

Editorial collective

David Cunningham, Howard Feather,
Peter Hallward, Esther Leslie, Kevin Magill,
Stewart Martin, Mark Neocleous, Peter
Osborne, Stella Sandford, Alessandra Tanesini

Contributors

Ken Hirschkop is Senior Lecturer in English
at the University of Manchester. His co-
authored *Benjamin's Arcades: An Unguided
Tour* is forthcoming (MUP, 2005).

Barry Schwabsky is the author of *The
Widening Circle: Consequences of Modernism
in Contemporary Art* (CUP, 1997) and *Opera:
Poems 1981–2002* (Meritage Press, 2003).

David Cunningham teaches English literature
at the University of Westminster. He is
working on a book on avant-gardes.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is Avalon
Foundation Professor in the Humanities at
Columbia University. Her books include *A
Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Harvard
University Press, 1999).

Judith Butler is Maxine Elliot Professor
in Rhetoric, Comparative Literature and
Women's Studies at UC, Berkeley. Her latest
book is *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004).

Simon Critchley is Professor of Philosophy
in the Graduate Faculty, New School for
Social Research, New York. His most recent
book is *On Humour* (Routledge, 2003)

David Macey's latest book is *Michel
Foucault* (Reaktion, 2004).

David Wood is Professor of Philosophy at
Vanderbilt University. His *The Step Back:
Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction* is
forthcoming (SUNY Press, 2005).

Jaimie Smith-Windsor studies Political
Theory at the University of Victoria, Canada.

Copied and typeset by Illuminatio
mortongable@illuminatibooks.co.uk

Production and layout by Peter Osborne,
Stewart Martin and Stella Sandford

Printed by Russell Press, Russell House,
Bulwell Lane, Basford, Nottingham NG6 0BT

Bookshop distribution

UK: Central Books,
99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN
Tel: 020 8986 4854

USA: Bernard de Boer, 113 East Centre Street,
Nutley, New Jersey 07100
Tel: 201 667 9300;
Ubiquity Distributors Inc., 607 Degraw Street,
Brooklyn, New York 11217
Tel: 718 875 5491

Cover: *Jacques Derrida, Warwick, 1992*
© David Wood

Published by Radical Philosophy Ltd.
www.radicalphilosophy.com

© Radical Philosophy Ltd

COMMENTARY

It's Not the Culture, Stupid: Interpreting the US Election

Ken Hirschkop..... 2

Patriotism as Paranoia: Steve Kurtz and the Critical Art Ensemble

Barry Schwabsky..... 6

OBITUARY SYMPOSIUM

Jacques Derrida, 1930–2004

David Cunningham..... 11

Remembering Derrida

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak..... 15

'Affirm the Survival'

Judith Butler..... 22

An Ethos of Reading

Simon Critchley..... 26

A Death Foretold, a Life Retold: Derrida's Press

David Macey..... 29

A Different World

David Wood..... 31

ARTICLE

The Cyborg Mother

Jaimie Smith-Windsor..... 33

REVIEWS

Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism*

Ben Watson..... 42

Keith Crome, *Lyotard and Greek Thought: Sophistry*

Andrew Goffey..... 45

Anne Fairchild Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead: Process, Dialectics and the
Critique of Capitalism*

Michael Halewood..... 47

Mark B.N. Hanson, *New Philosophy for New Media*

Andrew Fisher..... 50

Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Lacan Closely*

Christian Kerslake..... 52

CONFERENCE REPORT

7th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and
Psychology, Heidelberg

Alastair Morgan..... 55

It's not the culture, stupid

Interpreting the US election

Ken Hirschkop

Elections first and foremost decide governments, but they are also conjunctures when political forces are organized and realigned. The very act of mobilizing activists or energizing groups within the franchise can have long-term effects, and in the course of a campaign ideologies that have been kicking around for years may find themselves worked into new shapes and prised into new constellations. Gramsci pointed to certain elections as defining moments in the political life of a nation; and, if we believe the hype, the 2004 election should be seen as the most important American political event for decades. Maybe it was, though now that we know the result we might hope it wasn't. But its significance in the longer term will depend not only on the numbers of the day but also on the way in which the results are understood.

If the initial reaction is anything to go by, the pro-Kerry forces are aiming to lose the peace as decisively as they lost the war. According to commentary in the press, the results show us how deeply divided the United States has become. 'Not since the Civil war', Simon Schama reported, 'has the fault line between [America's] two halves been so glaringly clear, nor the chasm between its two cultures so starkly unbridgeable.'¹ Close elections can indicate a degree of popular consensus, but in this case the narrowness of Bush's margin seems only to underscore the severity of the split. For the torn halves of the United States – one secular, cosmopolitan, 'liberal'; the other evangelical, chauvinistic, conservative – are so distant from one another in world-view, yet so evenly balanced numerically, it is hard to see how they can coexist within a single nation.

That this analysis has penetrated popular consciousness receives confirmation of sorts in the numerous anecdotes and websites that have sprung up around the plight of the losers, some of whom have decided that coexistence is really not possible. Their strategies for escape include unifying the Kerry-voting states with more social-democratic Canada (see map opposite), emigration (columnists in the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* claim to have been besieged by US friends looking for employment in the United States of Europe), and 'marrying out' of the country (see the unholy alliance of sexual ardour, social-democratic politics and commercial acuity embodied in the Canadian 'Marry an American' website). The Sunday following the debacle, the *Observer* carried an article describing the fate of New Yorkers, 75 per cent of whom 'may have never met a Republican' (despite having elected two of them as mayor in succession), and now find themselves trapped in a society that detests the city they live in and everything they believe it stands for.²

For New York defines one side of this divide, the contours of which are strictly geographical. Because American citizens vote for members of an electoral college on a winner-takes-all basis in each state, the results can be represented as a contrast between the 'blue states' that vote Democrat, and the 'red' ones that vote Republican. (Is there a more telling instance of American 'exceptionalism'? Where else would red represent

the more conservative party?) With the deindustrialization of large swathes of America and the movement of population westwards, the map has acquired a certain consistency in recent years: the middle and South of the country (a large expanse, but not densely populated) has been red; the West Coast, the Northeast and the northern, industrial part of the midwest, blue.

Guns, gays and abortion

In the 1950s and 1960s Middle America was a class; now it appears it is literally the middle of America. Readers in Britain know that geographical splits, like the one between North and South, are often ciphers for class difference. But the now habitual contrast between red-state Middle America and the blue-tinted East and West coasts is not, on the face of it, about wealth and poverty, or whether your work is manual or managerial. The inner core of America defines itself in cultural terms – of its lifestyle, its ‘values’, its religious conviction and its position on three crucial issues: gay marriage, abortion and gun control. And its antithesis is therefore not the capitalist class, but a ‘liberal elite’ defined by its contrasting lifestyle, its food and leisure (the con-

sumption of café latte being a particularly damning marker), its secularism, and its different position on those same three issues, which, according to conservative wisdom, displays a unique mixture of moral relativism and belief in an intrusive state. Of course, the members of this liberal elite do, in fact, specialize in particular lines of work: in the world of the right-wing imaginary, they are typically professionals, people who earn their living by credentialled, and highly resented, expertise. But in the culture wars it is not work that counts, and it is not economic issues that mark the dividing lines. It is culture that drives politics.

This ideology has a long, disreputable history: it began, arguably, with Richard Nixon’s evocation of a ‘silent majority’ of decent citizens supporting

his efforts to slaughter as many Vietnamese citizens as possible. In his brilliant, funny and shrewd book, *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, Thomas Frank has shown how US backlash conservatism systematically promoted ‘culture’ over economics as an area of political concern, to win support from working- and lower-middle-class constituencies that were bound to suffer from Republican economic policy. As Frank points out, ‘leaders of the backlash may talk Christ, but they walk corporate’.³ Their political lines in the sand refer to sources of cultural anxiety (changes in family structure, sexuality, the mass media) that they know cannot be dealt with legislatively and which therefore can be relied upon time and again to motivate voters to defy their class interests:

The trick never ages; the illusion never wears off. *Vote* to stop abortion; *receive* a rollback in capital gains taxes. *Vote* to make our country strong again; *receive* deindustrialization. *Vote* to screw those politically correct college professors; *receive* electricity deregulation. *Vote* to get government off our backs; *receive* conglomeration and monopoly everywhere from media to meatpacking.⁴

From all the available evidence, the trick worked again in 2004. Although issues like abortion and gun control motivate only a minority of voters, in a nation which depends so much on demobilized (and often brutally disenfranchised) citizens, a minority that turns out to vote can make a big difference. And true to form, Bush has, despite the campaign rhetoric of moral values and the scenes of devotion, placed



business legislation at the top of his agenda and barely given gay marriage a second thought (though a new chief justice, with influence on abortion law, is high on his agenda). What is striking, though, is that now the anti-Bush brigade and the American centre-Left are *also* talking about American society in terms of provincialism versus metropolitanism, faith versus Enlightenment, a nation split by attitudes and ‘values’.

Given the depth of loathing each side apparently has for the other, it is surprising that the country is not on the brink of a political crisis, or that armed conflict has not broken out. Surprising until you realize that all the talk of cultural abysses and attitudinal chasms masks a striking consensus of political belief and lifestyle.

Capitalism and religion

If you attended church more than once a week, you were far more likely to vote Bush than Kerry, but on most political questions you shared a lot of common ground with your heathen brethren. Both sides believed in a very mild form of social democracy, focused on universally available programmes like Medicaid, pensions and public education (although some of the churchgoers have some interesting educational projects of their own). Both seemed to believe something called globalization was an inevitable, modernizing behemoth that we all had to adjust to. Both expected, almost as their right, a wide variety of consumer goods and a standard of living high by international standards (the important thing isn’t whether they drive Volvos or pickup trucks: it’s that they all buy cars, lots of them). Both sides have recourse to the language of rights when they feel their private lives are being interfered with. Finally, both sides believe in God.

Do they? Given the prominence of ‘faith’ as a signifier of the Right in both the campaign and afterwards, it is worth bearing in mind that recent polls show that around 90 per cent of all Americans (at least all Americans who respond to polls) profess belief in God. This ought to tell us that ‘belief in God’ is itself a wide category, with no straight political trade-off or consequence. It’s worth remembering that the civil rights movement was led in large part by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, that churches and church leaders remain crucial to that movement, that Quakers and Quaker groups were central to the anti-war movement of the 1960s, and that the states with the highest Catholic populations (Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York) are, with one exception, the most reliably Democratic.

Too many commentators take professions of faith on faith, as if opposition to every cultural initiative since the 1960s was *motivated* by belief in a higher being. It’s far more likely that what scares the ‘cultural Right’ is the erosion of the familial-sexual myths that were central to their sense of self and their notions of fulfilment (and, despite the rhetoric, opposition to abortion is about sex, not the unborn child), and that ‘God’ provides a symbolic resource in this struggle. Thirty years ago Habermas suggested that while capitalist states could possibly steer their societies away from open economic crisis, the operation of capitalist economies together with formal bureaucratic administration would gradually destroy the traditional world-views on which bourgeois society depended. Unable by its very logic to create ‘meaning’, the state would have to hope that ‘the fiscally siphoned off resource “value” [could] take the place of the scanty resource “meaning”.’⁵ In 1973 Habermas could not have predicted that ‘value’ (in terms of a rising standard of living powered by higher wages and greater benefits) would itself become a scarce resource even in the USA, leaving the door open for a renewed attempt to frame a religion suitable for advanced capitalism.

Habermas’s predictions call attention to a weakness in the strategy recommended by social-democratic analysts like Thomas Frank. They, quite reasonably, demand that the Democratic Party re-address its working-class base and focus on the kinds of economic policy and welfare state provision their constituency needs and deserves. But not only is there not enough ‘value’ to do this as effectively as in the period after World War

II, there is good reason to believe the working population wants ‘meaning’ as well. The post-1945 boom was accompanied by all manner of ideology and narrative bent on ensuring that working- and middle-class Americans felt not only more prosperous, but fulfilled as well, deserving of their prosperity, embodying tales of upward mobility with socio-cultural resonance. Kerry’s social-democratic promises are rather thin by comparison and, to Americans who are just getting by but are not impoverished, they may lack the moral lustre of earlier campaigns. (Clinton, although ruthless in his destruction of welfare provision and in his devotion to capitalist free trade, understood this intertwining of the moral, the aesthetic and the economic.)

Promises of prosperity, unmoored from a vision of fulfilment or moral argument, can seem dangerously close to the hedonism the moral majorities claim to abhor. Frank notes that the liberalism that haunts the imagination of fevered conservatives is nothing other than the liberalism of Hollywood and the culture industry, where glamorous fun-loving youth perpetually defy authority figures with moral scruples.⁶ Kerry rarely made his economic case in other than utilitarian terms, afraid even to evoke the spectre of social justice as justification for a change in economic policy: tax cuts for the wealthy were condemned for being unnecessary rather than pernicious. Unwilling to make the egalitarian case, he more or less ensured moral values would be presented as the repression of what seemed like hedonism.

Habermas’s case, framed by his polemic with the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann, implied that the destruction of traditional world-views was part of the functioning of capitalism itself, a ‘cultural contradiction of capitalism’. This hyper-systemic view of the matter forgets that cultural systems are often struggled over, made and destroyed. Were not the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s bent on the destruction of malevolent traditions and inspired by the prospect of new systems of meaning? One reason for the success of backlash conservatism is that it has managed to portray the advance of gay and women’s rights as the unleashing of hedonism rather than the construction of a new moral and cultural universe. And, to be honest, the Left has often allowed itself to be painted into this corner, evoking the language of rights as if what was at stake was merely self-expression or the opening up of a new market niche.

At the heart of the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (civil rights, gay and women’s liberation, the Green movement, CND, the various autonomous Marxisms) lay new understandings of the range of exploitation and the futures that could lay beyond it. Despite the hard work of many, these were not synthesized with the concerns and values of the existing labour movement. Since that time, a succession of defeats have put labour on the back foot and have often reduced the claims of new movements to an equal share in American middle-class fantasy (exemplified in television shows *Sex and the City* and *Will and Grace*). The Democratic Party has a lot to answer for in this decline, and you could say with plenty of justification that, in lacking a new moral vision, it is reaping the whirlwind. The worst thing it could do now, however, is to buy into the very culture wars that the Right is anxious to sell. There is plenty of bitterness abroad, but its source is not really a dispute about marriage. It stems from a long history of betrayal, and opportunities missed over and over again. To that extent, the culture warriors are right: it all goes back to the 1960s.

Notes

1. Simon Schama, ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, *Guardian*, G2, 5 November 2004.
2. Gaby Wood, ‘Those New York Blues’, *Observer*, 7 November 2004.
3. Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, Henry Holt, New York, 2004, p. 6.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
5. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, Heinemann, London, 1976, p. 73.
6. Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* pp. 240–41.

Patriotism as paranoia

Steve Kurtz and the Critical Art Ensemble

Barry Schwabsky

Folklore warns that the devil can only enter your house if you invite him in. What it's not so clear about is that more often than not the devil poses as just the person you need when you're in trouble. Steve Kurtz, an artist living in Buffalo, New York, invited the devil into his house on 11 May 2004. What would you do if you woke up one morning and found your wife lying next to you in bed unresponsive, apparently dead? Call for emergency medical assistance, obviously – which is exactly what Kurtz did. But, at least in the paranoid America of Bush, Cheney and the ironically named Patriot Act, calling on the power that helps also means calling on the power that surveys and persecutes. Hope Kurtz had died of heart failure. But the medical technicians, noticing laboratory equipment in the house – meant for an art installation Kurtz was preparing for an exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA) as part of the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), of which he is a core member – decided that something looked fishy and called in the FBI, who detained Kurtz overnight. As Stephanie Cash writes in *Art in America*,

they searched his home for two days, as well as his office at SUNY–Buffalo, where he is a faculty member. The bureau confiscated his wife's body, his house, car, equipment, computer hard drive, books, writings, correspondence, art projects and other items, even his cat.

The municipal Health Department condemned the house as a health hazard for a time.

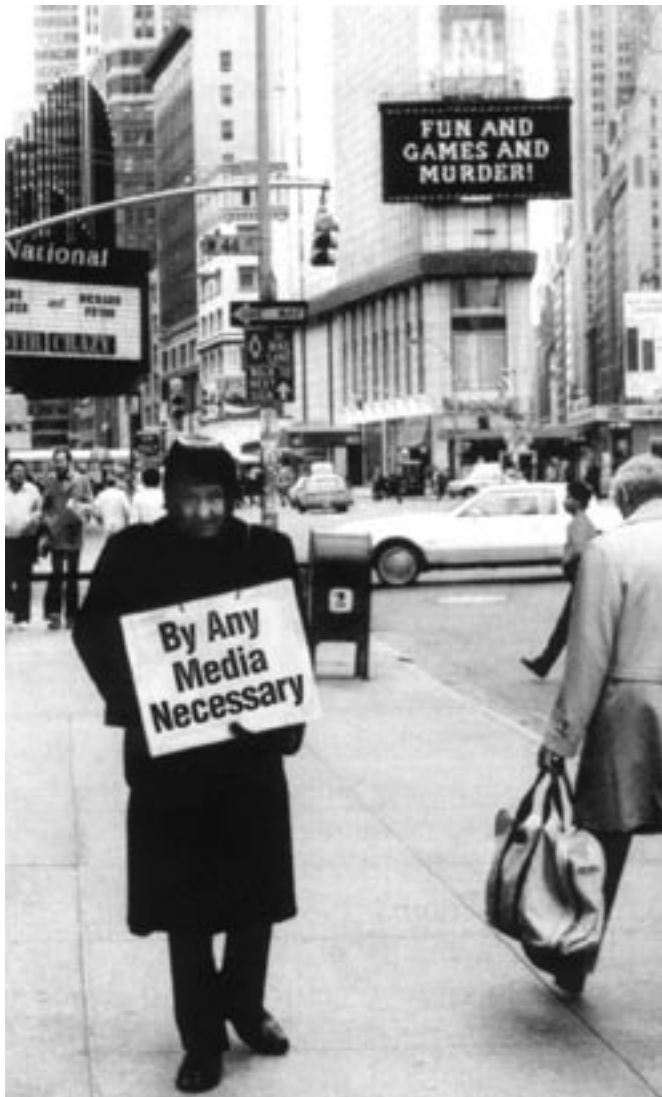
What was behind this extraordinary response to the call for help from a man stricken with grief? Of course, in the United States of Bush, Cheney and the Patriot Act, the answer depends upon just how paranoid you are. Perhaps the simplest and most ingenuous view is to accept that the medical technicians who arrived at Kurtz's door had been unsettled by the sight of the scientific equipment they'd noticed. Was it not their simple duty to ask themselves what had been going on here, and whether the materials they saw could have anything to do with the death of a woman who was, after all, quite young to have died of heart failure?

And what would an artist be doing working with test tubes and Petri dishes anyway? For those familiar with contemporary art it will hardly be surprising to learn that artists deal directly with technological processes as their materials, rather than depicting them in images or objects. But it should not be forgotten that, while most contemporary artists and theorists hold to the doctrine that art need not be visually distinguishable from the things of everyday life, this proposition has never held much sway with the wider public. And the legal consequences of this indistinguishability have yet to be worked out. It is nearly eighty years since customs officials imposed duty on a Brancusi sculpture being imported into the United States on the grounds that it was clearly not an art object but rather a machine part. Today this seems laughable precisely because we see Brancusi's work, whatever else it is, as the *ne plus ultra* of modern aesthetic stylization. But in Brancusi's time the idea of making a fetish of the machine, of seeing beauty in the smooth and inhuman – now so familiar as to seem positively

old-fashioned – was new and counter-intuitive. Likewise, today, the very claim by someone working with lab equipment that he is doing so as an artist appears so implausible to many people that in itself such a claim might be enough to arouse mistrust. If Steve Kurtz had been painting pictures about genetic manipulation rather than creating a participatory experience around the subject, he might never have been arrested.

But even given the not-in-themselves-inexplicable suspicions that might have arisen in the minds of paramedics entirely innocent of contact with contemporary art, even assuming that their sense of duty required them to call upon more expert hands to probe into this possibly mysterious demise, what happened next is extraordinary. Instead of an apology with the extenuation of ‘better safe than sorry’, Kurtz was presented with an indictment – as were a number of his artist and scientist collaborators. They were under investigation as bioterrorists.

Bioterrorism is a threat with particular resonance in the United States, where a series of both real and hoax anthrax attacks were perpetrated through the mail in the months following the attacks on the World Trade Center. Among the targets of the infected mailing were senators and the media. Five people died in the attacks, but panic was widespread. By the time of Hope Kurtz’s death, the attacks had long since stopped and the panic died down. Indeed, the case seemed to become very quiet indeed as its investigation stalled, with many observers convinced that the perpetrator of the anthrax mailings, far from being a representative of international terrorism, was a disaffected former US military researcher who could have obtained anthrax spores at Fort Detrick, Maryland. As George Monbiot wrote about the case in the *Guardian* (21 May 2002),



Several prominent scientists have suggested that the FBI’s investigation is being pursued with less than the rigour we might have expected because the federal authorities have something to hide. The FBI has dismissed them as conspiracy theorists. But there is surely a point after which incompetence becomes an insufficient explanation for failure.

In other words, the anthrax terrorist is a man who knows too much to be prosecuted. Here is how Monbiot describes the still-unknown man who had the ability to produce a rogue biological weapon:

an American working within the US bio-defence industry, with a doctoral degree in the relevant branch of microbiology. He is skilled and experienced at handling the weapon without contaminating his surroundings. He has full security clearance and access to classified information.

The only thing Kurtz has in common with the person capable of producing a home-made biological weapon is his citizenship. Kurtz’s work as an artist certainly concerns science, and he collaborates with scientists when necessary in order to make it, but he is not one himself. Indeed, part of the point of the Critical Art Ensemble’s work is to show that, as laypeople, we can understand much more about the science that affects our lives,

or that may do so, than we realize. But it is ‘real science’ only to the extent that what one did in one’s high school chemistry lab is real science. It is essentially a species of absurdist performance art.

The contrast between the US government’s response to the anthrax attacks and its conduct in the face of the non-crimes of Steve Kurtz is blatant. In the end, of course, it could hardly be denied that Kurtz and his colleagues were indeed using biotechnology in an artistic context; indeed, two of them, fellow CAE members Beatriz da Costa and Steve Barnes, were subpoenaed in art’s authorizing institution itself, the museum, and the artwork they exhibited at the Mass MoCA, *Free Range Grains*, was impounded as well. The artists were being investigated under provisions of the US Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989 and its expansion in the USA Patriot Act of 2001:

Whoever knowingly possesses any biological agent, toxin, or delivery system of a type or in a quantity that, under the circumstances, is not reasonably justified by a prophylactic, protective, bona fide research, or other peaceful purpose, shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 10 years, or both.

It seems self-evident that a museum exhibition should count as a peaceful purpose, so, just as in the case of the apparent hands-off treatment of the anthrax killer, the vigorous prosecution of an innocent like Kurtz cries out for ulterior explanation. As Kurtz’s lawyer Paul Cambria put it in the early days of the case, ‘I only hope that it is not simply aimed at trying to silence his message or the methods he’s using to convey his message.’ In fact, this is the theory that is popular among Kurtz’s supporters: that Kurtz’s arrest was more than simply what Cambria calls ‘a paranoid overreaction that would never have happened before 9/11’. Instead, on this view, ‘the feds (FBI, Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force, U.S. Attorney’s office) are opportunistically exploiting the convenient hook of suspicious biological material (in the context of post-9/11 anthrax incidents, both real and hoaxed) to go after an intellectual for his IDEAS’ (the words are those of Ed Cardoni, director of the Buffalo arts organization Hallwalls). Had the devil been waiting for an invitation?

Typical of the work Kurtz has done as part of Critical Art Ensemble is a project like *Flesh Machine*, 1997–98. As described on the group’s website, this is an event in which

Participants take donor screening tests and gather information on reproductive technology. On the CD, viewers can view factual data on in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment, new methods for assisted reproduction, egg and sperm donor profiles, and even take a donor screening test themselves.... Those who pass the donor screening test are asked to give blood for DNA extraction and amplification.... At the on-site cryopreservation lab cell samples are taken for flash freezing. A cross-media profile of an individual’s genetic representations is constituted.... Participants can then assess the potential value of their bodies as commodities and hence their place in the new genetic market economy.

The artists take on the role of helpful and authoritative scientific experts in order to undermine unquestioning belief in the political and economic neutrality of technical expertise. The artistic shortcoming of this strategy, however, is also its political shortcoming: although the conclusions the artists want to enforce may be in themselves correct, the fact that the conclusions are foregone means that CAE’s didacticism inadvertently reinforces the public’s position of childlike dependency. The democratic thrust of art emerges where artist and public engage on equal terms.

Also, one might wonder whether scientific authority is quite as imposing a social force as CAE imagine. Their contention that ‘science has slowly but surely become the key myth maker within society, thus defining for the general population the structure and dynamics of the cosmos and the origins and meaning of life, or, in other words, defining nature itself’ is initially plausible. But in the United States today, ‘creation



science' vies with evolutionary biology as an accepted teaching about the origin and form of life. Religion and science remain very much in contention, occasionally giving rise to weird hybrids. It's not so much that 'the theory of evolution is an example of science fulfilling the ideological needs of capital', as the CAE claim, as that capital, once established, will adapt itself to seemingly any ideological structure in force.

All in all, the artistic

work of the Critical Art Ensemble is characterized by a strange mix of analytical sophistication and rhetorical naivety. Yet their sustained questioning of the links between biotechnology and capital – best represented in their books, such as *Flesh Machine*, *Molecular Invasion* and *Digital Resistance*, all published by Autonomedia – is a necessary labour as we move, seemingly inexorably, into a world in which food, reproduction and selfhood are becoming technical constructions as well as the cultural ones they always were. Given the marginal position of artists in US cultural life, one should beware of imagining the authorities lose much sleep over their dissident discourse, so there remains something deeply puzzling about the government's dogged refusal simply to leave Steve Kurtz alone. The scariest charges against Kurtz were eventually dropped, but he is still being prosecuted – and the potential punishment is stunningly harsh. The charges against him now are federal crimes of mail and wire fraud, four counts in all. These charges are connected to the means by which he obtained the biological materials he was using, though the possession of such materials is common and not in itself criminal, and the laws under which the indictments were obtained are targeted at fraudsters, such as those behind telemarketing swindles. Each charge carries a maximum sentence of twenty years in prison. Robert Farrell, the head of the Department of Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Public Health, from whom Kurtz had received his biological samples, was also charged. (Thus, another absurdity: if Farrell was Kurtz's co-conspirator, he could not have been the victim of Kurtz's supposed fraud – and if not Farrell, then who?)

Even assuming the case against him is finally quashed, the legal bills Kurtz and his associates are accumulating in the process of defending themselves must be enormous. In the months following his arrest a number of benefit events were held around the USA to raise money, as well as one in London (of which I was one of the organizers). Now, even with the case having gone temporarily quiet as the defence has an opportunity to review the prosecution's case in preparation for upcoming court dates, the bills continue to mount, and donations to Kurtz's defence fund are still being taken through its website, www.caedefensefund.org. If Kurtz finally goes free, his prosecution will surely have had the same effect that censorship has had on other serious artists like Andres Serrano or Robert Mapplethorpe: his work will be better known, more widely disseminated and increasingly respected. That will be cold comfort for the torment he has been put through, but encouraging to anyone in favour of an art that thrives on contention and an active public.

radical philosophy conference

SHINY, FASTER, FUTURE Capitalism and Form

10.00 am–5.30 pm, Saturday 19 March 2005
Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1



Speakers include

Christopher J. Arthur

David Cunningham

Wolfgang Haug

Veronica Hollinger

Bob Jessop

Patrizia Lombardo

Stewart Martin

China Miéville

Bernard Stiegler

Sessions include S-F as political allegory Commodity aesthetics

Money as form: cultural and economic Musics: avant-garde and industrial

Philosophy of the metropolis

Admission £5 unwaged/students, £12 waged. Advance registration from
David Cunningham, Dept of English Literature, University of Westminster, Regent Street Campus,
W1B 2UW; D.Cunningham02@westminster.ac.uk. Cheques payable to Radical Philosophy Ltd.

Jacques Derrida, 1930–2004

In an interview with *Le Monde* published a couple of months before his death at the age of 74 from pancreatic cancer on Friday 9 October 2004, Jacques Derrida confirmed what many already knew, that he was ‘dangerously ill’, ‘at war against myself’. If questions of ‘survival’ had always ‘haunted’ him, this, he said, took on new meaning in the light of both his pressing health problems and people’s tendency to see him as ‘the last representative of a “generation”’ (*Le Monde*, 19 August 2004). It would not have surprised him, then, to find that it is this generational context which has, for many, served to frame his passing as more than simply another individual loss to contemporary intellectual life (however significant), but as something like the effective conclusion to a whole era of thought. In a moving piece from 1998, written on the occasion of Lyotard’s death, Derrida remembered an earlier testimony for Deleuze: ‘I seem to recall having said that I could feel us quite alone now, Jean-François Lyotard and I, the sole survivors of what has been identified as a “generation”.’

Derrida was born in 1930 into an Algerian Jewish family, and his early schooling suffered under anti-Semitic Vichy laws. Perhaps, in part, because of this, he had a long and difficult entrance into academic Parisian life during the 1950s. Nonetheless, he made several important friends during this period, including Althusser, Bourdieu, Marin and Foucault, as well as beginning the work on Husserl that included his first publication in 1962: a translation of, and lengthy introduction to, *The Origin of Geometry*. Early essays started to appear in *Tel Quel* and *Critique* around this time, but it was not until 1967 that Derrida really ‘arrived’, bringing out three works – *Speech and Phenomena*, *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology* – which, in many ways, formed the basis for everything that was to come. In the years that followed, while teaching and lecturing around the world, Derrida published some seventy books, whose influence has been felt in fields from philosophy and literary theory to law and architecture. At the same time, he also sought to challenge the established institutions of philosophy in France – co-founding Groupe de recherches sur l’enseignement philosophiques (GREPH) in 1974 and the Collège internationale de philosophie in 1983 – as well as involving himself in numerous political activities, from clandestine seminars in cold-war Czechoslovakia to a lengthy commitment to the struggle against apartheid.

If we can trust the mainstream media to have laid out with reasonable accuracy such basic details of Derrida’s life, we can, unfortunately, trust them for little else. Despite a very decent obituary in the *Guardian*, by Derek Attridge and Thomas Baldwin, more typical was a follow-up piece in the same paper the next day, soliciting the opinions of twenty ‘key thinkers’ on this ‘controversial’ figure. While a couple had the good grace to admit a general ignorance, others were not so circumspect, either delivering an unsubstantiated verdict of ‘nonsense’ (Scruton), proffering utterly incomprehensible ‘explanations’ (it’s all about ‘inter-linear analysis’, according to Sir Christopher Frayling) or falling back on the sort of banal formulations that are the stock-in-trade of Alain de Botton, for whom Derrida was ‘a thinker who made it his business to tell us that things are more complicated than we trust them to be’ (*Guardian*, 12 October 2004). As a journalistic exercise, this may have had unintended merit: a middlebrow version of that *Brass Eye*-style exposé of the willingness of ‘celebrities’ to pontificate

on absolutely anything they're asked to, regardless of their actual knowledge of the subject under discussion. And, no doubt, it is entirely futile to get worked up about the travesties it generates, or to bemoan the demands of a sound-bite culture. Yet the sheer level of shoddiness that has characterized Derrida's treatment does call for comment, if only because it attests to the persistence of all those strange – and often frankly malicious – misrepresentations of his thought which served consistently to prevent any real debate concerning the arguments contained within it.

They suggest something else too. For while it may not be strictly true that he was the very last of his generation, he *was* perhaps one of the last philosophers of our time whose name could spark some recognition beyond the academy. Unlike the journalistic presentation of earlier figures, however, Derrida's 'mythical image' was constructed almost universally, from the start, as a metonymy for at best a dangerous nihilism, and at worst a mystifying charlatanism. Once so constituted, deconstruction could all too easily be taken as just another name for relativism, scepticism, or whatever you like, while Derrida himself could be blamed, with no textual evidence whatsoever, for everything from the supposed destruction of the canon in American humanities departments by the forces of 'political correctness', to the 'postmodernist' abandonment of the class struggle in favour of capitalist-friendly 'free play' or the 'glamorization' of 'the homeless as a subject position for social change'. (This attribution to Derrida of some anarchic affirmation of free play is the result of a straightforward early mistranslation of the word *jeu*, which one might charitably put down to a certain misguided Kantianism, in the 1966 essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'.) As this last shameless fiction (copyright Tom Lewis) suggests, nobody comes out with credit from this dismal history. From Habermas's willingness to pass judgement on the basis of a popular secondary account (which he got demonstrably wrong anyway), to the self-righteous expressions of moralistic condemnation that apparently constitute argument for certain celebrated Oxbridge Marxists (who really ought to have asked themselves why Oxbridge was more than willing to accommodate such 'revolutionaries', while battenning down the hatches at any mention of deconstruction), if nothing else Derrida exposed the conditions of an academic Left unable to countenance any questioning of its most cherished dogmas.

It is impossible to offer an adequate assessment of Derrida's work here. Central to any such account would, however, be an explanation of why what deconstruction works to 'reveal' as the conditions of possibility for all 'effects' of identity or presence are, at the same time, their conditions of impossibility. Thus, for example, in a famous reading of Austin, the necessary possibility that a performative might 'fail' is shown to be a structural condition of the very possibility that it 'succeed' at all: failure is inscribed within, and ineliminably 'contaminates', *any* performative, however successful it might appear to be. In the work of the 1960s and 1970s what is at stake in this was most often approached, following Heidegger, through the violently hierarchical structures that dominate a 'metaphysics of presence', in which the self-identity of a privileged term is constituted through an unquestioned logical and ontological primacy over one placed in a secondary, excluded position. Derrida sought to show how, in any such opposition, an essential contamination of the primary by the secondary, by virtue of its necessary reliance upon that which it seeks to exclude in its very self-constitution, necessarily disrupts the structure of pure oppositionality (and thus absolute identity *or* difference) itself. Contra certain currently fashionable positions, there could thus be, for Derrida, *no* pure alterity or event. Presence is always already 'haunted' by an 'originary' difference and non-identical repetition in which identity is constitutively dependent on traces of other identities: 'All experience is made up only of traces, and whether we look to the side of the subject or the object, we will find nothing preceding the trace.' Yet such logical 'priority' cannot produce any new metaphysical principle in so far as it is not itself identifiable, nor has any existence, outside of these 'effects' of difference and

repetition. It is such 'quasi-transcendentals' that Derrida famously 'nicknamed', in an always provisional form, the trace, *différance*, the supplementary, and so on.

There is nothing specifically 'linguistic' (let alone 'semiotic') about this, although it is true that many of Derrida's early essays started from those problems of language and signification prevalent within the philosophy and human sciences of the time. Rather, it holds, logically, for *any* effect of identity or presence. Moreover, it has certain more general consequences for both philosophy and the human sciences (and, for that matter, the natural and mathematical sciences), which follow from the necessary re-inscription of the transcendental–empirical opposition that it produces. For, on the one hand, it can be shown that all attempts simply to reduce or 'explain' the philosophical from a supposedly external position, such as those elaborated by various positivist tendencies within the human sciences, will always be undermined by their need to generate a



'new' transcendental term to do the job of 'explanation': a 'transcendental contraband', the very 'philosophical' nature of which they are constitutively unable to think. It is this argument that was the basis for the early critical readings of Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Benveniste and Valéry, as well as for the beginnings of a long engagement with psychoanalysis. It provides the basis for a resistance to any crude materialist or empiricist inversions of philosophical idealism. On the other hand, and for the same reason, philosophy cannot, through its own explicitly transcendentalizing gestures, ever dominate or reduce without disruptive remainder, a contingency, historicity or facticity that is a necessary condition of any such gestures.

Most misunderstandings of Derrida have derived from a failure to understand what was entailed by this unavoidable movement of 'negotiation', irreducible to juridical–moral rules, and which was, from early on, thought in terms of the possibility of a 'lesser violence' in an unsublatable 'economy of violence'. In much initial reception of his work, whether positive or negative, there was a tendency to stress the second argument outlined above, imagining that, because he sought to demonstrate that the philosophical idea could not be purely separated from, say,

its linguistic or idiomatic 'expression', Derrida was arguing that philosophy was *nothing other* than a particular language game, rhetoric or literary genre. By contrast, later 'critiques' often presented him as precisely the epitome of the classical transcendental philosopher, subjecting the human sciences to an unknowable and mystified Law that denied all radical transformative praxis. Both can be shown to miss the 'double movement' that, in principle, Derrida's articulation of deconstruction insists upon.

Yet one can also understand the genuine frustration that at least some of these critiques reflected, even if one must remember that frustration has never amounted to refutation. Undoubtedly there *are* justifiable reasons why his work – particularly as it seemed to develop in the 1980s, with its associated elaborations of an *unconditional* 'originary affirmation', 'law before the law' or 'gift before exchange' – might seem

to have resulted only in the interminable analysis of such irreducibly aporetic (quasi-) transcendental conditions in an all-too-traditionally philosophical way. However, if something like an 'originary affirmation', or 'response' to the other, must be thought of as necessarily independent of any and every determinate context, it is, equally, never present *outside* of context, being always imbricated in concrete singular ways with the sphere of facticity. As Derrida wrote in the late 1980s, it still remains necessary to 'articulate this unconditionality with the determinate ... conditions of this or that context; and this is the moment of strategies, of rhetorics, of ethics, and of politics'.

The questions raised by this necessity no doubt motivated, in part, the apparent shift in emphasis, in the later writings, towards more explicitly 'political' issues; a shift perhaps also provoked by the so-called Heidegger and De Man 'affairs' of the late 1980s, and the gleeful attempt on the part of some to have finally done with Derrida through guilt by association. Yet, notwithstanding a seemingly new stress on the ineliminability of a 'certain experience of the *emancipatory* promise', the notion of a 'messianicity without messianism', for example, is in many ways entirely consistent with that argument concerning the quasi-transcendental which is present from the very beginning of Derrida's published work. Thus he was to insist that, if Benjamin was primarily concerned with the 'privileged moments' of messianic power opened up within particular 'historico-political phases', a messianicity without messianism was explicitly construed as 'naming' a *universal* structure of experience which would be the condition of (im)possibility of any praxis at all. It is not hard, then, to show why most criticisms of Derrida's politics have been misjudged: they simply miss the 'level' at which his arguments are pitched. Nonetheless, it is also fair to say that there does indeed remain an issue of precisely how a quasi-transcendental level of analysis *is* to be 'articulated' with determinate 'historico-political' contexts. Despite the over-hasty attempts by some to assimilate Derrida to the terms of a Levinasian ethics, the real problem that Derrida leaves us with may be what, as early as 'Structure, Sign and Play', he defined as a political 'problem of *economy* and *strategy*'. How is the force of orientation of a 'strategy without finality' to be understood (as it must be) outside of any teleological horizon, utopianism or regulating Idea, yet in relation to specific social forms and relations?

This is, perhaps, just to say that Derrida's own work – which was, first and foremost (if not only), the work of a philosopher – is *not enough*. Of course! It leaves us with problems. What thinking worthy of the name does not? Despite certain appearances to the contrary, despite the desire on the part of others for discipleship, it may be that Derrida frustrated a good many people precisely because he did not fulfil the conventional role of the French intellectual master, resisting the lure of political posturing and the construction of theoretical models or programmes that would relieve us of the responsibility to think and to engage.

For many who were students in the 1980s and 1990s, Derrida was a crucial figure who decisively transformed our thinking, philosophical and political. Nonetheless, I'm somewhat shamefully aware that, for a while now, some of us have rather avoided mentioning his *name*, even when his thought is most clearly presupposed, perhaps because it entails so many difficulties, opening up, yet again, 'arguments' we're sick of having. In doing so, unhappily, we have risked becoming complicit with the kind of academic fashion industry for which Derrida is simply yesterday's news, a moment of 'negativity' and 'critique' now displaced, most often, by a version of that constructivist 'immanence' affirmed by his friend Deleuze. This 'displacement' obscures both the affinities and the genuine divergences between these two thinkers, and frequently results in a caricature of each. Such a caricature is particularly prevalent in cultural studies and contemporary art theory. It takes up a long-standing demand that deconstruction be succeeded by some new 'construction'. Yet such an argument simply shows how little what Derrida meant by deconstruction was understood in the first place.

David Cunningham

Remembering Derrida

I do not want to remember him, I want to invoke him. I want to quote Auden's harsh words:

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections,
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

We are buffeted by this daily punishment, by the amazing mainstream hostility that is visited upon his name. They seem to have forgotten even the conventional courtesy to the dead.

Starting from the 1968 essay 'La Différance', in which Derrida undertook to explain his method to the doyens of the French philosophical establishment, his style has been a teaching style. This rankles for those who are not used to learning.

There can be no doubt that Derrida knew more than most of us about teaching – from the intimacy of a small seminar in French to the long distance and remote spectrality of the Internet; from English to the many languages of the world. There is authority – what other word can we use? – in his implicit model of the classroom as the workshop of the production of collectivity. 'How many are we' (the refrain in the classroom-based *Politics of Friendship*), ever, in a classroom?

A single teacher's students, flung out into the world and time, is a real-world example of the precarious continuity of Marxism in the lowest reaches of global activism today. There is often a slow but tenacious change of mind, quickly dismissed by the metropolitan establishment. This is reflected in the repetitive burrowing gestures of Derrida's style. After the collapse of international communism as a structured state-system, and the freezing or loosening of left parties, in reaction or coalition, it is in that open form, that call – of indefinite, and often unrecognizable collectivities, with little possibility of ever coming together across insuperable linguistic and spatial divides – that 'Marx' survives as at least the possibility of resistance in the far-flung global grassroots. Our hope for a persistently moving democracy that tries for its own salvation even as it salutes the other, lies here: Derrida's 'New International'. To be able to think this is so rare, so outside the established lines of recognizable good politics, that it is no wonder that he causes such profound unease in the establishment.

In the pages of the *New York Times*, Edward Rothstein, for example, felt that he could simply mock this man for saying, in his opening remarks (not as a conclusion, as Rothstein implies) in *Philosophy in A Time of Terror*, that the contraction of the events of 11 September 2001 into '9/11' or other short forms shows that we do not know what we are talking about. Remember, that event, thus contracted, was part of the obscenities of the electoral campaign. On the other hand, so contracted, it can allow mourning. A great deal could be added to this. It was Derrida's virtue that he thus saw both enabling sides, without claiming that they were equivalent, yet without claiming the power of knowledge: logocentrism is not a pathology, but it is deconstructible.

The only thing that Derrida's careful statement – which, even out of context, can be seen as respecting the unqualifiable in its singularity – cannot provoke is mockery. Jürgen Habermas, the other philosopher in the exchange that was published as *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, came to understand that 'deconstruction is essentially praxis'. In Derrida's own memorable words, 'the simultaneous generation, by graft, of the performative and the constative'.

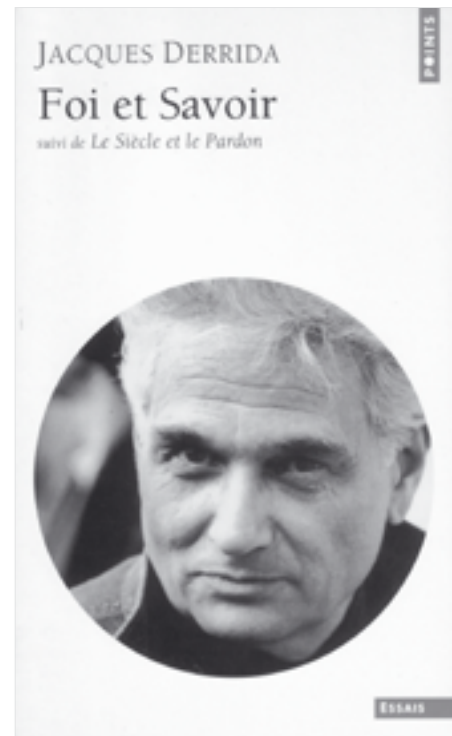
A word here about religion: friends who understand the need for secularism in today's conflicted world sometimes misunderstand Derrida too quickly. I refer to two things: first, his correction of Kant in 'Faith and Knowledge' that the so-called secondary matters (*Nebengeschäfte*) of buying and selling salvation must be taken into account as irreducibly imbricated with the religious; and, second, his courageous remark on the anniversary of Levinas's death that, by remaining silent about the earthly Jerusalem, Levinas forgot that the state of Israel was daily breaking the commandments.

Speaking at Columbia University on the work of mourning, Derrida had remarked that without an intuition of the transcendental, one can neither execute nor mourn. The austerity of his own burial, with no mourning speeches apart from his own anodyne words read by his son, and the absence of any religious functionary, was a valediction forbidding mourning that showed religion to be no more than performative conventions, even as his staunch opposition to the death penalty had interdicted the other example.

I will now say what we all know and feel: we will not see his like again.

An activist approach to concepts

Immediately after Derrida's burial, I flew to Seoul to deliver a lecture at a conference on 'Globalization and the Imagination'. My title was 'Is Language "Local"?' My words turned out to be an immensely simplified homage. I reproduce them here, in part, because of the brutal remark of a perfectly proper Americanized local female academic: 'His face was more beautiful than his philosophy.' O my friend...



Derrida was a controversial figure. He was controversial because he was not interested in exposing error, but, with an altogether relentless honesty, he investigated the way we produce our truths. He looked at our inconsistencies, at our exclusions, because they allowed us to live. Among these exclusions, he noticed again and again that, in order to enter democratic structures, the woman must become an honorary male. The male-dominated tradition found such attention intolerable. There are at least two reasons for this: first, because we are not accustomed to scrutinizing ourselves in such detail, Derrida's style was sometimes found absurd; and, second, since the dominant trend in philosophy leaned towards ordinary language, his scrutiny has seemed non-philosophical.

In fact, Derrida's is an activist approach to concepts. No concept that needs to be practised can ignore detail, as we find out if we are trying to do something rather than merely talk or think about it. Attention to detail is the secret of successful labour, manual *or* intellectual. Historically and structurally, a majority of the world's women and all manual labourers have been forced to remember this. This is also true of natural science. Disciplinary philosophy and official history have been able to ignore this for the sake of saving the argument, except when they are quantitative. Disciplinary anthropology trades performative attention to detail for ethnographic consistency. The vehemence with which Derrida was rejected is a kind of mechanism of denial of such things. Derrida submitted intellectual labour to the test of manual labour, scientific labour, women's work. It is because of this, I believe, that Jürgen Habermas has written that 'Derrida's deconstruction is essentially a praxis.' Habermas understands that Derrida's attention to detail does not mean giving up. It means persistence, repetition, circling back, for the job is never quite done.

Such a way of working and thinking can be related to the question of globalization and language. This is a particularly important issue for women because, all over the world, with very few exceptions, women and manual labourers have less control over language. I have discussed at length elsewhere why simply giving them apparent access to information and communications technology may not be as humanitarian as it is made to sound.

In his 2003 book *Voyous*, Derrida noted that Plato and Aristotle, philosophers who used classical Greek as their mother tongue, noticed problems of detail with 'democracy', a Greek word, which we, who have fetishized the word and even make it an excuse for military intervention, have decided to forget. Plato put the leaders above the law. Aristotle warned us about the inbuilt problem of conflict between merit and numbers. This attention to a language in use is not 'local' in the sense of 'cut off from the global'.

There is no doubt that globalization – having the same system of exchange all over the world and managing that through information and communications technology – can be the condition and effect of a just world. If we apply the standards of manual labour to this dream, as did Jacques Derrida to all intellectual labour, unceasingly, we would see that such a project necessarily involves incessant exclusions and inconsistencies. Languages in their idiomatic detail, in so far as they are singular yet pulled into translation, however imperfectly, are protection against the 'denial' symptoms of globalization, a denial of the irreducible untranslatability of idiom by imposing a single hegemonic language, impoverished and instrumental.

A sociology of knowledge looks into the ways in which social forces determine our way of knowing. A way of knowing – epistemology – brings with it a way of shaping what we know – constructing an object of knowledge. The new sociologists of knowledge suggest that, as a result of the explosive advances in information technology, our very way of knowing, our very way of intuiting space and time, have changed. Marshall

McLuhan was the first to suggest this, in the 1960s. Today this has become a common presupposition or assumption for many people. The most often acknowledged are, in alphabetical order: Manuel Castells, Saskia Sassen, Paul Virilio.

These intellectuals propose that those who think outside the virtual channels of telecommunication are not in keeping with our postmodern society. To put it in Castells's powerful and influential words, they are still thinking 'place' when the real world of the virtually connected megacities of the information society is made up of the flows of 'space'. The exclusion here is clear: everyone unconnected with the world of telecommunication. This excludes not only the rural poor and the underclass of global North and South but also those of us who might still believe in that archaic instrument called the book. It excludes those who believe that it might take time to train the imagination. In the world of telecommunication speed is king.

The movement of data is indistinguishable from the movement of finance capital. That is because the value-form of finance capital, negotiable capital instruments that need not

necessarily be converted (or realized, as the old word goes) into money or goods – in that sense the 'purest' form of capital – is the data-form. The value-form of finance capital is the data-form. What Antonio Gramsci called 'the organic intellectual', the intellectual who speaks and thinks for this new conduct of capital, will convince us that the world (in this case the globe) is created by telecommunication and groups that do not think, do not really belong to our world. This is not conspiracy theory. It is common sense.

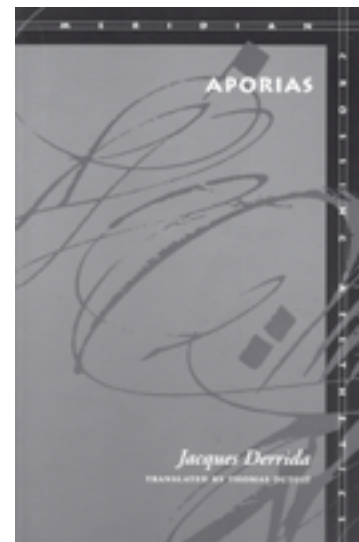


These are the major exclusions of the cultural theory of globalization. The major inconsistencies begin with the fact that minds do not change at the same speed as institutions. Castells celebrates the cultural theory of the disappearance of the book in three sequential books. The theorists of the new mind-set or episteme suggest that the inhabitants of this brave new world think space and time differently. Some of us think that, although we can think of different ways of thinking of space and time, and thus organize our thinking of space and time in different stories, in fact the human being thinks – does, as in performs – space as extension and time as sequence and this does not change. Derrida reminded us of this in *Aporias*.

Let us look at a more obvious inconsistency, an inconsistency in argument. I turn to Castells because his trilogy on the information society is massive, thoughtful and outstandingly documented. In his second volume, Castells tells us that certain movements have arisen in reaction against the virtuality of information theory. They are identity movements that tell us we are flesh and blood, that we exist: feminism, culturalism, fundamentalism. There are at least two inconsistencies here. If these movements arise in reaction to the abstractions of globalization, they must in some way, however inchoate, be part of that abstraction. Do they belong to the postmodern world of virtual reality or not? Castells does not discuss this.

A further inconsistency is lodged in the history of these movements. Culturalism as nationalism, fundamentalism as xenophobia, and feminism, ‘as itself’, have such long and variegated histories that to put them together simply as reactive to the information society seems unwise. And the most glaring inconsistency is that feminism has had an oblique relationship to the other two movements.

Derrida would read the claims of the organic intellectuals of the information society with an immensely scrupulous micrology or attention to detail. That scanning eye is now closed. It is imagination that lets us look closely at these exclusions and inconsistencies. I will define imagination as that which can make us, or allows us to, act against self-interest as well as think what is not present. This is the vaguest possible definition that may be useful only when set to work. Such a definition will always be tied to the situation in which it is set to work. (Is auto-affection self-interest is the kind of question that will pop up, for instance.) Derrida defined this tied-in-ness as ‘trace’ as early as 1968 and suggested that to take such situational constraints into account prevented the easy ‘transgression’ (his word) into universalization. For example, when my definition is taken by someone who teaches the humanities and the verbal arts of literature, it is tied to professional self-interest and thus prey to the inconsistency that it criticizes. And, attempting to be inclusive, it excludes the very globalization whose exclusivity it deplores, unless they come around to our side and thus serve the self-interest that our definition excludes. We cannot launch this definition to add to the grand definitions of the imagination that Europe has given us since the eighteenth century. Whatever effect it has will be in spite of itself. But it works fine to give a rough account of language. For language nourishes the imagination, and, as soon as you put something in language, you assume that it is not immediately present.



A slow learning

Let me repeat here the common-sense description of learning a first language that I often use: language is there because we want to touch another. The infant invents a language. The parents learn it. By way of this transaction the infant enters a linguistic system which has a history before its birth and will continue to have a history after its death. Yet during its life this infant, grown up into a human being, will think of this

language as his or her most intimate possession, and will mark it in a way, however small, which will be incorporated into its impersonal history. Only the first language is learnt this way. It activates a mechanism once in a lifetime. Derrida wrote of this in *Of Grammatology*.

There will be global English only when English is learnt this way by every child in the world. I am of course deeply troubled by claims to global English. I should perhaps include Chinese here. For it is sometimes claimed that the Internet can go Chinese. I



think that in order for that to happen, Chinese will probably have to go beyond simplified characters, and confine itself to the twenty-six letters of the pinyin, make its tonal system contextual. Then, since its grammar is simpler than English, we can make the same troubling pronouncement about Chinese. There will be global Chinese when Chinese is learnt this way by every child in the world.

I must make my last move in the hopeless concession that it is possible that if globalization is as inexorable, powerful and inevitable as it is claimed by its theorists, it is within the realm of possibility that the imagination will have to find its habitat within Chinese and English, two languages whose superb poetic traditions will remain inaccessible in their globalized versions, because imagination, implicit in poetry, takes time to train, and is therefore inconvenient.

It is obvious that self-interest drives globalization. Even the plans for world governance and the eradication of poverty are tainted by simplified versions of the civilizing missions of old imperialisms. Unlike my lopsided definition of the imagination, the agents and the system of capitalist globalization will, as I mentioned earlier, work by exclusion and inconsistency – the agents unselfconsciously or deliberately, the system by its inner laws of working. The very forces we are fighting will make sure that, even without the humanities fighting for languages on the level of teaching, not everybody will have access to the powerful uniformity of a global language. If globalization is to work, every child will not learn the global language in the way of a first language. We take shelter in that apparent sign of inequality, turn loss into gain. In my estimation, a successful globalizing *socialism* will also move towards the uniformity of speed-oriented world languages, perhaps with greater alacrity because, presumably, there will be more real equality under socialism. In theory, the only difference between capitalism and socialism is in the redistributive impulse of the human beings who run the state. For both systems to work, capital-formation, the driving force of globalization, must be assumed. And redistribution is against self-interest. It cannot happen without a highly trained sympathetic imagination; and the imagination is nourished by the slow learning of the other's language, with the memory of that first learning in the works. The learning of one's first language (the native language, the mother-tongue, marked by birth) is at once slow and fast, linked, as the philosophers of artificial intelligence and neural networking tell us, to the very telecommunication that needs to make uniform the multiplicity of languages.

Although most of us cannot perform Derrida's fine-tuned reading of the Greek language within the history of Europe's self-representation, and the history of words like 'democracy', a crude summary like the one I have just offered asks for such a fine-tuned reading of the word 'social' – and its companions in German and French – together with their transformations in the languages of Asia and Africa.

Here, and again by way of summary, let me point out that 'capital' and the 'social' of socialism both work by abstraction. The 'abstract' is produced by the imagination, for it is not the here and now. But the *work* of the abstract requires the wiping out of singularity, the repeatable difference. Most of the workers for globalization do not

produce the abstract, but accept it as given, and systematize within it. As I am insisting, the wiping out of singularity involves the destruction of the multiplicity of languages of the world, not because they are local, but because they are singular, translatable different. To give you a sense of this repetition and difference at work, I cannot know how the English word 'singular' plays with 'local' in Korean, with its own pattern of contradictions. Korea is a major player in telecommunications technology. I am citizen of a country, India, which is also becoming competitive in information technology. As Derrida plays between ancient Greece and global modernity, so should we be able to plot the passing of the grand ethical abstractions of Buddhism passing from classical India into Korea and see their displacement into the abstractions of global modernity. For this we need different lines of communication between the world's (not the globe's) multiplicity of languages. Here I have described a linguistic singularity and economic violence which are a displacement of ethical singularity and political violence.

The last time I appeared in public in front of an audience with my friend Derrida was in New York in 2001, at a belated celebration of his seventieth birthday, in a synagogue on the Lower East Side. I insisted then, with the obstinacy of an old friend who acknowledged the absolute superiority of the other's intellect and learning in every possible way, on repeating my criticism of his reading of Marx. Some of you may know that he had chided me on this in print. On this occasion too he chided me, affectionately, but did not question the substance of my criticism, as he had not in his published remarks. My point was that, if one considered industrial capitalism, which was Marx's subject, one would see the human being, female and male, 'spectralized' (Derrida's word) in abstract average labour, labour power. It is this spectral power that socialism snatches from capitalism. But, because the power remains spectral or abstract, a merely abstract equalizer of all that is human in the form of value, indistinguishable from capital – human capital – it can become subsumed and an ally of globalization, where all that is human is virtualized in the form of data. It is destructive of the multiplicity of singularities. In order for socialism to become messianic (Derrida's word), we must look outside its boundaries. Derrida has taught me that socialism, like all systems, becomes auto-immune if it continues to account for itself. The activist suppresses this risk at her peril.

As we all know, finance capital has to use world trade. And, in its lower reaches, in spite of all the changes wrought by telecommunication, world trade still operates by the rules of the old industrial capitalism. The intense feminization of labour is one of its proofs. This argument has been made by others. It relates to what I said a while ago: 'The very forces we are fighting will make sure that not everybody will have access to the powerful uniformity of a global language.' As among the rural poor, so here, imagination is potentially fostered in this lack of access. Humanities teaching must supplement this and transform the lack into an excess, the excess of the multiplicity of languages.

This brings me to my final point; but before I can make it, I must repeat something that I have said many times. I do not, indeed cannot, believe that a woman's entire fulfilment is in child-bearing and child-rearing; yet reproductive heteronormativity – in spite of intuitions of originary queerness – has been the norm of the world for a much longer time than capitalism. (I am not speaking as if that norm is necessarily desirable. I am attempting to place myself within my context.) It is in that spirit that I say that the large majority of feminized labour, the large majority of urban and rural poor, are mothers who navigate their children's initiation into the mother-tongue, the



mysterious process that I just described. Melanie Klein has suggested that, from the womb to the first years of childhood, the child constructs the 'language' of ethics, by transforming the body parts of mother (and father) into a complex semiotic system. It is this conglomerate ethical semiotic, among the children of the disenfranchised women of the world, separated from the monoculture of globalization, that humanities teaching such as yours or mine can supplement, from above, so that it is not excluded from the definition of our world. This is why I said at the beginning that theories of globalization that announce a general change in knowledge patterns exclude those that believe that it might take time to train the imagination. We professors of the humanities, going on about distant learning, and video classrooms, never think of the fact that we share in this exclusion. Today I am urging that we make use of that common exclusion – from above, learning to learn from below.

To give you an idea of how we might do this, let me tell you a story. I was speaking to a group of managing directors and provincial government officers in southern China who were learning English in order to work with the World Trade Organization. No one in the audience knew 'who I was'. One of the men said to me, 'You speak English so well because the British owned you.' I said, 'Yes, my brother, you are right. The British had their boots on our neck. But now that you want to enter the World Trade Organization, do not let the Americans do the same thing to you. I love English because I love my mother tongue. The reason to learn a language is not only trade, but to be able to appreciate its poetry. I am learning Chinese because, in my old age, I want to be able to taste your great poetry.'

To these Chinese professionals and administrators I was speaking as a teacher of English. I believe they thought I was a teacher of language. But, as you know, I teach comparative literature – English, French and German, three hegemonic languages – mostly to people who are native speakers. To the students in New York I have been saying, for a long time, control your desire to be ethical at your own convenience under the newly globalized world at your command since the end of the so-called Cold War. Learn the other's language carefully and well, to be able to access their ethical system. Train your imagination by way of the other's language.

To those in Asia and Africa I would say what I said to my interlocutor in China: let us love our mother tongues as public as well as private languages so that we can love the global language. Not as the language of globalization but as the language of poetry. And as we come up to universities – let us learn languages from other parts of Asia and Africa than our own, to break the bilateral bond of the West and my own place. It is thus that language can be a protection against globalization, because it can take us on the track of imagining the singularity of the other.

Can, not will. Humanities education strives to rearrange desires. It trains the citizens of the coming world, not merely the traders of the globe. It is the effort of teaching that can put us on the track of imagining the singularity of the other in the other's language. Imagination expands languages. And this effort of teaching and training, like all teaching and training, must of course be repeated. The schools do not close after one generation's business is finished. The humanities cannot abdicate their task. Some years ago, the Indian writer in English Khushwant Singh recommended writing fiction only in English to Indians because, he said, you can say 'blue sky' in many different ways in English, whereas in Hindi, his mother tongue, you can only say *neela asman*. What this told us was that he had lost the capacity to imagine in his own language.

No, in the era of globalization languages are not local. They are instruments to affect the monoculture of the global. Together let us keep alive the multiplicity of languages and not give up. For nurturing this conviction in me, I remember my friend Jacques Derrida.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

'Affirm the survival'

In his final interview with *Le Monde*, published last August, Derrida offered a set of meditations and inquiries about death. If he could learn how to live, he remarks, he would also learn how to die, and this would mean to die without any sense of resurrection or redemption; this would be an absolute death. It is interesting that at this revealing moment, Derrida should find in Socrates his proper precursor, that he should turn to Socrates to understand that, at the age of 74, he still did not quite know how best to live. In fact, he claims in this interview that he is '*inéduable*' on the matter of knowing how to live and how to die. He says to his interviewer: 'So then, to answer you plainly, no, I have never learned how to live. Not at all!' and then, a few lines later, he is clear that he has not learned to live because he has never learned to die: 'I have not learned to accept death.' We can accept what he says, since he is, after all, speaking plainly here, or we can ask what he might mean by this declaration. A paradox emerges, since at the end of the interview there seems to be a nearly ineffable acceptance of his death. We might pause, then, to consider whether learning how to live and to die is the same as a certain capacity for affirmation, a yes-saying.

At the end of the interview, Derrida remarks that everything that he has said, since 1986, about survival 'proceeds from an unconditional affirmation of life'. Survival, *la survie*, is, he explains, the 'affirmation of a living being who prefers living' and, hence, surviving, to death, because survival does not refer to what is left, what remains, but to 'the most intense life possible'. If, then, he is ineducable on the matter of learning how to live and to die, it is because his relation to living and dying is not one that can be instructed or learnt; it is a matter of affirmation, and this affirmation is not learnt or acquired, and it is most certainly not based on evidence that supports the case that, yes, affirmation is warranted. The yes-saying of affirmation is not based on evidence; it proceeds with indifference to evidence, and it takes the form of the 'yes' – though I take it that this 'yes' can happen in various ways.

So knowing how to live and knowing how to die are something that Derrida cannot do, has never been able to do, a task in relation to which he is permanently *ineducable*. He clearly did not expect to achieve that knowledge in this life since, at the time he is speaking, he knows that he is nearing his death. So is this a biographical insight into the person, Derrida? Can we say that Derrida happened to be ineducable in this regard but that surely other people are, that they have successfully learned how to live and how to die? The insight may well be biographical, but it seems to be what he would call 'structural' as well. Derrida remarks,

As for the formula you refer to ['to finally learn how to live', *apprendre à vivre enfin*]; it came to me after the book [*Specters of Marx*] was finished. First of all, it plays, but seriously, with the common meaning of the phrase. To learn how to live is to mature, also to educate. If you shout at someone and say, '*je vais t'apprendre à vivre*' [I'm going to teach you how to live], sometimes in a threatening way, it means I am going to coach you, even train you [*te former voire te dresser*]. And the ambiguity of this play on words – between *enseigner* and *apprendre* – is even more important to me, this sigh (*le soupir*) opens up to an even more difficult interrogation. Living, can it be learned? Can one learn through discipline or apprenticeship, by experience or by experimentation, to accept or, better, to affirm life?

The conversation reminds me of Plato's *Phaedo*, in which the questioner, Simmias, asks Socrates on his deathbed whether it is true that a philosopher is always preparing for death. Socrates answers that 'if a man has trained himself throughout life to live in a state as close as possible to death, would it not be ridiculous for him to be distressed when death come to him?' Simmias answers with characteristic acquiescence, 'it would, of course'. Then Socrates elaborates: 'true philosophers make dying their profession,

and that to them of all men death is least alarming.’ Derrida has failed at this philosophical task; he is, as he tells us, ‘ineducable’ on the matter of learning how to live and how to die, this *sagesse* or wisdom. But if we ask further about Socrates’ vocation, he tells us quite clearly that death is welcome only because there is no wisdom to be attained: ‘a true lover of wisdom who has firmly grasped this conviction ... that he will never attain to wisdom worthy of the name elsewhere than in the next world – will he be grieved at dying?’ So for a moment, we can see that Derrida is characteristically Socratic in underscoring his ineducability. If for Socrates it is a training and practice that leads him to the conclusion that there is no wisdom that he can acquire on how to live and how to die, it is a certain rigour associated with a systematic ascesis of thought. But once we see this moment of convergence between Derrida and Socrates, they clearly depart again, since Derrida makes clear that there is, regardless of the impoverished state of wisdom in this life, an imperative to affirm this life, a life for which there is no redemption, a life that is not justified through reference to another, more perfect life.

Indeed, there is no afterlife for Derrida, no soul that separates from the body, but there is an afterlife of words. In this final published conversation, he takes up the question of what survives, and so offers, we might conjecture, a certain consolation to his readers and to his friends in much the same way that Socrates spends most of the *Phaedo* doing for those who will survive him.

He is clear about the finality of death, but he returns to the task of affirming what he calls survival, *la survie*. He refers to Walter Benjamin, who, in ‘The Task of the Translator’, makes a distinction between *überleben*, the survival of a part, surviving death, as a book can survive the death of its author, or a child survives the death of a parent, and *fortleben*, living on, continuing to live, the continuation of life itself. Survival carries these two meanings, continuing to live, but also, he emphasizes, living after death. Derrida’s way of thinking about this question is not Socratic, and yet in another way it remains so, once we remember that ‘Socrates’, if he lives on, does so by virtue of Plato – that is, by virtue of Plato’s writing. That writing becomes the matrix in which a certain textualization of the conversation constitutes a survival, one in which the ‘continuing to live’ (*fortleben*) haunts the survival of these words, their *überleben*. Are we hearing from Derrida again, does he still live, or is this what is left of him in the words we read and speak? A certain haunting or spectrality is induced through this equivocation, and this equivocation, he tells us, is structural, even originary. We expect survival to come later, as a concept that follows a life, as a predicament we face upon the death of the author, but Derrida tells us, here, at the end of his life, that the predicament was always there, and that this equivocation, this question of survival, even this imperative to affirm survival, is there from the outset, built into the language that precedes us. He says,

All of the concepts that have helped me to work, especially that of the ‘trace’ and the ‘spectre’, are to be found in ‘survival’ as a structural dimension. It (the notion of survival) is derived neither from life nor from death. This is why I call it an ‘original mourning’ – it does not wait for death to become effective ... [S]urvival is an original concept, that constitutes the very structure of what we call existence, *da-sein* if you wish. We are structurally survivors, marked by the structure of the trace, the testament. But having said that, I would not want to leave the interpretation there, according to which survival is closer to death than it is to life and the future.

Here it seems to me that he refuses the Socratic claim to be closer to death. And he turns the task around, claiming that ‘all the time, deconstruction is in the corner of the “yes” – the affirmation of life.’

It is important to remember that this is an author speaking, one who, by definition, loses his words in a very precise way when he speaks and when he writes:

when one writes a book for a large audience, one doesn't know to whom one speaks, one invents and creates outlines, but they no longer belong to us. Spoken or written, all these gestures leave us: they start to act independently of us, like machines or, at best, like puppets.... At the moment that I allow 'my' book to be published (no one makes me do it), I begin to appear-and-disappear, like some unteachable ghost who never learned how to live. The trace that I leave signifies to me both my death, either to come or already past, and the hope that it will survive me. It's not an ambition of immortality, it's structural; it is the constant form of my life. Every time I allow something to go forth, I see my death in the writing. The extreme test: one expropriates oneself – one gives oneself away – without knowing to whom one confides the thing one leaves. Who will inherit it now and how? Will there even be inheritors? That's a question that one can pose now more than ever. It preoccupies me ceaselessly.

So there is no ambition for immortality, but there is a kind of survival that preoccupies him without pause. We do not choose the language into which we are born, we are born into a set of traces that have by and large lost their origins, but which constitute the survival of what is irrecoverable.

Derrida understands that he may now have left his traces in the French language, but he is clear that this language never belonged to him, an Algerian, a permanent foreigner, and that it nevertheless welcomed him and that he could welcome it, through a 'refined' form of 'disrespect'. He does not understand himself as inventing a new genre of writing, but only participating in an ongoing revolution: 'in every situation, an appropriate new mode of exposition must be created, a law of the singular event.' And though he understands the pedagogical impulse to teach the student to read, indeed to live, in some way that she is not being taught from any other place, he understands as well that he cannot form his reader, in the same way that no one could teach him, finally, how to live.

Survival is structural – it seems a neatly unpoetic way of replacing the dream of immortality. We inherit the traces of the dead, even when we were not the intended recipients, but in the moment in which we give away our own words, we participate in a certain wild future of inheritance, one for which no framework for kinship exists. We are not sure 'who' survives, but there is a surviving that takes place, spectral, haunted, in and through the trace. I am reminded of Celan, returning to accept an award at Bremen in 1958, returning, as it were, from another landscape, as he tells it, one that suggests that he has survived or that survival is the name for his being there. He addresses the crowd and lets them know that 'Bremen' has always had the sense of the 'unreachable' for him. And then he reads the following sentence:

Reachable, near and not lost, there remained in the midst of the losses this one thing: language. The language remained, but it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through frightful muting, pass through the thousand darknesses of a death-bent speech. It passed through and gave back no words for that which happened; yet it passed through this happening. Passed through and could come to light again, 'enriched' by all this.

Celan writes that he 'goes with his very being to language, stricken by and seeking reality'. Derrida joins Celan perhaps precisely at the moment in which Celan writes that 'not lost, yes in spite of everything'. The 'yes' that wedges itself in there as a *non sequitur*, that inaugurates the phrase that follows with no preparation and with no justification, it is perhaps this 'yes' that Derrida offers *enfin* 'in spite of everything'.

Towards the end of the interview in *Le Monde*, Derrida maintains,

Everything that I say about survival as a complication of the life and death opposition proceeds from my unconditional affirmation of life. Survival, that is the life beyond life, the life that is more than life, and the discourse that I offer is not petrified or mortified – it is the affirmation of a living one who prefers life and surviving death, because survival, which is *not simply* what remains, is the most intense life possible. I am never more haunted by the necessity of death than in moments of happiness and pleasure. Taking pleasure and crying in the face of impending death – for me they are the same thing. When I recall my life, I have

a tendency to think of the good luck I have had in loving the unhappiest moments in my life and even to bless them. Almost all except for one exception that is near [*Presque tous à une exception près*]. When I recall the happy moments, I bless them as well, surely, at the same time that they propel me toward the thought of death, toward death, because it happens, *fini*.

So we learn – if we did not already know it – that Derrida takes the eternal return seriously, and to everything that has happened he says ‘yes’, since no suffering, no loss, no injustice that takes place in life exacts from him a ‘no’ to life itself. I am unsure that I can follow him here. But I know that there is no instruction manual to help me. He says yes to the life that is mortal, but he does not precisely say his ‘yes’ to death itself. That remains the one thing he cannot affirm, and he cannot affirm it precisely because he affirms the singular and finite life that is his. What he does affirm, though, is survival in its equivocal and double sense, the originary structure of existence that turns out to be the originary structure of language as well.



At the end of the interview, after the concession that death does happen, Derrida says ‘*fini*’ and the interview ends. Is this a perfect consonance, in which the word enacts the experience? No, the last word that names the finality of death, the finality of his words, is still an act of naming, an event in language and so continues a certain ‘yes’ to life in spite of everything. The word is as much a trace as it is signifier. And inasmuch as the word *fini* is spoken then, before he dies, it continues to belong to life, to his life, and yet it is there, spoken in anticipation of being read when he is gone, a spectral utterance that equivocates between the life that is continued in the word, and the word that survives a life that is not continuing. It names and mobilizes that equivocation.

At his funeral outside Paris, Derrida left a few lines to be read by his son Pierre. Among them was a certain imperative, ‘*Affirmez la survie.*’

These are the words that survived him, the ones he wanted to be read by his inheritor, the one he knew, even as he knew that survival means precisely not to know where one’s words will go and what kind of inheritance lies in wait for them. Affirm survival, he tells us, and suddenly I am orphaned, since he gives us no instruction, and we are not told how, in the face of suffering, in spite of suffering, this affirmation is to take place. He cannot teach us here, except to let us know that this affirmation is precisely what cannot be taught. *Affirmez la survie* – it is his voice; it is a prosopopeia, it is a demand that he bequeaths to someone, anyone, words that cannot precisely seize and craft us, but words with which we are left. We can try to make better sense of them, but they persist in their spectral materiality, as it were; they are what is left, that they remain. That they continue to live and live on is precisely the point, the point we are always missing, the predicament that is ours as beings who go to language stricken by reality, seeking it.

I am stricken by the reality of Derrida’s death, which has indeed happened, *fini*. But, for some reason I do not understand, I continue now in or with his words, and something else continues there, which claims me prior to any decision. I do not seize upon it; it seizes upon me. Between what is finished and what is left to be affirmed is precisely the equivocation of survival itself, one that proves its structural persistence, for us, in spite of us, without him, with him.

Judith Butler

An ethos of reading

A vital measure of the influence of a thinker on a discipline is the extent to which they transform its customs, protocols and practices in a way that makes it difficult to conceive how things were done before they appeared on the scene. Such transformations are usually simply incorporated into the discipline and presupposed by those who come after. This is why we often have a thankless relation to the most influential thinkers – because their innovations are now the way in which we are accustomed to see and do things. Definitionally, then, great thinkers are often those who change the way we do things in a peculiarly thankless way. Jacques Derrida was a great thinker. He exerted a massive influence over a whole generation of people working in philosophy. His death is an unfathomable loss. In what follows I would like to thank him for what he enabled people like me to presuppose thanklessly in our practice.

How did Derrida transform the way in which people like me do philosophy? Let me begin negatively with a couple of confessions. I was never a structuralist and always found Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics a deeply improbable approach to language, meaning and the relation of the latter to the world. There is no doubt that Saussurean structuralism enabled some stunning intellectual work, particularly Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, Jacques Lacan's reading of Freud and Roland Barthes' brilliant and enduring literary and cultural analyses. But that doesn't mean that Saussure was right. Therefore, Derrida's early arguments in this area, particularly the critique of the priority of speech over writing in the hugely influential *Of Grammatology*, left me rather cold. Talk of 'post-structuralism' left me even colder, almost as cold as subsequent throat-clearing about 'postmodernism'. So, in assessing Derrida's influence, I want to set aside a series of notions famously associated with him – like *différance*, trace and archi-writing – in order to get a clearer view of what I think Derrida was about in his work.

I have a similar scepticism about the popular idea of deconstruction as a methodological unpicking of binary oppositions (speech/writing, male/female, inside/outside, reason/madness, etc., etc.). In my view, this is a practice which led generations of humanities students into the intellectual cul-de-sac of locating binaries in purportedly canonical texts and cultural epiphenomena and then relentlessly deconstructing them in the name of a vaguely political position somehow deemed to be progressive. In so far as Derrida's name, and half-understood anthologized excerpts from some of his texts, were marshalled to such a cause, this led only to the reduction of deconstruction to some sort of formalistic method based on an unproven philosophy of language.

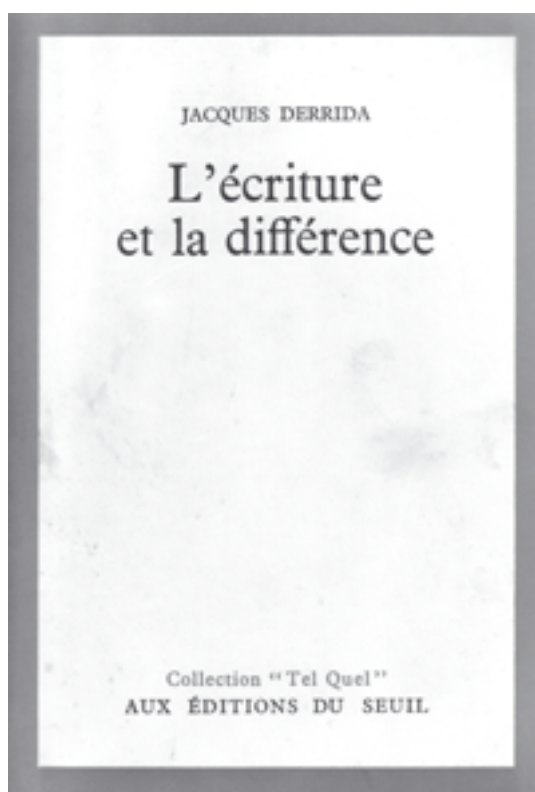
In my view, Derrida was a supreme reader of texts, particularly but by no means exclusively philosophical texts. Although, contrary to some Derridophiles, I do not think that he read everything with the same rigour and persuasive power, there is no doubt that the way in which he read a crucial series of authorships in the philosophical tradition completely transformed our understanding of their work and, by implication, of our own work. In particular, I think of his devastating readings of what the French called *Les trois H*: Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, who provided the bedrock for French philosophy in the postwar period and the core of Derrida's own philosophical formation in the 1950s. But far beyond this, Derrida's readings of Plato, of Rousseau and other eighteenth-century authors like Condillac and his relentlessly sharp engagements with more contemporary philosophers like Foucault, Bataille and Levinas – leaving aside his readings of Blanchot, Genet, Artaud, Ponge and so many others – are simply definitive. We should also mention Derrida's constant attention to psychoanalysis in a series of stunning readings of Freud.

In my view, what confusedly got named ‘deconstruction’, a title Derrida always viewed with suspicion, is better approached as *double reading*. On the one hand, a double reading gives a patient, rigorous and – although this word might sound odd, I would insist on it – *scholarly* reconstruction of a text. This means reading the text in its original language, knowing the corpus of the author as a whole, being acquainted with its original context and its dominant contexts of reception. If a deconstructive reading is to have any persuasive force, then it must possess a full complement of the tools of commentary and lay down a powerful, primary layer of reading. On the other hand, the second moment of reading is closer to what we normally think of as an interpretation, where the text is levered open through the location of what Derrida sometimes called ‘blind spots’. Here, an authorship is brought into contradiction with what it purports to claim, its intended meaning, what Derrida liked to call the text’s *vouloir-dire*. Derrida often located these blind spots in ambiguous concepts in the texts he was reading, such as ‘supplement’ in Rousseau, ‘pharmakon’ in Plato, and ‘Spirit’ in Heidegger, where each of these terms possesses a double or multiple range of meaning that simply cannot be contained by the text’s intended meaning. Many of his double readings turn around such blind spots in order to explode from within our understanding of that author. The key thing is that the explosion has to come from within and not be imposed from without. It is a question of thinking the unthought within the thought of a specific philosophical text. Derrida often described his practice as parasitism, where the reader must both draw their sustenance from the host text and lay their critical eggs within its flesh. In the three examples of Plato, Rousseau and Heidegger, the crucial thing is that each of these conceptual blind spots is deployed by its author in a way that simply cannot be controlled by their intentions. In an important sense, the text deconstructs itself rather than being deconstructed.

For me, Derrida’s philosophical exemplarity consists in the lesson of reading: patient, meticulous, scrupulous, open, questioning reading that is able, at its best, to unsettle its readers’ expectations and completely transform our understanding of the philosopher in question. Because Derrida was such a brilliant reader, he is a difficult example to follow, but in my view one must try. This is what I would see as the pedagogical imperative deriving from Derrida’s work. What one is trying to cultivate with students – in seminars, week in, week out – is a scrupulous practice of reading, being attentive to the text’s language, major arguments, transitions and movements of thought, but also alive to its hesitations, paradoxes, quotation marks, ellipses, footnotes, inconsistencies and downright conceptual confusions. Thanks to Derrida, we can see that every major text in the history of philosophy possesses these self-deconstructive features. Deconstruction is pedagogy.

Returning to the question of influence, although all of Derrida’s training and the great majority of his publications were in philosophy, it is difficult to think of a philosopher who has exerted more influence over the whole spread of humanistic study and the social sciences. The only comparable figure is Michel Foucault. And just

as it is now unimaginable to do historical or social research without learning from what Foucault said about power, subjectivity and the various archaeologies and genealogies of knowledge, so too Derrida has completely transformed our approach to the texts we rely on in our various disciplinary canons. In a long, fascinating and now rather saddening



interview with *Le Monde* from 19 August 2004, which was republished in a ten-page supplement after his death, he describes his work in terms of an ‘ethos of writing’. Derrida cultivated what I would call a *habitus* of uncompromising philosophical vigilance at war with the governing intellectual common sense and against what he liked to call – in a Socratic spirit – the *doxa* or narcissistic self-image of the age.

Derrida’s treatment by mainstream philosophers in the English-speaking world was, with certain notable exceptions like Richard Rorty, shameful. He was vilified in the most ridiculous manner by professional philosophers who knew better but who acted out of a parochial malice that was a mere patina to their cultural insularity, intellectual complacency, philistinism and simple jealousy of Derrida’s fame, charisma and extraordinary book sales. In the English context, the incident which brought matters to a head was the initial refusal in late spring 1992 to award Derrida an honorary doctorate at the University of Cambridge, a refusal that found support among prominent voices in the Philosophy Faculty. After Derrida finally received the honorary doctorate with his usual civility, humour and good grace, a letter was sent to the University of Cambridge from Ruth Barcan Marcus, then Professor of Philosophy at Yale, and signed by some twenty philosophers, including Quine, who complained that Derrida’s work ‘does not meet accepted standards of rigor and clarity’. I would like to take this opportunity to register in print my gratitude to these know-nothings for the attention they gave to Derrida.

At the heart of many of the polemics against Derrida was the frankly weird idea that deconstruction was a form of nihilistic textual free play that threatened to undermine rationality, morality and all that was absolutely fabulous about life in Western liberal democracy. In my view, on the contrary, what was motivating Derrida’s practice of reading and thinking was an ethical demand. This is something that can be traced to the influence of Emmanuel Levinas and his idea of ethics being based on a relation of infinite responsibility to the other person. Against the know-nothing polemics, deconstruction is an engaged and deeply ethical practice of reading that is of great social and political relevance. Derrida’s work from the 1990s shows this relevance with extraordinary persistence in a highly original series of engagements with Marx, with European cultural and political identity, the nature of law and justice, democracy, sovereignty, cosmopolitanism, the death penalty, so-called rogue states, and finally with what Derrida liked to call an alternative possible globalization, an *altermondialisation*.

Derrida’s work is possessed of a curious restlessness, one might even say an anxiety. A famous American philosopher, sympathetic to Derrida, once said to me, ‘he never knows when to stop or how to come to an end’. In the interview with *Le Monde*, Derrida describes himself as being at war with himself: *je suis en guerre contre moi-même*. He was always on the move intellectually, always hungry for new objects of analysis, accepting new invitations, confronting new contexts, addressing new audiences.

His ability in discussion to listen and then to synthesize new theories, hypotheses and phenomena and produce long, detailed and fascinating analyses in response was breathtaking. I saw him do it on many occasions and always with patience, politeness, modesty and civility. Derrida had such critical and synthetic intelligence – a brilliance, as Levinas was fond of saying. I remember sitting next to Derrida on a panel in Paris and thinking to myself that it felt like being close to an intellectual light bulb. The whole ethos of his work was at the very antipodes of the inert and stale professional complacency that defines so much philosophy and so many philosophers.



Simon Critchley

A death foretold, a life retold

Derrida's press

It was a death foretold. In the lengthy interview with Jacques Derrida published in *Le Monde* last August (recorded in March), his interlocutor, Pierre Birnbaum, clearly found it difficult to begin the conversation. He remarked that Derrida had been almost ubiquitous over the last year or so and briefly chronicled his recent activities. And then he hesitated: 'It's a lot for one year and yet, and you do not hide it, you are...' Derrida interrupted him: 'Go on, say it, quite dangerously ill and going through some unpleasant treatment. But let's leave that, if you don't mind. We're not here for a health bulletin – public or secret.' Derrida was suffering from pancreatic cancer, and that is not a disease that takes prisoners. He was hospitalized in mid-September and died on the night of Saturday 9 October.

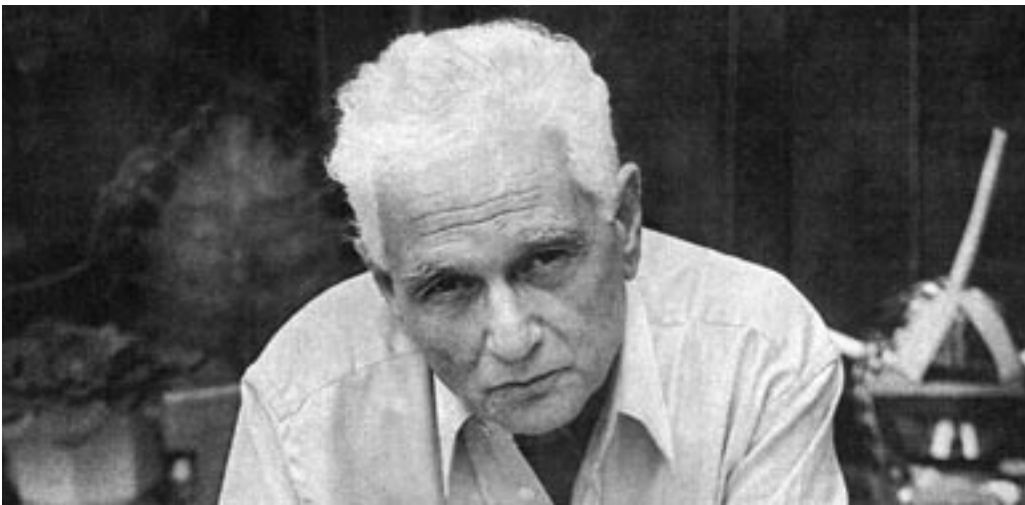
The first obituaries published in *Le Monde* and *Libération* were quite brief and said little that was not in the bald releases from Agence France-Presse. In its 9 October issue (which, thanks to the paper's bizarre publishing cycle, actually appeared on the Monday afternoon), *Le Monde* did little more than note Derrida's death and make some general comments on his career and status. On 11 October, *Libération* published a lengthy dossier (it seems inappropriate to describe it as a 'supplement') written mainly by its philosophy correspondent Robert Maggiori. The next day, *Le Monde* followed with an eleven-page dossier, which included a reprint of the August interview and comments and tributes from various luminaries. There was nothing unusual about this. France is probably the only country in the world where the deaths of intellectuals and philosophers make front-page news. The publication of dossiers like this is part of a tradition that, if memory serves, began with the death of Sartre in 1980, when, in tribute, *Libération* published a 'special edition' running to fifty-six pages. Such dossiers and special editions rarely say anything new about the deceased. They serve as long obituaries that sum up careers, and they allow a variety of friends and commentators to say farewell (in very moving terms, with Derrida's death, in the case of Jean-Luc Nancy and Michel Deguy, both writing in *Libération*). With time, they become historically valuable documents.

What is slightly surprising is that the extensive coverage was not restricted to *Le Monde* and *Libération*. The very conservative daily *Le Figaro* is not normally noted for its interest in deconstruction, but the various sections of its 11 October issue carried no fewer than six pieces devoted to Derrida. *L'Humanité*, the journal of what is left of the Communist Party, ran two articles recalling his attendance at various of its annual Fêtes. A further article appeared the next day. The Catholic *La Croix* joined in the tributes. Francophone voices from further afield echoed them: *Le Devoir* in Montreal and *Le Temps* in Switzerland.

Slightly later in the week, *Le Nouvel Observateur* published a round-up of the tributes that had been paid. President Chirac, Communist senator Robert Hué, psychoanalyst Elisabeth Roudinesco and mayor of Paris Bernard Delanoé all mourned the death of Jacques Derrida. Their comments do not necessarily signal any great acquaintance with his work – I do not suppose that Hué has ever spent much time studying *Spectres de Marx* – but they do express a consensus. France, it was agreed by all, had lost an important thinker, almost a national treasure. Virtually all the newspapers

commented on the sheer quantity of Derrida's output. More tellingly, many people described him as a successful 'export'. In death, Derrida became 'France's greatest philosopher'; in life, he had enjoyed greater prestige abroad than at home. He was never elected to a chair at the Sorbonne or the Collège de France, and probably had as many detractors as admirers. Admirable as it may be, the Collège internationale de philosophie, which he helped to found, is a somewhat marginal institution.

Obituaries and press releases are scarcely the places for expositions of the complexities of Derrida's philosophy (though Maggiori did do a good job). Friends spoke affectionately of a man with a gift for friendship; others paid tribute to his political work. All recalled his Algerian past. In his press release the minister for culture and communications, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, described Derrida as a 'profound humanist' who had devoted his last years to studying the values of hospitality, 'with a particular concern for the link between Europe and the Mediterranean – he was a successful cross between the two – that often led him to speak of the "Nostalgeria" of a boy born in Algeria. He wanted to build an open idea of Europe: the best tribute we could pay to him would be to make his wish come true.'



The contrast with the coverage in the UK press is depressing. The *Guardian*, *Times* and *Independent* all produced fine obituaries: the piece in the *Guardian* by Derek Attridge and Thomas Baldwin (11 October) was particularly good. But both the *Guardian* and *Times* undermined them. In the former's 'G2' tabloid, Stephen Moss asked 'a few key thinkers' if anyone actually understood Derrida. Was there really any point in putting the question to Julie Birchill or Roger Scruton? Was there really any point to *The Times*'s leader 'Is Derrida Dead?' (a question also asked by Rod Liddle in the *Spectator*)? Was there really any point to Gary Day's 'witty' piece (*THES*, 5 November), which begins by noting that Derrida's death coincided with that of Christopher ('Superman') Reeves, which was unfortunate as it inevitably meant that he would be compared with the man who saved the world. 'Playful' comments of that kind do no justice to either the philosopher or a good actor and very brave man. Such displays of boastful pride in one's own ignorance and 'not understanding' are not pretty, and, whatever one thinks about 'deconstruction', all the trite 'jokes' about the undecidability of Derrida's death are simply distasteful in the extreme.

In the *Le Point* interview, Derrida spoke of his boyish enthusiasm for Gide: 'For me he wasn't a novelist, but a *moraliste* who was telling us how we should live. For me, that's what philosophy has always been: the search for an ethics and a way of living.' And, of course, of dying. He told *Le Monde* 'When I recall my life, I tend to think that I've been lucky enough to love even the unhappy moments of my life, and to bless them.' Don't mock: begin the work of mourning.

David Macey

A different world

Dogs bark at what they do not understand.

Heraclitus

In *Radical Philosophy* 21 (Spring 1979) I wrote one of the early essays on Derrida in English, 'Introduction to Derrida'. (It was reprinted in Roy Edgley and Richard Osborne, eds, *Radical Philosophy Reader*.) This was an attempt to give a sympathetic (though not uncritical) presentation of the critical resources that Derrida was bringing to the table, in the face of suspicions from the Left that Derrida was a neo- or crypto-conservative, and suspicions from the analytic orthodoxy that he was a charlatan. It was for many a source of despair that on the occasion of his death, the spectre of the culture wars – and the Cambridge Affair – could rise again from the bathtub, and that Jonathan Kandell could entitle his *New York Times* obituary 'Jacques Derrida, Abstruse Theorist, Dies at 74'. They offer hemlock even to his dead body. This led to a great outpouring of letters of protest and signatures of support (to the date of writing 3,949) for the outraged 'Letter to the Editor' written by Samuel Weber and Kenneth Reinhard (they are captured on UC Irvine's web page 'Remembering Derrida').

It seems a long time ago that I (and many other English philosophers and graduate students) first met Derrida in Oxford in 1969, the year following the big March 1968 Grosvenor Square anti-Vietnam demo, and the May 1968 student revolt in Paris. My tutor, Alan Montefiore, invited the rising star over from Paris on a number of occasions. My friends and I were captivated not just by the man's sheer intellectual brilliance but by his modesty, openness and extraordinary generosity of time and attention, traits which never left him, and which often surprised those who knew him only from his books. In 1972 Derrida published *Positions*, in which he publicly held his fire against Marxism. Instead he was helping us 'continentalists' work through the positivistic edge of structuralism and the metaphysical aspects of phenomenology. But unlike his entry into the USA ('Structure, Sign and Play' addressed literary theorists at Johns Hopkins in 1966), in the UK Derrida was first addressing philosophers. Though I am no disciple, Derrida indelibly shaped my intellectual trajectory. It would take him twenty-five years to write *Specters of Marx*, and, even then, disappoint the Left. Derrida was always suspicious of dialectizable alternatives, including the victory of liberal democracy over communism, announced by Fukuyama. 'Freedom' was never a straightforward value for him, even as he came to proclaim that nothing was *less* outdated than the Enlightenment ideal.

It seems now like a different world. The main figures listed as reading on my courses have now nearly all died. Heidegger (1976), Marcuse (1979), Sartre (1980), Lacan (1981), Foucault (1984), Althusser (1990), Deleuze (1995), Levinas (1995), Gadamer (2002). This semester I have been teaching a graduate seminar on Derrida. Most of the 'Continental' philosophers I knew in Britain in the 1980s and early 1990s have emigrated – mainly to the USA (David Krell, Robert Bernasconi, Tina Chanter, Jay Bernstein, Geoff Bennington, Simon Critchley). It is perhaps not surprising that it is in the United States that Derrida really assembled a following.

It seems like a different world. And yet here we are again, 'at war' with a globally defined enemy. Here 'we' are again – we academics, intellectuals, philosophers – faced with our impotence in preventing war, torture, genocide, preventing the worst violence. Here we are again, propelled into the future for another four years, after an election that puts in question the very democratic institutions it serves, and that brings the language of good and evil to the lips of those who never believed they could think that

way. Many of us with an address in this rogue state wonder whether living in the lap of the great Satan gives us any greater opportunity to influence the course of events, or any greater responsibility. And in the shadow of this barbaric repetition, it is no accident that Derrida began to talk more about hospitality, about cosmopolitanism, about terror, about democracy, about the European ideal, about the ghosts that haunt us and the (im)possibilities that we can neither anticipate nor give up on.

Derrida was an Algerian Jew, living in the heart of the ex-colonial power, who specialized in inhabiting the uncanny space of the border, the margin, the never completely at home, impropriety. He was not a revolutionary, he had no programme, but he held open the possibility of transformation in every instant, at any time. I doubt I will see his like again.

David Wood

Refusing Deleuze's opposition between tree and rhizome, David Wood has launched a rhizomal Virtual Forest website through which people can sign up to plant a tree (or a whole grove) and even dedicate their planting to a friend or cause. All these tree-promises, with names, and potentially photos, are collected in a 'gallery' on the website. The initial target is 7000 trees by summer solstice 2005, recollecting Joseph Beuys' 7000 Oaks project in Kassel in the mid-1980s. After that the sky's the limit. The idea is to make the web work as a symbolic-material accelerator, using 'art' to raise awareness, with a multiplier effect on wider material practices, finally to combat global warming. David Wood is planting a Nanten tree in Kyoto in late November, to coincide with the 7th anniversary of the start of the Kyoto talks. He has dedicated another tree in Tennessee to Jacques Derrida, who, he says, was 'going green'. The Virtual Forest website is at www.circularsystem.com/trees.

2 - 5 AUGUST 2005
university of cambridge
cambridge, uk

the third international conference on new directions in humanities
HUMANITIES CONFERENCE 2005



CALL FOR PAPERS www.HumanitiesConference.com
Main Theme: THE HUMANITIES IN A 'KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY'

Humanities Conference 2005 will address a range of critically important themes in the various fields that make up the humanities today. Main speakers will include some of the world's leading thinkers in the humanities, as well as numerous paper, workshop and colloquium presentations by teachers and researchers. Conference papers will be published in print and electronic formats in the peer refereed International Journal of the Humanities.

This is a conference for any person with an interest in, and concern for, the humanities. All are encouraged to register and attend this significant and timely conference.

Further details can be found at
www.HumanitiesConference.com
or info@humanitiesconference.com.

The cyborg mother

Jaimie Smith-Windsor

31 January 2003. *The birth of my daughter, Aleah Quinn Smith-Windsor.*

A few days after Quinn was born this quotation appeared, written beside her incubator: 'Every blade of grass has an angel that bends over it and whispers: grow, grow.' It was a near-fatal birth. Quinn was born at 24½ weeks' gestation, 3½ months before her due date. Her birth weight was 700 grams, about a pound and a half.

1 February 2003. *It is difficult to imagine such a tiny, perfect human being. Her feet are no larger than two fingernails. Her legs are about the same size as adult fingers, femurs measuring 4.5 centimetres. Her eyebrows curve like fallen eyelashes above her eyes, waiting to be wished upon.*

Immediately after Quinn's lungs were cleared she was intubated, stabilized and flown, with the Neonate Team, by helicopter ambulance, to the Special Care Nursery at the BC's Children Hospital in Vancouver. We got to see her for a minute, tangled beneath the cords of her life-support machines.

2 February 2003. *A pump pushes breast milk down her throat, through a tube that goes into her belly. Sixty-five breaths per minute are administered by a Drager 2000 ventilator. She receives extra nutrition through an artificial umbilical line, blood products and medications through an intravenous. Electrodes cover her body, measuring her breaths and heart beats, her temperature, oxygen saturation and blood pressure.*

My daughter's birth was a post-human, cyborg moment. She became cyborg, 'the illegitimate child of the twentieth-century technological dynamo – part human, part machine, never completely either'.¹ In this moment it becomes possible to grapple with the concept and the implications of cyborg culture, raising some important questions about the amalgamation of the technological and the biological, and 'not just in the banal meat-meets-metal sense'.² Breaching the bio-techno boundary forces an engagement with 'new and complex understandings of "life", consciousness, and the dis-

tinction (or lack of distinction) between the biological and the technological'.³ Becoming cyborg is about the simultaneous externalization of the nervous system and internalization of the machine. Thus symbiosis of human and machine makes possible the genesis of the cyborg consciousness. Ultimately, the breached boundary of the human body is a diasporic phenomenon: the dispersion of an originally homogeneous entity (the body), 'the diasporas of the human condition into several mutually incomprehensible languages'.⁴

Becoming cyborg is a consciousness that is embedded within the notion of diasporas. To confront the interface between human and machine is to confront cyborg consciousness as it fragments the human experience into a lexicon of incomprehensibility. As the corporeal body is rendered incomprehensible, the genesis of the cyborg catalyses the simultaneous genesis of technic consciousness and a new episteme of the body itself. The cyborg body assumes 'a unified role: as a means of communication and reproduction; carrier and weaver; machine assemblage in the service of the species; and general purpose system of simulation'. In the moment of cyborg genesis, technology displaces motherhood, with a 'relentless aptitude for mimicry'. Technology appropriates the womb, becoming 'the living foundation for the whole staging of the world'.⁵ To redefine the human experience as the diasporas of the body means that it is possible to imagine infancy without motherhood, genesis beyond the womb. But before the displacement of the maternal body by technology can be understood it is first necessary to explore the relationship between mother and child in its original context.

Within the dual relationship transference between mother and child, according to Julia Kristeva, it is possible to render as 'object' of analysis, not 'childhood language', but rather an 'infantile language'.⁶ Before literate language begins to encode the identity of the infant, and prior to the moment where the mirror introduces the paradoxical representation of reality, the infant and the mother exist within a symbiotic relationship defined by two basic principles: the need to nurture and the nurture of need. The relationship

functions as the womb functions between the maternal body and the fetal body. The relationship functions within a paradigm of symbiosis and mutual comprehensibility. The mother–child symbiosis provides the necessary relationship for the infantile language to be communicated. The infant is *incapable* of distinguishing between ‘sameness’ and ‘otherness’, between ‘subject’ and ‘object’.⁷ Ultimately, the infant is not capable of imagining itself autonomous of the Mother. Where the infantile language is overshadowed by the diasporas of mutual incomprehensibility, this is where a critical questioning of cyborg culture begins.

For what if this symbiotic relationship between mother and child is interrupted? What happens when technology begins to work itself into the infantile discourse, severing the symbiosis between mother and child? What happens when the infant becomes incapable of distinguishing between itself and the *machine*? What does it mean for the human condition that the maternal space has been appropriated as a technological fulcrum? These are the questions posed by the biological mother of a cyborg. This is the genesis of a cyborg. It begins in pre-literacy, when the child engages in an infantile language with the machine, and not the Mother.

According to Julia Kristeva, ‘love replaces narcissism in a third person that is external to the act of discursive communication’.⁸ Love between humans, that is, becomes invested in a third party. What happens, then, in cyborg culture when that ‘third party’ is not a person at all, but a machine – a ventilator, an incubator, a monitor? Technology separates the dialectical relationship between mother and child, mediating the relations between them, appropriating bodily space for technological colonization. In the production of artificial means to life, is the machine capable of simulating love? Is the cyborg capable of love? Or is it merely a distribution of biopower or the redistribution of life as biopolitics broken down to its most simplistic simulation – the performance of living and the ritual of dying?

30 March 2003. *Quinn has been fighting with her ventilator. She tries to tug it out of her throat, but it's glued to her skin. To stop her from wrestling, the doctor drugged her with addictive sedatives and paralysed her so she can't move, so the ventilator can fully take over her body. How can such violence give life? So, I read her a story by Dr Seuss about really small people called Whos... At the sound of my voice, she opened her eyes for a minute. That's not supposed to happen. I was asked to leave. I was disrupting the machine.*

Living within a mediated body means that rituals of living are written by technology. Technology is mimesis, the capability of imitating the human condition with such exactitude that it has become synonymous with the skin, the flesh, the vital organs of human bodies. In the absence of a moment of differentiation between machinic and organic functioning, technology begins to appropriate the spatial body. Human relations have always been subject to invasive social mediation. The social construction of gender, race and ethnicity are all part of the historically mediated body. Mediation *is* what shapes the political imaginary. However, the skin is no longer the boundary between the political and the corporeal. The skin does not enclose the human body but becomes itself a medium of communication, a means for mediation. Thus the intimate functioning of the human body has been appropriated as a political nexus, a space to be managed, a complex system that functions for the hyper-realization of an otherwise virtual political imaginary. This is the ultimate moment in the realization of biopolitics. Mediation by technology means the appropriation of bodily experience as a new theatre for the performance of power relations. Artificial life becomes the performance of real life. Distinguishing skin from machine becomes difficult.

8 February 2003. *There is a scab on her chest where the nurse pulled the electrode off her skin, and with it came most of the right nipple.*

Where technology becomes synonymous with the organic, the cyborg emerges. What are the implications of this violent symbiosis? Becoming cyborg implicates the human condition with a specific mediation of the human experience, the eternal return of the machine within the intimate realm of bodily function. Autonomous function is rendered obsolete. Essentially, the genesis of the cyborg redefines the body. The body becomes the medium itself. The skin of the cyborg, like the clear glass of the incubator, is rendered an invisible interface through which all knowledge is mediated – the environment, the experience of living, the means to communicate, the way of ‘knowing’. The skin is to the cyborg selectively permeable: osmotic. Meaning is no longer reciprocally diffused between what is interior and what is anterior to the body; it can only be absorbed. An analysis of the maternal body in relation to the Cyborg Mother reveals a fundamental shift in how the body is constructed as a political space.

As cyborg culture begins to redefine the body, the skin itself becomes a highly symbolic and political

organ. The skin no longer functions within biological conditions of possibility, but assumes technological and political functioning as well. The skin is what distinguishes the Mother from the Cyborg Mother, bios from techno.

To the maternal body hovering in the realm of the symbolic meaning, the skin completes the function of 'Mother' as *enceinte*: her skin encloses and secures the maternal space and the language of mutual exchange which circulates beneath it, between her 'self' and the 'other'. The skin of the Cyborg Mother, in contrast, is invisible, osmotic, selectively permeated by the technologies of the paternal state: sonograph, probe, monitor. Her body is transcended by technology, traversed and mapped for the colonization of what it contains: the fetal body, already subject-citizen. The 'Mother' is no longer perceived as *enceinte*. Her skin, as boundary, has been breached. She is supplanted by the Cyborg Mother, the matriarch of the paternal state, who redefines what it is to be 'Mother'.

For the Cyborg Mother, there is no longer birth, there is only the genesis of 'life': 'life' to be managed, 'life' as social construct, 'life' as a linguistic moment where social meaning is transferred from anterior to interior. There is no procreation, there is only *re-creation* of 'life' as the parody of technology. The maternal body is supplanted from the symbolic event of procreation as the driving evolutionary force for humanity. In her stead stands the Cyborg Mother, who invests the body with biopolitical functions of preordained living, creation and dying. Through the symbolic death of the Mother, the evolution of the human species into something 'other' than a reification of technology becomes impossible. The womb, as the symbolic spatialization of evolution becomes a non-space, representing the impossibility of procreation as miracle, or evolution as mutation. In cyborg culture, the womb, as a disembodied organ, functions as the *re-creation* of 'life' as *involution*.⁹ The disembodiment of the Mother from the maternal function implicates the human species with a singular way of being human that is necessarily mediated and dependent on technology. 'The resulting entity is no longer a recombinant copy of either one that engendered it; rather, it is a new and singular combination.'¹⁰ Here we encounter the hidden violence in the eternal mediation of the maternal space: *involution*, evolutionary atrophy, the reification of the human body as both an anatomy and a politics of sovereign power relations.

Biopower is a sovereign power. It takes from the human experience the autonomy of the body and renders it politically and technologically subordinate.

Every intimacy of the body becomes marked as a microphysics of power. As body and techno are fused, so too do human relations come to be likewise shaped. The mother/child relationship itself is appropriated by technology, for the state. Technology interrupts this relation, intercepts the exchange of nurturing and needing of the infantile language, and encodes the body within an economy of 'living'. With the supplementation of the maternal space by the Cyborg Mother, power relations likewise shift their objectification and scale. Sovereignty is no longer an abstraction that is external to the body. Sovereignty has become a seemingly natural relation of power, a bodily function. It circulates, as foreign blood through artificial veins, invisibly, the silent violence.

1 March 2003. *Quinn has an infection and no immunity against it. She can't produce enough blood to replace the blood that they take for tests. Three more blood transfusions and no more veins in her head. So they attach a plastic vein to an artery near her heart. Blood pumps through her from both the heart and the machine...*

The most transparent moment in subjection is when knowing the body becomes anterior to the body itself; when knowing the body becomes osmotic. The exchange of blood, through an artificial vein, is a symbolic moment where the body is invested with an economy of productivity that originates external to the *corps*. Essentially, bodily space becomes mediated by sovereigntist technologies, rendered docile within the boundaries of economic utility. The productive body is an economically viable medium. It is an efficient expenditure of sovereign power that functions to reify the sovereign itself. Here we begin to understand the cyborg body within the context of efficient expenditure.

30 February 2003. *The average cost of sustaining life is about \$20,000 per day for an intensive care neonate. Ceadra's dad, from bed #5 has done the maths. Ceadra costs 0.5 million dollars today. Quinn, slightly higher and two months to go. How silly the concept of currency seems when life itself hangs by some invisible thread ...*

Has the body been redefined as currency? To what end? How does the body become a micro-physics of economy? To understand the body within the context of economic use, it is useful to apply an economic grammar to the body. It is useful to 'weird' the body into an economic episteme. Suddenly there is no cost attributed to sustaining human life in its most critical

vulnerability. Instead, within the economic episteme, there is only the cost incurred by the sovereign in exercising power over life and death. There is only the excess expenditure of \$20,000 per day that essentially circulates rituals of sovereign power relations. Foucault claims that within the spectacular performance of power on the body (i.e. the exertion of pain on the body of the condemned) every expenditure of power is justified within the context of economic use. He claims that the economy of power relations is defined by its efficiency. Here we reach the limit of Foucault's analysis and must ask: have excessive spectacles of sovereign expenditure really been rendered obsolete?

Georges Bataille, in his theory of general economics, draws attention to an entire space within the political imagination that is ignored by Foucault. Specifically, he identifies the excess expenditures of the social body and claims them as the essence of society. If we shift the object and change the scale of Bataille's general economics to the corporeal, it becomes apparent that the laws of general economics implicate the biomedical body as an excessive expenditure. The language of sovereign economics undercuts the notion of the body itself. Here we must ask: have we really exited the age of corporeal punishment as a means of subjugating the body into productivity? Or has corporeal punishment merely been adopted into a more subtle grammar of anatomical economics?

5 March 2003. *I call Statistics Canada today. No 'Live Birth' form has been issued for Quinn and we are unable to get health insurance for her. The province has quit sending me invoices for her hospital care and now threatens to 'terminate all medical care'. There is no record of her life, except as an expense. She does not exist beyond the cost-benefit balancing act of the state...*

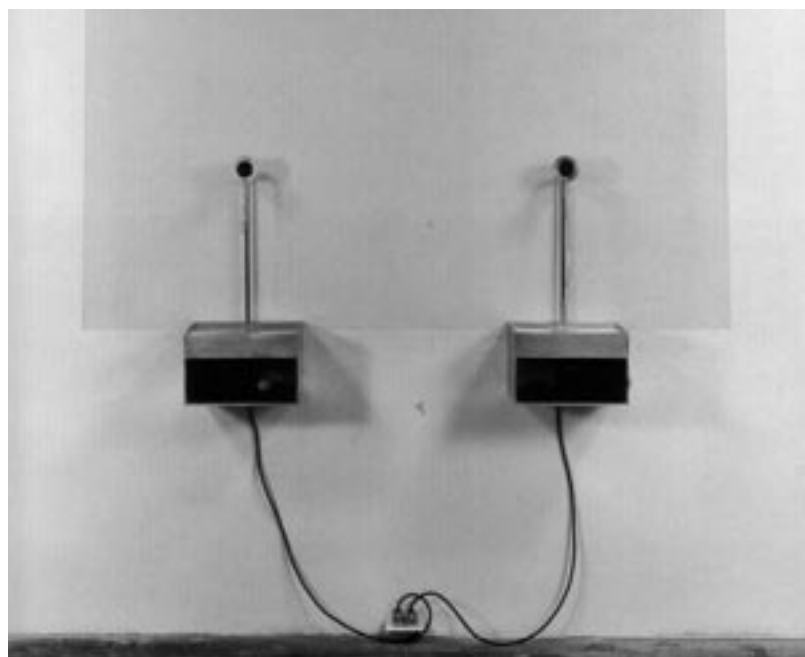
If society is best defined by the expenditure of surplus wealth, as Bataille claims, what does the excessive expenditure of surplus on the biomedical body say? Simply this: that the domination of the right of living and dying is less about a human miracle and more about performing a ritual economy for the sovereign. The disposal of surplus into my daughter's body is part of this economy. Her body, dangled by biomedical odds, ensures the eternal recurrence of

sovereignty as the biopolitical norm and a future that is dominated by the cyborg. Sovereignty becomes the message of the biomedical medium. It circulates through cyborg veins. And it is here, where economics and the body collide, that we begin to understand how biopower works to subject citizens. The ultimate form of biopower is the appropriation of the womb. The Mother becomes redundant: technology becomes the external womb. As the Mother is disembodied from the womb, the state assumes embodiment in fetal form. Ultimately, then, the fetal form becomes increasingly shaped into cyborg.

The investment of excess expenditure on the fetal body is not only an efficient expenditure of resources by the state. The extraordinary expenditure of surplus into the Western fetal body also identifies a geopolitical power that is deeply ingrained and exercised in the biomedical management of human life by the state. Here we encounter the geopolitical divide, where one fetal body is privileged over another, according to where that body falls in the arbitrary distribution of bodies across longitudes and latitudes. According to a recent solicitation I received in the mail, it costs only a dollar a day to save the life of a child living in substandard living conditions in a refugee camp in southern Uganda.

Questions abound. How does one child's life become equivalent to the price of a cup of coffee per day while my daughter's life becomes a million-dollar expenditure of surplus currency? Where does the value of human life end, and the value-as-currency of bodies begin?

The geopolitical divide is strengthened by the specific economic investment of the Western biomedical



subject and the fetal citizen of the developed world. Just as value has been redistributed along the geopolitical divide, the viability of human life has succumbed to political management as well. Viability of human life is no longer set by biological competence or human potential ('survival' of the fittest). Nor is viability determined by biomedical capacity alone. It is, like all power politics, first subject to the mercy of the map, to the distribution of bodies amongst border lines, between sovereign states and subordinate states. 'Viability' for a Western foetus, born into the outstretched hands of recent biomedical technology, is now set at 24 weeks' gestation. In contrast, the 'viability' of the Ugandan refugee might not be determined until late childhood.

'Viability' in the Western world is the stuff of legislation and public discourse. The geopolitical and biopolitical negotiation of 'viability' has recently arisen in the UK in the context of the abortion debate. 'Viability' is being appropriated and prostituted in both pro-choice and pro-life discourses. Behind these debates, however, is another issue. Viability is no longer a definitive moment where living either continues or is discontinued. It has become a discursive weapon, a political levy point, a technologically administered condition. According to David Steel, the Member of Parliament who first introduced the abortion bill to the British parliament in 1966, advances in medical technology are not being reflected by abortion law. The Infant Life Preservation Act of 1929 revolved around the '28-week assumption of "viability" of a foetus';¹¹ the 1967 Abortion Act set the upper time limit on legal abortion accordingly. But as medical technologies advance, the assumed gestational age of fetal 'viability' also lowers. Since technology has become intimately involved in the maternal experience, medical science has begun to boast of the 'viability' of infants born at less than 22 weeks of pregnancy. The gap between ethics and praxis is evident. Legislation and literature about fetal 'viability' draws a definitive line between miscarriage and birth at 24 weeks' gestation. What then, of those born on the borderline? Are they foetus, infant or neither? Perhaps it is in this grey area that the cyborg is born.

6 February 2003. *Another mother comes to tour the SCN, pushed around in a wheelchair by a nurse. She looks the way I must have looked when they told me they could not stop my labour. We talk for a while. She is 23.5 weeks along and will deliver within 24 hours. She tells me that the whole way to the hospital she thought she was miscarrying.*

She was shocked to hear that her baby could live.

I admit to her that I had assumed the same...

It seems strange that a mother should have to consult legislation to know whether or not her child is 'viable' in the eyes of the state. Essentially, the discourse surrounding the 'viability' of human life has been relocated from the womb to techno-politics. The ongoing debate surrounding 'viability' is only a fraction of the issue. At stake is the role of the maternal body in human genesis. The womb itself is no longer a private space. Every intimacy of its function has become both social and political fodder.

Within the discourse of cyber-feminism, the externalized, technological womb begins to make sense: 'in Latin, it is *matrix*, or matter, both the mother and the material'.¹² Technology, as the manifestation of the paternal state, has become both the mother and the matter of the consciousness, the medium through which the need to nurture and the nurture of need are fulfilled. The cyborg is thus born through this virtual non-space, this womb of machinic consciousness, this techne of state paternalism. Within the technological womb, human bodies and human consciousness become 'cy-dough-plasma' – malleable matter, without fixed form.¹³

27 February 2003. *I'm a little confused about her ears. They're pliable. Lacking cartilage at this stage of development often finds them in crumples of folded-over flesh. They require frequent repositioning and remoulding so they don't get all folded up like fortune cookies. I try not to play with them too much, but, it's not like you can rationalize with her yet: 'Don't crumple up your ears dear...'*

Externalizing the womb subjects the unformed body to manipulation. The cyborg body, by definition, is partly a virtualization, a chimera, an unformed body. The relocation of genesis beyond the maternal womb is a vital moment in the creation of the cyborg. Once the womb is exposed, appropriated and externalized by technology, the body emerges as a form to be fixed into an ideal shape for citizenship, a perfected system of productive functioning. The cyborg body is the visible body, the virtual body. The politics of the cyborg body are ultimately fixed through the perfected simulation of 'living'. The cyborg consciousness, like the fetal body, becomes the art of the machine. Bodies and consciousness are remixed. And what we perceive to be the body often becomes distorted in the engineering of cyborg.

3 February 2003. *It was as if her delicate features had been rearranged to make room for equipment. Somehow, her perfect nose was in the way of the ventilator, so they moved it off to the side. The machines rearrange the perfection of her body.*

Just as in Julia Kristeva's infantile language, there is no easy way to distinguish between the child and the simulated techno-Mother. The machine and the baby become symbiotic. 'Sameness' governs the relationship between the baby and the machine. Their sameness means that they are mutually dependent on each other in order for 'life' to continue. This moment, where differentiation becomes impossible, witnesses the ultimate realization of biopower: the virtual birth of the cyborg.

Technology is capable of simulating vital signs, of supporting life, of becoming Mother. The child of the techno-Mother is essentially a virtual body, a simulation of vital signs that becomes internalized. The ventilator simulates Quinn's breathing, supporting her life through mimicry. Through the perfect simulation of breathing, the ritual of life goes forward. In cyborg culture, the lines between simulation and reality are blurred into irrelevancy. The cyborg is the interface between simulation and reality, where the simulacrum becomes capable of living. Her body is 'redesigned by means of life-support machines and prosthetic organs'.¹⁴ Thus the body is breached in becoming cyborg, a recombinant fusion of technological and biological traffic. What is internal and external to the virtually dead body becomes confused. Indeed, what is internal and what is external is confused.

Infancy disembodied from the biological Mother goes forward unmanned, like the Predator Drone – moving forward into a machinic realm of infinite possibility.¹⁵ What happens when the conditions of infinite possibility are governed by an inherent nihilism? The externalization of the nervous system makes possible the continuation of life, yet it is a life that is fundamentally nihilistic, eternally bound to a mediated consciousness.

1 March 2003. *I want to love and hate the machine that breathes for her. Ventilation is a Catch-22. Ventilation turns the fragile tissues and muscles that are used for breathing and exchanging oxygen into scars. 'As long as her lungs develop faster than the ventilator damages them, we win', says Dr T. She is getting chest X-rays almost daily now. In her X-rays, her lungs are clouded over with white. Her little lungs fill with fluid that has to be suctioned out almost every two hours in order for her to get the*

proper amount of oxygen into her blood. We've had a serious heart to heart, recently. I used the 'stern mother voice' for the first time to tell her that she is not allowed to take her ventilator to kindergarten with her.

The relationship between machine and body cannot sustain life endlessly. One must eventually overtake the other in order for life to continue. Through the body, the machine performs the dichotomy of living and killing, life and death. It gives life only to overtake it. The technology that sustains life is ultimately nihilistic. What happens faster is vital – the ability to outgrow the machine, or the damage inflicted by the machine itself. This is a profound statement about the morphology of humans and machines. To become cyborg is to commit a slow suicide. Ultimately, it is the annihilation of the human body, of autonomous human consciousness. This is the paradox of the cyborg body: nihilism is embedded in the rituals of living.

Just as technology is capable of simulating rituals of living, becoming cyborg affects the rituals of dying. Technology has intervened and institutionalized the right/rite of death. Even after the body expires, the machines keep going. It is not until they are turned off that the body is pronounced 'dead'. Being cyborg means that death is experienced in a new way. Is it possible to be absent in death – a redundant body in the machinic performance of dying?

14 February 2003. *I hold my child for the first time. She is naked, against my chest. Her ventilator curls around my neck, is taped to my shoulder, and disappears inside her. There are other tubes, too, taped to my other limbs by peach-coloured surgical tape. Beside me, another mother's baby dies. Another baby dies. The respiratory technician yells: 'No CPR' from across the nursery. He crosses the room, switches off the machines – ventilator, incubator, monitor, eight intravenous pumps of miscellaneous medical poisons. The life inside the machine, refuses to go on without them. And I am taped to a rubberized rocking chair, taped to my baby, taped to the machine. I cannot leave when another baby's mother comes in.*

The nihilism of becoming cyborg is inescapable. We are taped down to our own inherent nihilism. In cyborg culture, nihilism becomes synonymous with death. When a cyborg dies, the announcement of death waits for the machine to be switched off. The simulation of life continues even in the absence of living being. When a cyborg dies, it is only because the human



body has failed the perfect simulation of life by the machine. Death is ambivalent in relation to physical being, the body becomes almost irrelevant. The machinic simulation of 'being human' can continue to exist in the absence of a body, but the body cannot continue in the absence of the machine. In death, the human body seemingly fails the machine. The real fails the virtualization: this is what Jacques Derrida calls the logocentric moment where one technology of knowing is privileged over the other and infinite other historicities of being are forgotten. What happens if someone fails to turn off the machine? Is it possible that the cyborg can forget to die? Can machinic consciousness simply be switched off? It is in the moment that we forget to be merely human that the machine takes over the mother, technology takes over consciousness. Thus becoming cyborg becomes a metanarrative, totalizing and privileging only one point of view – the technological gaze. The internalization of the technological gaze is the most important political moment in becoming cyborg. It is the moment when the human condition becomes invisibly mediated by technology. It is the moment where technology and knowing become bound within perception. Thus, becoming cyborg is not merely a physical reconditioning of the body. It is a condition of being appropriated by and for technology.

26 February 2003. *I look to the machines and they tell me how my daughter is doing today. How easy it is to look at the monitor that tells me 'she has the hiccups, she's sleeping, she's not breathing – not yet'. The machines talk to me and I understand what Quinn cannot yet tell me. The machines tell me what she cannot communicate. Quinn is having a 'terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day'...*¹⁶

Through the morphology of my daughter's body, her journey from the maternal *enceinte* to becoming cyborg, I experienced the displacement of my own motherhood by the machine. I could understand my daughter in and through the machinic interface. In this moment, I too was written into the metanarrative of the cyborg consciousness, my perception of the human condition filtered through the technological gaze. Becoming cyborg goes beyond the physical symbiosis between the corporeal and the technological. Rather, becoming cyborg witnesses the becoming of technological consciousness. Ultimately, cyborg culture witnesses the reification of Mother as technology, denying the possibility of ways of being that are beyond the cyborg experience.

Exposing the womb, digesting machinic consciousness, monitoring the human body, locating motherhood outside of the mother/child symbiosis: these are technologies of becoming cyborg that go beyond the physical imagery of meat-meets-metal. These are technologies of sovereignty that are internalized, that operate in and through the cyborg. When the machine is shut off, cyborg life continues to occupy the human condition through consciousness, subconsciousness, perception.

10 April 2003. *After sixty-nine days on a ventilator, the tube was finally pulled. My little Quinnapotamus now breathes her own breaths. I guess our little talk about 'no ventilators in kindergarten' made sense to her and she has decided to hold her own. It was amazing to watch her take her first breaths after they pulled the tube, to hear the resigned sigh of the ventilator when it was shut off. The monitor flatlining. The sound of her hoarse crying, her voice rising through bruised vocal chords for the first time, met my ears and was strangely comforting.*

The cyborg does not die because it is unplugged. The cyborg continues to exist beyond all locations of space and time, consciousness irreversibly fused with technology. Becoming cyborg necessitates the sublimation of the mind. Becoming cyborg allows for the

cultivation of human life in and for state sovereignty. Ultimately, to become cyborg is to be harvested by the state and for the state. Like my daughter, paralysed for wrestling with her machines, internalizing the technologies of state sovereignty is likewise paralysing. It becomes impossible for the body to perform outside of technology. Ultimately, cyborg culture is written within the context of state sovereignty. The making of cyborg bodies is simply that – the epistemic branding of the state on the bodies and the minds of the subordinate citizenry. The cyborg body is the ultimate embodiment of the state: the ideal currency, the most efficient expenditure, the most malleable subject, the virtual subordinate.

The body in cyborg culture is incorporated into a centralizing episteme. Anatomy becomes a homogenizing structure, a collective social anatomy of ‘sameness’ in which there is a marked absence of differentiation between ‘self’ and ‘state’, political anatomy and human anatomy, *bio* and *technic* sameness. Suddenly, a story about a neonate baby is less about medicine and miracles and more about what remains hidden and unarticulated – the nihilism of being bound to cyborg consciousness. To become cyborg is to commit to a slow suicide of the once autonomous body and the eternal reification of a bounded human identity.¹⁷ The cyborg becomes a venue for confinement, the confinement of the human condition within a symbiosis of machine and body. Symbiosis with machine (whether machinic consciousness or machinic matter) becomes the precondition to living itself. To locate ‘being’ outside of technology becomes an impossibility. Ultimately it reduces the human body to a specific mechanics, a site of micro-physics, a docile and useful being. Becoming cyborg is ultimately about the sublimation of the human identity and the political imaginary.

The aim of this critical examination of cyborg culture is by no means to discredit the technologies that taught my daughter the art of living. It does, however, highlight the implications of becoming cyborg. The entire history of the cyborg is written in and through my daughter’s body. Upon her body, history is written. It is the history of the body as it becomes disembodied from the womb. The day I gave birth to a cyborg, I began to understand how every human has become a collaboration of machinic and biological matter. The human condition is mediated by technology. The metanarrative of being cyborg ignores ethical questions. The machine can’t ask, What would the world look like without mothers? Or, for that matter, fathers? Technology is quite literally beginning to rewire the

way we do family, the way we know humanity. The ultimate violence of technology is its ability to generate its own invisibility, to circulate undetected in and through the physical body, to become manifest in human consciousness as epistemic reality. Conditions of possibility other than becoming cyborg are thus hidden from the human condition. The maternal body, once autonomous *enceinte*, is condemned to redundancy. Once technology has been internalized and invisibly operates within the body, it becomes the only way of being human. Engaging in a relationship with technology is merely one means of engaging with new conditions of possibility for the human condition, but the human–machine symbiosis simultaneously negates the possibility of a metanarrative of ‘being in the world’ and forgets all of the moments of differentiation and deferral that work to inform the human essence.¹⁸ Ways of being ‘other’ than an agent of sovereignty become impossible when identity is bound to this logocentric privileging of the dominant discourse.¹⁹

Notes

An earlier version of this article appeared in *Life in the Wires: The CTHEORY Reader*, New World Perspectives/CTheory Books, 2004. Extracts are reprinted here with permission.

1. Barbara Kennedy, ‘The “Virtual Machine” and New Becomings in the Pre-Millennial Culture’, in D. Bell and B. Kennedy, eds, *The Cybercultures Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000.
2. David Bell, ‘Cybercultures Reader: A User’s Guide’, in Bell and Kennedy, eds, *The Cybercultures Reader*.
3. Ibid., p. 7.
4. Anon.
5. Sadie Plant, ‘On the Matrix: Cyberfeminist Simulations’, in Bell and Kennedy, eds, *The Cybercultures Reader*.
6. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Language*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, p. 278.
7. Ibid., p. 284.
8. Ibid., p. 279.
9. Jean Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000.
10. Ibid., p. 7.
11. David Steel, ‘We Need to Rethink My Abortion Law’, *Guardian*, 6 July 2004.
12. Plant, ‘On the Matrix’, p. 333.
13. Bell, ‘Cybercultures Reader’, p. 8.
14. Ibid., p. 11.
15. J. Crandall, ‘Unmanned: Embedded Reporters, Predator Drones and Armed Perception’, www.ctheory.net/E124.
16. Judith Viorst, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Aladdin Paperbacks, New York, 1972.
17. W. Magnusson, ‘The Reification of Political Community’, in R.B.J. Walker and S.H. Mendlovitz, eds, *Contending Sovereignties*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO, 1990.
18. Richard K. Ashley, *Living on Border Lines: Man, Post-structuralism, and War*, Nichols, London and New York, 1980.
19. Ibid., p. 261.

KEYWORDS

A NEW SERIES FROM OTHER PRESS



IN AN UNPRECEDENTED INTERCULTURAL PROJECT,

Other Press and several other publishers around the world will simultaneously publish *Keywords*, a four volume series offering different points of view on the cardinal ideas of truth, identity, gender, and experience.

Carefully chosen authors from Africa, the Arab world, China, France, India, and the United States have been given free rein to share their distinctive visions of the concept at hand. The variety of the authors' backgrounds (from anthropology to philosophy, sociology, history, political science, and literature) and their commitment to making *Keywords* relevant in the explosive "here and now" offer new parameters for envisioning the implications of the process of globalization.

"An ambitious and very welcome venture."

—SIMON CRITCHLEY,
New School University

"Intercultural readings and contacts are a wonderful idea, but often difficult to achieve. The Keywords project is an imaginative way of helping us to deal with that problem. To understand the meaning of some basic concepts in different cultural settings is an interesting, provocative, and informative way of getting directly to the heart of different cultures."

—DANIEL CALLAHAN,
Director of International Programs,
The Hastings Center

Truth

1-59051-106-9 | PB w/ flaps | \$15

Identity

1-59051-105-0 | PB w/ flaps | \$15

Gender

1-59051-107-7 | PB w/ flaps | \$15

Experience

1-59051-108-5 | PB w/ flaps | \$15



OTHER PRESS

toll free 1-877-843-6843 (1-877-THE OTHER) • www.otherpress.com • orders@otherpress.com

The hesitation waltz

Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism*, Berghahn, New York and London, 2004. xiii + 242 pp., £47.00 hb., £14.95 pb., 1 57181 621 6 hb., 1 57181 542 2 pb.

As the adolescent's entrée into the world of ideas, existentialism has probably diminished a little since the Cure's 1978 'Killing an Arab', but 2005 is the centenary of Sartre's birth, and the celebrations can be expected to raise his profile. In his introduction to the edition of *Critique of Dialectical Reason* issued by Verso last year, Fredric Jameson argued that globalization has conferred a relevance on Sartre's concept of universal history that even his postmodern detractors cannot ignore. Birchall is likewise hopeful that 'a new generation of "anti-capitalists"' will rediscover Sartre. Hence this book.

Birchall is one of the most dogged researchers in the field of twentieth-century French letters. He is also a long-standing member of the Socialist Workers' Party. He dedicates *Sartre against Stalinism* to the memory of Tony Cliff: activist, biographer of Trotsky and the SWP's founding theoretician. After studying the government statistics in 1948, Cliff defined the society which emerged in the USSR after the defeat of the Left Opposition in 1929 as 'state capitalist', a term previously restricted to Frankfurt School or anarchist (non-party-building, non-Leninist) circles. Trotsky's own definition of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state demanded that it must always be 'defended'. Defence easily becomes 'apology': definitions of socialism which include labour camps, anti-Semitism and atom bombs make it hard to gain either sympathy or recruits. By breaking with Trotskyist orthodoxy on Russia, Cliff gave activist party Marxism a new lease of life.

Given his politics, the aspect of Sartre which causes Birchall grief is his vacillating relationship to the French Communist Party (PCF): the 'against Stalinism' of his title is deliberately tendentious. Sartre never really accepted Trotsky's account of a betrayed revolution, much less Cliff's state-capitalist analysis. On top of that, the PCF was one of the world's most reactionary communist parties: in February 1956, at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, only Mao Zedong and Maurice Thorez, the leader of the PCF, hailed Stalin as a father of socialism; for *seventeen years* (until 1973) the PCF insisted that Khrushchev's 1956 apology for the crimes of Stalin was a forgery. In a year-by-year

account, Birchall documents what he calls Sartre's 'hesitation waltz' with the PCF. Sartre's 'hard Stalinist' period, when he visited the Soviet Union and claimed it allowed freedom of speech (a barefaced lie), was restricted to the years 1952–56. It was a response to the Cold War and the peace movement. The rest of the time, Sartre was a fellow-traveller of the PCF, but frequently involved with initiatives which dismayed the leadership: organizing opposition to the Algerian War, defending Jean Genet and homosexuality, promoting feminism.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Sartre moved on from the existentialism which had made his name and engaged with Marxism. In 1960 he declared his 'fundamental agreement' with historical materialism. But Marxism in the postwar period was hamstrung by Stalinism. When Georg Lukács excoriated existentialism's obsession with despair and loneliness in 1952, he claimed that Russia's atom bomb was proof of the onward march of enlightenment and reason. This was not going to convince anyone too young to have fought in the war, let alone a CND member. When the New Left rediscovered Marx and revolution in 1968, it did so by emphasizing precisely those aspects of life which the Stalinists deemed 'petty bourgeois' and repugnant: sex, music, self-development, social experiment.

Birchall tells the tale of Sartre's political involvements with such fastidiousness – every assertion tied to a source by a footnote – that the atmosphere is peculiarly unFrench: English historical research meets Parisian posturing in a bizarre confrontation of opposites. French publications often eschew the apparatus of footnotes and index, but the notion of public debate and manifesto remains alive, defying grey academic knowledge-after-the-event (which is perhaps why French philosophers write primary texts and anglophone academics write commentaries on them). However, Birchall is himself urgently political, busting the limits of academic propriety with declarations of political allegiance. He introduces considerations banned from the charmed circle of those citing Derrida and Deleuze like Biblical texts.

In 1934, before he had written a word on existentialism, Sartre read an article on Martin Heidegger

by Colette Audry in *L'École émancipé*, a socialist weekly for teachers. She titled her essay 'A Philosophy of German Fascism' (straight away highlighting an issue which the academic reception of Heidegger in the 1980s befogged). She was concerned to explain this strange new political development called Nazism. As a Trotskyist, Audry was aware of the omissions of Stalinized Marxism: 'they leave to their opponents the monopoly of intellectual audacity in everything which goes beyond the scope of the purely economic and political'. As Birchall points out, such complaints provided Sartre with his postwar project. To achieve it, he resorted to the ethical and moral apparatus of existentialism, but also to a dialogue with the French anti-Stalinist Left. Some of the political stands he took were worthy, but it's hard to see his philosophical endeavours as achieving much more than personal fame and theoretical confusion. Fredric Jameson expresses surprise that Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is not more widely read. This may be because it is a turgid grotesque, a comedy of errors, in which a Cartesian unable to rid himself of the Christian metaphysical divide between spirit and matter repeatedly misunderstands what Marx said about humans as social, productive animals: a paranoid labyrinth which projects frustrations with the PCF to the level of anthropological truth. It aped Hegel's expansive *Phenomenology of Spirit* by adopting Braudel's breathless guidebook prose, a manner which later re-emerged in the dubious rhizomatic sprawl of Deleuze.

By restricting himself to Sartre's politics and refusing to set sail on the dark waters of philosophy, Birchall weakens his case. What he defends in Sartre's philosophy, against the structuralists and postmodernists, is his insistence on 'the unitary subject' and 'freedom of choice'. Dear as these are to Christians and apologists for the market like Tony Blair, many readers of Marx believe *Capital* explodes these liberal concepts. As the pre-eminent philosophical celebrity of postwar Paris, Sartre did not establish anything resistant to later trends; he set the mould – incomprehension of Marx and vilification of Engels as the guiding lights for a spectacular career. Structuralist and postmodernist attacks on Sartre were not devastating critique, but bids for the throne. Sartre's love-hate relationship with the PCF – 'party power as inevitably corrupting' – became a convenient *tic* for a purely academic Marxism, reproducing itself outside the conditions that gave it birth. Sartre was about as useful to the development of a genuinely Marxist philosophy and politics as Harold Pinter.

Birchall has a horror of 'mere' ideas, exhibiting the Anglo-Saxon positivism which Trotsky attacked mercilessly in his later years. He keeps returning to the fact that the PCF won millions of votes and had masses of working-class members. It was a 'real' political force. To ignore it would be ultra-left. But was Sartre's vacillating attitude so helpful? In May 1968, all the criticisms made by the Trotskyists (however tiny their *groupuscules*) were proven, when the PCF betrayed



the biggest general strike in history and prevented a social revolution, handing back power to De Gaulle and the employers. Cliff learned from 1968: working in reformist parties like the Labour Party or the PCF is useless; revolutionaries need their own organization. If Birchall took his own political positivism seriously, he would be in the Labour Party, not the SWP.

In 1956, Pierre Naville issued a pamphlet titled *L'Intellectuel communiste*. Passed over by Birchall, it questioned Sartre's self-description as an 'intellectual' communist. It explained why revolutionary socialists find something vain and compromised about the stance of the 'intellectual':

Do you imagine for a moment that Marx considered himself an *intellectual* communist? No, he considered himself a communist, which is something completely different. The *intelligentsia* swaps the right of every person to use their intelligence for affiliation to that celestial legion of the 'intelligent class'. By thinking it thereby elevates and magnifies its role, thought actually mutilates itself, reducing its social role to that of a paid functionary.

With Sartre as his lodestar, Birchall confuses speculative thought with celebrity politics. Perhaps it gave an impetus to the movement against the war in Vietnam when Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre decided to oppose it, but translating one species of spectacular power into another hardly advances our understanding of either war or capitalism. This is 'philosophy politics' for those who do not read philosophy, alien to the egalitarian and self-emancipatory principles of Marxism proper. Stars harm collective discussion and deserve our opprobrium.

The 'masochism' of Beauvoir and Sartre before the PCF was helped by the fact that they never joined. Alternately impressed by its size and power, but disappointed by its lack of principle, they regressed to the moral antinomies of the 'problem plays' of bourgeois drama: 'Action involves wickedness ... should I do it?' However, as the Trotskyists tried to explain to Beauvoir and Sartre throughout their lives, the reformist bureaucracy originates from the links between the labour movement and bourgeois society (this was how Ernest Mandel put it in 1953). The 'power' of the PCF was its power to betray workers' attempts at control and make deals with management. Pondering the ethics of taking 'action' is a fool's game: *their* actions hurt us every day.

The historical record presented by Birchall shows Sartre again and again failing to understand the opposed dynamics of class power in capitalist society. How he keeps managing to find anything admirable in

Sartre's obtuseness is really rather amazing. He even says that the confusions of *Les Mains sales* (1948), which casts a Trotsky-style martyr as a corrupt Stalinist who lied to his members (the opposite of Trotsky's practice), gives the play 'its richness and strength'. Birchall's Marxism appears to be so moralistic and formal, so lacking a dialectic of experiment, so absolutely certain of the task ahead, he needs to revert to liberal quandary to generate the unknown on which art relies. The possibility of acting artistically *after* reaching an understanding of class society and its manipulations (Brecht and Debord, Burroughs and Shepp, Jorn and Free Improvisation, Stewart Home and Punk) is nowhere on the map.

Birchall doubtless adores Sartre's novels and plays, but nowhere explains why politically he should be deemed anything more than a pompous centrist: self-dramatizing, moralistic and confused. Nowhere does he point out that because both liberalism and Stalinism believed in the electoral spectacle rather than the revolutionary moment, they made a perfect, if abusive, couple. Sartre was a symptom of his times. Real Marxism was elsewhere.

However, Birchall's conclusion makes a crucial point. Sartre's wobbly orbit is only comprehensible if we acknowledge the pull of the 'authentic' French revolutionary Left 'hidden from history during the long night of Stalinist domination' (as Birchall puts it): Colette Audry, Daniel Guérin, Victor Serge, Pierre Naville and the pioneers of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Sartre had a continuous dialogue with these activists, joining them occasionally in united fronts (especially during the Algerian War). However, what they said never seemed to stick. Sartre was the wealthy, well-connected chump who so often hangs around revolutionary circles and understands nothing. Rather than detailing every sad twist and turn of Sartre's alternations between Stalinist realism and liberal moral panic, one wishes Birchall had spent more of his 240 pages expounding their views and telling their stories (especially that of Colette Audry, who emerges as the real brain). When, in the 1970s, succumbing to postmodernism's critique of 'totalization' (a term used so often in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* the effect is comic), Sartre declared he was no longer a Marxist and converted to Judaism, Birchall's special pleading goes into overdrive.

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is usually interpreted as existentialism's gift to Black Power. Birchall, however, informs us that he also drew on Pierre Naville's *Psychologie, marxisme, matérialisme* in making the point that 'individual sexuality and

dreams depend on the general conditions of civilization, especially class struggle'. This could give us the Marxist theory of the imagination that Colette Audry (and Walter Benjamin) wanted. Pierre Naville – surrealist, friend and biographer of Trotsky – has never found an English publisher. This suppression of this genuine Marxism – speculative, creative, class-based, unrepressed, anti-authoritarian – ensures that all French criticism of Marxism which surfaces in English arrives from anarchism and the Right. This lacuna explains the chronic idealism and self-defeating narcissism of so much anglophone continental philosophy. Whatever its illusions about the political effectiveness of bourgeois celebrity, if Birchall's scholarly work helps spread word of Audry and Naville, it will have served the Left well.

Ben Watson

Sophistication

Keith Crome, *Lyotard and Greek Thought: Sophistry*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2004. 224 pp., £45.00hb., 1 4039 1238 6.

In this well-researched and thoughtfully articulated book, Keith Crome presents a case for the serious consideration of the relationship between Jean-François Lyotard – variously philosopher of desire, theorist of the postmodern condition, disenchanted Marxist or acute reader of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* – and Greek thought. Or rather, he presents half a case, as this book is only the first of a projected two volumes, dealing with, in turn, sophistry and Aristotle.

Lyotard and Greek Thought is initially motivated by a concern that the general tendency in Lyotard commentary has been to overlook the significant role that Greek philosophy plays in his writings. Crome notes that this is something of an anomaly given the more widespread appreciation of the role of the Greeks in the writings of Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida (and, we should perhaps add, Badiou). A significant result of this oversight has been that commentators have generally failed to consider the crucial role that sophistry had in helping Lyotard articulate his research problematic. In this volume, Crome charts the genesis of Lyotard's interest in the sophists – an interest that can be dated back to the 1960s (with a projected text on sophist logic) and which appears intermittently throughout his subsequent publications – a series of lectures he delivered on Nietzsche and the sophists

in 1974 and 1976 makes this interest evident. More importantly, Crome argues for a profoundly 'historical' Lyotard, whose philosophical project can be read as an attempt to put into play a political and ethical way of thinking and existing which should be seen as ultimately sophist in origin.

In keeping with the general thrust of the book, Crome devotes several chapters to considering sophistry in relation to Plato, to Hegel – one of the first, perhaps, to attempt the gesture of rehabilitation – and to Heidegger. These discussions show how sophistry is caught up in philosophy's determination of its own identity and how for that reason an engagement with it is essential if we wish radically to question the 'philosophical disposition towards truth and being'. Crome shows how the philosophical determinations of sophistry (can there be any other?) undertaken by these thinkers pass over what will eventually be the essential point for Lyotard: its challenge to the sovereignty of the decision to philosophize on the basis of what is.

Crome does well to note the peculiar ambivalence of philosophy to this, its intimate other. Indeed, it is a curious feature of Western philosophy that from its Platonic inception it has had to negotiate with the margin of indetermination that the 'sophist effect' induces in it. Plato, a little hamfistedly, in *The Sophist*, finds himself being forced to make 'non-being' be. Aristotle, with his curious demonstration of the principle of non-contradiction, was forced to turn the sophist gesture of refutation into the very rationale for his demonstration. Hegel, at the beginning of *The Science of Logic*, makes the sophist confusion of being and non-being into a crucial moment of his dialectic. Such gestures imply the possibility of a certain sophistication at the heart of reason, a point which is clearly not lost on Crome. However, the key point that Crome wishes to make in these chapters is that the philosophical delimitation of sophistry precludes an analysis of its challenge to thought.

The argument about Lyotard really starts only once this preparatory work is out of the way. The second half of the book rather painstakingly lays out the grounds for what Crome sees as Lyotard's restoration of sophistry. Where an early text such as *Discours, figure* raises the spectre of sophistry in terms of the need to displace the philosophy–sophistry dichotomy, the lectures on Nietzsche and the sophists marked a shift towards recovering the practices of the sophists and their 'habitus'. Crucially for Crome these lectures outline Lyotard's appraisal of the sophist practice of 'retorsion' (although the concept itself is derived from Aristotle). *Libidinal Economy* puts into play

what Lyotard was later to see as a sophistic challenge to philosophy, a point he makes in *Just Gaming* in 1979. The latter text also provides Crome with the opportunity to explore the curious but insightful rapprochement Lyotard makes between Kant and the sophist Corax, and to follow through Lyotard's own hesitations between an ostensibly Kantian position and a sophist one.

Like the ideas of reason, the sophist's plea at a tribunal in defence of a strong man who has assaulted a weaker one forces the judge to overstep the bounds of what is given in experience. It does this by adducing that the probability that the judge will think it likely that the strong man did assault the weak one – because common opinion has it that the strong always do this – precisely becomes the reason why the strong man did not commit the assault. Both the Kantian idea and the Greek *doxa* serve as a rule for judgement. The parallels with Kant are, Crome argues, continued in *The Differend*, where the appeal to the sophists is more direct and more explicit. Crome notes the resemblance



between Kant's notion of the antinomies of reason and Lyotard's conception of the differend. As he reminds us, Kant himself was inclined to see in the antinomies a 'sophistication of reason itself', something that arises from within reason and not something superadded to them from the outside by the ill-willed or stupid. Of course, for Kant, this regrettable sophistication was something to be avoided at all costs and in a sense motivated the entire project of critique in the first place.

To show that reason might be somehow intrinsically sophisticated, Crome reverts to a discussion of the Ancient Greeks and in particular to the sophist demolition of Parmenides' poem 'On Nature', on the basis of the tenor of Lyotard's references in *The Differend*. The case for the intrinsic sophistication of reason is strong when one examines the way in which Gorgias's *Treatise on Nature or Non-being* shows

how the self-evident presence of nature – revealed by a goddess to Parmenides in stark terms as being the One that is – is really a complex verbal construction. Gorgias achieves this by turning the phrase articulating the revealed truth – that what is is – into a logical argument. Crome follows among others Cassin to claim that the philosophical demarcation of itself from sophistry collapses with this demolition of the first evidence of ontology, the very 'evidentiality' of the evident. Both become modalities of 'logology' and imply the primacy of an ethical and political – Lyotard would perhaps say 'judicial' – practice of thinking and language. If we then accept that both sophistry and philosophy are possibilities of language, the differend, which bespeaks an irreducible conflict within reason, becomes constitutive. To support this view, Crome draws a parallel between the differend and the Greek notion of *steresis*, the privation of the ability of speech to speak about something.

In many respects, Crome's account of the role of the sophists in Lyotard's work is a useful corrective to the predominant image of Lyotard in Anglo-American academia as the prophet of the postmodern condition. In fact it balances the correction of this misapprehension, which insists on the crucial importance of Lyotard's earlier works, *Discours, figure* and *Economie libidinale*. And it adds something of a nuance to the view of Lyotard as having produced a philosophy of language. Emphasizing the philosophical importance which sophistry had for Lyotard is an intelligent way of drawing our attention to the depth, subtlety and – let's say it – sophistication of Lyotard's enterprise. Very sensibly, Crome does not try to pretend that his reading of Lyotard is definitive; nor does he try to minimize the importance of Lyotard's alleged Kantianism, libidinal economics and so on. However, the emphasis on the relationship of Lyotard to Greek thought does entail a certain rejigging of the stakes of Lyotard's work. By drawing our attention to the use that Lyotard makes of Gorgias, Crome situates the stakes of *The Differend* directly in relation to ontology and to the general (im)possibility of first philosophy. And this of course means, to anyone who has followed the developments of continental philosophy over the last half-century or so, taking up the cudgels for and against Heidegger, as it is Heidegger who has been largely responsible for stimulating the resurgence of interest in ontological questions and in promoting 'historical' arguments. However, it is by no means evident that the line which runs from Parmenides to Kant and from Kant to today is a straight one. Western rationality certainly has a history – or perhaps histories – but

there are clear problems entailed in assuming that it should receive its directions from philosophy in the manner Heidegger would like it to (qua 'the innermost basic features of our Western-European history'). One then slips quite quickly into a prognostic of the 'fate' of philosophy and the attendant pathos of 'the end', muted but implicit in this book.

The issue is not, perhaps, whether or not sophistry might help us develop a somewhat different appreciation of our modernity. Clearly for Lyotard it does; and Crome takes care to show how Lyotard's interest in the sophists shows up in *The Postmodern Condition*. It also features in other accounts of modernity and the fate of rationality – for example, the recent writing of Isabelle Stengers, which similarly revives the importance of opinion (but against the modernist gesture par excellence of critique) and emphasizes

the construction of nature and the given. The issue is rather one of how we should think this through and whether the idea is of a 'restoration' or 'rehabilitation'. Stengers for one manages to avoid the linguo-centric bias of the 'discourse with everything' approach, and in this respect it is perhaps noteworthy that in many places in his book Crome draws so heavily on Aristotle – particularly in the last chapter where the classic determination of man (*sic*) as *zoon logon ekhon* supports Lyotard's claim for the constitutive role of the differend. Of course, he is not wrong to do this as Lyotard does as much himself, but it does force us to continue to frame the problematic around discourse or logos, leaving us wondering whether this is really the way radically to question the canonical history of reason.

Andrew Goffey

In process

Anne Fairchild Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead: Process, Dialectics and the Critique of Capitalism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004. xii + 227 pp., £28.25 hb., 0 7914 5983 7.

Pomeroy wisely opens this book by addressing the supposed incompatibility of Marx and Whitehead, recognizing that some might see this as 'a most curious undertaking'. The linking of one of the most abstract of metaphysicians to one of the most stringent critics of the mystificatory status of metaphysics might indeed be seen, by some, as an unlikely union. Yet, given the recent upsurge of interest in Whitehead, an appraisal of the interrelation of Whitehead and Marx could also be seen as a timely and welcome contribution to contemporary debates. Whitehead's insistence on the utterly processual character of existence and the complex but necessary interrelation of the material and the conceptual within such process could help avoid concerns over the status of, for example, determinism, free will, agency and subjectivity within Marx's texts. It could also, perhaps, lead to a more 'dynamic' rendering of Marx's materialism. Equally, a reading of Whitehead through Marx could help rehabilitate him from being envisaged as occupying the outer reaches of philosophical abstraction by pointing up, through Marx, the critical relevance to contemporary theory of a range of his arguments, such as the rejection of the split between subject and object (or knower and known); the primacy of processes over a static conception of being; a radical reconsideration of subjectivity and its relation to materiality.

Pomeroy starts out by establishing Marx as a process philosopher along Whiteheadian lines and in doing so insists that there is no distinction to be made between the 'early, humanistic' and the later 'political economist' Marx. For, she argues, the missing link between these two is Marx's ongoing adherence to the theoretical position of the processual character of all existence. Pomeroy agrees that such a position is not always apparent within Marx's texts and that it takes a reading of Whitehead's more developed philosophical position into these to establish the continuity of Marx's argument. The crucial link between the two, it is claimed, is that both develop what Pomeroy terms a philosophy of 'internal relations': 'a philosophy of internal relations is one in which there is a real transmission of historical data and a constitution of each "entity" by its particular incorporation of that data, yielding process ... as the organic movement of inheritance and productive relationality to, of, and by that inheritance.'

The common concern of Whitehead and Marx is, therefore, to establish a theory that is able to go beyond simple subject-object or self-other delimitations to provide a sustained account of a concrete reality populated by material entities that are constituted through their active reception of their environment. The interrelation of all things adds an ethical and political

element to such an approach. For, if it is commonality that *produces* individuality, then questions and concerns about the conditions within which individuality is produced are brought to the fore. Overall, whilst this theory will apply to all entities, it is not of itself a transcendental or mystificatory one, as there is no additional premiss or explanation for these entities, save for that of 'process' by which the continual transmission of data proceeds. Pomeroy thus maintains not only that ontological concerns lie at the heart of all Marx's texts but that this, in a sense, politicizes both ontology and process philosophy. For 'the ontological features in Marx's work ... [and] the analyses of capitalist economics.... are inextricably linked.... The beating heart of the economic analysis and critique in *Capital* will be ontological.' Further, 'process philosophy ... is, or should be, economically, politically, and what amounts to the same thing, socially radical.' This rendering of Marx and Whitehead as cooperative partners in an ethically or politically charged account of the processual character of existence makes up some of the most informative and successful sections of the book; in particular, with regard to Marx's account of production and the associated dismantling of the social/natural distinction within process philosophy.

So it is that Marx's notion of production is described in terms of a Whiteheadian notion of process. Production is therefore not an occurrence within which either the individual, nature or society are fixed or substantial, self-identical entities. Instead, they are moments within a wider flux. 'Production is the generative ebb and flow from objectivity to subjectivity and back, the bridge between the past and future'. Hence, 'production is a *process*. It is processive production.' Whilst certain political economists might envisage both production and consumption (or distribution) as distinct, Marx insists they are not. Indeed, to state that they are is to misrecognize (or mystify) the interlinked status of their existence and thereby to impose capitalist conceptions as natural. This much is clear from many interpretations of Marx. But for Pomeroy the point is that Marx's argument relies upon and is best explained in terms of process, whereby supposedly distinct entities are shown to be, in reality (hence the importance of ontology), utterly interrelated and yet nonetheless attain some level of individuation. 'What Marx suggests ... is that we recognize just how tangled this web is.'

It is this tangled web, the complexity of interrelations, that Whitehead's philosophy more fully explains. Pomeroy states that because both Marx and Whitehead are philosophers of internal relations (though holding that this is more explicit in the case of Whitehead),

then the status of existence at any point or time is not to be considered as inert, as a passive objective material. Instead, existence comprises the already accomplished becomings of prior entities. In this sense it is no longer realistic to talk of the separations of humans and nature, or of the social from the physical, as all existence is social. 'For Marx, production is appropriation of the social-natural world.' Or, as Whitehead puts it in *Adventures of Idea* (1967), 'these societies presuppose the circumambient space of social physical activity.' Hence, the world is not given in the sense of being fixed, but it is still given as a *condition*. Furthermore, although material, the adoption of the concept of process is supposed to entail that this is not simply a determining condition, in the traditional sense, although it does have efficacy. In such passages Pomeroy successfully deploys Whitehead's work to sustain Marx's texts against charges of determinism or overly strict materialism, and to describe how both manage to overcome the society/nature dichotomy.

However, the consideration of how Marx and Whitehead might contribute to a renewed and more dynamic concept of materiality is not as developed as it might be. There is, for example, no discussion of multiplicity or difference, no investigation of the possibility of some kind of vitality being granted to matter itself. Rather, there is a sense throughout the book that Pomeroy's vision of Marx is a classical one, albeit in the best sense of the term. Throughout the discussions of time and labour, for example, in Chapter 6, the focus is mainly on 'value as socially necessary labor time'. And whilst some elements of Whitehead's conception of time are added to the mix, there is no reference to those such as Negri who have developed alternative analyses of the relationship between time and value which question whether time can any longer be given a value. Further, the sections on alienation, whilst faithful to Marx's text, tend to envisage it in terms of a form of creative consciousness as the essence of humanity. This is one of the areas where I feel that Pomeroy has slightly misappropriated Whitehead's work. Whilst recognizing that drawing out a full-blown theory of consciousness from *Process and Reality* is no small task, Pomeroy tends to conflate Whitehead's notions of conceptuality (and conceptual feelings) with human consciousness. Rather than seeing consciousness as an occasional resultant of process ('No thinker thinks twice ... no subject experiences twice', Whitehead wrote in *Process and Reality*), Pomeroy views it as that which defines and therefore subtends all human existence: 'human consciousness, as anticipatory consciousness and as dialectical consciousness, is ... the

union of thinking and being, the union of the ideal and the real – true humanism.’ Pomeroy’s reading of Marx and Whitehead is ultimately limited to using the latter to develop a form of phenomenological or existential Marxism wherein communism becomes ‘uniting our essence with our existence’.

As such, there is no place for considerations of the role of multiplicity or difference within this work, no sustained consideration of changing forms of capital, resistance, community or class. Instead, there is a thorough and ongoing reliance on dialectics as elemental to both Marx and Whitehead. Perhaps this is not surprising, but the manner in which this aspect is developed might, again, be seen as a misappropriation of Whitehead’s work (and maybe even of Marx’s). To view, as Pomeroy does, a Whiteheadian actual entity as ‘a unity in difference’ and eternal objects as ‘dialectical’, concluding that process philosophy must hence always be dialectical, is a very specific reading. It disregards the possibility that Whitehead’s discussion of the dual character of the universe (as cited by Pomeroy) is more of an argument against monism than evidence of his dialecticism. Some of the emphasis on dialectics arises from Pomeroy’s clear and detailed treatment of Hegel’s philosophical importance to Marx. ‘Praxis’ is viewed as the articulation of internal relations through self-constitution and, as such, ‘process metaphysics serves as the logical continuation of the

Hegelian project’. However, to insist that Whitehead’s philosophy is obviously and resolutely dialectical, and that the only reason Whitehead did not explicitly adopt the term is because of his ‘self-professed ignorance of Hegel’s philosophy’, is a rather bold claim upon which to establish the central theme of the book. Indeed, Whitehead’s emphasis on becoming, concrescence and relativity could be seen as offering a radical rethinking of production as an entirely physical yet social process of construction in which neither consciousness nor dialectics has a central role.

To say that this work is a missed opportunity would be an overstatement. Pomeroy clearly has a sophisticated and in-depth knowledge of the work of both Marx and Whitehead and has developed a scholarly yet politically aware account of their interrelation. The result is a striking account and defence of Marx’s philosophy, even if it does emphasize certain ‘traditional’ elements and interpretations. Given the specific reading of Whitehead offered therein, it is not clear how beneficial this book would be as an introduction to his work. Yet there is much to be gained in following its variable attempts to demonstrate the critical importance of moving ‘from the microontology of Whitehead to the social ontology of Marx’ – that is, of explaining the radical relevance of Whitehead’s metaphysics to contemporary thought.

Michael Halewood



Perception or affect?

Mark B.N. Hanson, *New Philosophy for New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 2004. xxviii + 333 pp., £17.53 hb., 0 262 08321 3.

In *New Philosophy for New Media*, Mark Hanson elaborates a complex 'triple narrative of image, body and affect' that attempts to provide a philosophical account of embodied experience in light of the development of digital technologies. In the process, he develops an ambitious thesis through a wide-ranging yet thematically consistent series of critical engagements with theories of information and new media. As interventions into key debates in this field these critical episodes offer many salutary insights that may serve as an antidote to some of the more impetuous responses to this most recent of technological revolutions. For example, he offers an interesting critique of the sense and desirability of the technicist dissolution of the category of the human in 'post-human' theories of information. Indeed, in opposition to this influential tendency, the book as a whole presents a sustained argument for the centrality of a certain problematic yet persistent conception of the human in the forms taken by such technology. This is all the more interesting given that the trajectory pursued remains broadly sympathetic to the forms of radicalism that much theorization of the digital conventionally takes.

The book is provided with a foreword written by Tim Lenoir that sketches its relation to recent discussions of media, locates it within historical debates in information theory and summarizes the argument in a way that will undoubtedly prove useful, given its complexity and the multi-disciplinary readership it is evidently aimed at. Following Hanson's own introduction, *New Philosophy for New Media* is divided into three main sections: 'From Image to Body', 'The Affect-Body' and 'Time, Space and Body'. In broad terms, these explore a strategic correlation between 'the aesthetics of new media' and 'a strong theory of embodiment', oriented by a set of historical-theoretical claims regarding the 'co-evolution of aesthetics and technology'. The theory of embodiment here is derived from Bergson's account of human perception, updated, so to speak, by exemplary practices in the culture of new media. This historically hybrid notion of embodiment is set against Deleuze's influential 'transformative appropriation' of affect and image from Bergson and develops into a critique of Deleuze's disembodiment of affectivity in his writings on cinema.

The critical and narrative core of the argument revolves around the thesis that new media art pursues a 'Bergsonist vocation'. At its 'best' new media art

serves to extend Bergson's account of 'brain-body' activity – with its privileging of intelligence over instinct – and to further his 'understanding of technology as a means of expanding the body's margin of indetermination'. Thus:

Contemporary media artists appear to be doing nothing else than adapting this Bergsonist vocation to the concrete demands of the information age: by placing the embodied viewer-participant into a circuit with information, the installations and environments they create function as laboratories for the conversion of information into corporeally apprehensible images.

This interweaving narrative of body, image and affect attempts to divorce the perceptual body from the image, whilst positioning the body as the active terminus of the contingent form of the digital work. The analysis further distinguishes the specificity of the technical and the embodied through a critical articulation of information seen as determined by context and interpretation. This leads into a discussion of the form-giving function of the human considered as a machinic organism that 'dwells in meaning' and is further developed through a critique of the cinematic immobility of the Deleuzean notion of framing. In relation to this, Hanson elaborates a conception of the affective body as active 'enframer' of information, which is taken to enable an account of the radical dissolution of opticality (a major feature of previous and persisting theories of aesthetic experience). These arguments culminate in an assessment of the inhumanity of digital technology and its theoretical development in post-human theories of the digital, through which Hanson attempts to show that the digital image's indifference to perception does not lead to the 'apocalyptic erasure of human subjectivity' (as Lenoir puts it).

Throughout the argument, much consideration is given to the 'inhumanity' of digital technology. This stems from an ontological description of digitized information's algorithmic organization. In terms of its impact on human perception, the important thing is that this enables the treatment of each part of an 'information set' independently from the rest. This means that the spaces and times possible in the digital image are inimical to the discourse of the image in previous accounts of media, with their insistence on a more or less strict analogical relation between image, apparatus and human perception. Such factors are

taken to imply that the experience of digital images operates on an affective level – that of bodily processes beneath the level of organization of perception – and that these are homologous with the technical processes of information systems.

The main argument culminates at the end of section two of the book, with an analysis of virtual reality environments that is intended definitively to differentiate affectivity from perception. Here, the experience of ‘nonextended mental apprehension’ that Hanson models on artistic uses of virtual reality technology are taken to finally establish the radical immanence of the active spatio-temporalizing ‘brain–body’ operations of the subject that experiences them. The discussion of virtual reality environments ends the argument for an interiorizing dissolution of the categories of aesthetic experience. This is followed by an attempt to broaden such ‘direct experience’ into an account of digital technology experienced outside of the immersive environment. The artwork Hanson discusses here is extremely interesting (an installation of cast sculptures of human skulls, the forms of which are manipulated digitally to appear anamorphic yet which do not resolve into ‘normal’ image shapes from any point of view). However, at this point the extension of his account of the immanent experience of digital space seems to wear thin. It is, perhaps, significant that this occurs at the very moment in which it has to explain an experience of the digital in a recognisably empirical social space, a space in which the materiality of affective relations to information has to compete with other, more mundane, senses of materiality.

Regrettably, in many cases, Hanson’s elaboration of the vocation of new media art sets the artwork in instrumental relation to the theoretical argument. Often the exemplary object – which is supposed to provide the suggestive model informing the discussion of the problematic materialization of digital form – is forced to serve as a ‘perfect demonstration’ of the thesis (as in the discussion of ‘facialization’ in Chapter 4). This may or may not be just clumsiness on the part of the writer, but it does make one wonder about the tight focus on technical definitions of the digital that shape the discussion of its materiality. What might this be leaving out of view? This is supposed to be an aesthetics that breaks down the concept of perception into distinct forms of affect, explicitly in order to provide a critically reflexive philosophical understanding of the kind of embodied experiences inaugurated by novel technological forms. Yet its treatment of examples terminate in comments such as, ‘What viewer could fail to empathize with these machine-produced heads

endlessly wondering if they really exist?’ Is it naive to expect the sophistication of theoretical construction to inflect the analysis of its examples? Or is there a deeper problem here that is perhaps symptomatic of the relation to culture adopted by the discourse of immanence?

To be fair, Hanson does present some very interesting discussions of particular art practices. Perhaps the best is the lengthy exposition of Jeffrey Shaw’s pioneering work, which describes his overlapping of new and traditional media formats in environments that confront ‘image and interface conventions with one another’. Here, the ‘Bergsonist vocation’ rings true with regard to the materialization of criteria such as those of ‘making technology a supplement of the body’ and ‘a means of expanding both the body’s function as a centre of indetermination and its capacity to filter images’. But why doesn’t this account of embodied relation to digital media find similar explanatory purchase on non-immersive experiences of the digital? Are the limits of Hanson’s attempt to extend his theory of technical–affective embodiment to the world outside of the immersive digital environment proscribed by a constitutive blindness to other considerations of materiality?

The last section of the book is taken up with a discussion of Douglas Gordon and Bill Viola, particularly their slowing down existing video, or shooting video very fast and then slowing it down. These are read through the work of the phenomenologically oriented neuroscientist Francisco Varela and his work on the duration of different levels of temporality. Hanson develops an interesting argument for the digital ‘liberation of affectivity’ in Viola’s material thematization of imperceptible temporalities. My reservation with this analysis is perhaps also pertinent to the book as a whole. What seems distinctive about many of Bill Viola’s artworks and the radicalization of affective experience they produce involves what one might call the cathedralization of the space and time of their experience. Affect here is frankly theological, a kind of classicism of religious sentimentality. My admiration for the impressive technical and formal manner in which he achieves such affectual resonance does not stop this worrying me. Search as I might, Hanson’s model of affect doesn’t seem to offer much purchase on such problems. Perhaps in respect of the judgements demanded by such artworks – though they evidently do transform the category of the image – older forms of the critical discourse of perception might come in handy after all.

Andrew Fisher

Brain food

Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Lacan Closely*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2004. xi + 192 pp., £ 52.50 hb., £17.50 pb., 0 8166 4320 2 hb., 0 8166 4321 0 pb.

Lacanian theory seems caught in a methodological dilemma about how to treat Lacan's writings. His prose in the *Écrits* is usually impenetrable just where you want clarity; if his seminars are clearer, the problem is that there are about twenty-five of them, and he is generally held to change his mind throughout them without ever signalling it. So is Lacan's work really a 'body of thought', as he claimed, or do his ideas radically preclude any kind of systematization? As a theoretically active Lacanian, do you attempt to extract the most coherent theory you can from this sprawling body of work, weighing up the various trajectories he takes and seeking out some criterion for deciding on the best ones? But if you fail to find a definitive Lacanian theory, at what point do you decide that there is in fact something instructive in the resistance of Lacan's writings to totalization? It is part of his message that the notion of totality is an imaginary one, and that 'there is no meta-language', so in this way the only true consistency for Lacan would be inconsistency. For the moment, the middle ground remains inhabitable: you can attempt to start to tabulate the various paths he takes, not deciding on the best one, as nobody is yet in a position to do more than appreciate what is the most majestic body of psychoanalytic work in existence.

Bruce Fink's third book on Lacan claims to be a 'close reading' of Lacan's *Écrits*. It faces the above dilemma in the form of the question whether such a reading must also be a 'closed' reading. The book contains a number of illuminating textual analyses, but it also exhibits an unease in so far as Fink's decision to opt for the non-totalizing approach to Lacan sometimes rubs against the desire to get as close as possible to the text. It is as if whenever Fink feels himself getting 'close' to Lacan's true 'meaning', he

needs to compensate by withdrawing, in such a way that one suspects that he thinks that to come too close to a true meaning inevitably risks destroying its allure forever. Fink opts to portray Lacan's texts as examples of the Lacanian notion of hysteria: Lacan 'himself' does not view his own texts as constituting any kind of finished theory or system'. His ultimate aim is to keep our desire for completion unsatisfied. Taking this line inevitably brings out a certain paradox in the very idea of 'Lacanian theory'.

It needs to be said at the outset that the subtitle is not to be taken too rigorously. The book appears to have been assembled from occasional papers on quite diverse topics, such as the Sokal and Bricmont affair, Lacan's critique of ego-psychology and Lacan's *Seminar XX*. If readers really do want a close reading of a text in the *Écrits*, they should read Philippe Van Haute's recent *Against Adaptation: Lacan's Subversion of the Subject* (Other Press, 2002), a stunning 300-page analysis of Lacan's 30-page essay 'Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious'.

Unease with Fink's book properly starts in the second chapter, which claims to be about Lacan's critique of ego-psychology, but ends up unexpectedly sabotaging Lacan's case by presenting it as inconsistent. There are similar acts of apparently unconscious sabotage throughout the work, where Fink seems to be undermining Lacan's theory in the very act of putting energy into clarifying him. At times, the justifications are so laid-back that it looks as if Fink is quietly mooting a future in evolutionary robotics. In one instance, he confesses that he is 'hard pressed to find an argument in [Lacan's work] to sustain any one particular claim' and that we should accept that 'Lacan leaves the task of supplying arguments to the reader'. As most theorists provide



arguments as well as claims, this admission would seem to place a heavier than usual burden on the kind of venture Fink is undertaking here. But Fink often appears reluctant to rise to this demand, with the result that Lacanianism is more often than not left rather exposed.

It is worth dwelling on the critique of ego-psychology, as it shows the effects of leaving the above-mentioned dilemma hanging. After some sound generalities about how it is counterproductive to treat a patient ego to ego, because the patient ends up hostage to the contingent and often unanalysed preconceptions of the analyst, Fink proceeds to discuss Lacan's alternative approach by appealing to his 'four different readings' of Ernst Kris's case of the man who craved fresh brains. This case concerns an academic who has the delusional belief that he is a plagiarist. After having finally overcome his resistance to publishing his work, he is browsing through the library one day when he discovers to his horror that a book written by one of his colleagues already contains the ideas he has just put into print. He concludes that he must have plagiarized the book, as he had read it some years before.

In his first interpretation Lacan seems to concur with Kris that the patient has an enduring shame about his father's inadequacy and an acute awareness that the latter was dwarfed by his own father. His belief that all his own ideas are plagiarized is thus a way of diminishing himself in order to prop up his father (to make him grander than his grandfather). The patient's response to Kris's interpretation is to disclose that whenever he has finished his appointment with his analyst, he goes off in search of a restaurant that sells his preferred dish – fresh brains. Lacan states that the patient's admission here is the kind of 'response elicited by an accurate interpretation'; it involves "a level of speech that is both paradoxical and full in its signification". The patient seems to announce his overcoming of his predilection for old brains.

In the second interpretation, Lacan claims that Kris's investigation into whether the patient really did plagiarize his colleague (he concludes that this was another delusion) lets the patient off the hook and actually leads him into a premature 'acting out', whereby seeking out fresh brains is nothing other than a symbolic hint that the symptom is about to be displaced again and that the analyst himself needs to take a different (less reality-based) approach. In the third interpretation it is Kris's egoistic attempt to inculcate his own bourgeois ideas about intellectual property into the patient's head that amounts to a dose of fresh brains (an injection of the analyst's ego-libido, as it were).

The fourth interpretation is the most overdetermined. The patient is now protecting himself against the effects of his grandfather's demands upon the father to be original and think for himself. The patient desires to justify the father's weakness retrospectively as a legitimate defence against the crushing pressure of the grandfather's demands. The patient adopts a kind of 'mental anorexia': 'Thinking nothing is the way for him to maintain a protected space for desire (just as eating nothing is for most other anorexics).' Lacan now suggests that the man really goes on a hunt for a meal of fresh brains because his analyst's interpretations were leading nowhere and bringing up no new fresh ideas. Fink then adds another reading on top of the four just outlined. 'Pretty as it is', he says, Lacan's diagnosis 'does not seem to me to be the best possible diagnosis for Kris's patient.' Fink points out that the patient does not seem short on ideas after all; 'he just did not recognize his own ideas as worthwhile until he heard them repeated or enunciated by someone else.' This leads Fink to diagnose Kris's cerebrophage as suffering rather from obsessional neurosis, because he can only make thinking attractive by believing that he is stealing his ideas from somebody, so that the whole process is somewhat taboo and only thence desirable. Fink doesn't say whether it is because the dish of fresh brains should now be understood as somewhat *outré* that the man seeks it out.

While Fink has performed a useful service in bringing together Lacan's different interpretations of the fresh brains man, he bizarrely seems to take this cacophony of interpretations as evidence of the therapeutic efficacy of the Lacanian 'symbolic dimension', as against the dual relationship involved in ego-psychology. But what has actually been produced is (at least) five different interpretations of the aetiology of delusional plagiarism and as many symbolic interpretations of eating fresh brains, with no indication how to choose the right interpretation in either case. As much as anything, it shows that this patient would have been treated entirely differently depending on which year he visited Lacan, which is surely to fall back into the traps of ego-psychology.

Looking around for some reasons why Fink believes Lacanianism is superior to ego-psychology, we find at the beginning of the same chapter the suggestion that the results of ego-psychology are 'sterile and unproductive' in that 'it led to very little in the way of a renewal of research and theorization, whereas Lacan's led to huge increase in both (like a good interpretation in the analytic setting, it generated a lot of new material)'. In fact, this criterion keeps coming up in the book. Fink

claims that 'an interpretation's soundness [is] found only in the new material it produces'. 'Sound' here clearly has a different function from 'correct', not least because new material might equally well be generated by haphazard and off-the-mark interpretations. One could object that this criterion of productiveness seems suspect because it potentially provides the perfect alibi for the avoidance of real problems. But still more troubling is the suggestion that productiveness is also serving as the main criterion for evaluating the power of Lacan's own theories. For Fink, tensions in Lacan's texts are not to be 'resolved, but explored and worked on', and indeed it seems that the more the texts incite divergent interpretation, the more valuable they are.

This view surely will not help justify the ideas of Lacanian theory. It can be argued, furthermore, that any affirmation that Lacanian theory is itself no meta-language must lead to unsustainable and paradoxical results. The basic Lacanian idea that gives rise to this view is that the position of enunciation in language can never coincide with the position expressed in the statement. This is taken to mean that any statement at all, from everyday speech to the statements of theory, is subject to the constraint that it cannot express a truth and simultaneously express the criterion that guides its being taken as true. Psychoanalysis lives off this discordance. But because all theoretical utterances are also subject to this aspect of enunciating speech, psychoanalytic theory itself must also be the object of psychoanalysis. Hence Fink suggests that it is consistent for Lacan in his seminars and texts to put himself 'in the position of an analysand', fashioning utterances which demand extreme interpretative effort, because such utterances are the object of psychoanalysis, and statements about the theory of psychoanalysis must be treated in the same way. Lacan's utterances should be treated as symptoms to be deciphered, not as theories. *But*, does he then provide any help with possible criteria for interpreting his symptoms? And what is 'psychoanalysis' if it cannot give some account of its own theoretical position? How do we know we are interested in it for the right reasons? Ultimately, doesn't this line on what Lacan is doing in his work lead inexorably to the conclusion that it is Lacan's texts that become the privileged object of analysis, and that the central task of psychoanalysis is the analysis of Jacques Lacan, the fascinating master whose utterances have no need of justification?

One cannot say that the way out of the aforementioned paradox is to say that it describes how every theory has a blind spot and hence an 'unconscious', as this in turn will introduce a concept whose validity is in question. Freud, of course, in like manner suggested

that philosophers were after all paranoiacs, and Fink too doesn't spare us the thought that the assumption that 'theory has to produce a discrete, discernible object (a turd of sorts) for us to examine (admire or scorn)' is an 'obsessive standard'. Lacan, by rejecting finished theory or system, apparently takes a more hysterical stance. A strained smile is the only proper response to such suggestions.

It may be, though, that these results represent the terminus of all Lacanian theory, not just that which more or less explicitly absolves it of justifying itself. For if Lacan changed his mind so much throughout his writings, surely the one thing that he never stopped attempting to formulate is the central mystery of symbolic castration. One of the main problems in reading Lacanian theory concerns the multiplicity of formulations of what this involves. How exactly is the lack in the Other's desire supposed to be overcome? Is it that the subject almost vitalistically attempts to evade being completely identified in terms of a specific demand of the Other (an identification which would negate desire's original and abyssal freedom)? This seems to be Fink's reading. Or is it desire's abyssal freedom that is the problem in so far as it is the unknown desire of the Other, which must be fled by acceding to stable, signifying identity, despite the cost? What is being avoided and what accepted in each version seems to be the inverse of the other. But perhaps the deeper problem is that the radical negativity that Lacan tries to isolate in the notion of symbolic castration seems to bore a hole through any attempt to mediate it stably in theory. If we accept that, though, we end up drifting towards the view that the act of the paternal function in symbolic castration is nothing other than a 'It is thus because I say it is thus' – the lack of justification for symbolic castration being now made into a virtue. But once that is affirmed as the ground of the law, it quickly follows that anyone who claims to enunciate definitively a true theory of symbolic castration would at the same time be excepting himself from symbolic castration. In other words, if Lacanianism is true, then it is not true. Therefore Lacanianism must adopt the structure of a conspiracy if it is to survive. It can only sustain itself through a myth of a primal father who does indeed exclude himself from the law (Lacan himself), and through ever more ingenious strategies for keeping our desire for explanation unsatisfied. Lacanianism would thus have an interest in keeping a smoke-and-mirrors approach going.

Yet if Lacanianism is indeed structured like a conspiracy, who is all this Lacanian *theory* for? Why the apparent search for fresh brains?

Christian Kerslake

CONFERENCE REPORT

Time, memory and history

7th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology,
University of Heidelberg, 23–26 September 2004

Jointly organised by the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Heidelberg, the Society for Philosophy and the Science of the Psyche, and the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry, this conference was an opportunity for mental health clinicians and philosophers to further the project of a philosophy of psychiatry in discussions grouped around the themes of time, memory and history. There were four main aspects to the encounter between philosophy and psychiatry staged by the conference: the task of conceptual clarification and the orientation of psychiatry; pure philosophical analysis, which opened up spaces for a new thinking of pathology; the delineation of features of psychopathology which could illuminate existing philosophical concepts, and, finally, the application of philosophical theories to direct psychiatric treatment of a variety of disorders.

The main philosophical protagonists within the conference were Husserlian phenomenology, particularly as applied through Jaspers's seminal work on psychopathology, and adherents of concepts of narrativity and narrative time derived from appropriations of Ricoeur's work. For example, Nassir Ghaemi's paper argued for a return to the pluralistic model of Karl Jaspers as an escape from the eclecticism of the biopsychosocial model in psychiatry. A similar thematic of a return to phenomenology as a basis for other forms of thinking psychopathology emanated throughout the conference, for example in Dan Zahavi's talk of the pre-eminence of a self-referential concept of selfhood in any discussion of narrative accounts. However, there was occasionally in these papers a lack of historical analysis as to how the phenomenological method would be mediated by technological and social changes in late modernity.

Giovanni Stanghellini attempted just such a discussion in his account of the 'pornographic self' conducted through a parallel reading of sociological accounts of late-modern selves and first-person accounts of eating disorders. The 'imperative flexibility' of these selves accounted for a new form of embodiment which did not rely on situated bodies, but rather on an instrumental attitude towards embodiment as something to be manipulated. Stanghellini offered a suggestive form for a new psychopathology which could be conducted in terms of deriving pathological phenomena in accordance with the loss of different forms of self: schizophrenia arising from the loss of a pre-cognitive self; melancholy, the loss of a narrative self; and eating and personality disorders from the loss of discursive/relational selves. Robert Kimball complemented this picture with his account of mania and depression as disorders which are characterized through breakdowns in time, and the loss of narrative time.

Different forms of thinking temporality other than through a Husserlian phenomenological analysis of a temporal field of present, past and future gave a more complicated and nuanced account of the relation between temporality and pathology. Iben Damgaard's interesting paper on Kierkegaard's philosophy contrasted the form of temporality encapsulated by Judge Vilhelm in *Either/Or* with Kierkegaard's concept of temporality in his later works. The judge refers to himself as an editor of experience, ordering experience into a narrative whole in relation to a linear temporal flow, but this form of temporality is problematized in Kierkegaard's later writing, which emphasizes discontinuities and interruptions in the flow of time. James Phillips pointed to similar congruences in the work of Freud and Heidegger. Rather than being viewed as a developmental theory, Freud's work stresses interruptions and intensities to experience, as well as forms of repetition and retrieval which are unwilling.

Keith Ansell-Pearson's paper on Bergson's 'curious time of memory' outlined an image of memory as outside time, as a form of dead time, that one could be stuck in either creatively, as in the form of the Proustian involuntary memory, or pathologically, in terms of some states which could be equated with schizophrenia. The question he did not have time to address was what the criteria are for entering into such a time: what would determine either a creative or a pathological entry into the 'dead time' of memory?

The question of history, in a philosophical sense, was perhaps the most underrepresented in the conference, despite historical symposia on the Nazi 'euthanasia' programme and the history of psychiatry. The question of the mediation of forms of mental disorder by historical and cultural changes in forms of experience was occasionally addressed, for example in Ian Prenelle's paper on urban psychosis, which used Debord and Benjamin to attempt to think the concept of schizophrenia as a historical and changeable experience which is itself being constructed as an image through media, user and psychiatric representation. This was one of the few papers to reference the Marxist tradition directly and pointed to one of the main philosophical gaps in the conference.

Nevertheless, the event provided a vast and diverse range of thought on the interrelationship between philosophy and psychiatry, ranging from Werdie van Staden's intriguing attempt to use neo-Fregean relational theory as a treatment typology and modality for borderline personality disorder, to important conceptual work on the philosophy of neuroscience. Overall, the conference provided a mine of resources for all of us working in the field, attempting to resist the dominance of biological approaches within psychiatry.

Alastair Morgan

This two-day conference provides a critical forum to debate the relationship between globalisation and the problem of representation. Can globalisation be represented, or is globalisation a further challenge to the possibility of representation itself? It brings together academics, practitioners, journalists and activists to transgress the traditional disciplinary boundaries and the theory/practice divide.

The Global City
International Relations
Democracy, Politics and Economics
Virtuality and Representation
Texts and Locations
Globalising Identity
Objects and Spaces: Architecture and Design
Culture Industry
Revisited
Imaging The Globe: Art And Ethics

CALL FOR PAPERS

Globalisation & Representation

12-13 March 2005
 School of Historical and Critical Studies
 Faculty of Arts and Architecture
 University of Brighton




Mike Davis
 Esther Leslie
 Achille Mbembe
 Charles Harrison
 Lindsey German
 Terry Eagleton
 Sue Gollifer
 John McKean
 T J Clark
 Julian Stallabrass
 Kate Soper
 Geoff Eley
 Alex Callinicos
 Neil Lazarus
 Jonathan Woodham

www.brighton.ac.uk/globalisation

For further information contact:
a.rupprecht@brighton.ac.uk

✱
University of Brighton

Subscription rates 2005

Individual Subscribers

6 issues – UK: £27 Europe: £32/€48 ROW surface: £33.50/\$54 ROW airmail: £40/\$66
12 issues – UK: £48 Europe: £57/€84 ROW surface: £61/\$98 ROW airmail: £74/\$120
Student rate – UK: £22 Europe: £26/€39 ROW surface: £28/\$46 ROW airmail: £35/\$56

Libraries and Institutions (agency discount 10%)

6 issues – UK: £62 Europe £67/101€ ROW surface: £70/\$110 ROW airmail: £77/\$124

Back issues: Subscribers £4.95/€8/\$9 per copy Non-subscribers £6.00/€9/\$11
Institutions £12/€17/\$20 (10% discount for orders of 10 or more)

Bound back sets (1–75) in five handsewn burgundy hard-cover volumes
including indexes: £495/\$745 plus p&p (surface) UK: £10 ROW: £20/\$30

A list of contents of back issues is available from the
Radical Philosophy web site at: www.radicalphilosophy.com

Radical Philosophy INDEX (1–60)

Subscribers £5.00/\$10 Non-subscribers £7.50/\$12 Institutions £12.00/\$20

NEW CONTACT DETAILS: Radical Philosophy Subs, McMillan-Scott Subs Services,
Garrard House, 2-6 Homesdale Road, Bromley, BR2 9WL
Tel 020 8249 4444 **Email** rp@mcmsslondon.co.uk

All prices include postage. Cheques should be made payable to *Radical Philosophy Ltd*
We accept Visa, Access/Mastercard, Switch & Eurocard. When ordering please state your card no.
and expiry date. Online subscriptions (secure link): www.radicalphilosophy.com

CONTRIBUTIONS

Please send *either* by email attachment (Word) *or* mail 6 copies clearly typed on one side of A4 paper, double-spaced and including a one-paragraph summary and word count. Articles should not normally be longer than 8000 words, to:

Radical Philosophy, c/o Mark Neocleous,
Department of Politics, Brunel University,
Uxbridge, UB8 3PH
email: Mark.Neocleous@brunel.ac.uk

Material is accepted for publication in *Radical Philosophy* on the understanding that copyright is assigned to Radical Philosophy Ltd unless other arrangements are explicitly made. Where copyright is held by Radical Philosophy, up to ten copies of any article may be reproduced for teaching purposes without charge, provided that *Radical Philosophy* is acknowledged as the original source.

BOOKS FOR REVIEW

Peter Osborne, Middlesex University, White Hart Lane, London N17 8HR
email: P.Osborne@mdx.ac.uk

NEWS items and **LETTERS** are welcome. They are subject to editing before publication.

Please send details of events, reports, etc. to:
Radical Philosophy, c/o Mark Neocleous, Department of Politics, Brunel University,
Uxbridge UB8 3PH. **email:** Mark.Neocleous@brunel.ac.uk

ADVERTISING

Radical Philosophy, c/o Stewart Martin,
25(a) Cann Hall Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 3HY.
email: stewart.martin@talk21.com

Rates: £220 per page £110 half page £65 quarter page (plus VAT)

Leaflet inserts: £165 per 1000 (plus VAT)

Copy deadlines: 6 weeks prior to publication

Journal appears: 2nd week of January, March, May, July, September, November

COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

Kevin Magill, 18 Compton Road, Wolverhampton WV3 9PH
email: k.magill@wlv.ac.uk

EDITORIAL PROCEDURE

Radical Philosophy is run by an Editorial Collective of ten members, who work on a voluntary basis and without any outside support. The journal appears six times a year. Each article submitted is read and refereed by at least four members of the Editorial Collective, one of whom is appointed Article Editor and takes responsibility for communication with the author. The Reviews Editor is responsible for commissioning reviews and for relations with publishers.