapparanoia, as he calls it at one point) makes for a similarly unstoppable read. My only regret at the end of the book was that poodles and other dog figures are always so irrecoverably slavish: even Unamuno gave a dog its say in *Mist*. Not that I like dogs – I don't, at all. But these ones wouldn't even bark in the night. On the other hand, they might take wing at dusk...

Ian Patterson

Fetishism is real

Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2003. 233 pp. £36.00 hb., £13.70 pb., 0 252 02832 5 hb., 0 252 07118 2 pb.

Bertell Ollman has been a lively presence in the field of Marxian studies for over thirty years. His most distinctive contribution lies in his elucidation of Marx's method, specifically dialectics. Here he gives us 'the best of my life's work on dialectics'. The various chapters are (lightly revised) reproductions of earlier published material: four chapters from his first (and best, I think) book *Alienation* (1971), three from his *Dialectical Investigations* (1993), plus five more occasional pieces. The whole forms an ideal introduction to his thought for newcomers, and a useful compendium for those renewing their acquaintance with it.

Ollman's book has two major themes: the philosophy of internal relations (first expounded in *Alienation*) and the method of multi-variant abstraction (the central chapter of *Dialectical Investigations*). These I will summarize in a moment; but first let us attend to what Ollman thinks about dialectic in general. One is struck by its epistemological and methodological characterization:

Dialectics is a way of thinking that brings into focus the full range of changes and interactions that occur in the world. As part of this, it includes how to organize a reality viewed in this manner for purposes of study and how to present the results of what one finds to other people.

Dialectics is a method one 'puts to work', not the way reality works, although to be sure it is useful because of the prevalence of 'changes' and 'interactions' in the world. Only in a late chapter does Ollman become self-conscious about this peculiar modality of his dialectic, and make a gesture towards ontology. But much more could be said.

Of course 'change and interaction' is a banal phrase on its own. What makes Ollman's work interesting is when he insists that these features determine what a thing is. Strictly speaking there are no things, only processes and relations; interactions are 'inneractions'. So he gives us a full-blown philosophy of internal relations. He introduces this idea with an acute observation on Marx's writing regarding the impossibility of finding in it neat definitions, because the meaning of a term shifts with its context. Here is Ollman's explanation:

The philosophy of internal relations ... treats the relations in which anything stands as essential parts of what it is, so that a significant change in any of these relations registers as a qualitative change in the system of which it is a part. With relations rather than things as the fundamental building blocks of reality, a concept may vary somewhat in its meaning depending on how much of a particular relation it is intended to convey.

This approach certainly clarifies much that is obscure in Marx's discourse. (However, Ollman makes an exegetical slip in citing a poem of the nineteen-year-old Marx containing the line 'I but seek to grasp profound and true that which in the street I find' as evidence for Marx's realism, missing the layers of irony – beginning with the scatological implication of what is found 'in the street'. This is one of a set of poems written by a Hegelian persona forced to speak against himself. This prior not only to Marx's materialism, but to his conversion to Hegel later the same year, cited by Ollman.)

For Ollman, it appears, all relations are internal relations. This view is implausible; a mind, a society, a solar system, are different realms of being with the 'parts' having differing status in relation to the whole. With an all-embracing philosophy of Ollman's kind there is a double danger: first, of 'thinning' out the concept of internal relation such that it can indeed cover 'everything', at the cost of being uninformative; second, of overextending the range of a 'thick' concept to cases where it does not really apply, at the cost of mysticism. I do not doubt that much of Marx's work, especially *Capital*, treats with great sophistication totalities characterized by internal relations. But in my opinion this derives not from a general philo-

sophical position, but from the peculiar character of his object. At all events, given that 'everything' forms a totality, discrimination of parts necessarily involves 'abstraction' in a strong sense (a whole constituted by external relations must also be studied through abstracting parts, but in this case one simply reads off the relevant unique distinctions from the reality). Ollman considers the chapter on abstraction to be 'the most important chapter' of his book. To think 'change and interaction' in an adequate way requires 'the process of abstraction'. Thought must abstract from the whole categories identifying the key relations and these must be capable of prioritizing movement over stability and interaction over isolation. (In an otherwise unexceptional passage on Marx's interest in change, Ollman mistakenly cites as evidence the frequency of the term 'moment'. However, this is not a temporal moment (*der Moment*) but a mechanical one (*das Moment*). Marx follows Hegel in using this metaphor. Thus when he says circulation is a moment of production he does not refer to a temporal phase but to the leverage it exerts on production. The ubiquity of the term is relevant less to the temporal than to the systemic relations of capital.)

The two aspects of Ollman's philosophy are connected in so far as

it is the philosophy of internal relations that gives Marx both license and opportunity to abstract as freely as he does, to decide how far into its internal relations any particular will extend.... Since



boundaries are never given and when established never absolute it also allows and even encourages re-
abstraction, makes a variety of abstractions possible,
and helps to develop his mental skills and flexibility
in making abstractions.

Ollman distinguishes these conjoint aspects to abstraction: 'extension, level of generality, and vantage point'. The first refers to the temporal or spatial range covered by the abstraction. The second brings into focus a specific level of generality for treating the material thus designated. The third aspect refers to the perspective on it flowing from the research agenda.

Ollman's discussion of abstraction in general and of these three aspects is very useful. It should be taken into consideration by all social scientists aiming to achieve clarity about the salience of their study. Ollman is also certainly correct in pointing to the flexibility and fertility of Marx's use of abstraction. But in so far as Ollman's concentration is on the methodological process of abstraction in theory, this means the ontological issue of abstraction is relatively neglected. He briefly notes that Marx recognized that there is something strange about capitalism in this respect:

Abstractions...exist in the world. In the abstraction, certain spatial and temporal boundaries and connections stand out, just as others are obscure and even invisible, making what is in practice inseparable appear separately and the historically specific features of things disappear behind their more general form.... Marx labels these objective results of capitalist functioning 'real abstractions', and it is chiefly real abstractions that incline the people who have contact with them to construct ideological abstractions. It is also real abstractions to which he is referring when he says that in capitalist society 'people are governed by abstractions'.

Even here, once again Ollman stresses the epistemological consequences and fails to follow up the significant remark by Marx that 'individuals are now ruled by *abstractions*'. It is around this issue that the differences between Ollman's approach and my own turn. Ollman devotes a chapter to 'a critique of systematic dialectics', a view attributed to 'Tom Sekine, Robert Albritton, Christopher Arthur, and Tony Smith'. He characterizes this interpretation of Marx's method as follows:

(1) that Marx's dialectical method refers exclusively to the strategy Marx used in *presenting* his understanding of capitalist political economy; (2) that the main and possibly only place he uses this strategy is in *Capital I*; and (3) that the strategy itself involves constructing a conceptual logic that Marx took over in all its essentials from Hegel.

Ollman does not deny that this interpretation offers important insights into Marx's expositional strategy, but he wishes to take 'Systematic Dialectic' to task for the following reasons: (1) Marx had other aims in *Capital* beside the presentation of a categorical dialectic; (2) Marx employs many other strategies of exposition, especially in other parts of his corpus; (3) it is wrong to restrict Marx's dialectical method to that of presentation instead of combining ontology, epistemology, inquiry, intellectual reconstruction, exposition and praxis.

Speaking for myself, the short reply to these criticisms is that I have never doubted any of these points. Systematic dialectic addresses itself to a very *specific* problem: the exposition of a system of categories dialectically articulated. I never said this was all Marx did, or needed to do. However, a longer answer is required to point (3), which in turn refers back to the reasons why exposition is so important, why – apart from the obvious – the focus of research is on *Capital*, and why Hegel's logic is so relevant. It is simply incorrect to state that ontology has been ignored in Systematic Dialectic. Indeed, the guiding principle is the need to identify the logic proper to the peculiar character of the *specific object*, as Marx himself recommended in his 1843 notes on Hegel. There is no universal method guaranteed to unlock all secrets.

Capital is characterized by an ontology peculiar to itself in so far as it moves *through* abstraction. Theory must follow this *real* process of abstraction, and elucidate what is negated in it. I argue for the relevance of Hegel's logic because capital grounds itself in a process of real abstraction in exchange in much the same way as Hegel's dissolution and reconstruction of reality are predicated on the abstractive power of thought. The task of the exposition is to trace capital's imposition of abstraction on the real world. Once this has been done it is perfectly possible to change the vantage point and present it as a system of alienation, reification and fetishism. But, once again, fetishism is *real*, not just how things are 'viewed'.

Ollman has a distinctive position worthy of attention. Much that he says about the relevance of the philosophy of internal relations to Marx's work is certainly illuminating, and much of the methodological advice about the handling of abstraction is to be taken on board. But there is also a certain one-sidedness: the pertinence of internal relations is overgeneralized, and the discussion of abstraction is primarily from the vantage point of method, whereas Marx's ontological insight about the rule of abstractions leads us into a dialectic of capital itself.

Chris Arthur

Richard Wollheim, 1923–2003

Richard Wollheim taught philosophy at University College London from 1949 to his retirement as Grote Professor of Mind and Logic in 1982. During 1982–85 he was Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University and then at the University of California at Berkeley from 1985 to 2003. As well as philosophical works and essays, he wrote one novel, *A Family Romance* (1969), and a reflective memoir, *Fifty Years*, about his experience of World War II. It is in this essay that we perhaps get some idea of what he meant in asserting in *Painting as an Art* that the two deepest commitments of his life were ‘the love of painting and devotion to the cause of Socialism’. Can he have been suggesting that painting enables us to make something good or fine with our unreflective or primitive tendencies and that we can come to socialism by a similarly psychological route?

Wollheim produced two major philosophical works that are concerned with art. *Art and Its Objects* (1968) and *Painting as an Art* (1987). The first of these was in many ways in the analytical tradition, connected particularly to the later writing of Wittgenstein. His underlying argument is that in order to have any clarity in aesthetics, we will have to do some work on the ontology of art. It was precisely at this time – with the nervous breakdown of modernism – that art’s ontology was undergoing what looked like a paradigm shift. Wollheim could not quite bring himself to relinquish the precept that art is something that requires material embodiment. His view was that in so far as there is an internal connection between a medium and its artistic or aesthetic effects, then the argument that there is a general and non-circular distinction between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic properties of art must be false.

This is where the idea of ‘seeing-in’ became relevant for Wollheim. He argued that seeing the marks with which a surface is configured and seeing an object represented by those marks are aspects of one and the same perceptual experience. The difficulty this entrains is that in seeing the painting blots as depicting my Granny, I may very well be wrong, or at least be recovering something culturally, historically or even technically irrelevant; my primitive ability to do this may have led me to the mistaken belief that any feature of an activity is aesthetically, or more basically perhaps, descriptively relevant.

Recoverable intentions

The theoretical *résumé* of *Painting as an Art* departs from premisses which are superficially similar to the ideas sketched by Donald Davidson in ‘What Metaphors Mean’. Davidson’s text is an article. It is short, terse and conversational. Wollheim’s is a book and is arguably his major work. For Wollheim paintings do not mean in the way that words do. Davidson’s article left open a link between what might be called the verbal and the non-verbal arts. It still leaves work to do. Wollheim performed a closure which severed the link. Davidson divided the odd sheep from the odd goat. Wollheim circumscribed painting as an art: Art. Davidson denied or did not attempt to produce an exhaustive picture of the interior life of the dawning of an aspect. Wollheim essayed a psychological account. But this account was not delivered with any discursive self-scepticism; rather it was an act, a performance which made space for a kind of *being*: the love of great art plus philosophy sensitively pursued.

A more empirical observation is that *Painting as an Art* is an art bosses' book, a theoretical Bible for the School of London, with all its attendant professors, heads of department and other varieties of academician. It is all universal-human-nature socialism attached to a grotesquely effortless sense of social hierarchy. But it is also uncanny – a massively informative and vivid allegory. Wollheim produced readings: illuminating accounts of his thoughts and imaginings in front of a range of paintings, each, on his own account, not so much studied as looked at at length, each original dwelt on as the object of a sustained face-to-face encounter.

The theoretical argument on which *Painting as an Art* is built is roughly as follows: painting, if it is practised as an art, is intentional under certain descriptions, and it is not an art if it is intentional under certain other descriptions (e.g. if someone did it 'for the money'). 'Intention' is qualified and ramified in various ways. Finally it more or less explodes: 'Intention must be understood so as to include thoughts, beliefs, memories, and, in particular, emotions and feelings, that the artist had and that, specifically, caused him to paint as he did.' Anyway, the path which intention takes is traced via thematization. The meaning of (presumably 'artistic') painting is not like linguistic meaning: it is not recovered through (or by appeal to) systems of rules, grammars, and so on, but in a systematic psychological attempt to read back to (or to retrodict) the *intentions* of the artist. It is these recovered or recoverable intentions which establish the correctness or incorrectness and the relevance or irrelevance of an attempted account of a painting's meaning. Not just anyone can hope to make the attempt successfully, though. The meaning (the artist's intentions) will be recovered by (since presumably they are addressed to) 'an adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator'.

Intentional in a Wollheimian way is what painting *must* be (under certain descriptions) in order for it to be art. It is as if *artists'* intentions mirrored a kind of *super*-rationalist in which the wishing world is allowed to be or to become the intending one. Wollheim was too disciplined a thinker to subscribe to the view of the artist as shaman, but by recourse to Freudian theory and Freudian case history he came up with something not wholly unrelated. Though 'we do not find in great artists great disorders of the mind ... what we sometimes find is the way back from such disorders'. Elsewhere it is made clear just how remarkable a projection into his medium the artist must have achieved in order to embody the meaning which Wollheim uncovered.

Theories which tended to make art a contingent and socially produced category were rejected out of hand. Wollheim held up 'the institutional theory of art' as an example of wrong thinking. This theory, roughly exemplified for him in George Dickie and Arthur Danto, was travestied in a wilful and unironical literalness.

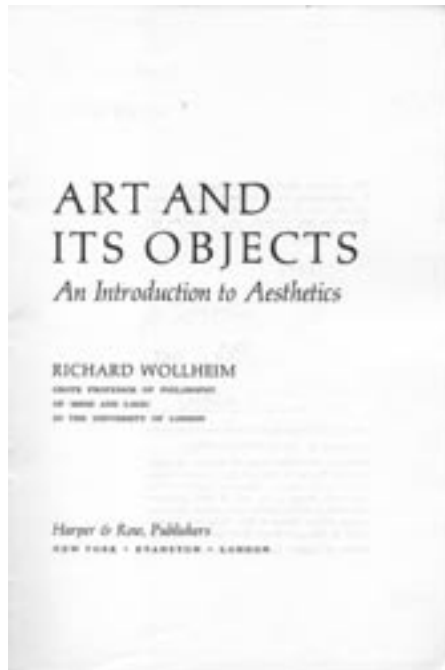


Does the art world really nominate representatives? If it does, where, and how, do these nominations take place? Do the representatives, if they exist, pass in review all candidates for the status of art, and do they then, while conferring this status on some, deny it to others? What record is kept of these conferrals, and is the status itself subject to revision?

The funny thing is that this travesty pointed to a contradiction in Wollheim's own position. 'Such socially identified persons seem to have no contribution to make to the account of art, they belong only to the presentation of the account: rather as though an account of disease were to try to characterize disease in terms of what doctors do and say about it.' Wollheim's Popperian allegiances are revealed: first, in his insistence on looking for 'persons' – social atoms; and second, in the production of a spurious

anti-Kuhnian analogy. Were we to replace ‘disease’ with ‘medicine’ in the last sentence quoted, the analogy would be both more apt and very much less damaging to the institutional theory.

Interestingly, the disdain accorded by Wollheim to Clement Greenberg was not extended to Michael Fried, his one-time disciple, who got pats on the back – or on the head. In fact Wollheim’s notion of ‘the spectator in the picture’ (the title of the third chapter of *Painting as an Art*) was clearly indebted to Fried’s work. He argued, however, that Fried had failed to make an adequate distinction between the internal and



the external spectator. Indeed he was charged with conflating them. Though Fried may not have discussed the matter with the same philosophical skill and refinement as Wollheim, it is hard to see how his ‘Art and Objecthood’ (*Artforum*, Summer 1967) could have been written without some such distinction being applied. In that essay Fried suggested that the (apparent) abandonment of the virtual (and what was called ‘relational’) space of painting by Minimalist object-makers had brought the latter’s work to the condition of theatre. For Fried, the effect of theatricalization was to restrict the spectator to a single possibility, that of ‘external spectator’. This entailed the loss, for him, of just that kind of imaginative scope with which Wollheim’s ‘internal spectator’ was dubbed.

Wollheim distinguished the ‘internal spectator’ from the ‘external spectator’, regarding the former as the latter’s imaginary protagonist or stalking horse (or cat’s paw?) in the matter of the recovery of intention. The two are functionally connected. It is the ‘adequately sensitive and informed [external] spectator’ who remained Wollheim’s real foundation, however. This construct

formed a motif which could not be called into question. The theoretical principles to which psychology and causality go turned out simply to be those which regulated the narrative of the agency of Wollheim’s gentleman spectator. Though he was the authority for the presence of meaning, his own presence was neither discussed nor defended. The adequately sensitive and informed spectator was, in fact, Wollheim’s representative. What *he* recovered determined the status of painting as an art. This (gentleman) was the artist’s ideal friend and confidante, and since artists are also, importantly, spectators of their own work, he was sometimes indistinguishable from the artist. Artist and spectator were rendered with undeclared circularity in Wollheim’s image to haunt the text as unchallengeable conventions. The ghost of an honourable and gracious (gentlemanly) age, his spectator was no more ontologically secure than those ‘representatives of the art world’ whom the author conjured and then ridiculed in his account of the institutional theory of art. He was the token of the author’s own cultural relativity, a cultural relativity which he disowned.

Imaginary character

But Wollheim was more persuasive when his readings were corrective than when they were inventive. In rescuing Poussin from the accusation of frigidity he did a good job against weak opposition – or perhaps it is fairer to say that in demolishing the set-up opposition he demonstrated just how primitive art historians’ normal methods are for deducing the psychology of style. By a kind of contrast with Poussin, Ingres was seen as psychologically, though not morally (like Delacroix), flawed. One sensed the author hovering about his work, reluctant to be caught too close to it. Wollheim held up against painting a (culturally produced) image of the Whole Man. He then constructed

whatever fitted the profile in such a way as to get himself reflected as the Whole Man's ideal boon companion.

Wollheim's project, which was – dropping a few things here, gaining some there – the massively elaborate psychologizing of 'significant form', reached its most discursive, and in some ways its most compellingly plausible, moment in Lecture VI of *Painting as an Art*, 'Painting, Metaphor and the Body'. In comparison with Wollheim's various summings up, the tops and tails of other lectures, the text is fugitive and allusive. However, it makes a definite start. 'Metaphorical meaning is a case of primary meaning; that is to say, it accrues to a painting through the making of it, but not through what the making of it means to the artist.' ('Secondary meaning' is not so much intentional as involuntary; it is the kind of meaning Wollheim found typically in Ingres; the kind of which only the psychoanalyst or the psychoanalytically competent philosopher has an overview.) In earlier lectures Wollheim trod the familiar road first laid out by I.A. Richards, and by dint of considerable psychological ingenuity produced a theory of expressing *and* representing, and he illuminated a lot of very fine art along the way. Psychologically ingenious or no, this brought him to a morally barbarous (manipulative) and normative dead end: not a difference and contrast, not the problem of keeping something at the centre of the pile of causal and significant junk, not conversation. Metaphor was the way out (or back).

Wollheim's theory of metaphor is, as he put it, a theory of double improvisation: 'It is an improvisation upon what is already improvisatory.' What paintings do, as representations, is produce certain seeings-in (by spectators of the right sort), the index of the correctness of which is the fulfilled intention of the artist. And analogously for expression: what is produced is a certain (kind of) experience in (the right kind of) people. The metaphorical 'meaning' is rather like the expressive one, but no appeal is made to the artist's intention as an index of correctness. Wollheim's analysis of linguistic metaphor was broadly post-Max Black, who hung on to the idea of 'special kinds of metaphorical meaning'. Wollheim preferred to say that metaphor is revelatory, that no facts or propositions are conveyed.

To stand back from the text is not to deprive it of virtue. Indeed, *Painting as an Art* would lose nothing, might even gain, from our standing back, in the sense that one stands back from – does not take literally or confuse with the world – a work of fiction. It is as such an already-demystified text that *Painting as an Art* deserves its place as a likely stimulant to the non-trivial conversation of the studio. Wollheim himself is perhaps best read as a kind of character, as the spectator in the picture of a picture – as one empowered with the three perceptual capacities he himself prescribed: 'seeing-in', 'expressive perception' (the ability to see a painting as expressing some mental or psychological phenomena) and 'a capacity to experience visual delight'. This imaginary character we may, if we choose, identify as our protagonist. Through his being we may then invoke and simulate a certain decidedly masterly repertoire of feelings, insights and manners. The motive for doing so would be to consider how and in what modes of feedback to experience the world – what forms of confirmation of his mastery – might, for a certain sort of spectator at least, be availed by the paintings we put him notionally in front of. The purpose would be to learn better just how his competences are to be marginalized or frustrated in practice.

Unlike many who have written with apparent authority and concentration about painting, Wollheim was unpedantically powerful in argument. He has left us with difficulties and work to do. The question of internality is of continuing relevance as the tatty crows of dematerialization come home to roost in the triumph of distribution and curatorship. Indeed, two hours of place and time in front of a work possessed of internal complexity is clearly some kind of resistance to the myths of institutional democracy.

Indeterminate! Frankfurt

Indeterminate! Communism, Goethe University of Frankfurt, 7–9 November 2003

The year 2003 has belonged to Adorno in Frankfurt. Across the city the Frankfurt son's hundredth birthday was celebrated. Ten-foot-high bookshop displays pushed doorstop biographies, picture books and collations of ephemera revealing such little-known details as Adorno's penchant for hippopotamus. Week after week the Literaturhaus hosted a series of salons where other Frankfurters shared their memories, read from Adorno, and delivered talks with cute titles such as 'Oh It's Not That Bad: Adorno and Laughter'. There were conferences, including one major one, and an exhibition simply called 'adorno', where Carl Andre, Art & Language, Samuel Beckett, Martin Creed, Liam Gillick, Gerhard Richter and twenty-five others exhibited 'adornoesque works', amidst quotations plucked from *Aesthetic Theory*, neatly letrasetted to the wall. All this was supplemented with a bilingual two-volume catalogue and a programme of lectures, culminating in an evening of piano music. The 'negativity' exuding from such stumbling blocks as Gustav Metzger's autodestructive monument, a matt black Ad Reinhardt canvas from 1955, or Maria Eichhorn's six cases of mineral water stood as triumphant refutation of another match of aesthetics and politics in the Schirn Kunsthalle across the road: 'Dream Factory Communism', with all the Socialist Realist Greats in life-size and twice as bright oil colour. 'The function of art in the totally functional world is functionlessness; it is pure superstition to believe that art could intervene directly or lead an intervention', rebuked Adorno from the gallery walls. Adorno even found his way on to placards posted up near the university. These mimicked 'wanted terrorists' posters, first prevalent in the RAF years of the 1970s, now back in vogue at airports. Advertising a series of political meetings and lectures by the Socialist Study Association, the banner 'Terrorists' was replaced with 'Theorists', beneath



which were headshots of Marx, Luxemburg, Debord, Zetkin alongside Adorno and his nemesis Hans Jürgen Krahl.

Adorno also haunted the conference at the Goethe University of Frankfurt on 7–9 November. The grammatically curious 'Indeterminate! Communism' took place in what the organizers called the 'legendary' lecture theatre VI, where Adorno was subjected to a flash of student breast and student critique in 1969 – the flyers shrieked 'Adorno as Institution is dead'. And dead he was in Hörsaal VI, even for his progeny, in the shape of Axel Honneth, who conjured up less tricky ghosts and more modest questions, such as the old fall-back of how to live a 'good life', how to reanimate the tradition of social democracy and how to secure the minimum wage. The conference was a new encounter with left politics now communism is dead and something new refuses to be born, but many of the questions posed predated even Adorno's time on earth. Micha Brumlik boomed out six or so of them, not one of which could not have been heard at any point in the last century: Can a global system effectively supply all needs democratically, that is, without compulsion? Can

socially necessary labour be redistributed by political means? Can the world market be a single political zone. And so on. Dismissing the bloody trail of Communism from Lenin to Pol Pot, all his answers led back to Eduard Bernstein.

'Indeterminate! Communism' was brought into life by two groupings: 'The Union for the Encouragement of Democratic Politics and Culture' (neatly acronymed to DemoPunK) and the Berlin anti-fascist activist group Kritik und Praxis. It netted a big supporter in the shape of Adorno's publishers Suhrkamp, but before it even happened it caused a scandal. The conference was denounced in the Frankfurt city chamber because public money had been awarded to what one councillor labelled a 'highly ideological gathering', co-organized by an anti-German, anti-constitutional group (Kritik und Praxis), bringing together the 'leading brains of the extreme left scene'. Mini-shockwaves troubled the highest echelons of the political world and, in a defensive move, Kritik und Praxis were demoted and distanced. Despite the whiff of Marxist chill in the conference title, the indeterminate part won out. A supplementary name signalled the withdrawal: the conference became a 'cultural congress'. To talk of 'left-extremists' was pushing it – Honneth, for one, confessed he had never thought about communism before. There was more 'bio-politics' than 'class struggle', more reform than revolution, more 'democracy' than 'communism'. Groups from the anti-capitalist movement, such as ATTAC, no spoon and colectivo situaciones, were there, but no 'orthodox Marxists' from the Left parties were invited. Oliver Marchart coined a quotable slogan when he called for the 'rifondazione of the democratic revolution', which seemed to encompass all possible positions and yet say nothing.

The actually rather moderate roster of stellar speakers included Chantal Mouffe on Laclau-and-Mouffism; Simon Critchley on 'local action' in a global setting; Jacques Rancière on the immateriality of contemporary production; and Isabelle Graw on alienation, art and Agamben; along with over sixty others in forums, panels and workshops. Badiou sent someone else to read his paper. Spivak cancelled at the last minute, denouncing the conference as dominated by white male hegemons. And there was, inevitably, the extremely energetic Žižek, who, we were told, has participated in over 550 international symposia in the last quarter-century. The born-again Leninist did his usual rap against minority rights and identity politics, because of their congruity to contemporary capitalism. He quipped about decaffeinated coffee, safe sex as non-sex, war without casualties. He made a plea to return to the central universalizable contradiction of class. He terrified the floor by evoking Sendero Luminoso's slogan of 'Hate your enemy' and commending the strategy of chopping off the immunized arms of children treated by the enemy in a humanitarian programme. The audience loved it, all 1,000+ of them, even if they hated it too.

Over the three days there were tussles here and there, as some voiced fears that the conference was promoting 'an inoffensive communism'. Some speakers tried to resurrect Marxist terminology. But there was no escaping the fact that, in the main, communism's qualifier in 'indeterminate' was there to negate it, while democracy appended by the term 'radical' was exculpated from any kind of examination of its connections to oppression and exploitation. It shone out as an untarnished ideal. The plenaries stretched late into the nights, and afterwards the entertainment included banner-making workshops, videos, exhibitions, German techno and cabaret, and the extracurricular hijinks of an onsite occupation against education cuts and student fees, which meant the university reeked of tear gas.

On the façade of the Literaturhaus, a short stroll from the university, a banner hung with an image of Adorno photographing himself in a mirror and a quotation from 1959's 'Bibliographische Grillen': 'Every book that is worth anything plays with its reader'. The essay moans about contemporary publishing's presentation of the book as commodity-seduction, its glossy covers and its popularization counteracting its outmoded bookishness and 'self-assertion'. In contrast, Adorno praises the beaten up books that accompanied a 'damaged life' into exile, and notes that worthwhile books' coquetry with readers is apparent when they defend themselves against easy quoting and recall – his prime example is Marx. Adorno quotes pepper Frankfurt's business air in 2003, like cryptic fortune cookie-kitsch that somehow supports the rightness of what is. Suhrkamp are disciplining the sprawling 'Indeterminate! Communism' conference into book form. Will it sit neatly on the bookshelf, subdued and quotable, or will some new-found insubordination break out?

Esther Leslie

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