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The Mass Reading Event and the Citizen-Reader

SARAH BROUILLETTE AND LINA SHOUMAROVA

Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo. *Reading Beyond the Book: The Social Practices of Contemporary Literary Culture*. Routledge, 2013.

Reading Beyond the Book presents the results of an extensive program of research into what the authors call mass reading events (MREs). It features case studies of the Richard and Judy Book Club, *Canada Reads*, and a variety of One Book, One Community (OBOC) programs: from Seattle Reads, which was the first program of its kind, and went on after its 1999 launch to become the basic toolkit for OBOC programs all over the world, to Get Into Reading, a grassroots program that aims to have Liverpool's underprivileged communities reading classic literature together. The broad purpose of *Reading Beyond the Book* is to study the "production, promotion, circulation, and reception" of MREs, as a way of exploring "why a feeling for reading and sharing books persists in North America and the United Kingdom in a digital age" (2).

Fuller and Sedo suggest early on that MREs are evidence of the way that "literary experiences" are now extended through a variety of print and nonprint media, such as films, author events, and book festivals, while publishers are eager to involve their titles in any effort that might allow content to be repurposed across media platforms. As Simone Murray's recent book on "the adaptation industry" eloquently shows, publishers and other media companies eager to market their selected lead titles push audiences "to consume near-identical content across multiple media" (Murray 18) and to view literary reading as a cross-platform "media experience." For Fuller and Sedo, MREs are a form of entertainment similarly well-suited to the intermedial spectacles of the twenty-first century. Participants in MRE activities can expect to be entertained while gaining knowledge and enjoyment from their engagement with a book's story and "its extratextual aspects" (205). They can also expect not to feel pressured by any long-term commitment to a face-to-face book club, or by having even to read the book.

Fuller and Sedo's initial question, then—why does the book persist?—might seem a

little strange, since they themselves go on to show that the book persists because of its very adaptability to current market conditions, because of the ways in which it has been ingeniously reimaged and repackaged. Instead of any tension, there is rather a symbiosis between the book as a form and its translation into remediated literary experiences. Indeed, where their research subjects—be they ordinary readers and MRE participants, or librarians and other cultural intermediaries involved in MRE production—continue to insist on a tension, Fuller and Sedo come to suspect that these readers’ self-conceptions lend themselves to conservative approaches to reading that preserve it as an elitist activity in the cultural hierarchy.

In their account there now exists a large-scale “reading industry” committed to the manufacture of both material goods and ephemeral experiences for profit, and consisting of “the organizations, institutions, and businesses” that produce artifacts and events for the reader-consumer (16). This industry includes, importantly, not-for-profit agencies, such as public libraries and arts organizations funded either through public funding or—as is increasingly common—through combinations of private and public monies. Given how public agencies are asked now to account for every penny, measure every impact, and prove their legacy, even those players in the MRE field who are not primarily commercially motivated have to be ever conscious of the necessity of “securing funds, brokering deals with for-profit organizations, and accounting for money spent in terms of audience participation, artifacts distributed, and media visibility” (18).

Fuller and Sedo’s account of how money circulates through MREs is, in its capaciousness and breadth, an unprecedented contribution to the study of the contemporary literary economy. There is a perceived ethos of social inclusion and accessibility in MREs, which often involve free public talks, book group discussions, film screenings, visual art displays, and musical performances. But these events, along with free or discounted copies of books, need to be paid for. Costs are usually subsidized by the organizing public library services, which broker deals with other agencies (local newspapers, radio stations, museums, theatres, cinemas, galleries, schools, publishers, et cetera) that can provide in-kind contributions or share in promotion costs for events. They also look for sponsors, and have found willing participants in the likes of Boeing, Target, Allstate and Motorola—companies that presumably like the prestige associated with books and the socially conscious appearance of the MRE model.

Yet Fuller and Sedo show that understanding the economic determinations and consequences of MREs requires more than an account of how they are financed. Also relevant is a consideration of the political economy of the media industries, specifically MREs’ partnerships with TV and radio broadcasting companies and with transnational publishing corporations, which seek any opportunity to make titles

visible (and to be clear, while there is limited evidence that MREs make new readers, they are good at making one title sell well for a while). MREs can also be seen in the context of the neoliberal displacement of the idea of culture as a public good, emphasizing how all culture can and should be commercially viable. Relatedly, on a local level, class affiliation plays a role as well in determining participation in mass reading events. Some people are motivated to participate because they are worried about social degeneration in their communities and they have the time and the means to attend to such matters; others do not participate because they think that libraries and reading are for wealthy white people. Still others, such as recent immigrants, often lack not only the economic means for participation, but also the cultural capital necessary to understand and engage with “the modes of belonging and identification” (230) that these events promote.

What Fuller and Sedo want to indicate, then, is some tension in the fact that, against all this certainty of economic determination, the people involved so crucially in this “reading industry” tend to distinguish their practice from any kind of mass culture, which they continue to perceive as failing to afford the kinds of personal development, civic engagement and deep reflection that reading encourages. They hold on to their faith that reading can be “an individually transformational, educational, therapeutic, creative, and even ‘civilizing’ experience”; and they embrace “the ideal of shared reading as a way of building community and improving cross-cultural understanding in urban centers” (3). So if there is a way in which reading seems to have “shed its popular image as a serious, solitary, and academic pursuit” (14), nevertheless, for many of the cultural intermediaries and everyday readers who are the focus of *Reading Beyond the Book*, the aura attached to reading books has to be maintained for it to have the resonance that it does.

The case studies of the Richard & Judy Book Club (RJBC) and the *Canada Reads* radio competition, both discussed extensively in the book, exemplify this point. The RJBC was part of the *Richard & Judy Show*, broadcast on the commercial Channel 4 in the UK. Modeled after Oprah Winfrey’s televised book club, the RJBC followed the familiar format of daytime TV magazine programs. It featured in-studio presentation of the book by the hosts, a discussion with guest celebrity reviewers and edited sequences featuring interviews with the authors or providing context to the book’s story. Fuller and Sedo argue that through such communication strategies, as well as in the selection of texts across a range of literary genres, the book club promoted reading “as a pleasurable and accessible activity” (58) and the show’s popular hosts were perceived by their audience more as “trusted guides” than as authorities in book reading.

The annual *Canada Reads* competition, on the other hand, is broadcast over five days on the radio of the state-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which

has traditionally upheld the mission of fostering a sense of national unity and identity through its programming. *Canada Reads* adopts the reality television model of a *Survivor*-style competition and features a debate between five Canadian celebrities, each defending or “championing” a book. Every day, a book is voted off until one title is chosen as the one that “all Canada should read.”

Fuller and Sedo identify differing views among readers—both participants and non-participants in MREs—about the cultural work that these “reading spectacles” do. Some readers point out that such programs have the benefit of making more people interested in books and reading or, in the case of *Canada Reads*, of informing listeners about Canadian cultural products. Others are more skeptical of literary discussions being featured as part of commercial media, especially in formats such as daytime TV or reality shows transposed to radio. Some readers view the book reading that these shows promote as a “disingenuous” attempt “to make a highbrow practice into a popular culture product” (109). In the case of *Canada Reads*, furthermore, many express unease about the compatibility of this popular genre of entertainment and the CBC Radio’s cultural and national mission.

Respondents in Fuller and Sedo’s study, particularly those who are suspicious of the success of MREs, frame their answers within a hierarchy of cultural taste, the very hierarchy which the producers of these shows claim to work against. These participants articulate a distrust of the commercialization and popularization of books, securing in such a way a “claim to good ‘literary’ taste” (81), counterposed against the shows’ “homogenizing effect.” In this “dance of distinction,” as the authors call it, the readers attempt “to distinguish themselves against popular culture by reiterating that hierarchy even in the face of its apparent dissolution” (86).

The authors argue, hence, against Jim Collins’s recent claim that popular culture has been “thoroughly destigmatized” (Collins 19). Their difference with Collins is probably one of degree, however: in Collins’s approach, literature very much retains its elite aura. He simply points out that this elite aura is an attractive property for those eager to sell niche literary experiences via Miramax films or coffee shops decorated with murals of famous authors and choice literary quotes. (For instance, “There’s no money in poetry, but then there’s no poetry in money either” -- Robert Graves.) The argument of *Reading Beyond the Book* is a little different. The authors suggest that the assumed superiority of literary reading helps to preserve the MRE’s fundamentally conservative orientation, even as it grounds the democratizing cultural project imagined by organizations and participants.

This conservatism has several facets. There is for example the easy alignment of MREs with contemporary neoliberal policy pieties, which place culture in service to

the economy and to the social production of consumer-citizens (or, at best, citizen-consumers). There is the preference that MREs show for mainstream realist fiction produced by the publishing branches of transnational media corporations over, say, avant-garde poetry put out by a small press. There is the related emphasis on a work being eminently “discussable” (at the level of characterization and plot; form is largely irrelevant to MREs) and never “too difficult” (27). Selected works often confirm rather than complicate received ideas about culture, race and class, and inducing concerted political action is rarely among their goals. There is, finally, what Fuller and Sedo identify as the MRE’s perpetuation of the basic “ideology” of reading, which celebrates it as an activity that magically transcends the very commercial concerns that provide readers with their materials.

Fuller and Sedo differ here from Jim Collins, who is largely sanguine about the way in which the literary has converged with other media in recent years. When Fuller and Sedo notice that some crucial players in the reading industry insist on retaining some distinction between culture and commerce (25), they are bothered by these players’ failure to achieve self-awareness. Seeing themselves as the “unfortunate scholarly products of [what Harold Bloom dubbed] the ‘New Cynicism’,” the authors adhere fiercely to the orthodox cultural studies positions: first, that reading is always a “social and political act performed by embodied individuals,” and second, that “all cultural activities have ideological effects” (41).

The logic of this positioning is perhaps clearest in their account of the working practices of three of the women at the core of One Book One Community (OBOC) programs: Nancy Pearl and Chris Higashi, co-founders of Seattle Reads, and Jane Davis, founder of Get Into Reading in Liverpool. Each of these women’s work is highly gendered, belonging to those professions in which the emotional work of social care is feminized and often underpaid (203). Fuller and Sedo describe their activities on behalf of MREs as “an act of romantic love lived out in public” (171), and argue that such love comes at a substantial cost. As scholars of cultural work have thoroughly established—the present volume cites Mark Banks’s *The Politics of Cultural Work* (2007) and David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker’s *Creative Labour* (2011)—the “labour of love” is easily exploited exactly because it is so heartfelt. So for Chris Higashi, who can truthfully claim “I *am* the Center for the Book,” it is clear that a high level identification with her work produces a welcome adrenaline rush, inspiration, and the pleasure of sociability and success, but also the physical and mental stress endured in the provision of programming (189). Fuller and Sedo argue that by acknowledging the cultural work involved in putting MREs together, we “interrogate” the assumption that “reading is a social good.”

The question that then arises for us is this: why does an adherence to this idea of read-

ing as an embodied “social and political act” determined by current economic and political imperatives necessarily forbid faith in the transformative power of reading (or any other experience, conducive to anti-market thinking, based in the contemplation of culture)? Indeed, especially given the conditions that they outline—conditions highly favourable to mainstream literary reading experiences and averse to anything too challenging or disruptive—wouldn’t it be a good idea to hold on to those moments in any cultural phenomenon when a non-market impetus is evidently at work? If, as Nicholas Brown has recently claimed, “a plausible claim to autonomy is ... the precondition for any politics at all other than the politics of acquiescence to the dictates of the market” (n.p.), isn’t there some promise in the fact that people involved in MREs are suspicious of attempts to reduce their cultural pursuits to their market value?

A similar question can be asked in relation to the potential of shared-reading programs to bring about concrete political and social change. Fuller and Sedo don’t see such potential, but they do acknowledge the ways in which the community engagement that these events offer, although apolitical, can be a source of personal empowerment for participants. Such engagement doesn’t happen in a politically active public sphere, which in the twenty-first century has been impoverished after years of privatization and cuts to cultural and social programs. Instead, MREs and the reading communities that they bring together are interpreted as potentially part of a gentler, “intimate public sphere” (borrowing Lauren Berlant’s concept) that provides some relief from the complexity of everyday life and allows for the enactment of affective notions of citizenship and belonging. It is also within this sphere that we can observe what Northrop Frye called “the principle of life imitating literature”—life experiences increasing in value “when something like a literary shape can be discerned in their chaotic phenomena” (Frye 57). MREs ensure a narrative thread from book to real life through, on the one hand, the selection of books which reflect and represent the history, geography and stories of local communities and, on the other, through the organization of such literary events as author’s readings or bus tours of the places where the book is set, which blur the line between fiction and documentary as well as between author’s and readers’ lives. For readers, participation in such events enhances their learning about their communities, while also creating an intimate connection with the authors. More importantly, it satisfies a generally felt desire to be part of something larger than one’s self, in this case an affective community of readers.

Fuller and Sedo argue that, brief and ephemeral though they are, these moments of connection can give a sense of agency to the participants who otherwise might feel politically disempowered in their everyday lives. They coin the term “citizen readers” to designate this group of committed book fans for whom reading is a form of belonging that enables their coming together as a public and their more meaningful

relationship to both a book's text and their local environment. The term "citizen" does not refer here to an officially sanctioned form of national affiliation; it is not so much the citizen-reader idealized by the producers of the *Canada Reads* competition, as it is the expression of a certain nostalgic longing to connect to and cherish that which makes sense in one's life, in both material and symbolic terms.

The authors stress the apolitical and the often non-representative character of the collectivities thus created. They don't "challenge the ruling relations of power" (213) and indeed, their demographics (white, educated, older women with the requisite economic, cultural and social capital to be able to relate to and enjoy the activities they are taking part in) sometimes leaves other groups (blacks, immigrants) feeling socially and culturally marginalized (240). The kind of social transformation that shared-reading events can be expected to achieve is at the most to improve literacy or mark the beginnings of conversations about cross-cultural and cross-racial understanding (11). But primarily, in Fuller and Sedo's account, MRE participants seek and experience the pleasurable engagement with a world beyond the book's page, a world largely mediated through the visual and participatory precepts of nonprint entertainment and through the economy of the media spectacle.

Though Fuller and Sedo are critical of the apparent conservatism of MREs, they do sympathize with the attempt to take literary reading out of the university classroom and make it the heart of affective experiences (37). They seem to have embraced Janice Radway's dichotomy pitting regular versus academic reading, the former being emotional, genuine, natural, heartfelt, while the latter is cold, "lifeless, abstract," rationalized, formal, and devoid of any relevance to the average person (Radway 3). So while they present their own challenges to MREs, they also challenge those critics who fault MREs for making fiction into the pretext for therapeutic identification with "relatable" characters and for stripping literature of any formal interest or ability to take me outside of—rather than further into—myself.

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Canadian Ghosts and the Narratives of Nation Building

SHAUN STEVENSON

Margot Francis. *Creative Subversions: Whiteness, Indigeneity, and the National Imaginary*. University of British Columbia Press, 2011. 252 pp.

Soon after relocating to Vancouver, British Columbia, I made an obligatory tourist excursion to Capilano Suspension Bridge Park on the North Shore. While struck by the beauty and lushness of a West coast rainforest, the enormity of the trees, and the vastness of the cliffs traversed via narrow, swinging bridges, I found my attention drawn to other things residing in these dense, damp woods. Totem Poles and other Indigenous iconography are scattered throughout the park, signaling something both present and absent in this hallmark depiction of the Canadian wilderness. Whether buried in the trees, or lining the shelves of the park's gift shop, there appeared a history--present, persistent, and yet not named--haunting this otherwise familiar signifier of Canadianness.

In many ways, Margot Francis' *Creative Subversions: Whiteness, Indigeneity and the National Imaginary* is a text about hauntings. Francis frames her analysis around the power of ghosts and the ways in which they become implicated in the everyday geography, real and imagined, of the Canadian experience. Tracing a shift in the historical understanding of ghosts, or "spectrality," from an emphasis on familial hauntings, to the post-enlightenment conception of collective, or national hauntings, Francis explores how whiteness and Indigeneity, and all of their spectral manifestations, are both omitted and conjured up in the symbols of Canadian social life. She investigates the articulation of Canadianness through pervasive yet banal emblems of national purpose, with topics ranging from the beaver, to the Canadian National Railway, to Banff National Park. As Francis notes, these seemingly banal symbols of Canadian nationalism are laden with "strategic absences": knowledge that is generally known, but which is rendered inarticulable (4). Francis' analysis is centered around the question: "when banal emblems of national belonging convey a knowledge that is both articulated and refused, what might this teach us?" (4-5).

The scope of Francis' theoretical foundations is vast yet focused, and in order to explore the meaning of national hauntings, and to root the concept of spectre in an understanding of national discourse, belonging and nation building, she de

ploys the work of a number of theorists. Contemplating the ideas of Freud and Julia Kristeva, and their analysis of the ways in which two seemingly opposite terms – the familiar and the uncanny – circulate through one another, Francis is concerned with how, “the uncanny intrudes on the Anglo-Canadian historical and cultural (un)conscious” (7). Building on the work of sociologists, critical race theorists, feminist and Indigenous scholars, Francis argues that at the center of the nation’s unconscious lies its implicitly white, hetero-masculine assertion of identity, haunted by the uncanny intrusion of Canada’s colonial legacy. Thinking through the work of Michael Taussig, Francis’ analysis articulates how failing to engage with these “public secrets” – histories that are known, yet often denied – perpetuates limited and exclusionary discourses of national belonging (159). The implications of denying the spectral power of public secrets are elucidated as Francis writes, “in so far as Canadians consume versions of the past that do not nourish, the living can themselves become ghostly” (5).

Creative Subversions is as much a text about analyzing these problematic manifestations of Canadian identity as it is about resistance through the critical counter-narratives of artistic practice. While Francis’ analysis of the banal symbols of national commemoration lay bare many Canadian public secrets, she is careful to assert that the power of spectres is not confined solely to our ability to “out” these national ghosts. Drawing on the work of Derrida and Benjamin, Francis writes,

The point is not simply to demystify the public secrets that shape a national consciousness, a project that [...] is tantamount to wanting the power of mystery without the mystery; rather, it is to engage in a drama of re-enchanting the world, or revealing a secret, but only through a “transgressive uncovering” of what is already “secretly familiar.” (5-6)

In each chapter Francis turns her attention to the radical and resistive creations and performances of artists, historical and contemporary – from video artist, Richard Fung’s *Dirty Laundry* (2006) and Cree painter, Kent Monkman’s *Moral Landscape* (2003), to Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan’s humorous performance of Lesbian National Parks and Services (1997) and the Garden River First Nations’ refashioned performance of Longfellow’s epic poem, *Hiawatha*. These artists raise critical questions about the nature of Canadian benevolence “while also articulating alternative visions of the ties that bind in this deeply contested nation” (19). She focuses on the artists’ ability to “cannibalize Canadian culture” in ways that prompt new forms of memory, agency, analysis and activism (19). The artistic works engage in the drama of re-enchanting the banal emblems of national purpose, demystifying the secretly familiar ghosts that haunt Canadian social life, as they “*play with and against* the very notion of belonging” (21).

Framing Chapters Two through Four around a different commonplace symbol representative of Canadianness, Francis unpacks the various ways in which these nationalistic images encapsulate hidden histories. For example, in Chapter Two, entitled, “The Strange Career of the Beaver,” Francis implements a Foucauldian discourse analysis of natural history to explore the anthropomorphizing of the beaver and the ways in which “beaver society” has been idealized, racialized and sexualized, and then transposed onto Canadian society (24). Reflecting on a number of historical writings emerging out of New France during settlement and the fur trade, Francis shows how the beaver was revered for its “laborious and disciplinable nature, its industry and its obedience in work” (23). Emphasizing the hierarchical and repressive structure represented in explanations of beaver society, these narratives worked to shore up the social regimes of New France, demarcating who would be included and excluded in this emerging nation. Perhaps most interesting, and problematic, is the manner in which the revered qualities of the beaver were implicitly directed at Indigenous peoples throughout colonial encounters in order to reflect the very traits that they were believed to be lacking (25-26). When not idealized as brave, stoic warriors, or when perceived to be in the way of acquiring resources and advancing ‘progress,’ Indigenous people were viewed as “wasteful, lazy and far from manly” – indeed unlike the beaver, and thus unlike Canadians (26).

Moving from these norms of social order, to the gendered discourse of beaver fashion (26), to commercial culture and colonial fetishism (35), and finally to the sexualized and degrading slang discourses of the female genitalia (42), Francis examines the beaver’s role in the construction of the imagined community that would come to form the nation. The seemingly banal emblem of the beaver was integral to this national project, “contributing categories that defined some people, primarily European male immigrants, as fully entitled and deserving citizens while others – including all women – were defined as unfit to be full citizens of the “new” land” (45). Through her historical analysis of how the beaver articulates the defining attributes of Anglo-Canadian settler identity, Francis begs us to consider how these ghosts of the past continue to inform and possess the living.

Similarly, in her chapters on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and Banff National Park, Francis interrogates each emblem of Canadian nationalism for its ability to produce and perpetuate a discourse of white national belonging, and to materialize the “regime of the open secret” (127). Francis depicts how the CPR became the emblem of masculinity’s domination of nature in the new continent (60). Likewise, the construction of Banff National Park, perhaps Canada’s most internationally recognizable signifier, worked to reinscribe a white masculinist discovery of and mastery over the wilderness, and ‘virgin’ lands (95). Both of these seemingly banal symbols of Canadianness, embedded in fraught discourses of nation building, naturalize white-

ness and hetero-masculinity as the foundational attributes of Canada's construction, once again calling on the reader to consider how these discourses continue to haunt contemporary Canadian life.

As mentioned, each chapter concludes with an artistic inversion of these problematic and exclusionary discourses of national belonging. These works, enacted and constructed by those very subjects previously excluded or subjugated by these limited national projects, destabilize the taken for granted emblems of Canadianness, and provide new models of belonging and nationhood; they also expose some of the public secrets that continue to haunt the living. The photography of C.D. Hoy for example, presents an alternative version of the Canadian Pacific Railway, depicting the fact that thousands of Chinese labourers were required for its construction, and that bachelor communities made up of Indigenous and Chinese workers were indeed the most integral aspect of nation building at this time (69-71). Certainly, this artistic intervention turns the white hetero-masculine discourse on its head, and as Francis so astutely comments, "The juxtaposition of C.D. Hoy's images with the earlier CPR images suggests that, although the railway secured a distinctly Euro-Canadian hegemony during the first decades after its construction, it also fostered a racially hybrid and predominately male homosocial culture" (74).

Perhaps the most substantial intervention into the limited discourses of Canadian nation building found in *Creative Subversions* are those offered by Indigenous peoples. Francis dedicates an entire chapter to Indigenous responses to "Indianness," as she identifies "Canadians' parasitic relationship to Indigenous peoples" as a central thread of analysis throughout her text (127). Here Francis looks to the ways in which Indigenous artists have played with and against the notion of national belonging through Indigenous responses to the "phantoms of Indianness" (127). While she incorporates a number of Indigenous counter-narratives, one of the most powerful and continuous instances of artistic resistance is seen in the Garden River First Nation's engagement with a classic narrative of the noble Indian: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *Song of Hawatha* (1855). While this poem and its corresponding theatrical performance is often understood as an assimilation narrative, beginning in the late 1890s, the Anishinaabek of Garden River would work within the confines of the problematic discourse to trouble its meaning, legitimizing Indigenous agency through the incorporation of their language and traditional practice, and presenting the Euro-Canadian audiences with the consequences of a colonial legacy, of which was unfolding right in front of them (141). This type of Indigenous counter-narrative asks viewers, and indeed readers of Francis' text, to consider how Euro-Canadian narratives of nation building, and the limited notions of a ghostly "Indianness" that they perpetuate, are both acknowledged and refused in the present moment.

While Francis' analysis initially appeared almost too encompassing, integrating whiteness studies, gender and feminist theory, Indigenous studies, critical sociology, artistic analysis and more, her text offers a fairly comprehensive interrogation on the construction of a limited and continuing problematic discourse of Canadian nationhood. She provides the reader with a number of significant examples of this discourse, along with various ways with which to critically read through and across national narratives. Her turn towards historical and contemporary artistic counter-narratives depicts how Canada's national discourse has never been quite stable, providing a hopeful and ongoing conception of resistance. Further, Francis' interest in ghosts and hauntings allows for a continuous thread and lens with which to understand how these narratives continue to manifest themselves in Canadian social life. In his text *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*, Daniel Coleman writes, "whiteness still occupies the positions of normalcy and privilege in Canada, and anti-racist activity remains hamstrung until we begin to carry out the historical work that traces its genealogy (7-8). *Creative Subversions* makes a substantial contribution towards tracing this genealogy, adding to a breadth of work done around whiteness, Indigeneity, gender, memory and national identity. It stands alongside similar integral texts engaged with the critical investigation of Canadian identity, including, Paulette Regan's *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Sunera Thobani's *Exalted Subjects*, Lee Maracle's *I am Woman*, Eva Mackey's *The House of Difference*, Roy Miki's *Redress* and Coleman's *White Civility*. Francis' text encourages readers to think more deeply about the precarious spaces between memory and forgetfulness, the spectres that haunt these spaces, and what these ghosts might have to teach us about contemporary Canadian society.

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Indigenizing Across Boundaries

AUBREY HANSON

Chadwick Allen. *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. U of Minnesota Press, 2012. xxxiv + 302 pp.

Chadwick Allen's *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* is an exciting new book. *Trans-Indigenous* earns itself a noteworthy place within the growing body of work on Indigenous approaches to research and cultural studies. This book nicely complements works like Margaret Kovach's *Indigenous Methodologies*, Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony*, Neal McLeod's *Cree Narrative Memory*, and Daniel Heath Justice's *Our Fire Survives the Storm* – texts that are grounded in particular Indigenous contexts and that engage in research and interpretation on those terms. Allen explains how he was influenced by the publication of Craig Womack's *Red on Red* and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*, both of which appeared in 1999 (a second edition of Smith's book came out in 2012). He remarks that, at the time, these works seemed to provide “a blueprint for the primary work of Indigenous studies in the foreseeable future: centering Indigenous concerns and perspectives within academic research paradigms and localizing Indigenous theories and analytic methodologies” (xx). He then goes on to raise questions of implementation and actualization for the visions of these key texts:

A decade after the initial publication of these paradigm-shifting works, the realization of Smith's and Womack's calls for new forms of Indigenous scholarship remains largely at the level of potential rather than standard practice. This situation seems especially true within studies of literature and representation. (xx)

The way that Allen contextualizes his questions here is significant. In pointing to Smith's and Womack's writings, he grounds his own text firmly in the ongoing work by Indigenous scholars to theorize and practice Indigenous methodologies – ways of interpreting and researching that are rooted in specific social, cultural, and epistemological contexts. Allen locates his own “intellectual home in American Indian literatures and cultures” (xviii), and the readings in this text “radiate outward” from that base into Māori and other Indigenous cultures across the globe (xviii). It is inspiring to read Allen's writing as he seeks to push this work of Indigenizing

methodologies further to “harness the potential” of approaches that thinkers like Smith and Womack have advocated.

The way that Allen’s work distinguishes itself is through its focus on “trans-Indigenous” methodologies for interpreting Indigenous texts. Allen alludes to a “still-emerging field of trans-Indigenous literary studies” (xxi); this book is my first encounter with a specifically *trans*-Indigenous framework, and I will be keeping my eyes open for other scholars doing this kind of work. Allen explains that he had previously framed his work by using a series of “and” statements (xii), then by using “comparative” approaches (xi-xiv), but felt caught up in a number of tensions, such as the engulfing of the “local . . . in the name of the global” (xiii) and the turning of “together equal” comparisons between Indigenous groups into a re-centering on “dominant settler culture” (xiii-xiv). He has turned to *trans*-Indigenous because he thinks that it opens up greater possibilities for exciting scholarship in Indigenous literary and cultural studies:

The point is not to displace the necessary, invigorating study of specific traditions and contexts but rather to complement these by augmenting and expanding broader, globally Indigenous fields of inquiry. The point is to invite specific studies into different kinds of conversations, and to acknowledge the mobility and multiple interactions of Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and texts. Similar to words like *translation*, *transnational*, and *transform*, *trans*-Indigenous may be able to bear the complex, contingent asymmetry and the potential risks of unequal encounters borne by the preposition *across*. It may be able to indicate the specific agency and momentum carried by the preposition *through*. . . . At this moment in the development of global Indigenous literary studies (primarily) in English, *trans*- seems the best choice. (xiv-xv)

I have quoted this passage at length because it conveys the spirit of Allen’s specifically *trans*-Indigenous framework, while also suggesting the breadth and ambition of his project. His enthusiasm here is well warranted, as he is able to follow up in the rest of the book with readings and studies that realize his spirited introduction.

Allen organizes the body of his text into two parts, “Recovery / Interpretation” and “Interpretation / Recovery,” foregrounding the importance of these projects: recovering Indigenous texts from history or from dominant discourses, and interpreting Indigenous texts from Indigenous perspectives (xvi-xvii). (Part I includes Chapters 1 and 2, and Part II includes Chapters 3, 4, and 5.) Allen explains that “what holds the book together, beyond an attention to formal innovations and several recurrent themes, is a methodology of focused *juxtapositions* of distinct Indigenous texts, per-

formances, and contexts” (xvii). As mentioned above, he intends these juxtapositions to both respect the “intellectual and artistic sovereignty of specific nations” and contribute to “an Indigenous intellectual and artistic sovereignty global in its scope” (xviii). The book’s chapters are successful in demonstrating what this intention means.

In Chapter 1, Allen studies “the 1965 special issue of the *Midcontinent American Studies Journal (MASJ)*, ‘The Indian Today,’” by juxtaposing it with a large number of comparable and/or contemporaneous texts, in a reading that is innovative and meticulously historical. In Chapter 2, Allen examines “American Indian responses to the 1976 American Revolution bicentennial observance” (xxvii), in juxtaposition primarily with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses to Australia’s 1988 bicentennial celebrations. This examination, too, is meticulous and broad in scope. Chapter 3 comprises a particularly stimulating and tangible enactment of Allen’s methodological vision. He reads Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday’s poem “Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919” through three distinct aesthetic traditions: firstly, he reads the poem “as a contemporary, literary version of the kind of pictographic marker used in the customary Kiowa winter and summer counts” (111); secondly, he looks at its syllabics to read it “through understandings of Navajo worldview and aesthetics, particularly as these are expressed in Navajo weaving” (116); and thirdly, he reads it through the Māori “art of carving in wood, stone, and bone” known as “whakairo” (131). These three readings are fruitful, but also help to make an important point about audience in Indigenous literary and cultural studies:

Engaging multiple Indigenous systems of aesthetics expands our appreciation and refines our understanding of how these texts produce meaning and pleasure for multiple audiences, including multiple audiences who identify as Indigenous. In distinct but related ways, Kiowa, Navajo, and Māori conceptions of aesthetic engagement – “beauty,” “power,” and “excellence” – help explain how Momaday’s highly condensed poem both names and overcomes a contemporary anguish over Indigenous separation from ancestors, cultural traditions, and worldviews. (136)

The three readings in this chapter open up Momaday’s text in interesting ways, and I agree with Allen that this question about audience is worth asking. He contends that “the idea of multiple and multiply informed *Indigenous* audiences has not often occurred to literary scholars in the dominant academy,” and argues for a rethinking of how Indigenous literary criticism is formulated in most U.S. English departments (142).

Chapter 4 examines a number of texts from different genres and media that are linked

by “the absence or presence of Indigenous language and the mobilization of literary and artistic strategies that spotlight the power of Indigenous ‘bilingual punning’ and ‘bilanguaging’” – “bilanguaging” meaning “operating between two or more languages and cultural systems . . . within (post)colonial relations” (xxx). Allen’s work here with languages and with “visual and aural empathy” (153) is fascinating and edgy, but evinces a deep respect for the nuanced and culturally specific understandings carried in Indigenous languages. Chapter 5 juxtaposes two longer works: “the book-length sequence of poems *Blood Run* by the American Indian poet Allison Hedge Coke (Cherokee / Huron / Creek) and the book-length sequence of poems *Star Waka* by the Māori poet Robert Sullivan” (xxx). Allen focuses, with both of these texts, on Indigenous technologies in his examination of their contents and structures: “In both their explicit contents and their more implicit poetic forms, Sullivan’s and Hedge Coke’s contemporary texts emphasize waka [vessels or canoes] and earthworks as Indigenous technologies and, more precisely, as Indigenous technologies for settlement” (195). Allen carries out his readings through these technologies in order to illuminate “the focus in each poetic text on Indigenous tenacity, survival, and endurance in the face of settler colonialisms” (195). I cannot adequately describe the intricate, diligent, and imaginative readings that lead to this insight; I recommend reading the book.

Allen’s text makes a number of significant contributions, in addition to its ambitious methodological project and its surprisingly elaborate textual interpretations. He addresses contemporary Indigenous identities briefly but usefully, opening up spaces for diversely located Indigenous people and challenging the assumption that the only “‘authentic’ Indigenous writers” are those with “unbroken” connections to their ancestral “communities, languages, and cultures” (xxxii):

Whether mourned as a loss or celebrated as survivance, the realities of contemporary Indigenous identities describe multiple kinds of diversity and complexity; often, they describe seeming paradoxes of simultaneity, contradiction, coexistence. These qualities are the contemporary Indigenous norm rather than its tragic exception. (xxxii)

In suggesting the complexity of Indigenous identities, Allen looks to “harness this diversity” and to “include” in “Indigenous-centered scholarship . . . realities and representations” that are, again, “trans-Indigenous” (xxxiii). Another significant aspect of Allen’s text is the ways in which it looks to the future. His consideration of futures is central to his discussions of Indigenous identities, of literary and cultural criticism, and of “the persistence and resurgence of Indigenous peoples and cultures within the context of contemporary politics” and “intellectual traditions” (246). Allen’s gestures toward Indigenous futures are optimistic and inspiring, but also historically and culturally rooted.

Allen's *Trans-Indigenous* will be a prominent new book for readers interested in Indigenous studies, literary criticism, and cultural studies. It offers genuinely interesting methodological considerations for taking up Indigenous texts. From imagining counter-narratives to colonialism, to working for collective Indigenous activism that maintain respect for distinct tribal traditions, to allowing methodological approaches to emerge from a text's form and content, to showing how traditional knowledges can be woven through aesthetic systems, *Trans-Indigenous* is culturally rich and theoretically adept. I will allow Allen's words to close this review: "reading through Indigenous juxtapositions reveals the potential for . . . levels of complex patterning and theory within trans-Indigenous scholarship. There is much exciting work to be done" (xxxiv).

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The Strategies of White American Masculinity

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Hamilton Carroll. *Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White Masculinity*. Duke University Press, 2011. 221 pp.

In *Affirmative Reaction*, Hamilton Carroll examines the “devices and strategies” through which “white masculinist privilege” is currently being “reorient[ed],” and thus maintained, in a “posthegemonic” context (2). Responding to widespread claims that masculinity is in crisis, Carroll suggests that, in the wake of “broad transformations that have radically altered the landscape of labor and opportunity in the United States,” white masculinity recuperates itself through a transformation from the universal to the particular (for instance, queer, Irish, “white trash,” working class) “whereby the particular becomes a location from which privilege can be recouped” (6). He provides close readings of a range of texts, including the films *Brokeback Mountain*, *Million Dollar Baby* and *Traffic*, post-9/11 superhero comics, the television series *24* and *American Chopper*, and the lyrics of Eminem; these analyses work to “chart the devices and strategies” through which “white heteronormative white patriarchal privilege” is currently being maintained in and through popular culture (2).

Affirmative Reaction tracks these formations as “symptomatic and opportunistic responses” to the pressures of “domestic multiculturalism and identity politics,” as well as “the globalization of labour” (3). Carroll’s main argument—his “central theoretical claim”—is that “the true privilege of white masculinity—and its defining strategy—is not to be unmarked, universal, or invisible (although it is sometimes one or all of these), but to be mobile and mutable” (10). Carroll uses the term “lability” to refer to this mobility and mutability, repurposing a word used in physics and chemistry to describe the quality of being prone to “displacement” or “change” (10, 9). Carroll offers a series of well-written, engaging, and insightful readings to support this argument. For example, Carroll suggests that *Brokeback Mountain* (which he refers to as “the least queer film about same-sex desire imaginable”) subordinates a narrative about homophobia to a “representation of the erosions of white masculinist privilege” in terms of labour and economic opportunity (17). Carroll exposes the ways in which the film appears unable to represent Jack and Ennis sympathetically without “citing [them] as “real men” and patriotic Americans,” and suggests that the film offers an example of how white men “regain centre stage” by being called “gay men” (16, 12).

While the readings are lively and convincing, I found myself wishing the analyses had engaged more extensively with other contemporary analyses of gender and race. For example, the *Brokeback Mountain* chapter may well have benefited from a discussion of Jasbir Puar's work on "homonationalism," which she describes as a new form of "homonormativity," one that is implicated in "continu[ing] or extend[ing] the project of U.S. nationalism and imperial expansion endemic to the war on terror" (2007, 2). At other points in the book, I wondered how Carroll's analysis differs from, or complements, work on intersectionality. While Carroll does speak to the "symbiotic imbrications" of whiteness and masculinity, and points to the ways in which white masculinity "inhabits a contingent space in which it is altered" in relation to other axes of identity (8), a more sustained comparison of the concept of lability and intersectionality might help the reader to understand what exactly lability is, and how exactly it works, in Carroll's argument.

When the concept is first introduced, lability appears to be a quality that a thing possesses: "to be labile [...] is to be "prone to undergo displacement in position or change in nature"" (10). And yet, when lability is invoked in terms of white masculinity's "response to sociopolitical transformations" through "various strategies," it appears to be something that is deployed or operationalized – thus, presumably, more than just a quality that something does or does not possess (10). Although Carroll defines white masculinity as a "process through which or a location in which heteronormative white masculinity attains or regains privilege," he also speaks about white masculinity as an entity with beliefs, desires and plans (181). For example: white masculinity is said to engage in "sleight of hand" by "citing itself as [...] needy and [...] worthy"; it "turn[s] to the representational politics of identity" as it "attempts to hold on to majority privilege" (10, 6, 23). I wonder, what is at stake in presenting "white masculinity" and "the discourse of crisis" as entities with intentions and strategies?

I'm sympathetic to what I take to be the political position behind this choice; Carroll wants to disrupt structures that maintain white supremacy (7), and to identify and critique the particular set of interests that are produced and maintained through white privilege. But for me this language of "strategy" remains problematic, both within the terms of Carroll's own analysis, and potentially also in relation to larger scholarly conversations around discourse and culture. What one might describe as Carroll's construction of white masculinity as a coherent and self-aware entity seems to diverge from prevailing methodological trends in discourse-oriented cultural critique (as practiced by Judith Butler or Lauren Berlant, to give examples of two scholars cited by Carroll). Obviously diverging from trends is not a problem in and of itself, but in this case I found myself wondering what is gained or lost in attributing (even as rhetorical flourish or political strategy) such cohesion and intentionality to

“white masculinity.”

While Carroll also describes white masculinity as “incoherent, reactive and contingent” and, as cited above, as a process and a location (8, 181), the language of “strategy” makes me a little uneasy: if the identification of intentionality is a criterion (even an implicit one) for identifying and critiquing racism, it becomes all the more difficult to identify the myriad ways in which processes of racialization proceed not only without conscious racist intention but even in sites, venues, and discourses which consider themselves to be, broadly speaking, anti-racist. In other words, granting a level of intentionality to a discursive construct (or, in Carroll’s term, a “process”) such as white masculinity may obscure its workings, and may even inadvertently play into a kind of liberal anti-racism in which intentionality is key to questions of injustice. That said, there may be a trade-off here; perhaps Carroll wants to maintain the language of intentionality in order to attribute responsibility and to avoid what some consider the potentially apolitical results of an analysis that emphasizes the heterogeneity, incoherency, and contingency.

I’ll end by briefly addressing one final aspect of the book that raised questions for me: to what extent are the social formations Carroll describes really new, or, in his language, “post-hegemonic”? As I mention above, Carroll is critical of the notion that white men are socially or politically marginalized in post-World War Two America (a prevailing view, as he notes in the first pages of the book), but he nonetheless seems to employ a framework of historical break or rupture in ways that I would have liked to see further clarified (4). Carroll makes it clear that, although neoliberal economic policies have contributed to an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and to widespread deprivation, white people generally, and white men specifically, have nonetheless maintained disproportionate social, political and economic power (5). So if the crisis of masculinity may itself be “phantasmagoric,” why describe contemporary formations as attempts to “reorient” (47), “reclaim” (73), or “reenfranchise” (159) white masculinity – if it was never disoriented or disenfranchised in the first place? For instance, discussing the immediate post 9/11 context, Carroll speaks of the “recuperat[ion] of a beleaguered masculinity” in the figure of the fireman (58). I’m not sure to what extent the model of the fireman as masculine paradigm was ever really beleaguered – to what extent the recuperation of this figure was ever really necessary. My own inclination, for what it’s worth, would be to highlight the continuities between the cultural formations Carroll describes and earlier iterations of white masculinity; to speak in terms of “intensifications,” or “reproductions” of prevailing norms. That said, Carroll’s close readings are compelling and insightful; *Affirmative Reaction* does offer useful interpretations of certain contemporary formations of white masculinity, and I especially appreciate how Carroll critiques the discourse of white male injury in the context of the social and economic changes that

have occurred over the last several decades in the United States.

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Pity on the Offensive

RICHARD IVESON

Élisabeth de Fontenay. *Without Offending Humans: A Critique of Animal Rights*. Trans. Will Bishop. University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 160pp.

First and foremost, Élisabeth de Fontenay is a philosopher. A philosopher, moreover, who has for decades committed herself to bettering the situation of other animals. I mention this at the outset because, while reading *Without Offending Humans*, not only did I find it necessary to repeatedly remind myself of this fact, but also, because de Fontenay herself would do well to recall an equal level of commitment on behalf of certain philosophers she deals with here. De Fontenay begins, however, with a brief analysis of Jacques Derrida's work on "the animal," which she describes as "both parallel and asymptotic" with her own (2). Thus safely distancing herself from accusations of epigonality, de Fontenay then offers a fine, if rather sedate reading, one that only really comes alive when exploring the insistent motifs of *time* and *sacrifice* in Derrida's *oeuvre*. Here, de Fontenay makes a number of important points, in particular as regards to the tendency of Derrida's notion of sacrifice to oscillate between the historical and the metahistorical (10). Furthermore, she notes that Derrida's "limitless extension" of the sacrificial domain risks falling into the trap of a vulgar evolutionism, one which would ultimately posit Christianity as the "spiritual and social accomplishment of history" (15). To combat this, she argues, any rigorous engagement with the notion of sacrifice must be attentive to the specifics of its emergence (15).

In the two major "philosophical" chapters, de Fontenay turns her attention to the difficulties that arise once one refuses the metaphysics of human exceptionalism. The first, entitled "The Improper" is, however, a frustrating experience. Principally, this dissatisfaction stems from the fact that de Fontenay appears completely unaware of the significant number of important texts produced on just this subject over the last two decades or so – a criticism that becomes all the more pressing as the book progresses. What marks de Fontenay's position as somewhat unusual, however, is that she clearly wants to reinstall some form of distinction that would permit human beings to maintain both absolute priority and absolute superiority. She wishes, in short, to escape the hubris of humanism, but *without offending humans* in the process. To this end, she writes, one cannot allow "unauthorized" incursions from other disciplines (such as zoology and ethology) to "destroy *without remains* the affirmation of the rupture constituted by anthropological singularity, an affirmation that only recourse

to philosophical tradition can supply" (21-22).

In this, continues de Fontenay, it is only prudent to propose what is a minimal, "zero degree" definition of the human that avoids excluding any section, to wit: "a human being is a being born of the natural or artificially provoked union of a woman and a man" (24). Such a definition, however, presupposes knowledge of "man" and "woman" as (gendered) human beings, and is thus clearly tautological: a human being, in other words, is a being born of human beings. Things become simply baffling, however, when, in proposing an argument for a *negative anthropology*, she asserts that the question "what allows us to recognize a man" is "indecent," as "everyone knows right away 'if this is a man'" (24). "Man," it would seem, has replaced the Gods both of negative theology and of the most dogmatic of evangelical Churches. Even more bizarrely, after insisting that "man [*sic*] is a being who neither can nor must be defined" (24), de Fontenay then proceeds to reaffirm just about every definition "tradition" has thus far employed to deem "Man" an exceptional being.

Hence, de Fontenay abruptly halts her summation of recent philosophies of the animal to proclaim instead that "urgency" compels her to repeat "the oft-rehashed criterion of a specifically human language" (39). Only the human, she writes, possesses declarative, ostensive, conversational and performative language – a claim regarding a difference of *kind* stated with all the simplicity of the self-evident. After invoking the authority of Aristotle, de Fontenay concludes that, "in the final analysis," what animals lack "is everything related to *doxa*, to belief, to persuasion, adhesion, and therefore to rhetoric" (40). Here, then, having initially argued that the refusal of any definition of "man" is the only acceptable ethical and political position, de Fontenay now declares "man" to be the sole "ethico-rhetorical" being, bearing alone the exceptional privilege of "*metaphorical power*" (40). Only humans, in other words, converse, believe, and have representations of mental states, not to mention metaphorical language, ethics, politics, and a great deal more besides. Astonishingly, de Fontenay then adds that "we can all agree that deeming this, so close to the thought of the Sophists, what is proper to man has nothing metaphysical about it!" (40).

De Fontenay then goes on to propose not one, but two further defining capacities of mankind, *viz*, the ability to "modify the global structure of the relations proper to the species" and the ability to give oneself "a global representation of the organizing principles of society" (41). Again, all this is stated as a simple fact. One cannot help wondering just what de Fontenay is doing here. Why, given her earlier note regarding the harmfulness of exceptionalism, is she exerting so much time, space, and effort to reinstall anthropological difference? The only answer, once again, seems to be the desire to write a book that will not offend, in this case creationists and dogmatic liberal humanists in particular. Whatever the reason, the process continues: Only humans,

she then contends, are not programmed by their DNA, the unique property of *epigenesis* alone guaranteeing that every human child is “unique every time” (44). With this, de Fontenay thus reiterates one of the most noxious productions of the entire philosophical tradition, one that renders every other animal identical with the species as a whole and thus infinitely exchangeable.¹ If she had perhaps read more widely in the field, however, she would have soon discovered that epigenesis – and indeed cell recapitulation – is increasingly being viewed among geneticists and biologists as characteristic of *all* organic living beings.²

Given this, it is therefore with a sense of vertigo that the chapter entitled “They Are Sleeping and We Are Watching over Them” opens with a condemnation of those who deem other animals to be “lacking in reason and in articulate word,” precisely because this “allow[s] them to be used and abused as tools, as personal property” (96-7). Without any discernible irony, de Fontenay thereafter turns with appreciation to three philosophers who, she claims, courageously *refused* the “separatist vulgate” in favour of human-animal continuism. The philosophers chosen, however, will probably come as something of a surprise: Aristotle, Leibniz, and Husserl.

De Fontenay begins with a summary of what for Aristotle constitutes the *idion* of nonhuman animals: possessing only “the persistence of an impression, which nonetheless already supposes time, the animal does not have the capacity to stop and develop the reasoning that pushes it [*sic*] to act in the direction of the future” (101). This notion of a persistent impression immediately raises questions of *iterability* and of the *trace*, central to Derrida’s critique of metaphysical tradition and its exclusion of the animal. De Fontenay, however, concludes here only that animals, insofar as they lack the middle term necessary for syllogistic reasoning, are thus incapable of judgment and opinion. Here too, de Fontenay appears ignorant of the extensive literature – beginning with Chrysippus and including Plutarch, Porphyry, Sextus Empiricus, and Montaigne – concerning just this question of animal syllogisms.³ De Fontenay, however, merely uses Aristotle as a springboard to repeat, almost word for word, her earlier argument: namely, that “man” is the only “ethico-rhetorical” animal (102).

¹ On this, see my “Animals in Looking-Glass World: Fables of Überhumanism and Posthumanism in Heidegger and Nietzsche.”

² On this, see for example Sarah Franklin *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy*.

³ On this, see Daniel Heller-Roazen *The Inner Touch*, 127-130. Porphyry’s account is particularly interesting, insofar as he invokes *Aristotle* to support his argument that other animals necessarily “participate of reason” (*On Abstinence* III: 6, 101). It should also be noted that de Fontenay’s *Le silence des bêtes* shows clearly her familiarity with all these writers.

Despite this, she then concludes that the “hastily established” Aristotelian human-animal distinction is nevertheless “ambiguous” (102).

With this, de Fontenay turns to Leibniz. As is well known, for Leibniz anthropological difference centres upon the relationship to God, insofar as only human “minds” are “images of the divinity itself ... capable of knowing the system of the universe” and thus “of entering into a kind of society with God” (*Monadology* §83-84). Despite this seemingly unsurpassable exceptionalism, however, de Fontenay locates a crucial conflict – one with clear implications for Aristotle’s persistence of impression – between a continuous and a discontinuous hierarchy of being within Leibniz’s conception of perception, insofar as imperceptible yet multitudinous murmurings “ensure the faultless continuity between sensibility and understanding” (103). Leibniz, explains de Fontenay, resolves this conflict by proposing an anthropogenetic movement of *natural translation*, which posits that certain animal souls already possess the seeds of reason within them as an aptitude that is actualized when its time is right, thus permitting both separation *and* continuity between humans and other animals.

With this in mind, de Fontenay similarly locates a certain continuity within Husserl’s notion of “animality” as the preconstitutional realm, a continuity that conflicts dramatically with his reduction of *actual* animals to “blind modes of instinctual life” (cit. 109). From this brief unfolding and infolding of the three philosophies singled out here, a fascinating glimpse of possibility thus emerges on the border between Husserl’s universal animality and the rigorous Husserlian “as if” that authorizes a certain human-animal “transfer.” This transfer, writes de Fontenay, takes place by way of *empathy* [*Einfühlung*], although this latter must be understood in the specifically Husserlian sense of “an action proper to the transcendental attitude,” one which allows Husserl to give “a rigorous status to the ‘as if’” (109). Through their various institutions of the analogous “as” and the intuitive “as if,” she continues, Aristotle, Leibniz, and Husserl potentially offer an invaluable resource against reductionisms of all kinds. Such a project would indeed be fascinating, and it is perhaps unfortunate that this book was not the result of just such a sustained philosophical exploration.

The question of philosophical rigour, or its absence, brings us finally to “Between Possessions and Persons,” the sole chapter – despite the overtly polemical translation of the book’s subtitle – purporting to offer a critique of contemporary animal rights discourse.⁴ Here, de Fontenay is clearly enraged beyond measure – and often beyond sense – by Paola Cavalieri’s Great-Apes Project, which seeks to establish a form of

⁴ It should be noted that the original French title, *Sans offenser le genre humain: Réflexions sur la cause animale*, contains no specific reference to animal rights whatsoever.

human rights on behalf of chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans.

Specifically, and despite what she has written elsewhere, de Fontenay's focus here concerns the reinscription of other animals within such "struggles for emancipation" as characterize the political domain (48). Nonetheless, she rightly cautions against a naïve and uncritical continuism, as such would be all too easily appropriated by racist discourse. It is with a suggested *lack* of caution, however, that de Fontenay turns to Cavalieri's work. While once again contending that only philosophy is adequate to such task, the "barely conceivable question" of extending rights to Great Apes, she claims, emerges instead out of disciplines such as zoology and ethology (52). Why this question should be "barely conceivable" is not explained. Instead, the very different question of philosophical rigour – and, with that, the question of academic responsibility – imposes itself. Cavalieri's "claims" are dubbed "outrageous," an adjective subsequently extended to the utilitarian theory of Peter Singer as a whole. Singer, writes de Fontenay, proposes "a truly extremist hypothesis" (53). This, she continues, is because, and in direct contrast to animal rights' theorists such as Tom Regan, Singer views the "vocabulary of rights" as simply "a convenient political shorthand" (53). Singer, of course, has always been very clear on this score (a position, moreover, which is hardly "extremist"), and as such it begs the question as to *why* de Fontenay thereafter sets up Singer, and not Regan for example, as *the* representative of contemporary animal rights theory, even going so far as to reduce the entirety of animal rights discourse to what she calls the "utilitarian offensive" (63).

In the most reductive manner imaginable, de Fontenay takes from Singer only the argument that, if vivisection is morally acceptable, then so too are experiments performed on mentally-handicapped humans. Singer, of course, is *not* advocating experimentation on humans, but rather making the point that humans have no moral right to experiment on other animals. De Fontenay, however, misreads into Singer's "scandalous" argument little more than an apology for the crimes of Josef Mengele. Thereafter revoking Singer's status as a philosopher by placing the term within inverted commas, de Fontenay then – and again with no sense of irony – accuses Singer of displaying an obvious "lack of civility" (56).

While I consider the notion of animal rights, in both its utilitarian and neo-Kantian variants, to be inherently flawed, I nonetheless find de Fontenay's "critique" to be at once superficial and deeply offensive to such philosophers who for so many years have committed themselves to the betterment of the lives of our nonhuman kin. Ultimately, de Fontenay's confession of "outrage" serves only to mask a conservative timidity "justified" by recourse to vague notions of morality along with facile statements such as "[t]hat's just the way it is and no argument is needed" (52).

After accusing Singer and Cavalieri of a lack of style and a rhetoric of bad taste, de Fontenay then suggests that such methods are, in fact, excusable “to a certain extent” – given the urgency of stopping horrendous psychic and physical torture (58). This urgency, however, is insufficient to prevent de Fontenay in subsequent pages from deeming Cavalieri’s work “inappropriate,” “indecent,” misanthropic, “saddening,” and, finally, nauseating. This, she continues, is because they fail to respect the “nobility” and “dignity” of Man (59). Such a notion of “dignity” is of course hugely problematic however – as de Fontenay herself notes in her encyclopaedic masterwork *Le silence des bêtes*.⁵ Political theorist Carl Schmitt, for example, persuasively argues that it is nothing more than an ideological construct providing an “especially useful” instrument of imperialism.⁶

In yet another sudden swerve, de Fontenay then declares that the “institution of a rights of animals” is “one of the legitimate struggles of our time” (61). So then, does she agree with rights for animals, or not? Well, yes, on condition that such rights are “not awkwardly mimetic” and attributed as a sort of appendix, but rather that they confer an individual and international ethical codification of “moral status” (62). This, however, is all somewhat simplistic, and would ultimately result in being precisely just such an appendix.

Recalling the necessity of the properly philosophical, in conclusion de Fontenay calls upon Schopenhauer, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty to support her notion of *pathocentrism* based upon *suffering* as that which is “shared by all living beings” (67). Perhaps most problematic here is that for de Fontenay it is the possibility of an empathic *human* understanding alone which marks out certain animals (but not others) as being somehow worthy of concern, and thus rendering “pathocentrism” a uniquely human concern in the process. With this, one can only wonder how far de Fontenay actually strays from the narcissistic contemplation of her own reflection.

Ultimately, de Fontenay is correct to criticize rights theorists for acting as if Nietzsche and Derrida never existed (64); correct in arguing for a thorough deconstruction of the notion of natural right (66); and correct too in suggesting that any discourse on rights demands a deep and nuanced understanding of the philosophical, historical and juridical problematic (66). One might add, however, that such a demand is equally applicable to any *critique* of rights discourse. By contrast, de Fontenay’s conclusion – that we must “find a place in international law that facilitates the existence of a community of the living ... These legal reforms can only be undertaken if the

⁵ On this, see de Fontenay *Le silence des bêtes*, 43-47. Also Giorgio Agamben *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 68-72.

⁶ Schmitt *The Concept of the Political*, 54.

meaning of pity is reevaluated” (132) – sounds both naïve and empty. Lacking depth and nuance, in the final analysis de Fontenay’s plea on behalf of a deconstructionist approach to thinking human-nonhuman relations will serve only to aggravate people *against* such an approach, and that is indeed a great pity.

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In The Meantime Without End

ADAM BROINOWSKI

Eric Cazdyn. *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness*. Duke University Press 2012, 230 pp.

The Already Dead comes at a critical moment in which the vulgarities of the global capitalist system have become increasingly difficult to conceal. The book's approach, at once theoretical and personal, historical and cultural, seeks new modes of revolutionary consciousness that can destabilize both within and without the capitalist system so as to reconfigure everything.

The Already Dead is divided into two parts. In the first, Cazdyn locates the book's origins in his own experience of being diagnosed with leukaemia. As an employee of University of Toronto but a citizen of the United States, his visa was not renewed when he was deemed an excessive burden on the Canadian health care system. Although he eventually negotiated a visa renewal through the courts, this was not before having to pay for an exorbitant course of pharmaceuticals in the US to put his cancer in remission.

Through this exposure to North American medical and immigration systems, Cazdyn identifies a newly emergent paradigm of cancer management which aims to defer death and prolong the present. Akin to the techniques of biopower and the economic management of everyday life, this pharmaceutical based treatment makes the concepts of cure and the terminal less discernible. While relieved to have access to life saving medications, Cazdyn warns that the rise in permanent drug dependency creates a temporal modality he calls the "new chronic". Ostensibly temporary, this unstable condition is not unlike waiting for the US military to pull out of Afghanistan. A deadline is promised, but withdrawal is endlessly put off. As one patient among many who receives regular stabilizers, Cazdyn points to the danger of becoming inured to a permanent meantime of diluted sickness. As unadulterated health becomes a distant and unrealistic dream, he points to how the search for more radical possibilities for cure is put off indefinitely. This is what Cazdyn identifies as an emerging culture of cancer, the chronic state of which will proliferate as diseases are increasingly treated as permanent, creating a long term and continuous dependency on pharmaceuticals.

Refusing to give up on a cure, and as he draws an analogy between this chronic form of cure and the social reproduction of capital, on revolution, Cazdyn seeks ways of overcoming his chronic condition. In the medical system, he proposes that non-instrumentalised models of caring for the dying, together with a skeptical analysis of the medical industry, can assist in disrupting the present regime. Delving into a legacy of thought which works the distinction between life and death, he understands “death as both continuous with life and absolutely discontinuous with life” (204). For those who exist between death and life, who also identified in Zizek’s “undead,” Nancy’s “living dead,” Agamben’s “bare life” and Lock’s “twice dead,” Cazdyn terms “the already dead”. For Zizek the undead is pure difference that exists before and outside life and death, and offers the potential of revolutionary rupture only to regulate and manage it again as the repressed. In Nancy’s *L’Intrus* the introduction of a ‘foreign’ organ to save a ‘host’ complicates the traditional concept of immunity wherein the foreign is rejected. For Cazdyn, the already dead are those who exist in the fissures created from the inherent inequalities and contradictions produced by global capitalism. Since the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2008, aside from a privileged minority who have fortified their financial and physical architecture from the public, Cazdyn includes ‘the rest of us’ who are living together in free fall.

The question for Cazdyn is how to create a revolutionary culture from this political condition. Paradox, in which the terminable (ends) and interminable (endless) coexist, seems to offer a method of overcoming our inner resistances so as to undermine the dominant dichotomies in the meantime. Capitalism, as the hegemonic ideology in North America, underpins its state-corporate organization. Understood as a political force and a way of life that produces liberty, democracy and prosperity, its analytic critique has been over-shadowed by a legacy of virulent anti-communism. The result is that ‘crisis’ and ‘disaster’ are depoliticised, obscuring their causal links to the capitalist system.

Rather than focusing on the immorality of various actors however, Cazdyn recommends the economic interconnections between consumers/workers, the US (privatised) health care system, and related crises such as the GFC and the ‘war on terror’. Prominent US officials seem recently to have even dropped the pretence that capitalism promotes humanitarian democracy and have taken to frank admissions of their geo-economic (and military) objectives of competition and dominance. These are closer to the truth that the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has never been to ‘liberate’ the people of those countries, nor has it been to defeat Al Qaeda, a guerrilla force created-in-part and aided by the US. Instead of going after corrupt officials who show little concern for civic or legal accountability, however, Cazdyn argues that this would seek to reform and reproduce existing social relations. Instead, he calls for a new set of relations within a different system.

The condition of the already dead demonstrates where the work of real democracy is required. Denied health care, poorly paid, barred from quality education and food, disproportionately represented in crime statistics and in prisons, Cazdyn finds that the already dead cannot afford the pharmaceutical course he has procured for his cancer treatment. For these people, the future is a foregone conclusion. While HIV and cancer statistics reflect exposure to globalization as much as immune deficiency, inequity and duplicity in liberal capitalism reflect the fundamental operation of the trinity of capital, nation and state.

In Cazdyn's experience of Canadian immigration policy and the US health care system, he finds the same narrow definitions of productivity informing policy. As a biopolitical operation of molecular intervention, the Canadian government identifies and rejects would-be migrants who are "reasonably expected to cause excessive demands on health or social services" (127). In this logic, state borders are a threshold across which pre-emptive interceptions are regularly conducted. As a bioeconomic operation, the US health care system ensures that those who cannot afford it receive limited or no public health care. Falling into what Cazdyn calls the "global abyss", those who have illnesses that are listed as too costly are denied entry from a body of *émigrés* who seek hospitable healthcare systems. This occurs at the same time as global corporations exploit publicly funded clinical research programs to manufacture and market their pharmaceutical products. Effectively undemocratic, a system resembling a form of economic eugenics emerges.

This link between individual illness and capitalist investment in an over-arching juridico-political temporality also suggests the condition of undocumented workers (mobile, foreign, flexible) who are encouraged to migrate to the US precisely for their cheap and vulnerable labour potential. Originating from a Euro-Japan-American colonial corporate-state apparatus, and evident in the supply chain between "first world" consumers and sweatshops, raw materials and other nefarious operations in the "third world," Cazdyn proposes that globalization has now entered a new phase. Instead of being debilitated by a sense of powerlessness for our consumer-complicity in this system, he argues that understanding how consumption perpetuates exploitation is not enough. Instead he seeks to explore modes of revolution and cure so as to re-shape our consciousness anew.

The criticism of global capital through lived inequalities and ecological destruction engages the personal while opening it out to further possibilities of change. The already dead, who endure in an unbearable present, embody a revolutionary consciousness required for the collective will to change the system. As non-recouperable entities living in the cracks of modernity, whose existence sustains the privilege of the few, their indignation inexorably builds toward rupture from within, so as to open out

toward an unrealized future.

What shift in consciousness might activate this rupture? Regarding the gaze of the camera as reflecting present social relations, Cazdyn turns to the temporal modalities invoked in the works of prominent, yet experimentally inclined Japanese filmmakers (Tsukamoto Shinya, Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Miike Takashi, and veteran Yoshida Kijū). Presenting a choice between an endlessly looped (and apparently safe) surveillance time, or an unbounded time of an unknown freedom, Cazdyn's point is to develop his notion of the new chronic through film. Where allegory and metaphor are apparently eschewed by both generations of filmmakers, he perceives the pointlessness of identifying the criminal with ever-more sophisticated surveillance technologies when the crime is a default outcome of the system. Similarly, Cazdyn never refers to the source of the leukaemia, as in the logic of "the already dead," seeking restitution from specific causation does not seem to matter. Instead of disciplining 'model behaviour', a non-moralizing analysis of systemic production is required.

Cazdyn's analogy between the delaying effects of pharmaceuticals and the deferral of revolutionary consciousness is an accurate diagnosis of the present artificial interventions to prop up a system which has run its course. Instead of accepting prescriptions of public sacrifice through austerity, stubborn indignation fuelled by a full awareness of the imminence of death can be the only assurance against total collapse. The practice of holding life with death in an unbearable present in which the economic imagination has dominated public discourse is, Cazdyn argues, to nurture the seeds of revolution.

Together with the biopolitical tools of repression and depoliticization, the bio-economics of the pharmaceutical industry that determine who may recover from illness and who may not suggest a more diffused but no less effective version of Hobbes' notion of the Sovereign right 'to kill and let live'. In this sense the ethno-nationalist promulgation of "the biological growth of the nation" is overlaid with the state-corporate imperative of economic growth. Even as social and medical illnesses are produced at greater intensity by the greater capitalist system, the burden for these illnesses is increasingly borne by the individual, both financially and in terms of identifying cures. This is vividly apparent in the practice of death insurance investment where cures are considered undesirable as they reduce returns.

In the unapologetic logic of profit and expansion, there are few choices left other than acquiescence to permanent inequality or collective revolution (154). The vulgarity and bluntness of capitalism in its advanced form, Cazdyn argues, is directly proportional to its responding politics of resistance (48).

Subcomandante Marcos' statement "We have nothing left to lose, we are already dead," suggests liberation when death permeates the living. While death and life endlessly cycle in the concept of *bardo* in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the already dead who feed the accumulation of capital and reproduce the power of sovereign rule, as Agamben's theory of biopolitics maintains, indicates an "inner solidarity between democracy and totalitarianism" as the secret of modern power (Agamben 10).

As the most exposed to crisis, as is critical to the functioning capitalism, the already dead embody contradictions that cannot be resolved through "good governance." As ineligible, stateless or criminalized populations continue to expose systemic causation, Cazdyn argues that associationist networks of consumer/workers offer real economic alternatives through transnational, legal and non-violent means. Revolutionary collective projects beyond the nuclear family as the principle organizational unit may interrupt the current regime toward a livable future (200).

For Cazdyn, repossessing death from its ideological use in the interests of the sovereign (terror and sacrifice), is to confront fundamental limits (mortality). Cazdyn cites Antigone who lived in symbolic death, Oedipus who lived with death beneath life, and Hamlet who is animated by the presence of death, to exemplify subjects who risk or carry death with them, in radical refusal of self-preservation to critique the social order and liberate erotic energy to interrupt the smooth chain of production (164). As the undetected malignant tumour that metastasizes and erupts from within, death can reconfigure everything. Rather than managing the death drive (uncanny excess of life), re-thinking the function of healing and cure can re-admit those otherwise repressed and marginalised and produce a set of social relations toward a livable future.

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Architecture's Struggle with Authorship

MATTHEW ALLEN

Mario Carpo. *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*. MIT Press, 2011. 169pp.

Mario Carpo's *The Alphabet and the Algorithm* presents a concise and compelling account of the rise and fall of what he calls the "modern paradigm" of architectural practice from its emergence in the authorial obsession of Alberti to its obsolescence following the "digital turn" of the 1990s. Though this story has been told before, Carpo imparts to it a rare sense of calm inevitability. His book leaves the reader with an enigma: why is architecture still saddled with an authorial ambition apparently so at odds with the current technological and social situation?

The style of Carpo's book should be a model for "popular" works of architecture history and theory. Carpo combines nuanced scholarship of the rise of modern architectural notational systems and the author function in the early Renaissance with a sensitive account of their eclipse by a new paradigm in the last fifty years. All of this is so well argued that when speculative bits pop up they are not nearly as jarring as they would be in an unadulterated manifesto. But, while this is indeed a rhetorical virtue on a casual read, the overextensions of Carpo's description of the present, once noticed, have a way of casting suspicion over everything else. This is unfortunate; a critical reader of Carpo's book would be wise to separate the historical from the projective to give each its due.

Roughly one third of the book distills the conclusions of Carpo's ongoing scholarship into the interplay of mediums and modes of practice of architecture in the Renaissance, a topic which he has presented before in *Architecture in the Age of Printing* (MIT Press, 2001). Carpo succinctly argues that a desire for the ability to reproduce things identically arose at the same time as, or perhaps just prior to, the technological inventions, such as printing, that would satisfy it. That is, means of creating identical copies were not only proliferating where they made economic sense – where, for example, they overcame the limitations of medieval manuscript copying or introduced new efficiencies in manufacturing – but, more profoundly, they were being sought out where their application would not seem necessary. This happened especially in architecture: architects began to produce drawings which would be "copied" in the

form of buildings, even when the drawings themselves were manually created and modern technologies of production played no special role in construction. Carpo argues that it was the desire for to forge links of identity between mind and drawing and between drawing and building that necessitated new notational systems and brought about modern architectural authorship, not the other way around. In this new regime, the architectural project was the drawings themselves, which contained the idea of the building. The building was only a (usually imperfect) copy.

Regarding the turning point between pre-modern and modern architectural authorship, Carpo compares Alberti – the “author” of the modern regime – with his contemporary, Brunelleschi, who is often acknowledged as the first architect-as-author. Carpo dramatizes how Brunelleschi was still operating within the medieval tradition of craftsmanship; his authorial role entailed complete control of the construction of the building through daily contact with workers and tyranny over the job site. Alberti brought this desire for control into the modern era by making it fully mediated. Rather than being present during construction, he would send a set of drawings that completely described the building. The workers would simply copy these at a larger scale. Carpo describes the inventions in geometry and notation that made this possible and the limitations that would lead to its undoing, namely the “notational bottleneck” whereby only buildings that could be described in precisely-measurable drawings could be built. Complex geometries, in particular, were ruled out.

Leaping centuries ahead to the recent past, the second third of Carpo's book chronicles the idiosyncratic evolution of an architectural subculture that sought to create exactly the types of geometries excluded by the Albertian regime. For Carpo, the impetus came not from the new possibilities of technology, but from architects' loose reading of philosophy – in particular *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* by Gilles Deleuze, translated into English in 1993. This fueled a desire for new forms and notational systems which only the computer could satisfy. Carpo identifies two new modes of practice, both of which run counter to the Albertian tradition of authorship. On the one hand, as digital models overtake drawings as the privileged medium of design, the daily work of architects begins to look more like a craft – building in virtual space – than an abstractly mediated pursuit. But perhaps more consequentially, the computer also allows a shift in the object of design: architects no longer need to design individual buildings. Instead they can author “generic systems” (aka algorithms or *objectile*) that can be used to create whole families of architectural forms. And this, for Carpo, is the death knell for Albertian authorship. Today, Carpo argues, the “primary author” sets up a generic system while “secondary authors” or “interactors” merely specify the specific manifestations we call buildings. Carpo's support for this argument draws upon examples at the margin of architecture – a famous tea service by Greg Lynn and a set of tables by Bernard Cache – which are made to

carry the possibility of effortless variability in all realms of design and production, including buildings.

It is in describing what he sees as the new status quo of infinite variability that Carpo ventures almost imperceptibly into the genre of the manifesto. Claims such as “there is no reason why... mass-customized [objects] should be more expensive than... mass-produced” ones (103-4), taken at face value, are manifestly false. Look around you for a second. Most of what you are likely to see are the products of modern mass manufacturing. Windows, exterior cladding materials, furniture and fixtures: all of this is as subject to economies of scale as it was fifty years ago. To pretend, as Carpo does, that there are processes to create these products at the same cost but with infinite variety in shapes and sizes is disingenuous. But a generous reader will take Carpo’s assertions not as statements of fact but as a challenge. Architecture’s new horizon, according to Carpo, is effortless variability in production and authorship of generic systems. We ought to move towards this inevitability rather than postponing its arrival. Carpo inhabits these new possibilities as if they were a reality; this may be his book’s greatest strength.

Carpo lines up his historical argument so nicely that one wants to believe that architects see the world the way he does. But, despite the sense of a looming apocalyptic paradigm shift that has suffused the culture of architecture for several decades now, the model of practice Carpo champions is appearing only gradually, and at the margins. Rethinking architectural agency – that is, identifying the domains in which architects have leverage and the methods by which their efforts are best applied – is long overdue. But, as Carpo himself points out, nostalgia is a powerful force. He notes that Rem Koolhaas’s *S,M,L,XL* – a tome that is *de rigour* for contemporary students of architecture – is “conspicuously contrary” to current trends in its “un-apologetic celebrat[ion]... of the standards of an age gone by.” (106) This cuts to the heart of architecture’s current dilemma. There are enough high-profile holdovers from the old, modern model of authorship for rising generations to emulate that it would be foolish to expect anything but the Albertian regime to dominate for the foreseeable future.

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A Materialist Theory of Affect

EMILIE DIONNE

Adrian Johnston and Catherine Malabou. *Self and Emotional Life: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Neuroscience*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 304 pp.

In *Self and Emotional Life*, Adrian Johnston and Catherine Malabou diagnose an incapacity for Continental thinkers to embrace an “authentically materialist theory of subjectivity” (ix) such as it is emerging in the neurosciences. Their project offers a multifaceted dialogue between philosophy and the neurosciences to bridge this gap, and they organize this dialogue in the shape of a co-authored book comprised of two separate sections written by each author, who then subsequently echoes each other’s writings, Johnston addressing some of Malabou’s critiques in the introduction to the book, and Malabou responding in the concluding part. Drawing from neurological studies of brain damage, Malabou articulates the figure of a “dis-affected subject” as foundational to the theory of subjectivity. This figure emerges in being “deprived of the ability to be affected so as to experience emotions and feelings” (xvii). Johnston’s analysis draws from the possibility for “unconscious affects” (xvii) within the corpus of psychoanalysis as a way to bridge a dialogue with the neurosciences.

Malabou wonders whether the neurosciences succeed in articulating a conception of affects that deconstruct subjectivity (3). She considers attempts in philosophy, psychoanalysis and neurobiology to destabilize the foundational status given to autoaffectation in the explication of the modern subject. Each discipline investigates the origins of affect, which she defines as a modification resulting from an encounter (5). She explains that an affect encompasses “every kind of modification produced by the feeling of a difference” (5). As the model that has dominated philosophical inquiries of subjectivity, “autoaffectation” relays the process through which a subject becomes aware of itself first as an other for itself. Autoaffectation constitutes the primary affect whereby all other affects emerge (6). Here we have an *affected* subject, meaning that a capacity for affect constitutes the precondition for subjectivity. Yet Malabou wonders whether there can be an affect without autoaffectation, without a *subject*?

For Malabou, the work of Antonio Damasio on brain damage explores precisely such possibility and articulates a model whereby within autoaffectation is inscribed a potential for detachment from one’s own affects that is activated when the brain is impaired

(7). She maintains that the disappearance of emotional processes that accompany certain forms of brain damage constitutes a modification. This modification renders the subject *dis*-affected and generates a new subjectivity. This new theory undermines the philosophical model of autoaffection by showing how the subject is, at its core, not an “affected subject” but encrypted in a potential for *disaffection* to be a nonsubject (8).

Malabou’s concept of *dis*-affected subject challenges philosophical models of autoaffection in which the affect of wonder is constitutive of subjectivity. Wonder is an ambivalent affect given that one wonders *what* it is that the “wondering” subject is struck by: is it the surprising object *or* the subject’s *self*-surprising ability? (9-10). Wonder itself however cannot be deconstructed given that the work of deconstruction requires wonder (11). To counteract this paradox, Malabou argues that one must allow for the possibility to sever wonder entirely, a task that eludes philosophical accounts. The neurosciences, however, reveal that after brain damage a conscious subject may remain intact while the affected subject itself is destroyed. In such cases, while the capacity to *wonder* is forever lost, there is nevertheless *an affect* that generates a new subjectivity.

This new model from the neurosciences suggests that autoaffection originates in the brain as a nonconscious structure (26). Brain events are intimately linked to our identity (28), yet not as *sufficient conditions* to secure an identity (29). Located in the body, a conception of the brain must encompass attention to both its “natural and social environments” (30); the brain is a fragile open structure, a “sensuous and affected organ” (30). Here emotions function as the homeostatic regulators of brain processes. Hence, Malabou illustrates that wonder can be located “at the interface between the nonconscious homeostatic attachment of the self to itself and the conscious autobiographical experience” (33). In this model, wonder is no longer an aptitude of the *affected* self in isolation. More importantly, the ability to generate an account of the self is restricted solely to cases when the “neural self” has been lost, such as when brain damage occurs (34). Without this event it is impossible to dissociate or to locate the “self,” given that the processes through which the “self” is made and remade happen in an ongoing interaction between the different strata of unconscious and conscious states. When subjectivity works there can be no witness to these processes: they are not located in one particular zone but are complexly entangled and arise in circuits (33). This account of the subject is paradigmatically *materialist* for Malabou because it reveals that the subject is “fundamentally, immediately *and* biologically” a stranger to itself, a process encrypted within the structure of the brain itself and not simply of consciousness (34). Brain damage therefore has *psychic effects* in this new materialist theory of subjectivity whereby the subject is biologically absent to itself (58).

In the second portion of the book, Adrian Johnston draws a distinction between *theoretical* philosophical descriptions, from which Malabou conducts her analysis, and *pragmatical* philosophical prescriptions. Johnston explains that the affect of *wonder* corresponds to the primal focus of *theoretical* philosophy, whereas the affect of *guilt* constitutes the “catalyst for the deliberations, decisions, and deeds of concern to philosophy’s *prescriptions*” (77). Johnston asks whether it is possible to feel guilt without being (fully) conscious of such a feeling (79). Using the feeling of guilt as a gateway to articulate the existence of the affective unconscious, Johnston illustrates how psychoanalysis contains the seed of a conception where an affect—*guilt*—can be (mis)felt. This reading creates a space for dialogue with the neurosciences for Johnston (90).

His reading of Freud reveals that the affect of *guilt* is situated within a “topographical variety of anxiety” (100) from which Freud distinguishes a “misfelt affect of guilt” from “unconscious affects” (108). Johnston is particularly interested in the feeling of guilt that is not felt *as guilt*, both *misfelt* and *misinterpreted* as anxiety (110). Then considering Lacan’s corpus, Johnston explains that, for Lacan, anxiety as an affect is produced as an effect of the signifier. This reading leads Johnston to wonder whether “certain affects [can] ‘represent’ different affects” —i.e. can a feeling of anxiety stand in for a feeling of guilt not felt *as guilt* (135)? He reminds readers that Lacan posits anxiety as the *only* affect. In fact, while affects remain enigmatic for Lacan (they are *sentiment*, concealing something else about themselves, both *felt* and *lying* (146)), the affect of anxiety however paradoxically cannot deceive, and it emerges as a disturbance. While adamantly rejecting the notion of “unconscious affects,” Lacan’s conception of anxiety opens up the possibility, for Johnston, of a subject who can be stranger to itself “at the level of feeling” (149).

Bridging his finding through the neurosciences, Johnston turns to Damasio’s notion of the emotional brain, which is indissociable from the cognitive brain—except when brain damage has occurred. For Damasio, emotions come before feelings, and feelings can either be conscious or unconscious (164), meaning that to *have* a feeling is not the same thing as to *know* a feeling; feelings, in Damasio’s sense, are defined as the “brain’s body maps” (166). This mapping proceeds as a constant *retracing* and partakes in the ongoing “self-modeling activity” of itself and of the self (167). The “brain” encompasses multidimensional circuits in which emotions correspond to processes entangled with non-emotional dimensions (177).

The neurosciences have reconfigured the brain as “hardwired to rewire,” a view Johnston believes is akin to Lacan’s notion of *lalangue*. Johnston, however, rejects Lacan’s premise that affects may be misleading us not about *what* they are, but about *why* they are. He maintains that, given the structure of the brain outlined above, affects do mislead us at the level of *what* they are. Affects are thus not limited to felt feelings

per se; rather, they encompass much more and because of this “affective life must be lived under the permanent shadow of doubts about passions and sentiments as self-evident, self-transparent, and self-sufficient experiences” (210).

Johnston’s and Malabou’s conclusions offer inspiring trajectories for a multidimensional dialogue between philosophy, psychoanalysis and the neurosciences. The work presented in this volume provides useful insights into the development of a new libidinal economy and a new theory of affects that emerge *only* by entangling these disciplines. Their proposals raise tremendous challenges for psychoanalytic and philosophical considerations because it invites to a reconfiguration of the psyche itself. First, Johnston reinstates the prevalence of affect for psychoanalytic considerations by showing that affects are not *always conscious*: Freud has struggled immensely in regards to the affect of guilt and adheres to a model of a “structural relationship of the unconscious with affects via the feeling of guilt” (212), whereas Lacan recognizes the entanglement of the affect of anxiety, as primal (and only) affect, to the unconscious (213). Revisiting Lacan’s claim that “[t]here is no representational rapport between affect and signifier” (213), Malabou explains the ways in which the neurosciences also reject an explication of representational mechanism within the brain. These developments reveal that emotions designate the “relational dynamic between brain and body, the very movement of the psychosomatic totality” (217). An emotion does not designate a single “passion” but is a *regulative mechanism*, and minimal excitation level *must* be maintained for other affects to be produced, for life itself to be maintained: “the brain affects itself in regulating life” (217).

The emotional brain is thus a paradox given that “inertia,” “stability” and “constance” require foremost *autoexcitation*. The brain’s first mechanism is to self-regulate before it can regulate itself in response to an external world (217). In regard to a cerebral modality of representation, the configuration of an *emotional* brain suggests an ongoing process whereby the brain attempts to (re)present itself to itself in forming maps of body-states; this attempt is formative in enabling the brain to (re)make itself constantly. The cerebral unconscious—a core self—thus emerges at the junction of the “brain’s treatment of internal excitations” and “the autorepresentation activity” tied to this treatment (219). The “cerebral unconscious” is not *nonconscious* but a *cerebral-ization of affects* comprising the ensemble of processes of *autoregulation* within the brain, whereby three undifferentiated processes happen as one phenomenon: homeostatic processes, the birth of the self and the birth of the object. From there on, how do we conceive of autoaffection? As shown, the brain’s autoaffection *produces* the unconscious, but this process requires an “impassibility and neutrality of the conscious subject” (221) that generates a structure for subjectivity that is always a potential for *disaffection*. Hence, there is no unity of the self (223).

Johnston's intervention has prompted more questions, especially the notion of *misfelt* feelings he put forth, which has tremendous implications as to how one can give an account of oneself. My dilemma in reading Johnston is his assumption that there is a truth to feelings, a truth that can evade the subject who feels as it feels yet can be revealed by an external other. When considering the process through which truth is determined, we must consider on whose authority a proposed truth is accepted as true. In line with the work of Judith Butler (1993), Michel Foucault (1976, 1993) and Karen Barad (2007), I believe necessary to consider how authority is determined *via* context and how the type of authority that determines the truth in question plays an integral role in *creating* that very truth. In short, I wonder how we might to situate Johnston's understanding of *truth* in light of the politics and economy of truth.

Along similar lines, the overlapping of concepts such as emotions, feelings, affects and passions within the different corpus lead me to question why Johnston is so adamant to reconcile conflicting accounts of affect in psychoanalysis and the neurosciences. What are feelings? How do subjects acquire *knowledge* about feelings? Furthermore, given the special status given to anxiety in his reading of psychoanalysis, it appears that all affects do not share the same *substance* and/or lead to equivalent psychosomatic effects. Anxiety has been described as diffuse, nebulous state of agitation, a phenomenon that, once submitted to evaluation, is subjected to specific *cuts*, a boundary-making process that produces historically, contextually and physiologically bound *feelings*, whereby "feelings" are psychosomatic effects, cultural specific *and* bodily incorporated in processes of corporeal generosity, and materializing in the flesh (cf. Prosser; Diprose; Wilson). Moreover, if all felt feelings emerge from a topography of anxiety, how is knowledge about feelings acquired—or even *created*?

Consider a child. Children are at times unclear as to what they feel; they may be in a state of agitation, a state of a diffuse anxiety. Understanding the *cause* of such agitation is incumbent upon the parents. A child has not yet developed the proper tools that enable her to identify such "feelings." Now one could say that this stage only requires a *recognition pattern* of feelings, whereby one represents to oneself what those feelings are but the *feelings* themselves are left untouched. I would maintain that this is far from being the case. A child, for instance, may be mistaking a feeling of *hunger* with *anger*; in the process of teaching a child to recognize bodily states and feelings, parents therefore actively partake in making knowledge that will materialize psychosomatically, whereby they enact an "agential cut" within a particular phenomenon—anxiety as diffuse—to make another phenomenon: a felt feeling (Barad 2007, Haraway 1990, 1997).

I doubt there is an affect behind that is *not* diffuse, as disturbance, without the making of a phenomenon through this cut: affects are produced *through the process of dif-*

ferentiation, a process that creates boundaries whereby, echoing Malabou, the process of identification itself is a modification, *an affect*, that generates subjectivity. Such a view does not reject Johnston's rich analysis; instead, it problematizes his assumption that there is an objective truth to the occurrence of a subjective affect by speaking to the complex entanglement of the powers that establish the truth of such matters.

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Figuring Those Who Have Already Been Dead: Destructive Plasticity and the Form of Absence

RICHARD IVESON

Catherine Malabou. *The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage*. Trans. Steven Miller. Fordham University Press, 2012. 268pp.

For nearly twenty years, French philosopher Catherine Malabou has been exploring the unpredictable terrain of metamorphosis, through which she has evolved the important concept of *plasticity* (*plasticité*) understood as the *hermeneutic motor scheme* of our “new age.” By this, she means that plasticity is a singular scheme or motive that opens the door to the current epoch by enabling the interpretation of phenomena and major events as they arise. In this way, argues Malabou, plasticity has displaced the previous motor scheme of *writing* (*écriture*).

In contrast to *elasticity* as the capacity to *return to an original form*, plasticity denotes the *production of form* in its positive and negative aspects. Plasticity, in other words, refers positively to both the *donation* and the *reception* of form and, negatively, to the *formative destruction* of form. It is this latter aspect—one that both scientific and philosophical discourse consistently shy away from—that forms the subject of Malabou’s latest book, *The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage*.

A formidable close reader, Malabou is thus in one sense continuing along a clearly delineated philosophical trajectory with what is an important new reading of Freud. At the same time, however, *The New Wounded*, originally published in 2007, demands to be considered as utterly *discontinuous* with her earlier works. As she acknowledges in her “Preamble,” her work bears a distinct break marked by her “incursion into the domain of neuroscience” (xii). This rupture can be located precisely between the “before” of *The Heidegger Change*, and the “after” of *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, both of which originally appeared in 2004.

As regards the “post-neuronal” texts, Malabou’s aim is twofold: first, to free neuroscientific discourse from its unwitting production of conservative criteria that

ultimately serve to regulate social functioning; and second, to produce a consciousness of the brain that emphasizes the mutual speculative relation of brain and world, and in so doing place “scientific discovery at the service of an emancipatory political understanding” (*Brain*, 53). Such an understanding, she argues, is urgently required if we are to respond adequately to what she maintains is a “new age of political violence” (*New Wounded*, 156).

Here, Malabou attempts to further this understanding by placing the “profiles” of psychoanalysis and neuroscience side by side, a long-overdue articulation that reveals a surprising specularity between the two seemingly incommensurable discourses.¹ According to Malabou, moreover, if psychoanalysis is to move forward, it must be forced to come to terms with what she calls the *new* wounded (in contrast no doubt to its “old,” hysterically wounded). Exemplified by the victims of catastrophic brain lesions, the new wounded are those subjects who, transformed completely by trauma and oblivious to affect, find themselves utterly indifferent to everything around them. In short, contemporary psychoanalysis must risk a potentially destructive encounter with a new wound and thus a new form: that of the embodiment of the death drive itself.

Coming Together: Cerebrality and Sexuality

At the root of the conflict between psychoanalysis and neurology, Malabou locates a struggle for *etiological dominance*. As is well known, Freudian psychoanalysis is characterized by the etiological regime of *sexuality*, referring not to the narrow set of genital practices, but rather to a *law* that functions to regulate the form of causality specific to psychoanalysis. To elucidate how this apparatus works, and hence establish “the causal value of sexuality within the domain of mental illness,” thus becomes fundamental to the constitution of psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline (*New Wounded*, 2). Sexuality, in short, determines “*the sense of the event within psychic life*” (2).

By contrast, Malabou identifies a radically different causality at work in contemporary neurology, for which she coins the neologism *cerebrality*. Mirroring the psychoanalytic relation between *sex* and *sexuality*, here the *brain* refers to the narrow set of cerebral functions, whereas *cerebrality* designates “the causal value of the damage inflicted upon these functions – that is, upon their capacity to determine the course of psychic life” (2). As such, cerebrality “implies the elucidation of the specific historicity whereby the cerebral event coincides with the psychic event” (2). In this way, a *cerebral etiology* of psychic disturbances becomes possible, and this etiology, according to Malabou, will inevitably supplant sexual eventuality in the psychopathology to

¹ For more on the methodology of “placing in profile,” see what Malabou calls the “transformational mask” in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 2-8.

come.

As we shall see in more detail in the next section, developments in neurology have demonstrated that cerebral activity goes well beyond the merely cognitive, encompassing “the affective, sensory, and erotic fabric without which neither cognition nor consciousness would exist” (4). Indeed, the neuronal metabolism and the dynamic of emotion have been shown to be inseparable, meaning that brain lesions, for example, not only cause *cognitive* damage, but *emotional* damage as well. One can thus begin to understand the challenge posed to psychoanalysis by neurology, insofar as the latter has no need of an additional circuit of *psychic* energy to supplement the *nervous* energy of the brain. Neurology, in short, has no need of the *libido*, a concept fundamental to Freudian psychoanalysis.

By analyzing the nature of the psychic event, first by way of cerebral etiology, and then again by sexual etiology, Malabou makes very clear the stakes of their contrasting economies. An event, by definition, involves both the element of surprise (its external or exogenous aspect) *and* the way in which the psyche integrates this exteriority into the history of the subject (its internal or endogenous aspect). For Freud, sexuality is the privileged site of this encounter between external and internal or, more accurately, between “an *incident* and a *signification*” (5). With cerebrality, however, things are very different, insofar as the external character of a brain lesion *necessarily remains external to the psyche*. Instead of an incomprehensible event and its “making sense,” between external and internal a connection is revealed that is “distinguished by the fact that no interpretation of it is possible. . . . It is constitutively inassimilable” (5).

Such accidents, writes Malabou, cut the thread of history, remaining beyond any possibility of hermeneutic recovery even though the psyche remains alive. With this, the haunting figure of the new wounded begins to take shape beyond the regime of sexuality – that is, *beyond the drives of life*. Rather, Malabou argues, cerebral trauma constitutes the “exemplary example” of destructive plasticity. If brain damage, she writes, “creates a new identity, this creation can be only *creation through the destruction of form*” (17). Indeed, this is a literal *form* of destruction, proving that destruction may in fact *constitute* a form of psychic life: “not as absence of form but as the form of its absence” (18).

Cerebral fragility, Freudian Indestructibility

Whereas Freud argues that the nervous system could never represent the relatedness of psychic and somatic on its own, contemporary neuroscience, by contrast, insists on the brain’s capacity to *affect itself*, that is, to regulate itself without any outside assistance. It does this by way of primary, social, and background *emotions*, through

which brain and body constantly exchange information and thus regulate the psychosomatic totality. This is because the process through which the brain provides itself with information about the organism's internal state and external relations simultaneously produces *affects*, i.e., *modifications*. Hence, while the elementary task of the nervous system is to maintain the lowest level of excitation conducive to survival, the emotions work alongside as "the elaborate prolongation of affective processes" within this homeostatic regulation (*New Wounded*, 38).

The argument for cerebral auto-affectation is supported by cerebral imaging technology, which clearly shows that emotional processes are indeed distributed among several sites in such a way as to allow the brain to effectively "manage" its internal sources of excitation. These sites, moreover, are not genetically determined, but rather constitute overlapping *functional systems* that require, as Malabou says, "the collaboration of several *cerebral agencies*" (39). Most importantly, these agencies "constitute part of an ensemble of structures that simultaneously regulate *and represent* corporeal states" (40, emphasis added). Here, then, the brain affects itself, and affects these affects through positive feedback loops, thus producing an internal "proto-self" that is simultaneous with the externality of object relations. Requiring no supplemental displacement into psychic or libidinal energy, *identity* is simply the product of the brain's auto-affectation understood as the set of its homeostatic processes.

This has two important corollaries: first, insofar as we can gain no *sense* of the activity of cerebral auto-affectation, the latter thus constitutes "*the unconscious of subjectivity*" (43). Second, given this constitutive collaboration of cerebral agencies spanning the varied orders of the nervous system, the "proto-self" must therefore produce itself from "instant to instant" and hence is "fundamentally temporal" (44). Cerebral auto-affectation, in other words, is the *manifestation of finitude*. More precisely, writes Malabou, it is the process "by which finitude is constituted within the living core of subjectivity without ever being able to become the knowledge of a subject" (44). Hence, in contrast to the Freudian unconscious for which there is no temporality and thus no death, the cerebral unconscious, tied irrevocably to the passage of time, is always "the incessant internal announcement and reminder of mortality" (45). And so, there is no suggestion here of an indestructible self or immortal unconscious, but rather only a *fundamental sense of originary fragility*. In short, the core of cerebral subjectivity not only *risks being destroyed* when attacked but, and of equal importance, it is *constantly attuned to this risk*.

However, and this is a central point, while the cerebral subject always risks being utterly destroyed, psychic life can, *even then*, survive the damage inflicted upon the brain. By recognizing this, writes Malabou, contemporary psychopathology breaks absolutely with psychoanalytic practice, insofar as the personality changes that result

from brain damage cannot be interpreted as a *regression* to an earlier stage of an organism's being – an interpretation fundamental to psychoanalysis. Indeed, the very notion of regression depends upon the indestructibility of unconscious traces. This is to say that earlier stages of development persist and are subject to return or revival at any time, *a return which defines mental illness*. Neurology, by contrast, recognizes that severe brain trauma has the potential to bring into being “a new, *unrecognizable* person,” that is, “a new identity with loss as its premise” (48). An identity, in short, *without a past, without childhood*. Given this, psychoanalytic forms of treatment are clearly without relevance.

The Welcome that Arrives as a Farewell

We now reach a provocative and highly original point in Malabou's argument: the positing of a *neuronal* death drive that both mirrors – and goes beyond – the Freudian death drive. She begins, however, with an important proviso: if we are to think the work of a destructive, “postlesional” plasticity, it is also necessary to postulate the existence of an *internal* process of destruction that “responds to the traumatic stimulus and welcomes it, in a sense, facilitating its work of annihilation” (*New Wounded* 70). The possibility of an external accident that arrives to destroy the self, in other words, requires an internal process that prepares for – welcomes – its own farewell. As such, argues Malabou, there must be a link between cerebral auto-affection understood as constituting “a *continuous* annunciation of finitude,” and the traumatic, intrusive event that destroys this same continuity, thus killing psychic identity (71). This, she continues, is the *neuronal* drive toward death, albeit a death that precedes death.

To clarify the distinction between the neuronal and the Freudian death drives, Malabou turns to the question of *reflexivity*. According to Freud, the opening of the psyche “to the horizon of its own relation to itself” begins with the anticipation of death (130). Hence, writes Malabou, the anticipation of death necessarily “pertains to the structure of anticipation that every form of anxiety – internal or external – has in common. By the same token, it is the apparatus of psychic openness to all types of events and accidents” (130). As such, the event for Freud arrives to affect a structure of anticipation founded upon “the *originary possibility of leaving oneself behind*” (130). This structure, moreover, is the very *form* of the unconscious. With this, we reach a crucial point in Malabou's reading of Freud, insofar as, for the latter, trauma is therefore *caused by* “remembered or future separation; it is the cause of *separation that sees itself coming*” (132). Ultimately, what this means is that the anticipation of separation, that is, the structure of the effacement of the subject – the *unconscious*, in other words – “is the indestructible substrate of destruction,” with the result that “[n]ever, for Freud, does separation separate from itself” (132). Put simply, the anticipatory structure of the psyche cannot be destroyed by the trauma it anticipates. Hence, for

psychoanalysis the formation of a new identity can never be presented as a discontinuous process. For Freud, the cut is never absolute prior to death.

For contemporary neurology, however, the anticipation of death – which, as we know, is the process of cerebral auto-affection itself – is *not* insulated from danger, but rather always risks being overwhelmed. As Malabou puts it, “the neurological horizon of the anticipation of destruction is destructible” (133). For neurology, there is always, and for every one of us, the possibility, the *risk* of being deprived of the possibility of seeing or feeling ourselves die (133). The absolute cut, complete separation from itself, remains always a possibility.

Metamorphosis Born of the Wound: Daphne Fleeing Gregor

Given that the traumatic event cannot, according to neurology, be the cause of a separation that sees itself coming, the psychic past cannot therefore function as a resource for the present. Rather, in contrast to psychoanalysis, the pathological force and destructive plasticity of such an event necessarily “creates another history, a past that does not exist” (*New Wounded*, 151).

This distinction is hugely important, insofar as the “specificity of the traumatic event thus inheres in its *metamorphic power*. The traumatic event, in a certain sense, invents its subject. . . . a *new subject* enters the scene in order to assume this past that never took place” (152). With this, we reach the crux of Malabou’s entire argument: “*Separation can no longer be anticipated but it does occur, precisely, in metamorphosis*” (152, my emphasis). Indeed, it is the “radical rupture,” more even than disaffection, which defines the new wounded. However, while we indeed owe to neurology our understanding of this rupture that leaves in the place of identity only the form of its absence, Malabou argues that neurological *discourse* nonetheless joins with psychoanalysis in fleeing its – barely glimpsed – theoretical implications. Both neuroscience and psychoanalysis, in other words, and in different ways, recoil from the idea of *destructive plasticity*.

To think destructive plasticity, however, is to contend with a radical form of metamorphosis: that of a *biological* metamorphosis born of the wound. Indeed, it concerns *the very transformation of metamorphosis itself*. By far the clearest illustration of this can be found in Malabou’s *Ontology of the Accident* (2009) wherein she argues that, in the traditional conception of metamorphosis “transformation intervenes in place of flight” (*Ontology*, 10), as exemplified by the mythical tale of Daphne who, being chased by Phoebus and unable to outrun him, instead transforms herself into a tree. The impossibility of flight that lends itself to such a transformation, however, is by no means the same as a metamorphosis forged by destructive plasticity. However

paradoxical it may seem, writes Malabou,

the being-tree nonetheless conserves, preserves, and saves the being-woman. Transformation is a form of redemption, a strange salvation, but salvation all the same. By contrast, the flight identity forged by destructive plasticity flees itself first and foremost; it knows no salvation or redemption and is there for no one, especially not for the self. It has no body of bark, no armor, no branches. In retaining the same skin, it is forever unrecognizable (12).

The metamorphosis born of the wound, in other words, is a transformation *both without change and at once utterly unprecedented*. Put simply, when no possibility of transcendence, flight or escape remains, destructive plasticity constitutes a form of alterity “where the other is absolutely lacking. ... The only other that exists in this circumstance is being other to the self” (11).

How might we imagine such an impossible figure? Malabou’s answer is superb: recall the opening of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* in which Gregor Samsa awakes to find himself inexplicably transformed into a large and ungainly beetle. However, rather than accompanying Gregor into the nightmare of having his human *essence* captured within an alien *form*, let us imagine instead “a Gregor perfectly indifferent to his transformation, unconcerned by it. Now that’s an entirely different story!” (18). Such, then, would be a new figure of metamorphosis and an entirely new form of life: indifferent to anxiety and mourning neither loss nor lack.

A Beyond of the Pleasure Principle

In the last instance, Malabou’s critique of psychoanalysis comes down to its inability to think this new form of life, an inability that is a direct result of its “*failure to admit the existence of a beyond of the pleasure principle*” (*New Wounded*, 189). Indeed, she argues, Freud’s selection of sadism and masochism as “representatives” of the death drive serves only to demonstrate this failure, it being a simple matter to show that neither escape the love-hate dyad, and thus the “intrigue of pleasure” (191). This failure, continues Malabou, is inevitable because inherent in the Freudian death drive is the *incapacity to form forms*. Freud, in short, lacks the necessary conception of *destructive* plasticity. With nowhere to go but to the safety of positive plasticity, Freud thus “softens” the problem of the death drive and, as a result, is unable to extricate it from the life drives.

The specific form of the psyche produced by the presence of death or pain becomes available to us, argues Malabou, only with the idea of destructive plasticity, as only the latter makes possible the *embodying* of the death drive. By this, Malabou means those “living figures of death” who “purely and simply inhabit a space beyond the

pleasure principle" (198). Such, then, are psyches beyond love and hate, utterly deserted by pleasure: the new wounded.

All around us today, such forms or figures of trauma, argues Malabou, constitute a "worldwide psychopathology" that forces a rearticulation of psychoanalysis even as it consolidates its thinking of the death drive. In place of a sexual etiology, disclosed instead is a "traumatized subject who has gone beyond the pleasure principle" and in fact bears "sacrificial witness" to the *deconstruction of subjectivity* in the very form of her psyche (206). As such, Malabou asks, "Isn't it time that philosophy discover the cerebral psyche as *its subject*?" (206).

That Fragile Partition: Heidegger, Wounded by Plasticity?

This challenge to philosophy, and to its subject above all, takes a somewhat uneasy turn, however, when we consider a different aspect of metamorphosis, and a very different figure of Gregor Samsa. Such is the transformation enacted by *The New Wounded* itself, and by Malabou's "neurological turn" more generally; one which raises the question of whether Malabou's earlier, very fine reading of Heidegger can survive the trauma it simply cannot see coming.

For Malabou in *The Heidegger Change*, Kafka's Samsa again constitutes an exemplary figure. Here (and without implying any contradiction), Samsa figures the paradox of *perpetual* metamorphosis which, insofar as constant change presupposes the divesting of *form*, is thus deprived of the very *possibility* of metamorphosis. It is in the face of such a figure, argues Malabou, that Heidegger must provide a "proof of the plastic power of modification, of something like a *form*" (*Heidegger Change*, 231) if he is to save *Being and Time* from the "bad infinity" of an absolute, nihilistic relativism that ultimately reduces the Dasein to the status of "an insect stuck crawling the walls" (234).

While Malabou's argument is too complex to be restaged here, we can note that, whereas in the later work it is cerebral auto-affectation that constitutes the primitive form of identity, in *The Heidegger Change* this role goes to the "thin partition" between authentic and inauthentic ways of being-Dasein, which constitutes the locus of exchange where existence and identity are "written." Of particular interest, however, is the fact that this quest for "something like a form" takes place in conjunction with what Malabou calls the "triad of change": *Wandel, Wandlung, and Verwandlung* (change, transformation, and *metamorphosis*). Given such a focus, it therefore comes as something of a surprise that in *The New Wounded* Heidegger's name is nowhere to be found. This is particularly bewildering in that in the earlier work Malabou concludes by arguing that it is the "partition" which allows for the *possibility* of a

Heideggerian ethics. And yet, this same “partition” is precisely that which ensures both the *individuality and the continuity of identity*. Because of the saving partition, in other words, Heidegger joins Freud in refusing the possibility of a discontinuous rupture constitutive of a new form of Dasein. Moreover, for Heidegger and Malabou, it is the very plasticity of the partition throughout the Dasein’s existence that prepares for the final transformation of the Dasein that is *death*. It is this structure, in other words, which allows for the possibility of authentic existence in being-toward-death, an authentic existence that, by way of the “call” of conscience, demands a *decision*.

For Malabou of *The New Wounded*, however, the trauma manifest in the form of absence is an event that directly threatens the ability to *decide*, insofar as everything becomes “just as good as everything else, so nothing is worth anything,” the traumatic disturbance producing “a sort of nihilism ... an absolute indifference” (*New Wounded*, 50). The new wounded, it would seem, are subject to just that bad infinity which Heidegger must be rescued from – a rescue performed by the *partition ensuring ontological continuity in being-toward-death* in conjunction with the *structure of decision* – and yet this is precisely what Malabou *denies* to the new wounded. What is left unanswered, then, is the questionable existence of the partition in the new wounded, the absence of which would ultimately serve to negate a functioning Heideggerian ethics. Amid Malabou’s “wager” on the rupture, therefore, a different choice between rupture and continuity has been left in suspension, a suspension with equally important consequences for *The New Wounded*.

To Wound is to be Wounded

In *The New Wounded*, the “hard” truth of the death drive opens directly to ethical and political concerns, albeit an opening complicated somewhat by its unthought relation to the absent Heidegger. Central to this is Malabou’s – perhaps shocking – claim that the *perpetrators* of terror are themselves the victims of destructive plasticity.

In a move at once rigorous, provocative, and important, Malabou once again recalls us to the fact that plasticity dictates the *production* as well as the *reception* of form. It demands, in other words, that, in addition to the traumatized form of the psyche that results from having *received* a shock, we must also consider the *active* or *productive* form of destructive plasticity. Thus, writes Malabou, the cruelty of executioners “emerges as the mimetic reappropriation of traumatic passivity” (*New Wounded*, 200). “Making suffer,” she continues, thus assumes “the neutrality and senselessness of a blow without author and without history, of mechanical violence, and of the absence of interiority” (200). In other words, those who produce forms of pure destruction are themselves disaffected individuals formed by destruction. They are, in short, the new wounded.

Crucially, argues Malabou, neuropathology provides a legitimate structural model for *every* type of psychic trauma, insofar as victims of brain lesions present identical behaviors to those suffering other types of trauma, including sexual abuse, terrorist attacks, and war. The new wounded emerge, in other words, irrespective of whether neuronal changes are the *cause* (organic) or the *consequence* (sociopolitical) of psychic disorganization.

Moreover, given that the victims of sociopolitical traumas, natural catastrophes, and grave accidents all present identical profiles, politics must consequently give up all hope of “endowing violence with a political sense” (155). Indeed, argues Malabou, the singular lesson of contemporary terrorism consists in its *refusal to formulate a lesson* – “dissimulation of the reason for the event [being] the new form of the event” (155). Political violence, in other words, has come to share the same senselessness that characterizes the pure accident, thus becoming indistinguishable from the happenings of chance. As such, *all* catastrophic events start to take on a *natural* character – a naturalization of political violence that further erases the boundaries between the biological and the social.

At the same time, however, this positing of a shared wound in which the form of the torturer appears indistinguishable from tortured forms is not without its problems. For Malabou, those who make suffer must first “make themselves other, in accord with a decision of a metamorphosis that is itself also constituted on the level of the brain as indifference to suffering” (200). Here, a question immediately arises regarding the degree of *volition* in this paradoxical formulation of a subject who both *decides* to become other, to *become wounded*, and is at once the – absolutely discontinuous – subject formed *by* this decision. Moreover, does not such a “decision” – to *become* indifferent to the suffering of another – always already presuppose *being* wounded? Again, an engagement with Heidegger’s call of conscience and the structure of decision would have served as a useful clarification in both directions as, without it, not only is a Heideggerian ethics left in suspension, but the conflation that both gathers and divides the newly wounded remains obscure.

Tracing the *Muselmann*

Finally, given its subject of sociopathic wounding, the absence throughout *The New Wounded* of any consideration of the Nazi extermination camps is simply baffling; especially since this absence concerning the form of absence ultimately centers upon representatives of the death drive.

As philosopher Giorgio Agamben notes in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999), in recounting their experiences, the survivors of the camps repeatedly testify to a “gray zone in

which victims become executioners and executioners become victims" (*Remnants*, 17). Bruno Bettelheim, for example, says of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss, that he had to "divest himself so entirely ... of feeling and personality, that for all practical purposes he was little more than a machine" (Bettelheim 238). The resonance with the new wounded is clear. It is within the camps, however, that we find the representative of extreme sociopolitical trauma coupled with the absolute disaffection of destructive metamorphosis: that of the *Muselmann*. Freud, we recall, lacking the idea of destructive plasticity thus fails to identify a single authentic representative of the death drive. Malabou, by contrast, finds herself quite literally surrounded by them. In spite of this, the figure of the *Muselmann* remains inexplicably absent.

Muselmänner ("Muslims") was the name given to those prisoners in Auschwitz and other camps who were already dead while still living (one "hesitates," writes Primo Levi, "to call them living; one hesitates to call their death death" [Levi 90]). Most often described as "living corpses," the various testimonies of survivors focus on two aspects above all: first, the *absolute indifference* of the *Muselmann* to any external relations and, second, their *becoming-object and/or becoming-mechanical*.

It seems extraordinary that Malabou overlooks the *Muselmann* in her search for an exemplary sociopathological counterpart to match the "natural" example of those transformed by catastrophic brain lesions. The *Muselmann* is surely *the representative figure of the death drive*, that which most clearly encloses in a single "image," as Primo Levi contends, "all the evil of our time" – the representative, in short, of Malabou's "new age of political violence" (Levi 90).

There is, it should be noted, a single brief mention of the *Muselmänner* in *The New Wounded* (in Malabou's "Preamble"). This, however, only makes things more baffling than ever, in that Malabou here not only demonstrates her familiarity with the work of Bruno Bettelheim, but also, more importantly, attests to its *fundamental significance* for *The New Wounded* as a whole (*New Wounded*, xvii). It was Bettelheim, she writes, who had first observed the similarities in the behaviors of autistics and *Muselmänner*, and it was only by "[s]ynthesizing Bettelheim's experience with the teachings of the treatises on military psychology" that Malabou was able to legitimate her hypothesis regarding the identical behaviors presented by the victims of brain lesions on the one hand, and those suffering from war trauma on the other (xviii). Given this founding legitimation, then, what happens to the *Muselmann*? In fact, not only does Bettelheim argue that the *Muselmann* provides the *interpretative paradigm* for autism and schizophrenia in children, but in *The Informed Heart* he also suggests an identity common to both the *Muselmänner* and the victims of traumatic brain lesions and, in particular, of such lesions as cause severe damage to the *emotional* brain.

Only now, argues Malabou, is it possible to even think the idea of *destructive plasticity*. To this we might add Giorgio Agamben's equally articulate contention that perhaps "only now, almost fifty years later, is the *Muselmann* becoming visible; perhaps only now may we draw the consequences of this visibility" (*Remnants*, 52). What is made visible, he continues, "is the guard on the threshold of a new ethics" (69).

Conclusion: Regression, Transference and (the Destruction of) Psychoanalysis

In *The New Wounded*, psychoanalysis as a discipline is offered a stark ultimatum: metamorphosis, or death. This is, however, a work of *critique* in its most rigorous sense: Malabou is by no means championing the *demise* of psychoanalysis, but seeks instead to recall the reader to the introjective openness of its original incarnation. In so doing, she explores two, interrelated questions: First, what, exactly, would a new psychoanalysis look like? And second, upon what ground might one begin to elaborate an emancipatory politics capable of responding to our new era of violence?

Central here is the vulnerability to psychic rupture, understood as both an existential possibility and a condition of being-alive. More specifically, the two questions engage critically with the core Freudian concepts of *regression* and *transference*. First of all, if it is to even begin to account for contemporary psychic suffering, psychoanalysis must, despite the risks to itself, actively address the "new signification" of traumatic violence by recognizing its link to destructive plasticity. As we know, however, insofar as the new wounded live on in the form of *absence*, the notion of *regression* is no longer germane, and this in turn means both that "the force of trauma, whether political or lesional, never derives from lifting repression," and that "illness does not in itself constitute a form of truth with respect to the ancient history of the subject" (*New Wounded*, 214). Psychoanalysis, as a result, finds itself tasked with its own transformation.

Similarly, the notion of *transference* too cannot survive the encounter with neurology: existing in a beyond of the pleasure principle, and thus beyond any feelings of love or hate, the affective indifference of the new wounded leaves them constitutionally *incapable* of transference. Hence, the role of the analyst too is correspondingly transformed, he or she now having to somehow "become the subject of the other's suffering' without thereby entering into transference" (215). Moreover, the stakes of such a "*nontransferential*" relation, one which demands the metamorphosis of both analysis and analyst, far exceed the disciplinary confines of psychoanalysis and neurology. Instead – and this is Malabou's "*wager*" – such a relation would open the door to the possibility of a *response*, at once responsive and responsible, not only to the "world-wide psychopathology" that marks our contemporary era, but also to the senseless violence, be it "biological" or "social," that manufactures it. This, argues Malabou, is

both the future and the promise of neuropsychanalysis.

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Spinoza and the Politics of the Future

MIRIAM TOLA

Antonio Negri. *Spinoza for Our Time*. Columbia University Press, 2013. xix + 125 pp.

Hasana Sharp. *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*. University of Chicago Press, 2011. xii + 241 pp.

Nowhere has the capacity of Baruch Spinoza's philosophy to enable radical politics been asserted more forcefully than in Antonio Negri's *The Savage Anomaly*. Published in 1981, the book marked a turning point in Spinoza scholarship by establishing Spinoza as a thinker of revolutionary immanence. Although *Spinoza for Our Time* carries little of the innovative power of *The Savage Anomaly*, it once again throws into relief a distinctive reading of Spinoza as a philosopher of living labor and social activity. With its emphasis on the universal human power to make itself and the world, Negri's new book contrasts interestingly with Hasana Sharp's turn to a more-than-human Spinozism. Her feminist intervention repositions the human as a being not different in kind from other beings, and whose capacity to act is impinged upon many diverse natural powers. The juxtaposition of these volumes makes explicit the existence of two intersecting trajectories of current radical Spinozism: (1) an established neo-Marxist line of thought that celebrates the transformative dimension of human productive forces and (2) an emerging tendency that puts Spinoza's break with human exceptionalism at the center of the analysis and reflects on its implications for politics. This review traces affinities and divergences between these two strands of Spinozism to explore how they could complement each other and contribute to a politics of the future.

Savage Spinozism

Spinoza for Our Time is the third book on Spinoza written by Antonio Negri. If *The Savage Anomaly* and *Subversive Spinoza*, written ten years apart, offer respectively a systematic treatise in political theory and important self-reflections and elaborations of key themes, this third volume dedicated to Spinoza's philosophy is a much less ambitious collection of four talks given by Negri between 2005 and 2009.

What is it about Spinoza's thought that makes it so attractive for a committed,

albeit heretical, Marxist like Antonio Negri? *The Savage Anomaly* was written in prison as the author awaited trial on the spurious charge that he had masterminded the Red Brigades' assassination of the former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro. Behind Negri's turn to Spinoza was the need to find new sources of political creativity in the aftermath of the insurgencies against state, capitalist and patriarchal disciplinary regimes that rocked Italy between 1968 and 1977. Negri was one among hundreds of militants arrested in the country in a sweeping campaign of state repression executed with the full support of the Communist Party. In the face of defeat, some activists looked for new tools for orienting themselves in a landscape radically altered by the irruption of new political subjectivities –precarious workers, proletarian youth, women, and a myriad of counter cultural groups. In such circumstances, Spinoza's ontology of immanence provided Negri with the resources to profoundly renew Marxist thought.

Negri was not alone in the pursuit of a materialist Spinozism. In France, Gilles Deleuze and Alexandre Matheron had paved the way for such endeavour with the publication in 1969 of *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza and Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*. Louis Althusser, on his part, wrote very little on Dutch philosopher but famously argued that his seminar Reading Capital was more indebted to Spinoza than structuralism. Such influence is reflected in the work of Althusser's students Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, authors of influential books on Spinoza. Negri's groundbreaking contribution in *The Savage Anomaly* lies in the connection between the thought of Spinoza and the development of capitalism in the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century. Spinoza's ontology allows Negri to qualify being as the inexhaustible human capacity to produce, as constitutive *potentia*, that always exceeds *potestas*, the transcendental power of command. This interpretation has some far reaching implications for politics. First and foremost, it revitalizes the Spinozian figure of the multitude and asserts the primacy of its constituent power over the *potestas* of the State. As site of convergence of ontology, ethics and politics, the multitude becomes a powerful antidote against the liberal notion of society as association of free and equal individuals and of politics as a matter of representation, law and rights. In Negri's words "Spinoza's politics participates in a true Copernican revolution: the multitude is an infinity, its power is a continuous movement – an infinite movement that constitutes a totality but is identified in it only as the actuality of a passage; it is not closed but open; it produces and reproduces" (Negri 2004, 40).

These themes return in *Spinoza for Our Time* with few variations. The book opens with a long introduction that sets the tone for the remaining chapters. Here Negri offers some caustic responses to his critics and argues against what he sees as misguided interpretations of Spinoza. His first target is the contemporary understanding of Spinoza as the ideal-type rather than an alternative to modernity. According to this

interpretation, advanced by Jonathan Israel among others, Spinoza is the precursor of the radical wing of Enlightenment, the theorist of a fully-fledged individualism who breaks with the Old Regime of absolutism with the embrace of the modern ideas of democracy, equality and free expression of thought. While this position credits Spinoza as a crucial influence on liberal democratic ideals, Negri claims that the novelty of his political theory can only be apprehended from a post-modern or alter-modern perspective. Spinoza poses a problem that sets him against all political paradigms of modern thought: the problem of “whether there exists the hypothesis of government by the multitude, whether the institutionalization of the common is possible” (17). Indeed, as we will see in a moment, the daring idea of Spinoza as a precursor of a politics of the common resulting from the activity of the multitude is what drives *Spinoza for Our Time*.

The second target of Negri’s criticism is Alan Badiou. If in Hegel’s eyes Spinozist ontology ended up annihilating human subjectivity in an undifferentiated totality because of its lack of negativity, in Negri’s view Badiou commits a similar mistake in portraying substance in Spinoza as incapable of articulation. Against this position, Negri reaffirms that the Spinozian substance (also called God and nature) is a productive force, mobilized and constituted as multiplicity by the ceaseless activity of its modes. Finally, a third criticism is directed toward those authors—Balibar but also Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito (but one could also add Paolo Virno’s nuanced assessment of the ambivalence of the multitude to the list)—who, in different manners and degrees, express skepticism about the eventuality that the multitude might accomplish Negri’s project of absolute democracy. Negri readily acknowledges that: “it falls not to us but to the multitude itself to decide what it wants to be” (30). Yet he also declares that the optimism about the possibility to achieve an anthropological metamorphosis springs from the observation of the transformation of labor.

The chapters that follow the introduction reiterate these points in various ways. The book’s first chapter begins by asserting, once again, the destabilizing force of Spinoza’s thought vis-à-vis the modern political philosophy of transcendence represented by Descartes, Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel. While the tradition of modern sovereignty tells us that society needs power to be constituted, in Negri’s eyes Spinoza reverses this account by suggesting that resistance precedes power. In developing this argument in characteristically *workerist* fashion,¹ Negri returns to one of the key insights of The

¹ Workerism (*operaismo*) is the “heretic wing” of Italian Marxism developed in close connection with workers’ movements of the 1960s. Key figures include Raniero Panzieri, Mario Tronti, Romano Alquati and Negri. In contrast with the longstanding argument that capital is the driving force of the process of production, workerist theorists claim that living labor and workers’ struggles compel capital to transform.

Savage Anomaly: Spinoza's constitutive ontology provides the matrix for foregrounding the leading role of the productive forces over the relations of production. The advance beyond previous statements of this argument is that, in *Spinoza for Our Time*, the notion of the primacy of *potentia* over *potestas*, of living labor over capitalist command, is reframed to include the struggle for the common. The central axis of Negri's recent work, the common is "both the milieu in which occurs the rupture that we are constructing against the power that dominates us, and the result of this rupture" (50). In other words, the common refers both to the cooperative dynamic that ties together the multitude, and the always evolving material formation that emerges out of this process.

Chapter two stages the philosophical encounter between Spinoza and Heidegger. Despite their similarities in providing an exit from the modern illusion of transcendence, Negri suggests that their conceptions of being diverge profoundly. Spinoza's ontology, with its emphasis on the productive capacity of being, privileges the plentitude of life. Conversely, Heidegger's ontology of the void tends toward death. Chapter three returns to the making of absolute democracy, that is, the government of the multitude by the multitude. Chapter four presents the attempt to disrupt sociological notions of individual interrelations through the Spinozian philosophy of composition of bodies. Negri qualifies social relations in terms of the "ontological impulse" that animates them, and traces the constitutive route that though the complex physics of the *conatus* (the strive to persist and increase one's power), leads to the expansive collective powers of love. For Negri this movement corresponds to the passage from the social production of subjectivities to their articulation in the political common.

The combative spirit of *Spinoza for Our Time* is not new to Negri's readers. His style, particularly as a public speaker, is informed by a political urgency that has few parallels in the Anglo-American academia. Yet, one cannot help but notice the contrast with the more nuanced and generous tone adopted in the *Empire* trilogy co-authored with Michael Hardt. Despite its brevity, *Spinoza for Our Time* is not the best book for those seeking a point of entry into Negri's engagement with Spinoza. It neither does justice to the sheer complexity of Spinoza's constellation of concepts, with its immanent relation between substance, attributes, and modes; nor does it fully render the novelty of Negri's materialist approach to Spinoza. At times, the lack of in-depth discussion of key ideas may pose some difficulties to readers who are not familiar with Negri and Spinoza. The flaw of the book, as sometimes happens with collections of texts originally composed for public talks, is that the chapters are simultaneously disjointed and repetitive. Without a doubt, however, what emerges from these various texts is the intensity of Negri's investment in social praxis as a constitutive process tending toward the construction of the human common.

Inhuman Politics

Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization, the first monograph by Hasana Sharp, takes a different path, one that poses considerable challenges to Negri's fundamentally humanist approach. The two authors share considerable affinities, most notably their inclination to consider Spinoza's ontology as a source for politics. Further, they both incite readers to assume an activist posture in an epoch marked by precarity and dispossession. Throughout her text, Sharp draws on Marxist scholarship and cites Negri's work approvingly. Yet, there are also considerable divergences. Whereas Negri puts forward an ontology of the social grounded on living labor as the human capacity for transforming the world, Sharp broadens the frame of reference beyond social relations and proposes a politics that connects us with more-than-human forces and beings. Her work resists the assumption of much of contemporary political theory, including Negri's, that the world in which we live is a human artifact. In cutting across Marxist, feminist, and ecological approaches, Sharp fully engages with Spinoza's key argument that the human is part of Nature. In one of most powerful passages of the *Ethics*, Spinoza writes "Most of those who have written about the affects, and men's way of living . . . seem to conceive man in Nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of Nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself" (E III Pref).

Sharp explores the political consequences of Spinoza definition of nature. This is not an entity out of history or a closed system tending toward equilibrium that has to be protected from the devastating impact of the human. On the contrary, nature is a power of mutation that enables human thought and action. Rather than thinking human history as the result of the overcoming of nature, the project of renaturalization is a practical theory that "seeks the nonhuman forces operating within everything we think is ours, or our own doing" (Sharp 9).

Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization is divided in two parts. The first, "Reconfiguring the Human," sets out to rethink the concepts of agency, ideology and reason through a rigorous analysis of Spinoza's texts. Human action is redefined in light of Spinoza's theory of affect. Agency is the capacity to affect and be affected, to increase or diminish one's power to act upon other bodies. From this perspective, agency pertains to all bodies in nature, it stems from an affective milieu and bounds infinitely many beings in a system on mutual causality. Ideology is reconfigured as an ecosystem of ideas that thrive or dry out depending on the vital support provided by a specific environment. The critique of ideology is thus understood as a struggle to support the vitality of some idea and diminish the power of others. Finally, the analysis of reason is situated in relation to Spinoza's peculiar understanding of human nature.

Here, Sharp argues that for Spinoza there is no human essence but only singular essences of similar beings that are called “human” (86). Reason is the power of a mind that always accompanies a body actively engaged with other bodies. It is produced, but never guaranteed, through a process of composition, that is, the joining of forces among a variety of bodies, particularly, but not exclusively, human bodies. Although *man* still retains a special place for Spinoza, reason and human nature are constituted rather than discovered.

After establishing the lexicon for the project of renaturalization, in the second part of the book, “Beyond the Image of Man,” Sharp proceeds to supplement Spinoza’s work with feminist philosophies of nature in the effort to articulate a politics grounded on the enabling power of nature, that is, on a plane that enables the connection rather than opposition of *physis* and *techne*. She acknowledges the importance of feminist, queer and anti-racist efforts to dismantle “naturalist ideologies” and yet privileges a politics built upon a non-dialectic relationality, a politics of difference that takes into account human and nonhuman forces. The politics of renaturalization is not interested in questions of recognition and rights so much as it is concerned with an affirmative politics of bodies and capacities, of synergy and composition, oriented toward the constitution of new forms of life, of new categories beyond the dialectic of master and slave.

Sharp is firm in distinguishing her project of renaturalization from the post-Hegelian politics of recognition articulated by Judith Butler and other feminist thinkers. From the standpoint of renaturalization, politics does not necessarily start from the shared interrogation of the boundaries of universality, or the claim to rearticulate the terms of inclusion of the categories of personhood and humanity. However useful the politics of recognition might be in certain circumstances, it is by no means the only one. Taking a cue from Elizabeth Grosz, Sharp turns instead to the potential of “a politics of imperceptibility,” that places emphasis on the circulation of affects and forces rather than subjects and intersubjectivity. Such a position shifts attention to the impersonal combinations of bodies and affects that over time may produce new values and new modes of existing. Thus, the project of renaturalization helps to reconfigure struggle “as a question of the conditions under which desires for perseverance, human and nonhuman, combine and form enabling or disabling assemblages” (153).

Sharp’s project of renaturalization radicalizes Spinoza’s dispersion of the human into nature. Yet, she also argues that Spinoza’s naturalism erodes those models of man that produce hatred by suggesting that we are either a perversion of the natural order or the ultimate reason for nature’s transformation. Following feminist philosopher Genevieve Lloyd, Sharp acknowledges that the human still plays a significant role in Spinoza’s thought. Human beings are brought together by affective affinities, that is,

the tendency to join forces with those beings whose affects agree with ours. Thus, she proposes a form of “philanthropic posthumanism” defined as “a collective project by which we can come to love ourselves and one another as part of nature” (5). The idea of “philanthropic posthumanism” might sound a little naïve when compared to Negri’s uncompromising embrace of revolutionary humanism, or Grosz’s incitement toward the undoing of the human. Behind this concept, however, lies the important question of imagining forms of politics that are not governed by the old images of *man* and the human but still pursue the project of *organizing* our collective powers and pleasures.

Reliqua desiderantur

The virtue of Sharp’s book is that it pushes the Spinozist political trajectory beyond itself and helps to formulate some puzzling questions: How do impersonal forces impact political practices? How does the vitality of the nonhuman enter the realm of politics? How can we account for the enabling impact of nature on politics without falling back into the realm of representation? Sharp is not alone in asking these questions. Her book is part of a larger turn toward the “rematerialization of political theory” (Braun and Whatmore 2010) that illuminates a political space densely populated by disparate existents. Occasionally, her examples of politics of renaturalization are tentative and not always fully articulated. But this should be taken as an indication of the difficulties of such an enterprise. Certainly, she deserves credit for contributing to a much needed discussion on the subject. Specifically, she deserves credit for bringing into conversation neo-Marxist and feminist strands of Spinozism that rarely or only cursorily speak to each other. After reading Negri next to Sharp, one feels compelled to ask what multitude would emerge should the divide between natural and social forces be displaced.

As those familiar with Spinoza’s work will know, he did not complete the chapter on democracy of the *Political Treatise*. His anonymous editor ended it with the words “reliqua desiderantur” (the remainder is lacking). One can conceive of Negri and Sharp’s work as additions to that chapter, interventions that tirelessly mobilize the force Spinoza’s ontology to forge a new vocabulary for politics. These are interventions that maximize the “untimely” character of Spinoza’s philosophy, the way it counters our time, acting upon our time and on a time to come.

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Global Warming: Between History and Ontology

EMANUELE LEONARDI

Timothy Morton. *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013. x + 230 pp.

In the numerous debates concerning the multifarious threats posed by global warming, it is frequent to be exposed to arguments about the inability of human thought to grasp the enormity of such threats, their incalculability, their unprecedented magnitude. For instance, in a recent, seminal essay Dipesh Chakrabarty contends that “traditional” critiques of globalization are no longer sufficient to deal with our present condition—as we have entered a new era, the so-called Anthropocene—and should, therefore, be supplemented with a broader species-history of humans; to do so, he calls for a “negative universal history” (Chakrabarty 222) that arises from a collective, species-shared and impending sense of a catastrophe. Timothy Morton’s compelling new book, *Hyperobjects*, seems to transpose Chakrabarty’s reflections on the ontological and aesthetic fields and, in so doing, provides further lines of development which should be of great interest for scholars as well as citizens concerned with the radical novelty represented by global warming.

This novelty, in Morton’s view, does not solely refer to global warming: in fact, this latter is simply a particularly useful example of a hyperobject, namely an entity we cannot take distance from – no matter how restlessly we try to. Other examples analyzed in the book include: the biosphere, oil, radiations, mercury spills, and even the compulsive gesture of self-revolutionizing which defines capitalism. To be sure, there is no lack of heterogeneity. However, what really matters is that all hyperobjects cannot be approached as an epistemological “outside.” Rather, we are “in” them, surrounded by them, forcibly bound to them – and from this uneasy internality we struggle to make sense of their omnipresence. Morton refers to hyperobjects as viscous, and is attentive to specify that their “viscosity is a direct product of increasing information. The more data we have about hyperobjects, the less we know about them—the more we realize we can *never* truly know them [...] The closer we get, the less we know. Yet we cannot break free of them, no matter how far away we retreat” (180). No one, thus, lives a planetary atmospheric experience without the support of climate science. In order to link a weather-related event to global warming, a massive mobilisation of the general intellect in its diverse forms (various knowledge-factories such as universities, think-tanks, activists’ and artists’ counter-narratives, etc.) is in

variably required. And yet, this mobilization is not sufficient to gain objective certainty with regard to the understanding of its multiple causes and the destructiveness of its heterogeneous effects.

Are we then dealing with yet another version of ecological constructivism? No. In this regard, Morton is crystal-clear: what we are witnessing is not only a convulsion in thought, a shock for societies; rather, it is a *quake in being*: “The threat of global warming is not only political, but also ontological” (32). In order to investigate such a quake, Morton grounds his reflection in a recent stream of philosophical inquiry denominated object-oriented ontology (OOO), and particularly in the works of Graham Harman (2005, 2013). In a nutshell, OOO aims at “speculating outside of the human” (10) and assumes as a privileged polemical target correlationism, namely the Kantian postulate that the knowing subject functions as an epistemological filter between the thing as it appears (i.e. the object of knowledge) and the thing-in-itself (supposedly unknowable). For Kant, knowledge is necessarily *human* knowledge. By contrast, Morton’s OOO intends to abandon such anthropocentrism and explore the “more profound interconnectedness” (42) which places humans alongside other entities within the context of broader hyperobjects, whose temporal as well as spatial scales are so extraordinary that the human mind is utterly unable to grasp them. After all, we do not look at hyperobjects: we belong to them.

Insofar as Morton’s argument is firmly grounded on the ontological terrain, it proves consistently thought-provoking and ultimately efficacious. The numerous, brilliant descriptions of scientific theories (e.g. relativity and quantum physics) and works of art (e.g. films, music, and paintings/installations) provides the critique of anthropocentrism with visual substance as well as conceptual depth. The main thrust of the assembled argument and examples is that we have lost for good the metaphysical “world” in which objects were reified and basically subjugated to the human gaze: humans are no longer at the centre of the stage. Actually, there is not even a stable stage anymore, since our feet rest on the variable, moving relationality of hyperobjects! The *end of the world*, thus, entails a profound shift with regard to the ontological position occupied by the human: from pinnacle towering above the rest to entity amongst many, defined by apparently humiliating features such as *weakness*, *hypocrisy*, and *lameness*. Ontologically speaking (from the perspective of OOO), humans and non-humans alike confront themselves on the basis of what Morton calls *meshes*: “[They] are potent metaphors for the strange interconnectedness of things, an interconnectedness that does not allow for perfect, lossless transmission of information, but is instead full of gaps and absences. When an object is born it is instantly enmeshed into a relationship with other objects in the mesh” (83).

Doubtlessly, *Hyperobjects* represents a fascinating new chapter in the theoretical path

of the OOO. The original ontological framing provided for hyperobjects such as global warming is, to my view, the main achievement of the book. By contrast, I found problematic two aspects which recur quite consistently throughout the volume: the relationship between ontology and history, and the political implications of Morton's reflection. As for the first point, it is not clear to me whether the ontological novelty brought about by hyperobjects is a historical condition of possibility for investigations on being (e.g. "it has always been like that, but we can see it only today") or an actual historical transformation of the ontological field (e.g. "hyperobjects signal a modification in being such that we need new categories to grasp its unprecedented qualities"). Otherwise put: have hyperobjects always been there—but we can "see" them only now—or have they emerged in close relation to the contemporary phase of capitalist modernity? There might be good arguments for both positions, but my impression is that Morton's elaboration constantly shifts from one to the other as if they were easily connectable or even complementary.

The best way to frame this issue is to link it to Morton's account of *global warming temporality*: when does it begin? It begins with the emergence of Anthropocene, namely in 1784, "when carbon from coal-fired industries began to be deposited worldwide, including the Arctic, thanks to the invention of the steam machine by James Watt" (4). It then continues beyond the Industrial Revolution: "After 1945 there began *the Great Acceleration*, in which the geological transformation of Earth by humans increased by vivid orders of magnitude" (5). Here the significant marks are Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Following Morton's line of reasoning, we might say that Industrial Capitalism brought about such profound quakes that a deep transformation of being took place between 1784 and 1945: thus, Anthropocene would be the socio-geological name of a new configuration of the ontological field. Similarly, global warming as a hyperobject would be the quintessential modern phenomenon, so modern in fact that it entails the termination of modernity itself, namely the end of the world in its metaphysical conception. Why, then, in the sophisticated discussion of Islamic thinker ar-Razi, do we read that "by thinking through Aristotle, [ar-Razi] discovered hyperobjects in the tenth century" (66)? In this case, global warming would be an always-already existing entity which could be perceived by a prophetic view in the past and which is today visible to all. The two positions seems to me to be contradictory.

Moreover, there is another problem with regard to *capitalist temporality*: how does it develop? It is possible to fully appreciate such an issue by considering Morton's critique of the notion of *sustainability*: what we sustain when we talk about it is "[an] intrinsically out-of-control system that sucks in grey goo [to adapt a term suggested by thinking about nanotechnology] at one end and pushes out grey value at the other" (113). Morton thinks the relationship between nature and (capitalist) value in terms

of an enacting limit provided by the former to the latter. In fact, the environment can assume either the form of an infinite source of raw materials at the beginning of the economic process, or that of an inexhaustible garbage bin at its end. In both cases, however, nature and valorization do not overlap; rather, nature is configured as the mobile border within which value-creation occurs. But the collapse of this relation between nature and (capitalist) value is precisely the condition of possibility for the notion of sustainability to emerge. Actually, as a dogma of the current phase of capitalist development (marked by the pervasiveness of financialization and the continuous mobilization of the general intellect), sustainability is configured as the discursive formation through which neoliberal elites attempt to internalize the environmental limit and turn it into a driver for further economic growth. Carbon trading, for instance, is nothing other than the translation of the hyperobject global warming into the homogeneous grammar of money. Such a situation discloses, from my perspective, a historical novelty which sheds new light on ontological research. However, it is not clear whether we can draw such a conclusion following Morton's elaboration.

The second point I found rather ambiguous concerns the political implication of Morton's framework. Although it is true that his critique of the "back-to-Nature" rhetoric is the most effective to date, its side effect is that it eventually fosters individual resignation rather than activist engagement. To be fair, it is evident that Morton's polemical object is a certain "act-now!" attitude which has often proved to be a block rather than a catalyst for a meaningful political ecology. Nonetheless, my impression is that the ethics he derives from OOO—namely a combination of "simple letting-be" and "meditation" (198) which we may define as *contemplative resting*—might present itself as even more politically disempowering. In his understandable effort to displace humans from the centre of the world—more precisely, to melt the world-throne the human could sit on—Morton ends up paralyzing the idea of social change through collective action. He writes:

The phasing of hyperobjects forcibly reminds us that we are not the measure of all things [...]. The object-oriented approach that frees hyperobjects for our being-with them is a type of *rest* [...]. Thinking is already, in itself, a relation to the nonhuman, insofar as the logical content of one's thought is independent of the mind thinking it. In this sense thinking is intrinsically contemplative. Thus, when in meditation the mind takes itself as its own object of rest, the withdrawn, secret quality of the mind itself become poignant [...]. The uncanny thing is that the more one does such a task, the less immediately graspable an object becomes—precisely because we become more and more intimate with it. Such contemplation is far from simplistically apolitical, far from a retreat from things. (197-198)

Honestly, in the book I could not find a single word concerning how this non-

“simplistically apolitical” contemplative resting might be developed in practical ways. Moreover, its insistence on demeaning features such as *weakness*, *hypocrisy*, and *lame-ness* does not sound promising to set up a political strategy. However, Morton’s analysis allows us to pose a question which seems interesting to me: once humans have been placed on the same level of other objects (and linked to them by an intimate interconnectedness), is it possible to think an inclusionary Promethean attitude? In other words: is it possible to positively characterize human agency after the end of the world, which is to say after its pretence of *grandeur*? In a recent piece, Albert Toscano argues as follows: “In a world where mankind has truly become a geological agent, we may wonder whether a diffuse anti-Promethean common sense expresses a dangerous disavowal rather than a hard-won wisdom [...] Warning against the menace of Prometheism at a time when the everyday experience of the immense majority is one of disorientation, powerlessness and opacity—that is, one where knowledge, scale and purpose are rent asunder—is simply to acquiesce in the exercise of power in the usual sites and by the usual agents, in that particular mix of anarchy and despotism that marks the rule of and for capital” (Toscano 2011).

Timothy Morton’s *Hyperobjects* is an acute and significant book that raises more issues than it can directly address. In such cases, I believe that the best way to “use” an intellectual effort is to put it into practice and translate its intuitions into a weapon to be employed in the ecological struggles to come.

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Housing Whiteness

LISA UDDIN

Dianne Harris. *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 392 pp.

Last year marked a milestone in my life as a multiracial immigrant to the United States who has thus far warded off steep downward mobility. The purchase of a modest ranch-style house located on the corner lot of a quiet, leafy street was arguably the most explicit investment in whiteness our family had ever made.² This is not only because home ownership is a freedom that has most vigorously been exercised by white, middle-class Americans through racially restrictive covenants, blockbusting, and risk-free loans, but also because of the house we bought. A bit of a threshold itself, the house was built in 1945 and stands on the architectural cusp of the conventional postwar house that anchors Dianne Harris' study. Absent is the seamless indoor/outdoor living spaces created through sliding glass doors to a ground-level patio. But present is the single-story open plan, picture windows and generous built-in storage. The real estate listing was another point of seduction, photographing the house in isolation from its neighbors and describing it as having "original style" that had been "enhanced and blended tastefully with today's modern conveniences"—an extraordinary, but still practical home. One year on, I daily engage this vestige of mid-twentieth-century racialization and what is arguably a still active channel for generating privilege.

With broad and meticulous strokes, *Little White Houses* inspires precisely this kind of self and spatial reflection. Narrating the nexus of race and residential space, Harris expertly details the postwar house as a spatial template for mid-century American whiteness. Eight abundantly illustrated chapters chart the design, marketing and consumption patterns of white, middle-class domesticity, beginning with the practices of Rudolf and Eva Weingarten, Harris' maternal grandparents. The Weingartens were German Jewish immigrants who, in addition to acquiring U.S. citizenship as soon as possible, acquired, furnished and maintained a house that would secure their footing in the normative strata of postwar whiteness. Harris' descriptions of their single-family, detached house are distributed throughout the book and become a gateway for historical analysis of how this housing form produced white

² George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

racial identities for a generalized market of American homeowners between 1945 and 1960, including immigrants looking to assimilate. The strategy is two-fold: first, to “search for the spatial cues of [white] racial/ethnic construction in the banal, and seemingly, benign, setting of the ordinary house,” (13); second, to make those cues appear strange to readers vis-à-vis their hyper visibility in the promotional apparatus of the housing industry and their adaptations by immigrant homeowners, like the Weingartens, for whom postwar houses became “efficient frameworks for forgetting past lives” (50). The strategy works well. *Little White Houses* adds conceptual rigor and archival depth to the story of U.S. housing as a site of racial significations that support socio-economic forms of discrimination, while also revising the story of mid-century residential architecture as something more quotidian, and potent, than the avant-garde plans of high modernism. The result is a major historical study that takes on the unfinished business of revealing how white identities have been glorified and normalized in the American vernacular.

Trained as an architectural historian, seasoned in the literature on race and space, and Director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Harris opens her study by navigating an impressive range of scholarship that signals the breadth of her topic and audience. Here, architectural and urban history meets visual and material culture studies and scholarship on racial formation. While some of the exegesis may be redundant to those already working within these approaches, Harris clarifies their collective merits for understanding how inhabitants and viewers of the typical postwar house adhered to the “contours of residential conformity: how to look like everyone else and, essentially, how to be white” (32). Harris is unflinching in her assertion that postwar domestic space was an iconographic field of white racial power, one that was not only ubiquitous but also often overt in its exclusionary rhetoric and operational through systems of class, gender and sexuality. Invoking Slavoj Žižek’s concept of ideological cynicism, she argues that Americans bought into these meanings at full throttle without any mystification; a case of recognizing the codes of whiteness *as* codes, understanding their economic and social value, and profiting from them (13).

The first chapter unpacks the typical house in all its underestimated force. Situating her analysis within the geography of segregated housing, Harris catalogs the key words and spatial characteristics that designated whiteness across various administrative bodies, films, literature and taste-making handbooks. Describing neighborhoods as having “integrity” or “school quality,” white immigrant residents as “clean” and “thrifty,” and design and decor in terms of “*privacy, ease, luxury, freedom, informality, order, cleanliness, and spaciousness...*” was common, euphemistic parlance in housing discourse (37-43). A close reading of the Weingarten’s house from 1955 generates a rich analysis of how these ideas materialized in 1,250 square feet of living space, and

how they anticipated elements that would become standard issue in houses thereafter, including the 1958 “California style” house designed by A. Quincy Jones and Fred Emmons for *Popular Mechanics*. In addition to interpreting these spaces as prescriptions for normative white identities, Harris also attends to the “programmatically and design disjunctures” that developed in spatial practice: Eva Weingarten’s use of the utility room for storing kosher dishes, for example or, more recently, the propensity for some Chinese immigrants to convert laundry rooms or garages into second kitchens for serious cooking. The qualifications help nuance the whiteness of these houses as a relay between designed and appropriated environments.

Two more chapters tackle house imagery in shelter and popular magazines and architectural renderings, respectively. Harris demonstrates how popular periodicals and their visual representations did the heavy lifting of constructing “a structure and a set of norms for the bleaching of difference” (61). Subscription booms and editorial decision-making for middle-brow publications like *Life*, *McCall’s*, and *House Beautiful* form the discussion in Chapter Two, which stresses both how they appeared within actual homes and how they conventionalized mid-century domesticity into a narrow band of white middle-class heterosexuality. Chapter Three examines specific visual techniques that made ordinary homes and gardens appear credible as prospective real estate purchases and the objects of postwar consumer fantasy. Central to this discussion is the rise of illustrations with axonometric or aerial views, which “provided potential consumers with a visual language of freedom in which the eye was unconstrained by either a single viewpoint or any boundary other than the edge of the page” (89). Harris’ accompanying images of perspective drawings by, for example, California ranch house architect Cliff May, *House Beautiful’s* Pace-Setter House, and the atypical tongue-in-cheek images by architect Arne Kartwold energize the analysis, as does the 10 x 8” trim size of the book itself. The mid-sized horizontality of Harris’ volume allow for image reproductions that echo the scale, dimension and sensibility of the actual houses.

Chapter Four takes up privacy as a hallmark of postwar housing, examining how it functioned as a Cold War euphemism for white, middle-class personhood that was connected to ideas of spatial purification, autonomy, and protection from the “other” (national, sexual, racial or, surprisingly, generational). Remarkable here is how she integrates a sprawling cultural analysis of the concept with pointed treatments of the spatial devices of household privacy and its compromises. Here, for example, we learn that open-plan designs were a source of tension because they constructed physical and visual connectedness within the family unit, but also a desire to retreat from its members, especially intrusive children—a valuable complication of the “family togetherness” thesis of 1950s domesticity. The dialectic between the picture window and the exterior privacy wall is another carefully presented example. Loosely

associated with the distinction of high modernism's ribbon windows from the early twentieth century, the extensive glazing of the picture window eventually conflicted with privacy anxieties of homeowners after World War II, who opted for street-level barriers to control their degree of public visibility.

The following three chapters throw emphasis on commoditiescapes, approaching American mid-century houses and their stuff as expressive consumer products mediated by sociological studies (including Russell Lynes' infamous taste chart from a 1949 issue of *Life*), retail trading stamp programs, built-in furniture and storage systems, and television home shows. Each archive further expands Harris' core claim that postwar space articulated what David Roediger calls the ability of white identity and privilege to hide in plain sight (30-31). Harris' consideration of what filled people's homes, how these goods were displayed and concealed, and what kind of television programming facilitated these processes, confirms that while whiteness is "the accretive impact of multiple media forms operating simultaneously" it habitually appears as a natural or neutral spatial formation, invisible and everywhere (260).

A final chapter moves out into the yard. Specific design elements and material objects serve as focal points for interrogating the transformation of residential gardens from the food-bearing land familiar to Old World and Non-European immigrants to aestheticized property with clean horticultural lines and neighborhood discipline. Some discussions of this green space are fresh and incisive, such as the paradox of a leisure area that demanded regular homeowner labor, or how architects alternately designed patio areas as outdoor rooms and living rooms as indoor patios. Another seems like a trouble spot for a history of middling modernism geared towards expunging the past—namely, the popularity of the Black Sambo lawn sprinkler that revived the 19thC cast-iron lawn jockeys and their associations with an antiquated plantation South. The concluding analysis of fences is a vivid indication that postwar residential design was deeply involved in the symbolic and physical work of securing property values, national membership and racial exclusion.

As might already be clear, one strength of the fifteen years of research that culminated in this book is the near exhaustive content therein. Harris leaves almost no room, image, word or artifact unturned in her project to make everyday spaces strange and complicit with racism's institutional face. The book's visual sources are partly to thank here. Numerous photographs, illustrations, plans, advertisements, tables, charts and television stills give strong and varied evidence that these were keenly imagined spaces working over myriad lives at the level of the body, person, reproductive family, neighborhood and nation. In the same vein, Harris' writing attempts to marshal a cross section of disciplines towards a common analytic cause. It is a demanding and worthwhile task, but with the occasional casualties of narrative tone and flow.

A second strength of Harris' work is the questions it raises, if inadvertently, about the status of materiality in American racial history. A key argument within the race-as-representation paradigm, to which this book belongs, has been the arbitrary nature of racial signifiers; e.g., there is nothing *intrinsically* white about a string of straight, blond hair or a blue eye. In U.S. racial theory, these commitments are often traced to Michael Omi and Howard Winant's seminal work on the historically contingent nature of all racial identities, and cumulative research on the mutability of the white/other binary.¹ More recently, some scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences have begun to question not the contingency of race, but its claims to arbitrariness. At issue is if biological bodies (the chief markers of race) are indeed random and inert in the production of meanings, racial or otherwise—or whether they might “speak” in some influential way that tends to be overlooked in favor of more self-conscious and/or politicized forms of speech, forms that reduce bodily matter to resource.² Though it is not reasonable to expect Harris' already encyclopedic volume to have taken up these issues directly, it is tempting to ask how the lively, sensuous and other-directed materiality of bodies—and physical spaces—may have interacted with the ideological procedures of being raced within and through the iconic postwar house. How, for example, did people's phenotype call out differently from one side of a picture window to another, and for whom? What did the presence of nonhuman bodies (dogs, cats, squirrels, lizards, ants, microbes) in indoor/outdoor spaces do to racial self-fashioning? How might radiant heated floors not only have connoted distinction but affected the degree to which bodies could stay as relaxed as the architectural style they inhabited?

More brainstorms follow from the epilogue, where Harris surveys the contemporary housing market. On the one hand, Americans have witnessed changes to homeowner homogeneity, signaled by a recent housing bubble and pronounced diversification of the nation's suburban population. On the other, the author points to the enduring structural racism of the American landscape via, for example, unfair lending practices and real estate steering. But what are the racial iconographies of domestic space to-

¹ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

² See, for example, Arun Saldanha, “Reontologising race: the machinic geography of phenotype,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 9-24; Michael Hames-Garcia, “How Real is Race?” in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 308-339.

day? How does the fall of the McMansion, renewed interest in prefab dwellings and the tiny house movement relate to mid-century trajectories of spatialized whiteness? What do HGTV, Home Depot and other facets of the home/garden industrial complex owe to postwar magazine editors like Elizabeth Gordon and on-air personalities like Arlene Francis? Where does Arne Kartwold's mockery end and unhappyhipsters.com begin? Harris' book succeeds on the well-established terms of its named fields, as well as by opening up lines of inquiry that can complicate, intensify and update the racial registers of what Americans call home. There is nothing little about these little white houses.

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