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Architectural Positions

JEFF DIAMANTI

Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2011. 251 pp.

At a certain point in Pier Vittorio Aureli's *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* it becomes clear that the book's promise (that an absolute architecture is possible) remains, as any skeptic might suspect, unrealizable. It's not that what Aureli means by absolute is at last impossible, however; rather, the concept's architectural valence is bound between a dialectic of architecture's historically specific struggle for autonomy and its tendency towards urban integration. There are two reasons Aureli opts for what he calls a paradoxical thesis, which together constitute the project's motor. First, Aureli means to reintroduce a classical understanding of space as political under the concept of the absolute—"something being resolutely itself after being 'separated' from its other" (viii)—into our late capitalist experience of urbanization. Spatially, urbanization's primary function in Aureli's scheme is the "destruction of any limit, boundary, or form that is not the infinite, compulsive repetition of its own reproduction" (16), and so the possibility of the absolute is already bound by a particular situation rather than a universal constant. Second, somewhere amidst these two poles—absolute separation and urban integration—lie the material traces and coordinates of a dialectical tension, here named architectural form that consists, on Aureli's account, of both composing and separating parts. Form for Aureli implies on the one hand a material and conceptual limit such as the skyscraper or, *Absolute Architecture's* hero, the archipelago, and on the other hand, typological assimilation on which urban expansion relies.¹ Precisely because the former can tend toward the latter via its own reproducibility—the lamentable mutation of Oswald Mathias Ungers' city within a city impulse in 1970s Berlin, for example, into a redevelopment strategy aimed at increasing property value—an absolute architecture remains, for Aureli, a possibility rather than a reality. *Absolute Architecture's* object is as much an *a posteriori* measure of effect as it is an anterior impulse up against the integrationist dictates of urbanism, in other words, and thus the book is organized around four historical examples that pass or at least announce the test, ranging from Andrea Palladio's archipelago forms in 16th century Venice; Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Giovanni Battista Nolli's cartographic reconstructions of Rome's urban fundamentals two centuries later; Étienne-Louis Boullée's prefigurations of modernity's urban

¹ Aureli's account of form builds on the work of Carl Schmitt and Jeanne Hersch (30).

paradigm moments before the French revolutionize its new political positions; and finally, Ungers and Rem Koolhaas' more recent "The City within the City—Berlin as a Green Archipelago."

As for the question of form more specifically, Aureli's presentation consists in distilling architectural set-pieces down to two: On the one hand, to the prototypical part *set apart* exemplified by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's plinth—an elevated base raising buildings like Seagram in New York City up from the street introducing "stoppage into the smoothness of urban space" (40–41); on the other, the more general composition of these separating parts into an archipelago, "the city made by agonistic parts" (42). In the process of distilling these two basic, opposing forms, the book's attention rarely strays far from the contradiction that most urban development today, at least on the level of municipal policy, tends to endorse the 'city within a city' model though for very different reasons. What, in Aureli's account, distinguishes the archipelago from its namesake, such as iconic superstructures or gated communities tarring our urban fabric today, is its unique ability to separate and thus formalize positions without relying on a center. The archipelago, unlike the city, "presupposes that its parts, even in their *absolute separation* are moved by an *absent* center, toward which each island, in communion with the others, is oriented without claiming possession of this center" (42). Taken to its extreme, the radical rupture materialized in the archipelago, for Aureli, amounts not to an architectural form to be repeated, but a "counterform" to be confronted, an architectural act insisting upon political events. The version of archipelagos endorsed here is in the final instance not bound within urban spaces, but rather generates the pressure to dissolve the faculties of urbanization *tout court*.

At first glance, Aureli's methodology appears out of sync with his political motivations to block the circulatory mechanisms of urbanism, as anyone who has stood in front of van der Rohe's corporate palaces at Seagram or Toronto-Dominion will recognize immediately. We tend today to think of van der Rohe and his many mid-century disciples as the progenitors of corporate architectural protocol, rather than an architectural "project" where "agonistic form" (40) meets the urban. The same can be said about four of the five architects Aureli endorses in *Absolute Architecture*—Palladio, Piranesi, Nolli, and Boullée—all of whose works, while tending towards finite irruptions of smooth urban space, also accelerate the infrastructure of today's urban world. For Aureli, however, the point is not so much to collapse the capitalist function of a building with its architectural form, but to insist rather on the composite and at times disparate parts of what in the end makes possible the "autonomy of the project" as opposed to the "autonomy of design," the distinction being that "design reflects the mere managerial praxis of building something, whereas the project indicates the *strategy*" upon which "an act of decision and judgment on the reality that

the design or building of something addresses” (xiii).

As an active architect and architecture theorist well versed in the tradition of radical Italian architecture of the Manfredo Tafuri and Superstudio variety, Aureli comes equipped with ample anti-capitalist projects for the city. (Indeed, Aureli’s previous book *The Project of Autonomy* in many ways creates the theoretical space for *Absolute Architecture*, and the architecture collective Dogma, which he helped found, asserts a necessary postface here.) The hypotheses of *Absolute Architecture*, though, is not that we can imagine a different city as a whole (i.e. the hyperbole of Superstudio’s Continuous Monument and the Situationists’ New Babylon or, in a different vein, the clean slate planning of 1920s Russian Constructivism and Le Corbusier), but rather that a different idea of the city made of antagonistic parts persists as a fundamental component of architectural form all along. When Aureli endorses German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers as the capstone of *Absolute Architecture*’s project in the final chapter, the urgency of thinking form as blockage amidst building as integration is made clear.

The final chapter’s story goes that as West Berlin reached its apex of cold war crisis in the 1970s (crippling depopulation, extensive urban blight, and plummeting property values) Ungers along with Koolhaas and members of his then new firm OMA conceived a “rescue project” named Green Archipelago. At its core, the initiative worked immanently to Berlin’s urban condition to strategize two radical outcomes. First, Ungers and OMA embraced Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s nineteenth century plans for a Berlin (then capital of Prussia) unified not by a coherent city schema but by its singular architectural punctuations. Industrialization and fascist neo-classicism had long since forced city planners to abandon Schinkel’s plan in exchange for integrative zoning, but the formal debris and clustered layout of a city made of singular parts nonetheless remained. For the 1970s team, this meant splicing parts in order to cluster densities and then formalize those clusters into architectural archipelagos. As a response to the city’s shrinking population and architectural decay, in other words, Ungers and OMA tabled a plan to reduce the city’s size into separate parts, an experiment antagonistic to the more common failed ideology of planned economies by way of planned development.

Green Archipelago’s second outcome links the Berlin experiment to Aureli’s more general interest in tracing the contours of a political architecture in the first four chapters. Rather than leaving sections of the city open to an urban division of function and labor, Unger’s insisted on the superblock typology of self-sufficiency and self-management imported from interwar architecture experiments in Vienna and nineteenth century communes in America (a topic on which he and his wife published *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt* in 1972). Coupled with Ungers and Koolhaas’ ideas on bigness and anonymous simple forms, the superblock, rather than the mega-

structure or *tabula rasa* cherished by so many of Unger's contemporaries, gave the team a typology tailored for political separation. More to the book's overall premise, the superblock serves as the most recent architectural invention of an absolute form when retracted from its urban condition into an archipelago of superblock islands.²

What the team imagined made its plan Green was equally, if not more, important politically to the superblocks that would form the archipelagos of Berlin. Opposed to contemporary theories of environmental productivity, Ungers and OMA sought to render the in-between space (the "sea" separating the "islands" [225]) into "on the one hand the practice of what today would be called 'zero-mile' agriculture—fields in which the inhabitants of the islands could manage their own food supply and thus make the economy of their settlement independent from larger systems" (225), and on the other hand a permanent force of decentralization. For Aureli, what therefore makes the Green Archipelago project exemplary is its insistence on limiting circulation, thus facilitating economic disruption.

But of course economic disruption, by which Aureli in part means blocking the accumulation of surplus-value through urban arrangements, is as historically specific as the politics with which it is confronted. Aureli's argument about space relies on a Marxist theory of accumulation, where urbanization is another name for the real subsumption of space into economic production and circulation through the division of labor (26). So, while the book's *modus operandi* is simply to trace instances of the archipelago through four historically specific moments (sparingly, but nonetheless consciously linked to particular logics of economic accumulation), the stakes more complicatedly implore us to politicize architectural form today. In the terms set out in *Absolute Architecture*, an absolute (which is to say political) architecture amounts to a project altogether antagonistic to the production of surplus value likely linked but not identical to what it meant to accumulate capital in Europe during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries or even in Berlin during the 1970s. Were there to be a concluding chapter to *Absolute Architecture*, it would insist, most likely, on a separation from and thus blocking of something closer to the speculation of finance capital. Yet the trouble is imagining architecture as itself anything other than speculation, when whether through fluctuating property values, its enigmatic relationship to derivatives trading through the secondary mortgage market in the US, or the labor power concealed in every stage of its production, architecture is nothing but the formalization of surplus-value.³ For Aureli, however, the point all along was to separate

² For Koolhaas' ideas on scale see "Bigness or the Problem of Large" in his 1995 *S, M, L, XL* and for Ungers' see his 1976 "Planning Criteria."

³ See David Harvey, "The Art of Rent: Globalization and the Commoditization of Culture" in *Spaces of Capital* and Fredric Jameson's "The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation" in *The Cultural Turn*,

architecture from its urban tendency; a possibility he insists is most recently viable in the archipelago. Today, when the condition has become financialization (which is to say circulation and speculation), the prospect for an absolute architecture has never seemed less possible, but only because the possibility is always tied to strategies of which we seem to have few.

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No Exit? Imagining Radical Refusal¹

ERIN WUNKER

Simon During. *Exit Capitalism: Literary Culture, Theory, and Post-Secular Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2010. 208 pp.

How do we refuse capitalism? Should we? This is Simon During's central question in his temporally vast and historically deep book *Exit Capitalism: Literary Culture, Theory, and Post-Secular Modernity*. The book begins with a reflection on his experience at the Sydney Museum of Modern Art's 2008 Biennale exhibition. During recalls looking up during a luncheon of "beetroot salad [which] blends subtly with an Otago pinot noir"; before him is the advertisement for the exhibition: "positioned exactly between the Opera House—that icon of Sydney's Pacific glamor—and an elegant Mediterranean-style apartment building on the harbor's far shore" the sign boldly asks "Is this freedom?" His answer is complicated and, I'd wager, familiar: "whatever 'this' is, it's pretty damn good," he writes (vi).

But of course *it* isn't good at all. As I read During's book, signs of a 'double dip' recession are becoming harder to ignore. The Dow plunges twice in as many weeks, Spain and Italy are on the brink of declaring bankruptcy, the United States is embroiled in a bitter bicker over whether or not to raise the already gargantuan debt ceiling, and my own country of residence, Canada, can no longer hide behind its façade of fabricated benevolence and environmentalism. Riots continue in London and, save for a smattering of mostly alternative or academic writers there is very little in the way of engaged media analysis over the reason for these riots which seem so clearly connected to immense systematic inequalities levied at Britain's racialized youth and working class populations. So, in our current moment where capitalism appears to be a freeway with no viable exit ramps, is During's question even a viable consideration?

To begin with, During himself isn't so sure. He writes "much of this book, placed in

¹ Big, warm, genuine thanks to colleague, friend, and co-conspirator Geordie Miller for his constant willingness to think through huge ideas. Thanks too to the Dalhousie Theory Group (Geordie Miller, Alice Brittan, Anthony Enns, Jason Haslam, J. Matthew Huculak, Travis Mason) for reading, discussing, and producing provocative conversation on this and other books.

no-exit indirection, explores, from a literary-historical point of view, certain paths through which we have arrived at where we are now” (vii). And where we are now, for During, is “not at the sanctioned ‘end of history’ but at something like its opposite. Capitalism without hope, hopeless capitalism, endgame capitalism” (vii). Interestingly, and in some ways problematically—at least for this decidedly post-secular reader—During’s strategy for reintroducing hope begins by tracing the “mid-eighteenth-century moment in England when market-oriented culture gradually displaced the old oligarchic order dominated by the Anglican Church” (vii). For During, this shift to market-oriented culture effected a loss of Europe’s historical sociology (3). What results is a text that is hugely disparate in its case studies, yet ultimately compelling and cohesive in its argumentation and central thesis.

The text is broken into two sections and then subdivided into discrete case studies. Part one, “Modernizing the English literary field,” opens with a chapter considering the separation of church and state through the rise of modernization. After the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, which saw the overthrow of King James II and the ascension of William and Mary, the “Anglican clergy became increasingly professionalized,” and more thoroughly entrenched in state politics (5). These clerical shifts had intrinsic effects on the content of literary production: “literature became less centred on polite learning, including classical scholarship, and more centred on sympathetic imagination and the suspension of disbelief” (5). Thus as the Church became more intertwined with state politics and began to push to professionalize within its own “filiative chains within the elite” literary production became increasingly crafted *for* an emergent marketplace, rather than for its own sake. During summarizes the effects of the comingling of Church and State as follows. Literary production was divided into two sections. The first was targeted at the marketplace and it “disseminated practical information, discipline, and various kinds of readerly excitement. This section of literary production was predominantly controlled by “market-attuned book-trade business men who turned away from collaborative enterprises and concentrated on distribution (export) marketing, periodicals, and the developments of new formats (especially periodicals).” These businessmen aimed their sales pitch at “discretionary consumers from the middling ranks” (6). The second section of literary production came from the ranks of the “gentlemanly world” whose intellectual matrix resided in “the established church” (6). Like the market-attuned book-trade, this section of literary production was also variegated; however, it differed in its aims to legitimize the intellect of the episcopate and ameliorate fissures in the church itself (6). There were two other sections of corollary literary production: print production aimed at the medical and appellate professionals of the day and the print production of and for groups on the margins of the church, most especially republicans (6).

In a meditation on the effect of William Warburton and the Warburtonians, During

posits that the dissolution of the separation between Church and State led to the evolution of gentlemanly society into the current cultural capitalism of today. “The deceptively simple claim that poetry primarily involves pleasure,” writes During, “now decisively breaks with the rhetorical and ethical models of literature that dominated the Renaissance humanism and neoclassicism.” In short

poetry as defined as productive of pleasure is now being removed from the public world of professional Anglican practice, which now needs stronger weapons of defense and stronger principles of authority. But defining poetry as primarily aimed at pleasure is also extraordinarily liberating: it frees it from moral duties as well as from responsibilities to rhetorical precedent. Indeed, it enables literature to become something like autonomous. (21)

Here, then, at the end of the first chapter lies a hint of During’s overall thesis. If literary production becomes divorced from both the spiritual realm that is Church purview, and if it instead is aligned with affect, then it is possible that literary culture may offer tactics for refusing our current capitalist condition.

“Interesting: The politics of the sympathetic imagination” makes up the final section of part one. During’s analysis gets to the heart of what I find so maddening about the omnipresence of “interesting” as an evaluative term in critical literary writing. The evaluation of something as ‘interesting’ effectively masks the ways in which discourses surrounding the politics of sympathy are, at their root, often both politically and ethically paralyzing for the individual. During teases out a relationship between the “politics of pity” and the eighteenth-century modernization of the literary field in order to suggest that sympathy has become enmeshed with a “more powerful but much less visible and contested category: that of the ‘interesting’” (40). During begins his consideration of the interesting with a far more recent event than those he’s previously interrogated. In August of 2001—*prior* to the events of September, which, among other things, ushered in a renewed era of state sanctioned racism—the Australian government refused docking to the MV *Tampa*. *Tampa* was a Norwegian tanker that was carrying 430 refugees rescued from their sinking ferry. The tanker was not allowed to dock on Australian soil, and rather was “boarded by troops, and sailed under duress to Nauru, a remote, poor, ecologically devastated Pacific island whose leaders...allowed the asylum seekers to be disembarked in return for the provision of health care and other benefits to their own citizens by the Australian government” (39). He relates his sense of powerlessness in learning about the *Tampa* situation and suggests that the feeling of powerlessness was undergirded by the fact that there was no sustained public outcry. Moreover, he posits that there couldn’t have been a sustained public outcry because the “language of rationality had largely been pre-empted” (39). In other words, by coopting and reorienting the language of protest,

the government foreclosed any possible resistance. Recalling Sianne Ngai's neologism "stuplimity," During positions the public reaction to the *Tampa* as "sympathetic compassion," or "emotion across a distance" (40). Drawing on recent work by Martha Nussbaum and Lauren Berlant, During connects sympathy to liberalism in that both "presuppose a fundamental distance between people" (43). Publicly acceptable and comprehensible emotions are transformed by the always-already political; compassion becomes sensibility, and sympathy draws people together over a common cause. However—and here is the crucial bit—while "the interesting and the sentimental both *engage*" there is no necessity for engagement to lead to action. Which is to say that affect masks and potentially forecloses public action.

"Towards Endgame Capitalism: Literature, Theory, Culture" is the second part of During's text and it picks up on the contemporary example of the *Tampa*. The opening chapter of the second part, "World Literature, Stalinism, and the Nation: Christina Stead as Lost Object," first offers a reconsideration of the category of world literature, and then embarks on a close reading of the Australian writer Christina Stead in order to make an argument for the provisional return to evaluative criticism. For During, the renewed focus on world literatures signals not only a reaction to the "cross-border flows of tourists and cultural goods around the world," but perhaps more so an expression of "anxiety concerning literature's decline as a response to its commercial cross-media globalization" (58). Echoing the lament of many a textual scholar, During posits that in our current moment one needn't actually *read* to be engaged in the world literary production. During relies on Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), which comes out of Marx's prescient statement that capitalism's aim to unify the world market will gain intellectual traction when "from numerous national literatures and local literatures there arises a world literature" (Marx *The Communist Manifesto* 34). The "national vernacular literatures" begin to view one another as rivals due to the material and symbolic global system of rewards that are marketed under the sign of international genius (60). Literary capital, which differs from pure capital, can be divided between the anachronistic and the modern: regions on the periphery of the global imaginary produce anachronistic works, while metropolitan centres which have attained a certain degree of literary autonomy, produce literary capital that is divided between the anachronistic and the modern. And, while it is possible for so-called peripheral literature to join the global canon, this requires a "metropolitan act of consecration" that is literary rather than political, for as During has already argued in Part One, literature has the potential for autonomy, and, as he'll go on to explain, in the equation of secular and religious there is always a challenging and autonomous remainder (61). Using Stead as his case study, During tests Casanova's theory. Stead was a prolific writer, a committed communist, she travelled extensively, and her writing has not been canonized either nationally in Australia, or globally. During embarks on a careful and scrupulous close reading of

Stead's novel *Cotter's England* to suggest that a return to evaluative criticism may remediate questions of canonicity. During concludes that questions of canonicity need to be addressed "across two barely separable registers: the first critical, the second institutional" (93).

The penultimate chapter, "Socialist Ends: The Emergence of Academic Theory in Post-War Britain," traces three loosely connected phases in the development of an institutionally based theory. During first turns to Iris Murdoch's 1958 essay "A House of Theory," which posits theory as an area of translation across knowledges, and which has the potential to "refresh the tired imagination of prose." During cites the theory that was imported into British socialism after the decline of the New Left (mainly Gramsci and Althusser), the literary post-structuralism that gained strength in the United States (de Man, Derrida), and the "discrete formation of theory inside the humanities" that arose after the failed youth movement of the 1960s and included figures such as Deleuze, Lacan, Lyotard, Kristeva, Foucault, Irigaray, Baudrillard, Adorno, and Benjamin (97). The objective of theory was to forge a "critical public" (101), but the mutations of capitalism proved an unanticipated challenge in that "capitalism itself was constituted at several levels," all of which required constant "intellectual legitimation" as it undertook "equally constant regrouping of interests and positions of power" (103). The task for the socialist in this environment was "not to emancipate human beings ...but to articulate a new model of civilization" (105). However, this ambitious and effervescent aim was unsuccessful. The failure of 1968 to secure any sustained revolutionary momentum "marked the end of the hope that humanist thought of the culturalist heritage could provide an effective counterforce to capitalism" and also simultaneously severed the relationship between leftist academic theory and public policy and journalism (111). The turn to an increasingly rarified theoretical methodology effectively bifurcated literary studies from cultural studies.

"Completing Secularism: The Mundane in the Neo-Liberal Era" reads Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* to posit the mundane as a viable mode of refusing capitalism. Embarking on a sustained critique of Taylor's subtraction thesis (namely, that the secular is what remains when we subtract the religious), During posits the mundane as a genuine challenge to the secular and, by association, the State. "The mundane falls out of academic knowledge," writes During, "after all, the modern university system is sanctioned by the social utility it produces" (121). For while "endgame capitalism does produce from within mundanity an experience that bears the weight of two great, but less compatible Western traditions—orthodox Christianity and aestheticism" it is possible that cultural conservatism may also be able to "generate complex, weight-bearing, posthistorical forms of living in the mundane" (130).

During does in fact offer a provisional answer to his opening questions ‘is this freedom’ and ‘how can we refuse capitalism?’ During’s conclusion, “Refusing Capitalism? Theory and Cultural Studies after 1968,” functions as a coda to the current intellectual moment. Academic theory today, for During, is both more political and more theological (131). The critiques mobilized by the likes of Deleuze and Derrida are no longer avant-garde; moreover, they have been supplanted by “an intellectual impulse to reconnect theory to radical politics more directly” (131). Not only is theory oppositional to cultural studies, current forms of theory are being actively avoided by Anglophone literary studies (131). In positing that the “recent theoretical turn which allies theology to *gauchisme* responds to the end of hope that capitalism’s triumph carries with it,” During offers a practical step forward. Academics would do well to consider socio-historical events in order to formulate a rigorous and radical critique of capitalism (During cites the French Maoist—namely Badiou’s—turn to militancy and the British New Left’s turn in the 1960s to what we now call cultural studies).

Should we then refuse capitalism? During thinks so, but not through the usual channels:

In the difficult search to find concepts from which to refuse capitalism, it seems to me fitting to return to a vocabulary—to *names* in Badiou’s sense—which pre-date modernity, has not been wholly appropriated by either modern instrumentality and relativism of by that discourse and apparatus of abstract rights, adapted to the condition of endgame capitalism. (157)

He offers “perfection” and “honour” as two such possible names. And while During is neither unaware of the potential impossibilities, nor fails to offer some cautions to his theorem, ultimately he positions the humanities as ground zero for this radical refusal:

It is more a question, on the one hand, of occupying those social spaces that are least attached to endgame capitalism mainly because of their history and, on the other, of living privately on terms that must one’s unavoidable social incorporation. Those social spaces include, importantly, *the academy, at least in the pure sciences and the humanities, whose forms of thought lie at some remove from endgame capitalism.* (160 emphasis added)

What next steps are taken up on campuses and in classrooms will be up to those of us occupying positions of relative power. No individual can effect a refusal of capitalism alone, but we must continue the work of imagining.

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The Pig Stays in the Picture: Visual/Literary Narratives of Human-Animal Intimacies

SARAH O'BRIEN

Susan McHugh. *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011. 280pp.

Some of the most productive work currently being done in the emerging field of Animal Studies responds in earnest to the title of John Berger's essay "Why Look at Animals?" (1980).¹ Berger intended his titular question to function rhetorically: why bother looking at animals, his argument ultimately declares. According to Berger, we look at animals because that is the only relationship late capitalism affords us; we look at animals—or, more precisely, at compensatory images of animals (stuffed animals, filmic animals, animals on display at zoos)—because we no longer live with animals. As a result of the profound social and material ruptures introduced by modernity, the beings that once "constituted the first circle of what surrounded man" now linger in a perpetual state of vanishing: "everywhere animals disappear" (3, 26). As animals recede into images, they can no longer return our gaze: "Therein lies the ultimate consequence of their marginalisation. That look between animal and man, which may have played a crucial role in the development of human society, and with which, in any case, all men had always lived until less than a century ago, has been extinguished" (28).

Susan McHugh begins *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* with an explicit rejection of Berger's "approach to representational mechanisms," which "makes animals appear to be eternally 'disappearing' or distanced always in relation to the human," and her excavation of a range of contemporary texts that hinge on the sustained—if not always warm and fuzzy—intimacy of humans and animals constitutes a thoroughgoing rebuttal not only of his particular "metaphorical" tack but also of the numerous "other aesthetics beholden to animal-really-means-human and likewise substitutive logics" that have appeared in the wake of his seminal essay (8). With

¹ Berger's essay, it must be said, has proven foundational not only because his audacious nostalgia is so provocative, but because his self-reflexive stance—at turns cryptic and incisive—generates space for divergent, interdisciplinary responses.

this point of resistance, McHugh joins an increasingly cohesive current of scholarship—other recent notables include Nicole Shukin's *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) and Anat Pick's *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (Columbia University Press, 2011)—that insists that humans and animals are currently bound in a complex network of relationships, and that wagers that critical analysis of the field of representation presents an especially constructive way into understanding these connections.

McHugh makes her intervention from the domain of literary studies, and consequently one might expect that her interests in animals and artistic/cultural production would stray from the focus on visual culture that has thus far tended to dominate Animal Studies. However, one of *Animal Stories*' greatest strengths is that McHugh reads literature with/in visual culture. This is not simply to say that she views the two as complementary; rather, she discerns that literature is imbued with elements of visual culture and, vice versa, visual culture is embedded with literary forms. Thus, for example, her examination of girl-horse stories in Chapter Two weaves together analyses of contemporary equine photography, plastic doll ponies marketed to young girls, and the photographs that ekphrastically recur in her primary corpus of female jump jockey narratives. Her dexterous movement between forms and genres furthers what appears to be, on a pragmatic, institutional level, the book's overarching aim. McHugh contends that "literary institutions are set up to be inauspicious places for the investigation of shared human-animal stories," and she indicates that this inhospitality derives from the discipline's focus on canonical Literature (for the purposes of her argument, Modernist novels and poems) and its treatment of narrative as an exclusively literary form (16). In this light, her attention to obscure and formally heterogeneous texts presents a calculated challenge to Literary Studies' traditionally narrow scope. Yet McHugh's insight into the co-implications of literary and visual culture also speaks back to Berger's essay, the thesis of which Jonathan Burt has cogently summarised as an historical argument in which "the linguistic animal is replaced by the visual animal" (208). McHugh's consideration of the substantive overlapping relationships that proliferate around such marginal literary subgenres as the narrative of the blind detective and his guide dog—relationships that implicate outwardly disparate issues like the symbolisation of animals, televisual adaptation, and dog-breeding practices—roundly discredits this idealised and ultimately sterilizing historical arc.

But perhaps I am getting ahead of myself. McHugh's deconstruction of Berger's substitutive logic, wherein representation supplants lived experience and the visual image trumps literary metaphor, performs a predominately latent function in *Animal Stories*. Indeed, she carries much of this work out in the service of dismantling a binary that occupies the foreground of her text, that of subjectivity and agency. She opens with the proposal that the modern novel, given its formal propensity for "ex-

periments with multiple perspectives and processes that support models centered on agency rather than subjectivity,” promises insight into “social life shared across species” (1, 2). She quickly qualifies that “distinguishing agency from subjectivity” is not a panacea for the myriad problems posed by the “foundational discourses of the human subject” and even surmises “agency may never be completely or purely represented apart from this peculiar subject form” (2). It soon becomes clear, then, that McHugh is proposing a historical trajectory of her own: whereas the novel since the eighteenth century has classically been regarded as a window into the formation of the human subject (and its rise has therefore conveniently dovetailed with that of identity politics), more recent fictions—particularly ones housed in “film and new media environments”—about the working relations between humans and animals cannot be reduced to descriptions of “human intentionality or psychological interiority” (12).

McHugh thus establishes the central aim of *Animal Stories* to be elucidating the ways in which

modern and contemporary fictions of cross-species companionship [...] record the formation of new and uniquely mixed relationships in this period, [while] they also reconfigure social potentials for novels and eventually visual narrative forms. As narratives of distinctly modern human-animal ways of living move to media forms like film and television, they situate subjectivity more clearly as a collective production, a disciplinary form of power complementing rather than negating other biopolitical options. (3)

This thesis is certainly intriguing and indeed plausible, yet in order to be fully convincing it requires a more rigorous definition of the primary theoretical concepts. McHugh parenthetically defines *agency* as “the social movement or impact attributed to an agent of social power” and *identity* as “the humanist form of subjectivity through which an agent is understood to have a history in the broadest sense” (13); she also divides the book into sections revolving on the schematically defined terms *intersubjectivity* and *intercorporeality*, a move that introduces an additional and sometimes competing dichotomy. Considering the interdisciplinary range of readers it addresses, *Animal Stories* would benefit from a more comprehensive explanation of its foundational concepts and a governing structure that elucidates the relationships between them. Fortunately, McHugh’s subsequent and extensive close readings begin to more clearly articulate the meanings and consequences of these terms.

The first section, “Intersubjective Fictions,” delves into narratives about the “irreducible partnerships or ‘working units’” that bind blind detectives and service dogs, on one hand, and girl jump jockeys and horses, on the other (28). While I began these

chapters with some scepticism of the importance of these “small but persistent narrative strain[s]” (McHugh is the first to acknowledge the “rarefied” status of much of her corpus), there was something immediately familiar about these fictions (16, 4). As someone who has never read a novel featuring a Seeing Eye dog or a steeplechase horse, my initial sense of uncanny familiarity would seem to confirm McHugh’s argument that the ways in which these narratives “integrat[e] forms and ideas about species in turn inform[s] current and pervasive ideas about how people live with animals” (4).

The histories McHugh maps out in these two chapters are best summed up as stories of lost narrative potential. The first chapter, “Seeing Eyes/Private Eyes: Service Dogs and Detective Fictions,” begins with Baynard Kendrick, a veteran who between 1937 and 1961 published a mystery series (twelve novels and four short stories) centred on the relationships between detective Duncan MacLain, an officer blinded in World War I, and his changing roster of Seeing Eye and police dogs. Written partly out of frustration with the few, deficient blind characters then circulating in popular literature, Kendrick’s series is laudable, according to McHugh, for its commitment to realism and the rigors of training, its painstaking attempts to educate readers and dispel their prejudices against guide dogs, its acknowledgement of the guide dog’s conjunction with technology, its refutation of accusations of animal exploitation, and, most importantly, its attention to the ways in which guide dogs radically alter “both the sense of self of blind persons and their social lives with others” (40–43). Regrettably, Kendrick’s fidelity to these facets of human and guide-dog relationships—particularly his attention to “canine-human social complementarities”—is missing from later fictions inspired by his mysteries. McHugh’s analysis of the numerous filmic and television adaptations of Kendrick’s work and of the television series *Longstreet* (1971–72) and *Blind Justice* (2005) underscores the regularity with which these imitative stories “drop the difficult questions of cross-species representation [and] give up the struggle to account for the special sense of interdependence that characterizes the impaired-unless-canine-assisted experience in favour of using this relationship to symbolize a more personal struggle, the identity conflicts of a suddenly disabled white man working amid failing justice systems” (30). As in later chapters, McHugh’s critique of these narratives’ changing priorities is highly attuned to the erasures that necessarily attend the deployment of animals as symbols. Particularly compelling is her development of her very specific observation that many of these later stories “preposterously collapse” numerous dogs into one character (54). She lauds Kendrick for persistently clarifying that the nature of detective work often calls for dogs with specialised skills and that the length of these working relationships demands that dogs be retired and replaced, and she contends that his successors’ gross simplification of these details—a move that amounts to the casting of “superdogs” (i.e., symbols)—is complicit with “the blind-detective stories’ retreat into human identity problems” (54).

In Chapter Two, McHugh tells the story of another subgenre in which the commitment to expressing “interspecies intimacies” has waxed and waned. The richly detailed representational history set forth in “Velvet Revolutions: Girl-Horse Stories” works to dispel the “natural affinity” between girls and horses that seems all but self-evident at the turn of the twenty-first century (65). It reaches back to early modern novels such as Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) and Walter Scott’s *Rob Roy* (1817), in which the minor appearances of women riders are all but overwhelmed by the high drama of their male counterparts; to the less well-known fictional works of Robert Smith Surtees (1860s) and Finch Mason (1880s), which assert the “competence” and “integrity” of female riders (87); and to women’s sentimental fiction, in which novels such as Anna Sewall’s *Black Beauty* (1877) “came to articulate not only antislavery critiques but also the concerns of women’s suffrage” (89). Over the course of this overview of the genre’s forerunners, McHugh develops a succinct history of concurrent changes in the gender dynamics and politics of equitation (I found the evolution of equestrienne attire and undergarments to be particularly fascinating). This back story effectively sets the stage for her analysis of Enid Bagnold’s *National Velvet, or the Slaughterer’s Daughter* (1935), a novel that details a girl and her horse’s triumphant journey to England’s Grand National steeplechase and, in so doing, becomes “the first best seller to focus on the potential for female athleticism in cross-species relations” (74). McHugh finds much to commend in this novel, yet she is most impressed by the ways in which it becomes apparent that “success in this story involves not just training for physical ability but, more precisely, cultivating an inter-subjective mind-set, a framework through which the girl-horse connection precedes and exceeds any individual’s achievement” (75). Once again, she spins an outwardly minute observation into an intriguing argumentative thread: noting that the novel opens with its eponymous heroine playing with magazine and newspaper cut-outs of famous race horses, she contends that “these repurposed media images prove tools with which she ‘dreams’ into being ‘stories’ of how a girl can ‘be a famous rider’” (75). Although many subsequent girl-horse fictions innovatively recast this connection between “visual media play” and the “sense of the shared benefits of cross-species life,” they capitulate to other, significant representational problems. Namely, these stories’ propensity to accommodate “queer visions of desire” increasingly gives way to the assertion of a “peculiar linkage of girlish love for horses with sexualized violence” (66). She expands, “while such stories concern displacements and rearrangements of power forms, their increasing emphasis on competition, particularly the ways in which gendered rivalries come to involve not just sex but also violence, betrays a more profound ambivalence concerning media and intersubjective agency” (99). Much like the textual legacy of Duncan MacLain and his Seeing Eye dogs, these later narratives lose sight of the specificities of the cross-species relationships at hand; choosing instead to cash in on the spectacular value of sex, violence, and athletic prowess, films such as *Marnie* (1964) and *The Horse Whisperer* (1998) reassert the human individual

as the focal point of girl-horse fictions.

Overall, I left the first section of *Animal Stories* intrigued by McHugh's attentive readings of cross-species intersubjectivity, but unsure of her take on the material stakes of these relationships. She gestures to these implications at several points, but seems reluctant to directly address them. For example, she observes that the original title of Bagnold's novel, *National Velvet, or the Slaughterer's Daughter* (subsequent editions and adaptations drop the subtitle), shows in relief that the lives of the human characters and their numerous companion animals "all depend on the family business of killing animals." Yet rather than explore the co-presence of these incongruous human-animal relationships, she merely surmises that "a 'togetherness' shared across species, families, and communities is thus intricately interconnected with Velvet's eventual National victory" (77–78). As I began the book's second section, "Intercorporeal Narratives," McHugh's initial evasion of the intersections of cross-species relating and killing (as well as other controversial and often bloody practices) emerged as more pointed. The first chapter of this section details the simultaneous rise of the pet-memoir and the normalization of animal gonadectomies. McHugh opens with an example of the media's treatment of pet spaying/neutering that underscores "the capricious ties between the intersubjective ideals and embodied realities of cross-species companionship," and she goes on to assert that "the sentimentalizing of intersubjectivity across these particular species [humans, dogs, and cats] reflects and informs a distinctly 'unnatural' pairing, that is, of the ideal of monogamous heteronormative couplings among humans with the surgical mutilations of companion animals" (115, 117). It thus seems that the first section, "Intersubjective Fictions," serves as something of a foil for the latter "Intercorporeal Narratives." That is, in the first section McHugh details narratives that lend themselves to the idealization or sentimentalization of human-animal intersubjectivity (and she at times idealizes these fictions), and in the second section she then calls such tendencies into question. I question the rhetorical efficacy of this operation, which left me with the confused sense that McHugh had constructed a binary only to dismantle it. In her introduction, McHugh establishes this binary as an inherent division in animal fictions:

Although fictions of cross-species intersubjectivity ostensibly work to displace the centrality of individuals, they incur a serious risk of denying embodied differences. By framing food and sex as sites of entanglement, other fictions of this period elaborate how more generally human-animal relationships mutate into the worldly structures of non-human-centered agency. (4)

Yet it becomes increasingly evident over the course of the book that McHugh's own reading strategies and intellectual investments play an equally significant role in "framing" this division.

This confusion aside, McHugh continues to deliver engaging readings of unlikely animal fictions in the final two chapters. As before, her far-ranging analyses tend to crystallise around a particular narrative or series of narratives. Chapter Three, “Breeding Narratives of Intimacy,” coheres around the later works of J.R. Ackerly, namely his memoirs *My Dog Tulip* (1956) and *My Father and Myself* (1968), and his novel *We Think the World of You* (1960). She contends that Ackerly reiterates “a mature version of the boy-and-his-dog tale” that lays bare the ways in which heteronormative culture encroaches on “nonhuman animal bodies and behaviours,” and he thereby “counter[s] the puritan mind-set that leads today to the more radical erasures of domesticated animal sex and genitalia” (132). She suggests that Ackerly’s transgressive stories reverberate not only in pet-keeping practices but also in scientific circles; his “queer ‘crusading’ with—and never simply on behalf of—animals” coincides with scientists’ first systematic attempts to “address nonhuman nonheteronormative behaviours as part of the lives of species” (155). Yet McHugh’s optimism over this development is restrained, as the hard sciences’ continued focus on the reproductive sex acts of animals betrays its sustained preference for “research that confirms rather challenges conventional terms of human relating” (155). The final chapter of *Animal Stories*, “The Fictions and Futures of Farm Animals,” surveys the small but significant literary tradition of “meat animal” narratives—Upton Sinclair’s *Jungle* (1906), George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945), Sue Coe’s *Dead Meat* (1996), Ruth L. Ozeki’s *My Year of Meats* (1998), and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003)—before settling into an extended analysis of the film *Babe* (1995). McHugh returns here to mixed-media representations’ power to unlock narratives of animal agency. She argues that Ozeki’s formally heterogenous novel, Coe’s autobiographical graphic novel (which includes photographs), and the hodgepodge of live action, puppetry, and animation on display in *Babe* work to establish, in varying ways and with varying degrees of success, that “any single media form remains all too perfectly manipulative and ultimately is inadequate to the monumental task of moving beyond dis/identifying with the spectacle of lives suspended by meat hooks” (176). I found McHugh’s reading of the “mixed relations of species and narrative forms” at play in *Babe* to be highly original (188). Noting the numerous ways in which the animal characters engage with television, she argues that the film “assum[es] pan-species visual media literacy throughout, a fantasy perhaps, but one that disables anthropocentric views of visual technologies by depicting them as employed to produce the collective fiction of the worker as individual” (185).

In sum, *Animal Stories* delivers on its initial promise to demonstrate that “against the fixed formal dynamic that some see as characterized by (literally and figuratively) disappearing animals, these narrative developments provide an important, if limited, record of how and why some cross-species relationships arise and even flourish amid urban industrial landscapes” (19). McHugh’s ambitious effort to establish the sus-

tained importance of animal life in the margins of literary studies, the artistic arena in which animals have perhaps been most rigorously and consistently jettisoned to the status of metaphor, is to be commended. Her success in this project is largely due to her keen attention to the visual registers of narrative, and future scholarship in the field will doubtless be enriched by her innovative focus.

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Queering Anarchism

MICHAEL TRUSCELLO

Jamie Heckert and Richard Cleminson, eds. *Anarchism and Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power*. Routledge, 2011. 232 pp.

It may surprise some people outside of the study of anarchism that, alongside race, sexuality is perhaps the least studied subject within anarchist scholarship. This absence in the scholarly literature is often mirrored in practice, and as such the recent publication of Jamie Heckert and Richard Cleminson's *Anarchism and Sexuality* provides a necessary intervention. Judged on the basis of the editors' intent "to craft a queer book, both in style and in content" (1), the result is an overwhelming success. Stylistically, the anthology darts from personal memoir to social scientific survey to literary analysis. In this sense, the anthology achieves what most interdisciplinary projects only gesture towards: a collection of writings (I intentionally avoid *essays* here, because the anthology includes "poetic interludes") that illustrate the dynamics of activists and intellectuals, public agonies and private abuses, philosophical excursions and tactical reminiscences. This may be the most diverse collection of writings I have ever read under one cover.

As Judy Greenway notes in the Preface, "sexual anarchy, alias 'western decadence', is blamed for everything from natural disasters to 9/11, and misogyny and homophobia are playing a significant part in the resurgence of the political and religious right" (xiv). For "fundamentalists and bigots of all persuasions," she continues, "sexual liberation is a variation on anarchism: an attack on the foundations of society, a form of terrorism—anarchy as chaos" (xiv). For their anthology, Heckert and Cleminson imagine anarchism "as a kind of ethics of relationships, as advocating and practising very different relations of power than those involved in the state, capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy" (3). The approach to the dynamic duo of sexual liberation and anarchism in this collection is "post-anarchist," a combination of anarchism's libertarian socialism and post-structuralist influenced cultural theory (see, for example, Rousselle and Evren, 2011). The "radical decentring of the way in which people can live their lives" that characterized these philosophies "recognises that freedom cannot come through sex alone; rather it entails a critique that runs through all social relationships and attempts to reconstruct them in non-hierarchical terms" (9).

The variety and quality of analyses in this anthology is infectious. Jenny Alexander, for example, "re-reads" Alexander Berkman's prison diaries "in the service of a

dynamic anarcho-affective praxis” (25). Berkman, the famous companion of Emma Goldman, is frequently discussed in anarchist literature, but not in connection with sexuality (contrary to the way Goldman is discussed). Alexander’s perceptive analysis of *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* repositions Berkman as “one of the first well-known political figures in America to endorse sexual love between same-sex individuals” (31). She claims that “Berkman-the-autobiographer wants us to know that Alexander Berkman changed in prison, from a young man shocked and disgusted by homosexual acts to an older man loving and losing two young men to death” (31). Thus, Alexander argues, “we might indeed read Berkman productively as ‘queer’ in its broadest sense,” alluding to Sedgwick (34). Alexander believes “it is now time to return, within Western queer, anarcho-queer and anarchist political and scholarly contexts, to considerations of intimacy” (39).

In the next chapter, Stephen Shukaitis does just that, by advocating for an “affective resistance—that is, a sustainable basis for ongoing and continuing political organizing, a plateau of vibrating intensities, premised upon refusing to separate questions of the effectiveness of any tactic, idea or campaign, from its affectiveness” (46). For Shukaitis, “the *effectiveness* of political organizing” cannot be separated from “concerns about its *affectiveness*” (46). To illustrate this theory, he looks at “struggles around issues of care and housework, of the tasks of the everyday” (50), especially various Wages for Housework campaigns, “a moment in the struggle of wages *against* housework: a strategy of composing class power from the position that women have found themselves in, but precisely to escape from that position” (52-53). Based on the traditional left’s avoidance of issues around gendered labour, Precarias a la Deriva, “a feminist research and organizing collective,” formed in Spain in 2002 (53). They utilized tactics derived from the situationists to explore the “intimate and paradoxical nature of feminized work” (54); the concept of *dérive* was transformed from a masculine bourgeois form of wandering into a “drift through the circuits and spaces of feminized labour that constituted their everyday lives” (54). The drift became “a mobile interview, a wandering picket” that sought out women in a haphazard array of spaces and sectors: the domestic, the telemarketing conversation, language instruction, food service, and health care. With the example of Precarias, Shukaitis demonstrates that “rather than considering interpersonal and ethical concerns as an adjunct and supplement to radical politics, affective resistance is about working from these intensities of care and connection” (62).

Lena Eckert’s chapter looks at Beatriz Preciado’s *contrasexual manifesto* and Preciado’s notion of *dildotopia*. Eckert believes “it is possible to open up a space between psychoanalysis and an anarchist expression of agency within daily sexual life” (75). To do so, she draws on Jack Halberstam and Ira Livingston’s notions of the post-human, and Donna Haraway’s cyborg manifesto. “Preciado’s concept of *contrasexuality* seeks

to interrogate the production of knowledge about gender, sex and sexuality,” writes Eckert, “and should be understood as a specific way of questioning the production of knowledge, desire and their interconnections” (76). Using a Foucauldian “analysis of the possibility of resisting the disciplining production of sexuality not by struggling against the prohibition but by elaborating a contra- or counter-productivity,” Preciado’s manifesto seeks to “reclaim or twist traditional notions [of gender and sexuality] in order to place them in new contexts” (77). Contrasexuality, then, “is a practice of deheterosexualising” (78).

It may surprise some readers to encounter the interview with Judith Butler, who has recently been associating with anarchist gatherings such as “The Anarchist Turn” conference hosted by The New School in May 2011.¹ Butler says she understands anarchism “as a movement, one that does not always function in a ‘continuous’ fashion” (93). Butler’s interest in anarchism is derived from two “points of reference”: Anarchists Against The Wall and “the way in which queer anarchism poses an important alternative to the rising movement of gay libertarianism” (93). Butler explains her particular form of anarchism:

So anarchism in the sense that interests me has to do with contesting the ‘legal’ dimensions of state power, and posing disturbing challenges about state legitimacy. The point is not to achieve anarchism as a state or as a final form for the political organization of society. It is a disorganizing effect which takes power, exercises power, under conditions where state violence and legal violence are profoundly interconnected. In this sense, it always has an object, and a provisional condition, but it is not a way of life or an ‘end’ in itself. (94)

This last sentence and its declaration of Butler as a “provisional” anarchist may be problematic for anarchists, but her legacy speaks for itself, and her presence in anarchist studies offers the field a notable convert, if you like.

After examinations of anarchist literature, highlighted by Lewis Call’s reading of “postanarchist kink” in Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany, co-editor Jamie Heckert offers some “Fantasies of an anarchist sex educator.” Impressive for both its philosophical range and emotional depth, Heckert’s autobiographical rumination on sex education is the heart and soul of the collection. From his recollections of life in a conservative town and a father who abused alcohol, to his recounting of the ways he survived many of life’s challenges by constructing what he calls “fantasies of superiority,” Heckert’s voice is one of compassion and wisdom. “What effects do vari-

¹ Video of this event is available here: <http://anarchist-developments.org/index.php/adcs/issue/view/4/showToc> .

ous forms of oppression have on our capacities for sexual pleasure, for self-care, for intimacy?" he asks (161). I cannot reproduce the nuances of his answers here, but suffice to say he and the collection he co-edits make a substantial case for "becoming-anarchist" (172).

Anarchism and Sexuality blends poetry with sociological insights about anarchist organizing, memoir with revisions of anarchist history, moments of intimacy with transnational queries. Contrary to forms of classical anarchism, post-anarchist thought resists teleological posturing in favour of instantiated modes of becoming, and often prefers the creative experimentation of micropolitical practices over prescriptive macropolitical ambitions. This anthology complements nicely a host of post-anarchist texts by people such as Richard J.F. Day, Todd May, Saul Newman, and Simon Critchley. What anarchist studies needs now is an anthology dedicated to *Anarchism and Race*.

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Subject of Desire/Subject of Drive: The Emergence of Žižekian Media Studies

MATTHEW FLISFEDER

Jodi Dean. *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*. Polity, 2010. 140 pp.

Paul A. Taylor. *Žižek and the Media*. Polity, 2011. 192 pp.

Fabio Vighi. *Sexual Difference in European Cinema: The Curse of Enjoyment*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 256 pp.

Those familiar with Slavoj Žižek will know that a great deal of his work is bound up with later theories of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. While Lacan has long been an influential figure in media and cultural theory, the three books reviewed here demonstrate an emerging field of Žižekian media studies that is distinct from the earlier Lacanian media studies. Jodi Dean, Paul Taylor, and Fabio Vighi all respond to key questions that arise in Žižek's theories of ideology, subjectivity, power and politics, with a particular focus on the media. These books suggest two centres of gravity that signal a shift away from familiar Lacanian approaches that a Žižekian media studies might represent: (1) a concerted critical engagement with questions of ideology and emancipatory politics, and (2) a sustained preoccupation with the problem of the demise of symbolic efficiency.

Of course, these two tendencies intersect and fold into each other. The problem of the demise of symbolic efficiency is related to the question: how is it possible to propose a critique of ideology in the (supposedly) post-ideological era? Fredric Jameson addresses this question in his renowned essay, "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." In order to explain the postmodern demise of symbolic efficiency, Jameson refers to the Lacanian conception of psychosis as a "breakdown of the signifying chain," which signals a suspension of the operation of 'suture' that ties together the field of floating signifiers. The thesis of a demise of symbolic efficiency posits the experience of a post-ideological condition in the sense that the master narratives of modernity are no longer operative. Master narratives, such as religious narratives, Enlightenment narratives of progress, and emancipatory narratives, such

as Marxism, no longer function as structures of symbolic cognitive mapping, as Jameson puts it. The condition of postmodernity is one in which all such narratives have been deconstructed to the point of losing their entire symbolic weight in the meaning-making practices of subjects in the social world.

Despite this fact, Žižek argues that ideology is still operative on the obverse side of the demise of symbolic efficiency, but below the surface level of symbolic reality. Postmodernism may signal the suspension of the function of the ‘master-signifier’, but there exists a sublime underside of ideology, which more forcefully attaches the subject to the symbolic surface of ideological propositions. Leaving behind the ‘screen theory’ musings on the ‘mirror stage’, the ‘gaze’, the imaginary, and the symbolic—perhaps the most rehearsed aspects of Lacanian theory found in media studies—Žižek speaks to the *objet petit a* (the ‘object-cause’ of desire), the real (as opposed to the imaginary and the symbolic), the drive, the *sinthome* (as opposed to symptom), and enjoyment. With the demise of symbolic efficiency, and the suspension of the function of the master-signifier, enjoyment plays a much stronger role in interpellating ideological subjects. In opposition to the modernist order of prohibition and authority, postmodernism is marked by the superego injunction: ‘Enjoy!’ In the ‘post-’ conditions of our times, not only are we supposedly free to enjoy; we are increasingly *obligated* to enjoy. Psychoanalysis, for Žižek, offers emancipatory cognitive mapping for the postmodern subject because it is the only discourse in which the subject is allowed to *not* enjoy (which is qualitatively different from ‘not allowed to enjoy’).

The analysand in the psychoanalytic experience learns to transition from a subject of desire towards a subject of drive. Desire involves the endless, metonymical search for the (impossible) object (*objet petit a*) that will wrest, and satisfy desire itself. But desire is self-reflexive and is, by definition, insatiable. It continues to follow along a cycle in which the object attained is never *it*, the thing that is desired. This constant search for the object produces a surplus-enjoyment: there is an unconscious satisfaction in being able to reset the co-ordinates of desire, continuing the search. Drive speaks to this other side of insatiable desire. Drive achieves enjoyment by *failing* to get the object—it is the enjoyment of failure. Desire attaches the subject ever more aggressively to the reigning conditions of domination and exploitation, while drive moves the subject in the direction of emancipation and the ends of analysis.

Drive in Social Media

Jodi Dean’s *Blog Theory* begins by addressing the problem of the demise of symbolic efficiency. According to her, the changing function of the symbolic is linked to the reflexivity of complex technological societies, which she investigates referring to her

own conception of ‘communicative capitalism’.¹ The latter refers to the way that contemporary communications media capture users in networks of enjoyment, production, and surveillance (3-4). Drawing on Žižek’s writings on the demise of symbolic efficiency, Dean argues that the Lacanian conception of drive “expresses the reflexive structure of complex networks” (30). Beyond the symbolic, or prohibitive order of the Law, are the reflexive circuits of drive. Communicative capitalism thrives, not because of insatiable desire, but because of the ‘repetitive intensity of drive’ (Ibid.).

Dean is somewhat at odds with Žižek, who argues repeatedly in favour of an ‘ethics of drive’ over an ‘ethics of desire’. She argues that, “under conditions of the decline of symbolic efficiency, drive is not an act” (31); rather, it is what makes communicative capitalism operative. Politically, the challenge involves “producing the conditions of possibility for breaking out of or redirecting the loop of drive” (31).

Dean discusses the conditions of communicative capitalism by examining the world of social media, ‘blogs’ and the ‘blogosphere’, or the ‘blogipelago’, as she puts it – the former term creates the appearance of community, whereas the latter points towards the actual separation and disconnection between users. Communicative capitalism makes this kind of disconnection operative by engaging users through the repetitive and reflexive circuits of drive, imposing further gaps in older symbolic networks of community. By doing so, blogging and the use of social networks such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter facilitate the integration of users into the matrices of neoliberal capitalism. ‘Communicative capitalism’ is an attractive way to theorize the current configurations of networked media. It allows media theorists to grapple with the conditions of space-based media, where the limits of time are increasingly eroding.

Noting the similarities between early blogs and search engines, Dean points out that both originate in the problem of organizing information online. Filled by the fantasy of abundance, online users had previously been plagued by the problem of locating sought after information. Like the Lacanian theory of the unconscious, Dean points out that in cyberspace ‘the truth is out there’, but difficult to find within the sea of abundance. Dean notes that the first blogs were lists of websites, links and articles, noteworthy to the ‘blogger’. Bloggers also added comments about the links that they posted. Like search engines, blogs emerged in place of the ‘subject supposed to know’ (the Lacanian analyst) (42). I would add that the search engine and the online database work in combination to avoid the time lag, the result of which is the ‘spatializa-

¹ Dean first introduced the concept of ‘communicative capitalism’ in *Publicity’s Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

tion' time. The latter adds to the difficulty in grasping a conception of prohibition in postmodernity. Everything is available; there are no limits to access (that is, if we ignore the global digital divide). Desire is no longer prohibited by time—the time necessary to locate and achieve satisfaction; everything is present, located in the database. The result is a crisis for the subject of desire—how to save the saturation of desire when its impossibility becomes increasingly apparent. This is how we might return to Dean's claim that drive makes communicative capitalism operative, and therefore unlikely to work for a political act of resistance and transformation. The disappearance of the limit of time, which made satisfaction of desire appear possible, leaves only the drive on the other side of fantasy.

Since the subjects of communicative capitalism are, according to Dean, already subjects of drive—subjects she refers to as 'whatever beings'—it certainly appears as though an ethics of drive is off the table for a revolutionary politics. A political ethics of drive depends largely upon the way in which the demise of symbolic efficiency is interpreted and approached. If it is read, in Lacanian terms, as the non-existence of the big Other, pure and simple—the Other of the symbolic order, regulating and organizing symbolic reality—then surely it is necessary to concede Dean's main argument, that a politics of drive is not possible today. But what if the postmodern subject's recognition of the non-existence of the big Other is *only* apparent? Here it is necessary to invoke the psychoanalytic notion of fetishism disavowal, best expressed using Octave Manoni's phrase, "*Je sais bien, mais quand même...*"—I know very well, but nevertheless. I am allowed to *not* believe (in the big Other) on the condition that my belief is invested in a fetish object.

For Žižek, fetishism disavowal expresses the contemporary reigning cynical approach to ideology. Cynicism, as Todd McGowan puts it, "is a mode of keeping alive the dream of successfully attaining the lost object while fetishistically denying one's investment in this idea" (29). The post-ideological subject can fully recognize the fact that investment in the object of desire is doomed to failure, but nevertheless, she continues to invest herself in the search for this object. Drive is certainly the flipside to the ideological investment in the object of desire. However, it remains an unconscious aspect of this investment. True satisfaction is achieved, not by the successful attainment of the object, but by the enjoyment of returning to the position of loss through failure. Drive is definitely a central aspect of contemporary communicative capitalism; however, we should be hesitant about claiming that the subject of communicative capitalism is one of drive.

On the contrary, it is worth conceiving the demise of symbolic efficiency, not necessarily as the loss of the symbolic order as such (the non-existence of the big Other), but rather as the loss of the symbolic efficiency of interpretation. According to Žižek,

postmodernity is marked by a crisis in interpretation, leaving the symptom intact. Žižek refers to the hypothetical example of a neo-Nazi skinhead

who, when he is really pressed to reveal the reasons for his violence, suddenly starts to talk like social workers, sociologists and social psychologists, citing diminished social mobility, rising insecurity, the disintegration of paternal authority, lack of maternal love in his early childhood, etc. (*For They Know Not What They Do* xci)

The problem, then, is how to bring a rupture in the subject's symptomal chain, when she herself already recognizes the interpretive procedure of locating its cause. According to Žižek, the loss of the efficiency of symbolic interpretation is one way to diagnose the postmodern condition of the demise of symbolic efficiency. This, too, is how one should read Fredric Jameson's notion of cognitive mapping—lacking the symbolic weight of interpreting her position in the world, the subject remains lost, trapped in a situation, without any means of making sense of herself and her position in the world.

Media Form and the Perversion of the Analyst

Paul Taylor's *Žižek and the Media* offers an alternative interpretation to the demise of symbolic efficiency. In contrast to Dean's text, *Žižek and the Media* is an introductory text for those less familiar with Žižek. Taylor introduces Žižek, first by discussing him *as* a media image (as the star of two documentaries, and as a regular TV and Youtube 'personality', Žižek is 'hot' in McLuhanese), and then by showing where and how Žižek's theory of ideology is useful for media analysis. The most ambiguous aspect of Taylor's book is the fact that, at times, he uses the terms 'ideology' and 'media' interchangeably. Often, where Taylor claims that Žižek is speaking about 'the media', Žižek scholars will know that Žižek himself rarely refers to 'the media' quite as specifically as Taylor suggests, and actually talks about 'ideology'. Replacing 'ideology' with 'the media' allows Taylor to more easily adapt Žižek's theory of ideology to a theory about the media, where the two are often taken as transferable entities. This, however, forces the reader to consider whether the symbolic of 'the media' occupies a position previously held by the symbolic of the 'objective spirit' in Hegelese. That is to say, at a time when the dissolution of the big Other appears to be an accepted fact, has the media developed into the very ground upon which the symbolic big Other rests, today? This last question opens up an avenue for thinking about the ways in which Taylor's book poses an alternative approach to the claims made in *Blog Theory*.

Throughout the past decade it has become increasingly clear that the perceived non-existence of the big Other, and the demise of symbolic efficiency, is not a fact, pure

and simple, but is, rather, ideology at its purest. Žižek suggests that,

[i]t may seem that Lacan's *doxa* 'there is no big Other' has today lost its subversive edge and turned into a globally acknowledged commonplace—everybody seems to know that there is no 'big Other' in the sense of a substantial shared set of customs and values.... However, the example of cyberspace clearly demonstrates how the big Other is present more than ever....” (*In Defense of Lost Causes* 34)

As Taylor puts it, “[w]e engage with media, like cinema and cyberspace not to *escape from*, but rather in order to *escape to* a social reality that protects (mediates) us more effectively from the truly traumatic issues and concerns that belie our ‘normal’ lives” (78).

The big Other, or the symbolic order, is on par with what we normally refer to as ‘reality’, as opposed to the Real. ‘Reality’ makes sense—that is, it assigns meaning, returning potentially traumatic facts to their place in the symbolic order. The Real itself is traumatic and non-sensical. Entering a state of subjective destitution, at the end of analysis, requires some kind of awareness on the part of the subject—analysis and that there *is* no guarantee of meaning—that, in fact, the big Other does not exist. Taylor’s assertion that we engage with media to escape *to* ‘reality’, makes sense if we consider the way in which the media helps to regulate our lives by assigning meaning to increasingly traumatic events. Instead of a complete demise of symbolic efficiency, Taylor finds that the symbolic order itself has been colonized by the hyperreal signs of the media (71).

Individual media and their properties, according to Taylor, are part of a larger, overarching ‘media system’; and, it is this system that is replacing the older symbolic efficiency of the big Other. He focuses particularly on reality TV and the conflation between mediated reality and lived experience. Rather than merely presenting reality, the media *construct* reality. Within the historical context of the supposed loss of the big Other and its symbolic efficiency, “the media attempts to render social reality in ever more detailed ways via the exponential growth of a range of increasingly intrusive images” (88). The problem with the latter is that it opens itself up to accusations of simply revamping the old Marxian theory of ‘false consciousness’.

One of the advantages of Taylor’s approach to the media is his emphasis on form, pulling out the way that Žižek, as well, adds an emphasis to ideological form, above content. According to Taylor, “Žižek’s media analysis succeeds where others fail in addressing the contemporary conveyance of ideological *effect via form*” (24). It is important to distinguish this emphasis on form from a purely ‘formalist’ analysis. Here, the point is not to focus on the formal techniques of conveying ideology, but has more to do with the organizing structure of mediated content. In semiotic terms, we might

say that the series of floating signifiers in the content are organized and structured by some absent, empty signifier: the Lacanian master-signifier. Noting Žižek's emphasis on ideological form, Taylor addresses one of the most distinguishing aspects of Žižek's brand of ideology critique. Ideology succeeds, not through its explicit content, but through its 'mode of delivery'.

Ultimately, what the media constructs, according to Taylor, is an ersatz reality, that allows the postmodern subject to compensate for the loss of the big Other of modernity. Unlike an older notion of false consciousness, here the operation of concealment through revelation is in full force. This is how we can account for phenomena such as reality television, in which characters—supposedly 'real people'—are encouraged to reveal everything about their lives, from marital and other family problems, to financial worries, dating and sexual preferences, etc. According to Taylor, the media system is perverse, not only because it enjoins subjects to reveal the most intimate details of their lives, up to and including explicit sex, but also because it is fixated upon the construction of a "symbolically efficient mediated substitute" built around the depiction of *all* social activity (84). Despite the demise of the symbolic efficiency of an overt big Other, the latter continues to exist, but in a less apparent, more benign form.

Taylor calls Žižek's method a 'perverted analysis', by which he means to emphasize the strict psychoanalytic conception of perversion, as "a disproportionate attachment to a particular ordering or structure of desire;" and he notes that "[t]his attachment is typically manifested in the pervert's reliance upon a fetish, of which the sexual variety is only one kind" (7). Taylor points out that Žižek's apparent perversity helps to bring to the surface the "deceptively naturalized forms in which we tend to encounter mediated ideology" (7). Taylor claims that Žižek is an 'old-fashioned' pervert in the sense that his theoretical *raison d'être* is "to turn conventional understandings upside down by the unremitting application of theory" (8). The latter, though, is actually the role played by the analyst.

As Žižek notes, the formula for the Lacanian discourse of perversion and the formula for the discourse of the analyst are identical, split by a 'thin, almost indivisible line' (*The Parallax View* 303). Perversion and analysis are two sides of the same coin. The latter, the position of the analyst, is arrived at, after one has traversed the (ideological) fantasy, entered a state of subjective destitution (a subject position without guarantees—the guarantee of the big Other and the symbolic order), and has performed an act which 'changes the co-ordinates' from which one perceives one's own subjective position. In the context of the demise of symbolic efficiency, perhaps these two positions—the position of the pervert and the position of the analyst—account for the two sides of ideological recognition/misrecognition. Perversion represents the

subject's attachment to the order of the big Other, even after its authority has been deconstructed. The pervert remains attached to the symbolic order *because* it saves the subject's desire from saturation—a desire that the perverted subject wants to keep intact. If we read the Lacanian discourse of the analyst as the discourse of the pervert we find that it represents a social link, the product of which is the master-signifier. The pervert escapes *to* the protective field of mediated, symbolic reality, because it helps to preserve a perverse pleasure. Perversion requires some figure of authority in order to keep afloat its 'inherent transgressions' of authority. Thus, it is possible to agree with Taylor's claim that, "[d]espite the decline of the overt symbolic efficiency of various meta-narratives (the church, etc.), the big Other continues to exist in very practical, albeit submerged forms" (88). The symbolic fiction of the big Other may have been replaced by technologically processed fictions (CGI, etc.), but Žižek's perverted analysis, according to Taylor, "helps us to take more responsibility for the role the media plays in *screening* our social fantasies" (115). Here, it is also possible to agree with Dean, that within a declining symbolic order, the discourse of the analyst no longer represents a radical-revolutionary emancipatory subject (Dean 87), on the condition that we recognize that this is not a subject of drive in the position of the analyst, but still a subject of desire in the position of the pervert.

Sexual Difference and the Gaps in the Symbolic

Fabio Vighi's book, *Sexual Difference in European Cinema: The Curse of Enjoyment*, is grounded less in media studies, and engages more with film theory. Vighi begins by addressing concerns with film studies that Žižek himself takes on in *The Fright of Real Tears* (2001). Like Žižek, Vighi advocates for the importance of Lacanian film theory against so-called post-theorists, such as David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, but he argues that, unlike screen theory, which focused on the subject-positioning of the spectator, a Lacanian perspective should focus on the way in which films master their own symbolic efficiency. For Vighi, cinema—not all cinema, but particular, exemplary cases of cinema—demonstrates the way in which the symbolic itself is structured. Film analysis, according to him, shows how cinema makes sense of itself. Film-sense emerges by negotiating its own symbolic consistency. The latter involves dealing, in one way or another, with the some excess, or excluded surplus.

Vighi's book is Žižekian, rather than Lacanian, to the degree that he distinguishes himself from older screen theory categories, like the imaginary and the symbolic, the mirror stage, and the 'gaze', and focuses on the real and enjoyment. His investigation of cinema's negotiation between symbolic consistency and its excess involves looking at two interrelated aspects of analysis: the role of enjoyment and the representation of sexual difference. Emphasizing the latter, Vighi shows how film analysis teaches

us ways of identifying the emergence of the real within the space of the symbolic. By looking at the interaction between the symbolic consistency of the film text and enjoyment, it is possible, Vighi asserts, to locate that which is central to every political discourse: the relation between that which is represented and that which is excluded from representation. Film analysis must allow us to identify, not necessarily political themes, but the logic of sustaining a social-symbolic space, something of which is important for any hegemonic discourse. Cinema helps us to understand the emergence of social, symbolic reality, and how it is constructed around excessive enjoyment. Like Žižek, Vighi's project is one of understanding how our enjoyment itself is organized by the reigning ideological order. The latter is tied to the psychoanalytic problem of sexual difference in the sense that attempts at its representation ultimately end up on failure, similar to the representation of class antagonism, and give some indication of the place of the Real. The universal status of both rests upon the deadlock of the impossibility of their symbolization. There is, in other words, no neutral position from which antagonism may be represented. Every attempt at their representation ends up in failure—the failure to fully, and adequately, represent the antagonism itself.

Vighi's book is divided into two sections. The first addresses the 'masculine' side of the Lacanian formulas of sexuation—"the ideological process of concealing the wound of sexual difference by displacing it onto woman *qua* sublime and forbidden cause (the logic of courtly love)"—while the second looks at the 'feminine' side, as "correlative to the Real of sexual difference itself" (11).² Put simply, the masculine side of the formula represents the symbolic concealment of the Real by way of its exclusion: the universality of phallic signifier operates only on the condition that something remains excluded—the latter is a finite totality. The feminine side, in contrast, affirms the position of the exception by positing an infinite totality, in which not-all elements are submitted to the universal. In political terms, we might say that, on the masculine side, the claim, 'everything is political' affirms an exception that is not political; while on the feminine side, the exception affirms that *there is nothing that is not political* (note, here, that the latter is *not* equivalent to the claim that everything is political). Masculinity, in other words, is operative of symbolic efficiency in its concealment, or exclusion, of its surplus—the 'phallic' is a performance: it stands in to mask the impossibility of representing sexual difference. Femininity returns the excluded to its position in the symbolic, the result of which is the fracturing of the symbolic order itself and the emergence of the Real in the field of the Symbolic. Femininity deprives the Symbolic "of its founding excess" (149).

² For an excellent interpretation of the Lacanian formulas of sexuation see Joan Copjec, "Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason." In *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

Vighi focuses on post-war European cinema because, for him, there is something about the way that these films represent sexual difference that speaks to the way that Lacanian theory conceptualizes the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real. The section on masculinity addresses the problem of courtly love and its relation to sublimation. Libido, according to Freud, is heightened by an obstacle. Sublimation, then, operates by way of an internalized obstacle/prohibition that replaces the impossibility of the (sexual) object. Courtly love, similarly, operates by way of the sublimation of 'woman'. Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1959), for example, speaks to the psychoanalytic conception of courtly love. As Vighi indicates, the three women in the film represent three different versions of the sublimated woman: Maddalena is woman as prostitute; Emma opposes the cliché of faithful and maternal wife; and, Sylvia represents a modern version of the Lady in courtly love (20). The key to all three is that they are all elusive figures. Here, Vighi emphasizes a fundamental characteristic of masculine enjoyment: the paradoxical enjoyment of missing the object—which, on the other side of things, satisfies the drive.

Other intriguing examples include Vighi's interpretation of François Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1962), and David Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1945). The former is usually thought of as a film about experimenting with alternative love ethics; however, Vighi reads it as a film about the impossibility for the couple to attain full autonomy: the traumatic implication being that $1+1=3$. The film, according to Vighi, is not about the failure of the love experiment, but about the fact that there is always a missing third—a third 'gaze', perhaps—in every couple. *Jules et Jim* is a film about two friends who share the same woman, *and* remain friends because of the mediating role of the woman as missing third. The missing third, in other words, is "the necessary supplement that sustains the 'healthy' functioning of the couple" (31). *Brief Encounter*, conversely, shows how the idealization of the love relationship disavows its own presupposition: "the obstacle to the accomplishment of the illicit affair between Alec and Laura is *its very cause*, its condition of possibility" (145). It is the fantasy of the affair that allows them to avoid the Real of enjoyment. The affair does not take place, not to preserve the sanctity of the institution of marriage, but because, according to Vighi, the two are afraid of losing the fantasy that binds them. Their love relationship is bound by the very impossibility of the sexual relationship, externalized as a fantasy object. As Vighi presents them, all of these examples speak to the masculine side of the formulas of sexuation and the (masculine) desire to keep desiring.

Femininity, in contrast, "undermines the masculine field by abolishing the fracture between the Symbolic and the Real, thus depriving the Symbolic of its founding excess" (149). Man is caught in the metonymic search for the excluded object; woman, however, "has a chance to disengage from the masculine urge to symbolize and, instead, 'enjoy' the Real inconsistency of the symbolic field—the fact that 'the big

Other does not exist” (150). Woman disturbs the symbolic order by removing the exception; or, rather, by returning the exception to its place in the Symbolic—an intervention of the Real in the Symbolic. Vighi highlights the films of Michelangelo Antonioni and Ingmar Bergman as exemplary of the feminine side of the formulas of sexualization. According to Vighi, these filmmakers collapse the fantasy upon which the masculine account of woman as *objet petit a* is based: “The woman at the heart of their cinemas brings about a *loss of reality*, which is deeply connected with a *loss of fantasy*” (155). Both filmmakers demonstrate the Lacanian thesis that the closer one gets to the feminine subject the more we lose our perception of symbolic reality.

Nelly, in Bergman’s *Crisis* (1946), and Clara, in Antonioni’s *The Lady without Camelias* (1953), represent for Vighi ‘woman’ as the ‘absent cause’ of man’s despair and impotence. Both women frustrate the masculine gaze, implying, according to Vighi, that ‘*jouissance féminine*’ is the enjoyment of an insight into the inconsistency of the symbolic order. Such an insight transforms ‘woman’ into a threatening figure for masculine desire, represented by figures like Nelly and Clara. Both characters, in different ways, reveal “the insignificance of our attachment to the socio-symbolic order” (171).

Ultimately, the difference between masculine and feminine enjoyment amounts to the difference between the safety and security of the symbolic order as a protective shield, or the risk of inconsistency. The difference between the two is perhaps thought of as one between desire and drive, or as Žižek puts it in *The Fright of Real Tears*, between the calm life (of the symbolic order) and the ‘mission’ (of the Real) (*The Fright of Real Tears* 137). Vighi’s look at the representation of sexual difference in post-war European cinema adds to the Žižekian thesis that reality itself is split between the contingent meaning of the symbolic order, guaranteed by the figure of the big Other, and the underside of fantasy, which fills in the gaps in the big Other. That being said, in opposition to Vighi’s initial point regarding the usefulness of psychoanalysis to theorize the symbolic efficiency of film itself, it is necessary to insist upon a reading and understanding of spectatorship as well, for it is precisely the enjoyment of the spectator that fills in the gap of the excluded third in cinema’s symbolic consistency. The latter does not necessarily have to reflect the misconceptions of spectatorship found in screen theory.

Conclusion

The three books reviewed here all draw upon categories of Lacanian psychoanalysis, but they do so in the context of a particularly Žižekian reading of Lacan. By emphasizing the Lacanian concept of the real, enjoyment, the *sinthome*, fantasy, the ‘sublime object’ of ideology (the *objet petit a*), and the drive—and by addressing questions

related to the critique of ideology, emancipatory politics and the demise of symbolic efficiency, especially as they are connected to questions about the media—these texts all signal the emergence of a distinctly Žižekian approach to media studies. In conclusion, I would like to add a few remarks about the direction of Žižekian media studies by taking up some of the terms of the debate proposed by Dean, Taylor, and Vighi.

Media studies shows that claims regarding the demise of symbolic efficiency and the avowed knowledge regarding the non-existence of the big Other are somewhat exaggerated. The big Other of the media may not take the same form as the older symbolic order of modernity. However, it is evident that the media does provide the settings for the ideological organization of enjoyment. Media studies demonstrates, particularly through digital media, film and television, that symbolic reality—what we regularly refer to as ‘reality’—always already *was* virtual. What is needed is a system of interpretation and ‘cognitive mapping’ adequate for bringing this fact to the surface. The three books reviewed above move in this direction.

In *The Indivisible Remainder* (1996), Žižek makes an intriguing connection between the Lacanian interpretation of courtly love and cyberspace. Courtly love, as we have seen through Vighi, accords the necessity of external obstacles as a condition of possibility of the love object – to create the *illusion* that without these hindrances the subject could have direct access to the object. New media, as noted above, potentially threatens the sublimated object of desire through the instant availability of nearly everything. The absence of prohibition (or the lack of availability of objects of desire) suffocates desire. How one relates to this problem depends largely upon whether one chooses an ethics of desire or an ethics of drive.

The subject, herself, is not conditioned one way or another, either by new or conventional media. The subject’s engagement with the media, like the symbolic order, is split between desire and drive. Both are operative, on different sides of fantasy, and regulate the subject’s approach to her own enjoyment. In the strict psychoanalytic sense, the ethics of the subject depends largely upon the choice of prolonging desire, like the perverse logic of masculinity, or the choice of risking desire in order to engage with and recognize the constitutive subjective position of loss, necessary for breaking free of the repetitive circuits of communicative capitalism. The aim of Žižekian media studies is to move the subject in the direction of the latter.

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Fantastic Materialism

SARAH HAMPLIN

Andy Merrifield. *Magical Marxism: Subversive Politics and the Imagination*. London: Pluto, 2011. 220 pp.

Andy Merrifield's *Magical Marxism* arises from what he describes as "a double dissatisfaction": an obvious dissatisfaction with the state of contemporary society and a more delicate frustration with the revolutionary potential of actually existing Marxism (xii). Discontent with the resolute negativity of traditional Marxism, *Magical Marxism* instead proposes an alternate vision that leaves behind some of Marxism's most well-worn notions in favor of an affirmative utopianism that uses the imagination as the foundation from which to begin the act of living "post-capitalistically" (73). As such, the book is in conversation with other recent attempts to reinvigorate Marxism, most of which have been published as part of Verso's Communist Hypothesis series. Merrifield's contribution to these debates centers on the affirmative politics of living differently. Thus, alongside its critique of traditional Marxism and its theorization of a new international – one inspired by magic and surrealism and which sees Gabriel Garcia Márquez and Guy Debord as its guiding thinkers – *Magical Marxism* surveys existent models of alternate living that challenge both capitalist hegemony and certain tenants of traditional Marxist thought.

At the core of the book is Merrifield's attempt to reconnect critique and praxis, a link that has been lost as Marxism becomes an increasingly and exclusively negative practice. For Merrifield, this emphasis on negativity is, in part, the legacy of Marxism's adherence to dialectical thought, where the positive can only ever be "an outcome, not a starting point" (111). Moreover, it is reinforced through basic Marxist concepts – the idea that the proletariat is the class proper to revolution, the theory of fetishism, and the tension between appearance and essence – all of which stem from the belief that there is a truth of material conditions that only (scientific) Marxist analysis can uncover through political critique. As a result, Merrifield maintains, Marxism has become obsessed with capitalism's contradictions and crises, with its "darker, negative side" (112) and its mission has become simply to "monitor a failing global system, to soberly and coolly analyze capitalist machinations, to revel in clinical critical negativity (146). "Historically," Merrifield argues, "negative thinking has been a collective prison-house and individual straightjacket" (110) that has resulted in a "gutless and worthless" Marxism, one "without a future, without hope, without hope of inspiring hope, without any discernible characteristics to pass on to anyone" (146).

Turning away from the canon of traditional Marxist concepts and the stultified negative Marxism inspired by them, Merrifield posits instead an “*ontology of action*,” a positive subversion that affirms utopian desire and attempts to bring it into being through the act of living differently (119). The source for this desire is the poetic imagination, which enables us to imagine radically new worlds and non-traditional ways of being that can then materialize. “Never, perhaps, have we lived in such *un-poetic times*” (162), laments Merrifield, and it is essential that we reconnect with our creative, utopian spirit if we are to transform the world. For Magical Marxists, poetry “becomes something ontological [...], a state of Being- and Becoming-in-the-world, the invention of life and the shrugging off of tyrannical forces that are wielded over that life. Poetic lives destabilize accepted notions of order and respectability, of cool rationality and restraint” (11-12). Channeling André Breton and the surrealists of the early twentieth century, Merrifield champions their poetic power of “absolute nonconformity and marvelous unreality” as the source of new ways of being (12). Tracing this thinking back to the *Grundrisse*, Merrifield maintains that this magical imagination is “something more than idealism, something more than simple wishful thinking and naïve optimism” (143). Rather, it is a powerful material force where “‘real materialism’ is conditioned by ‘the will (and hope) of ‘fictitious’ idealism’” (16), it “drag[s] present reality along with it, [...] leaping across the ontological gap between the here and the there, between the now and the time to come” to actively create the future (12). Thus the Magical Marxist project is, in the Blochian sense, conditioned by invention rather than discovery; it is a large-scale *détournement* of reality where “the source of creation is always reality, always somehow embedded in reality, yet a reality in which imagination is an instrument in its production and recreation” (29).

This poetic transformation of reality breaks with the traditional Marxist model of the seizure of power since “society isn’t so much overthrown as reinvented” (12). Rather than focusing on the negation of capitalism, Magical Marxism proposes affirmative invention through spontaneous subversion, or what John Holloway elsewhere calls “an anti-politics of event rather than a politics of organization” (Holloway 214). The influence of anarchism and the self-determined politics of 1968 loom large in this emphasis on anti-power. Indeed, Merrifield’s Marxism is founded on the desire for autonomy, for Lefebvre’s notion of the *autogestion* of life; that is, “a spontaneous *subjectivation* from the standpoint of social reproduction ... [where] people construct their own objective structures to life,” and where “their agency and even their wishful thinking drive them forward, compel them to act, have them strive for collective autonomy” (101). The result is a movement characterized by a revolutionary energy that “resonates” affectively and non-teleologically (74), that is adaptable, non-dog-

matic, fully self-determined, “unperfect”¹ and spontaneous. Significantly, this does not mean that it is unorganized; somewhat akin to Lefebvre’s idea of “cultivated spontaneity,” Magical Marxism rejects both the rigidity and authority of a formalized system and the ineffectuality of “localism, of symbolism, of ‘partial practice,’ of an impulsive nihilism” (87). Rather, Magical Marxism mixes “painstaking planning with spontaneous militancy, clearheaded analysis with touchy-feely utopianism” (90).

Ultimately, then, Merrifield’s is a Marxism of affirmation and of action as the “only viable alternative[s] to the bankruptcy of representative democracy, the paralysis of contemplation, to the alienation of the spectator” (42). Importantly, *Magical Marxism*’s emphasis on action does not entail a rejection of traditional Marxism’s critical negativity. Indeed, Merrifield maintains that negation remains as a foundational principle of resistance. However, rather than the negative clearing the ground for the positive as traditional dialectic thought would have it would have it, the positive simultaneously performs the negation as it struggles against something to affirm something else. Ultimately, then, *Magical Marxism* is a “dialogue between Marxism as realism and Marxism as romantic dreaming” (xviii).

Merrifield discusses a diverse range of situations where these politics have manifested in the act of living differently: the Zapatistas, the Invisible Committee and the Tarnac Nine, the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers’ Movement, the San Francisco-based human rights organization Global Exchange, the Direct Action Network and the Institute for Applied Autonomy, Local Exchange Trading systems, and the Free Software movement and its fight for A General Public License society, even the downshifters and voluntary *déclassé*. For Merrifield, it does not matter whether these groups are working class, whether they identify as Marxist, or even whether their modes of action are compatible or ideologically coherent. What matters is that they are all finding ways to at once actively resist capitalism and affirm alternative modes of being. As such, they are members of a “non-aligned neo-proletariat” (94), of an Imaginary Party, bought together only by some “inessential commonality” in the Agambenian sense. These “pockets of resistance” (language Merrifield borrows from Subcomandante Marcos) are part of a larger network of “collective micro-movements against the totalitarian mega-machine” (xvi).

For Merrifield, the benefits of moving beyond the idea of the working class as the only group proper to revolution are clear: “The notion of a ‘non-class’ opens up the political terrain, makes it both potentially more fruitful and decidedly more in-

¹ This term is borrowed from the Yugoslav radical Milovan Djilas, whose book, *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class*, similarly articulates the never-ending nature of revolutionary action.

clusive, yet clearly more uncertain, too, because nothing can be taken for granted, because it precludes Messianic dogmatism, militates against ‘bearers’ of history in our midst. Instead, it implies a challenge, and begets a possibility” (63). Moreover, the idea of a “non-class” suggests that revolution is no longer an external, abstract force imposed on the masses. Rather, it springs from shared desires: “it’s the realm of affect that binds [...] that serves as a mobilizing force” (64, 76). As a result, “Marxism is treated as offering a utopian vision, an expectant counter-emotion of how people might live *post-capitalistically*” (72-73) and by opening itself up to these movements and their affirmative praxes, Marxism becomes “broader,” “more versatile,” “more supple,” (xii) and ultimately, “*unbreakable* because there will never be anything set in stone or cast in concrete, no giant monuments or ego edifices, nothing that towers above people” (189).

In using figures like Debord and Lefebvre as his touchstones, Merrifield aligns himself with the theory of social alienation. As the logic of capitalism invades our free time, Merrifield argues, the boundaries between the political, the economic and the social begin to disintegrate until “all consumable time and space are raw materials for new products” (22). As such, the Marxist struggle has become “a question of reclaiming the totality of everyday life – of work life and daily life” (23). And it is precisely this idea of an increasingly pervasive capitalism that enables Merrifield to open up the idea of struggle to everyone who feels marginalized by capitalism. More significantly, this emphasis on the social means that the dynamics of culture become the motor of revolutionary change and the basis for a new political imaginary. For Merrifield, as for Lefebvre, the everyday is “the primal arena for meaningful social change – the only arena” (19) and that time-honored goal of Marxism – “the extinction of political economy” – is no longer confined to the workplace.

Moreover, the drive towards self-autonomy and the politics of anti-power preclude the possibility of party-led transformation or the reformation of the state. For Merrifield, the state is a bankrupt concept that will only ever hamper our efforts towards *autogestion*. As such, he ultimately comes down against any state-sponsored actions, including more radical projects like Social Income, arguing that, “There’s little to expect from the state other than repression or pacification, or both; there’s little to expect other than baton blows or bribes, suppression or seduction – or various permutations of each” (122). For Merrifield, the fact that the state, at least since Thatcher and Reagan, has “withered away from the social needs of people, re-channeling its ‘post-Fordist’ paternalism unashamedly in the direction of capital” (102), needs to be seen as an opportunity to finally break from its structures of dependency, as a “potential cue to exploring new activities more self-organized, more autonomous; to self divest from work without falling into the right’s ideological trap of personal responsibility and possessive individualism” (102). As such, “becoming autonomous,

asserting Magical Marxism, thus means that any new experiments in living, any new collective affinities and fidelities, any new forms of solidarity and citizenry, will have to come without subsidies and will need to be impenetrable to state interference, to state intervention” (173). While there is always an imminent danger, Merrifield concedes, that the autonomous impulse of *autogestion* will be reappropriated by capitalism as the neo-liberal logic of self-responsibility, we can no longer direct our energies towards the transformation of the state: “we already knew the revolution was not going to be televised but we must accept that neither will it be funded” (174).

This emphasis on the social makes it easier to imagine a stateless existence since it foregrounds individual experience and folds the political and economic realms into the social so that the more universal problems that they pose appear diminished. But they do remain. So, while it is relatively easy to imagine our particular lives organized outside the strictures of the state, more universal concerns, especially those concerning equitable distribution, become much harder to deal with. The commutopian sentiment of Merrifield’s book, the desire to “go back to the future” (136) and create smaller, and in some ways more simple modes of existence, seems to come unstuck in the face of access to certain fundamentals – clean water and air, healthcare, modes of mass transit, housing. Without some kind of larger state structure, it is hard to imagine how we can ensure access on a global scale. Surely the state must remain, even if only as the “minimal abstract structure” and “instrument of distribution” that Spivak defends (Spivak and Butler 98).

But this is perhaps precisely Merrifield’s point: Marxism spends so much time debating these questions, critiquing systems and theorizing alternatives that it becomes trapped in its own criticality. Magical Marxism simply asks us to begin somewhere: “*Autogestion* cannot be all or nothing from the outset; it doesn’t have to be global or everywhere before it can be anywhere. *Autogestion* has to germinate somewhere, somehow” (102). This is not to turn towards a politics of reform – Merrifield is clear that the larger goal of Magical Marxism is total and perpetual revolutionary transformation – but to argue for the centrality and vital importance of action as a starting point from which such revolutionary momentum blooms. Merrifield’s Marxism is one of action, of permanent revolution; it is an unperfectable system of subversion that combines critique with action, negativity with affirmation. So, rather than waiting for the conditions or the theorization of the perfect solution, Magical Marxism implies that we should just get on with the act of living differently and tackle these problems as we go. To do so, to imagine something different and act in order to realize it, is the only revolutionary path.

Magical Marxism isn’t for all Marxists, a fact which Merrifield acknowledges wholeheartedly. It seems as though Merrifield imagines this rejection will come at the hands

of classical Marxists who remain faithful to the ideas of stagist, class-based revolution. But one has to wonder to what extent this old guard still persists; while certain elements of traditional Marxism have perhaps endured, the doctrine of scientific Marxism has long been eclipsed. Moreover, while Merrifield's primary contention is with Marxism's serial negativity, surely it is the case that the critique of political economy persists precisely because of capitalism's radical transformations, because its machinations are anything but "obvious" (112). Given such paradigm shifts as post-1956 Communism, the failures of 1968, postcolonialism, and the advent of truly global, stateless capitalism, the critical work of these negative Marxists remains vital as it refines our understanding of structural changes in capitalism. Thus, just as Merrifield attempts to sharpen the active side of Marxism, these scholars diagnose the changing conditions of capitalism and the failures of older socialist programs and their models of futurity; that is, they deepen our knowledge of the system through critique so that action can ultimately become more powerful. To be sure, however, to reaffirm the importance of critique is not to undermine Merrifield's argument and his insistence on the persistence of negation perhaps allows for this. For *Magical Marxism* is not a call to abandon the critique of political economy altogether, but to develop a concomitant affirmative politics that opens up the possibility of the future. And for those of us similarly dissatisfied with the programs of the official left, the frustrated "mischief-makers who want to *do* something radical" (xiii, my emphasis), his contribution to the shape of contemporary Marxism is timely and invigorating. Above all, then, what *Magical Marxism* asks us to do, in the spirit of Bloch's utopia, is to begin²: to begin exploiting the cracks of the capitalist system in order to liberate time and space from work and private property, to abolish wage labor and imagine systems of work and exchange free of capitalist logic and which enable autonomous self-development, and to reclaim the commons and the right to space. *Magical Marxism* asks us to begin "living the revolution *now*" (148).

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² The opening lines to Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia* read: "I am. We are. That is enough. Now we have to begin" (1).

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Entry and Exit Points in Global Capitalism

PABLO CASTAGNO

Ahmed Kanna. *Dubai: The City as Corporation*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011. 262 pp.

No doubt Dubai's image is one of its principal Siren-like allures, calling us to leap to a prelapsarian imagination, simply to swoon immediately at the site of architectural fantasies of the future. In these travels, what remains in commodity fetishism is nothing else than the refractions of consumers on the immaculate urban surfaces of the capitalist juggernaut, on which the empty seas and deserts are reflected. This said, I argue that Ahmed Kanna's *Dubai: The City as Corporation* misses a potentially fruitful opportunity to engage with current works in cultural studies that illuminate how the dialectics of the modern and the primitive telescope in capitalism (Smith xii). I believe that actively pursuing critical dialogue with such works would much more effectively achieve the author's worthy goal of demystifying state power, researching "the workings of the hegemonic family-state project of presenting Dubai as a synthesis between reified cultural values and neoliberal discourses of consumerist individualism" (xii).

Kanna's provocative work questions which voices and social formations are enabled and which are displaced when a city undergoes a transnational urban competition for real and symbolic capital (7). Responding to this question, Kanna illuminates the instruments of political hegemony, ethnic control, male domination and labor exploitation as contributing to Dubai's spatialization of the capitalist dream. Further, Kanna discusses how Dubayyans respond culturally to those state constructions. In his account, space refers to the spatial representations of institutional actors, the territorializing discourses of the term "culture" in the usages of Dubayyans, the varying types of state governance, and the social appropriations of these forms of governance. Following Michel Foucault, Kanna's anthropological perspective serves to demonstrate how spatial politics produces ethnic, class and gender identifications and thus regulates subjects in any political system, no matter its institutional configuration (x).

Kanna explains the processes constituting the city-state by examining the history of capitalism in the Arab Gulf. Drawing on Ferdinand Braudel's work, Kanna observes that the expansion of European capitalism was based on a network of trading cities

governed by concentrated institutions of power. Such towns functioned as socio-political entry points for capitalism. He notes that during the colonial period, the British co-opted through collaboration prominent tribal chiefs in the Gulf emirates and reinvented the latter as unitary, hereditary and absolutist sovereigns, such as the Al Maktoum's dynasty of Dubai (24). Later, in contemporary Dubai, the Executive Council—the effective state body that controls urban developments in the city, headed by Sheikh Muhammad Al Maktoum—came to closely resemble its previous colonial institutions, due to the hierarchal form of its governance (140). This approach successfully relates the current economically neoliberal and politically less-than-democratic city-state to its colonial history, although it does not clarify whether the current politico-institutional configuration is still a requirement of capitalism.

Another productive move made by Kanna is his claim that the very state form of Dubai depends on the social struggles within the Emirate. In chapter one, he argues that the reliance of the Emirate on ethno-nationalism is a result of its attempt to cope with the critiques of nationalist reformers who were inspired by Third World independence discourses during the period spanning from the 1940s until Dubai's independence from British rule in 1971. The reformers claimed the Emirate favored British interests over those of the local merchants. Against the dynasty's ideology of dependency, protection and co-optation, reformers proposed a conception of national sovereignty resting on participatory citizenship (26). In response, the family-state implanted and disseminated an ethno-nationalist discourse, one which was centered on a notion of Arabness and thus denied the existence of Persian and South Asian identities in Dubai. The family-state presented itself as protecting the Emirati citizenry from the threats supposedly posed by migrant South Asian or Iranian small-merchants and workers, who are excluded from citizenship (47). As result, citizens constitute only about the twenty percent of the total population of today's Dubai. Ruling families with Arab-Bedouin roots—a class that has retained the property of oil revenues and land—occupy the top of the social pyramid. Next, there is an elite population belonging to the administrative stratum and merchant class. This social sector includes descendents of Sunni Iranians (24, 54).

Pointing to this ethnic hierarchy, and following the approach of Abdul Khaleq Abdulla and Anh Nga Longva on politics in the Arab region, Kanna contends that Dubai is an ethnocracy where ethnic control, economic privileges and political domination mutually reinforce each other. The defining feature in this form of governance is citizenship, conceived in terms of shared descent: a society governed by an exclusive ruling ethnic group (30). This formation coincided with the intensification of oil production in the United Arab Emirates and the flow of petrodollars. The family-state in Dubai used oil-wealth to co-opt reformers, establishing a politics of “ruling bargain”: a construction of citizenship based on notions of protection, hier-

archy and charity (50). Specifically, Kanna demonstrates that this form of politics operates through spatial control: the ethnocracy represents the polity as homogenous and identifies migrant workers' spaces with moral degradation, legitimating its segregation of workers in labor camps (27, 68). This perspective helps to examine how modes of state authoritarianism relate to global capitalism, as an economy whose core components have the potential of working as a unit in real time on a planetary scale (Castells 102). Disappointing in the author's treatment of this topical subject, however, is the lack of comparative analysis of Middle-East ethnocracies with Western democracies. For instance, Kanna employs the category of hegemony without either exploring its Gramscian roots or analyzing the family-state's idiosyncratic paternalist practices of power.

Examining state hegemony in Dubai, Kanna argues that the family-state is reproduced through its policy of establishing neoliberal enclaves for attracting global capital and tourists. Since the 1990s, the Emirate engaged in an aggressive policy of the commodification of Dubai as a world-class tourist destination, a prime zone of real estate investment, a platform for global corporations and a hub in the re-export business. In turn, the family-state fused the ruling bargain ideology with a consumerist notion of Westernization (76). Kanna maintains that "urbanists" (state rulers, real estate managers, leading world architects) reproduce both neoliberal consumerism and the hegemony of the family-state: they conceive of Dubai's culture as identical to the stereotypes of ethno-nationalism. In "Going South with the Starchitects: Urbanist ideology in the Emirati City," for example, Kanna considers the cultural politics constituting New Dubai. Following Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey and Fredric Jameson, Kanna observes that late capitalism is characterized by various interconnected features—labor flexibility, capital mobility, a crisis of profit accumulation and a retrenchment of elite economic interests, and, what he finds more pertinent to his argument, "the spatial representation and spatialization of symbolic processes of culture and political processes of hegemony" (17). Yet, while Marxists consider the processes of capital accumulation and the contradictions between culture, politics and the economy, Kanna tends to isolate his study of culture from the dynamics of capital accumulation, thus leaving this influential factor unanalyzed.

Crucially, Kanna does not investigate the connections between oil trade, finance capital and real estate investments in Dubai (Davis 55), therefore missing the opportunity to analyze the issue of the value of land as a form of fictitious capital (Harvey 367; Jameson 43). Similarly, he considers neither the relationships of Dubai's airports to United States' geopolitics in the Middle East (Davis 58), nor how Dubai's free-market zones facilitate multinational corporations' exploitation of labor. According to Mike Davis, this latter regulation also permits the family-state to implant cultural restrictions out of those areas (Davis 63). Even so fundamental a concept

as neoliberalism is loosely defined in Kanna's text, which focuses on the neoliberal apotheosis of the entrepreneur, individualism and so on. Furthermore, drawing on Lefebvre, Kanna observes that "[s]pace [in Dubai] increasingly became an object to be visualized and abstracted from its more complex, multi-layered, and symbolically imbricated social texture" (78). However, while Marxist authors relate contemporary architectural forms (e.g., extreme isometric space, glass skin, enclosed skin volumes) to the abstractions of finance capital (Jameson 44), Kanna does not investigate New Dubai in adequate depth. While he notes that urbanists reproduce a reified version of Arab-Bedouin culture—images related to camels, *dhow*s, desert landscapes and mythical village life, it is unclear what Kanna means by reification and the economic aspect of this cultural problem. As a case in point, the author does not analyze any of Dubai's luxury sites representing capitalist fantasies: e.g., the World Islands, the Burj Khalifa or the Burj al-Arab Hotel.

For Kanna, urbanists polarize "Emirati culture between tradition and modernity. The former is equated with authenticity, the latter with its opposite" (97). However, it seems to me the vital task is to analyze the relationship between capitalist modernity and tradition. Kanna's reference of Siegfried Kracauer's insight that "surface-level expressions ... by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of things" (112) suggests he wants to engage with Western Marxism. Yet while Kracauer locates appearances within the totality of the historical process and in relation to the underlying conditions (Kracauer 145), Kanna mostly describes fragments of such manifestations. For example, he observes in passing that "[a] wall of skyscrapers, one to each side of the highway, gives the passerby the claustrophobic impression of traveling through an interminable tunnel of mirrored glass" (77), without considering how this abstract space might shape narcissistic subjectivity, usually characterized by mythical and solipsistic refractions from the historical concreteness of the processes of capital and the state (Smith 42). Elaborating on this kind of interpretation could clarify how the Emirate obtains consent from consumers (fifteen million overseas visitors a year by 2010) and expatriates, a potent politics that Kanna mostly misses.

Kanna has much to tell us about the relationships between ethno-nationalism and neoliberalism. In chapter three, he endeavors to explain the neo-orthodox trend in Dubai's dominant culture. He argues that to assuage their anxieties regarding the impacts of the current financial crises, Emiratis have strengthened their Arab-Bedouin identity at the expense of migrant workers and women. For example, men within the dominant social strata demand gender orthodoxy: they blame Emirati women for supposedly having abdicated their family responsibilities for foreign consumer life-styles (127). Male neo-orthodoxy relates women's supposed nature as reproducers of the family with their ascribed role of reproducing the polity's moral and national

cohesion (129). Kanna demonstrates this discourse coexists with the hegemony of neoliberalism. In chapter four, Kanna argues that young “flexible citizens” construct their identities aligning Emirati and neoliberal values (135). Middle-class Emiratis not only devote resources to stage their Arabness, but also they emphasize what in Paul Smith’s terms we may call a neoliberal self-interested rationality (Smith 11). This coincides with the discourses of key parastatal companies owned by the ruling family. The family-state highlights individual values to compete in the global market, and stresses national belonging within the administrative-managerial stratum to cohere the dominant social group. In other words, neoliberalism does not emancipate subjects from the state.

In chapter five, Kanna observes that middle-class South Asians utilize values of neoliberal self-improvement to negotiate professional positions with the ruling ethnic group. They highlight their identification with neoliberal norms of merit to open the limits of civic ethnocracy that stigmatize them as foreigners, but without demanding political rights (197). Thus, Kanna explains that neoliberalism shapes Dubai’s project of class formation and ethno-nationalism legitimates the social inequalities of that project. He demonstrates how the family-state directs ethno-nationalism to control South Asian workers, who constitute about the ninety-five percent of Dubai’s working-class. In a strong but ultimately too-brief discussion, Kanna argues that unskilled workers get caught in a circle: they lack the political leverage to alter their material situation and their economic marginalization exacerbates their political vulnerability. Citing reports issued by Human Rights Watch, Kanna argues that Dubai exploits and controls migrant workers through its spatial politics: it segregates workers in labor camps, allows employers to expropriate workers’ passports, and authorizes firms to breach labor contracts in their benefit (35, 95). He calls particular attention to the situation of working-class women, observing that unlike male migrant workers, female domestics do not enter into a sponsorship relationship with employers but into guardianship relationships with the latter. This binds migrant women to Emirati male domination, making them vulnerable to be associated with threats to national culture, prostitution and adultery (64, 203).

Kanna’s book offers a critical examination of the state structures of domination in Dubai, a subject clearly in need of attentive scholarly investigation. His analysis successfully demonstrates how the cultural, political and economic practices of the ruling ethnic group are constitutive in reproducing the unequal city-state. A fruitful research task for the future would be to refine the materialist theoretical perspective of his work on the intimate relationship between reified traditions and neoliberal modernity, thereby generating greater analytical purchase on the empirical reality of Dubai’s fantasy.

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A Queer Death

DAVID A. GERSTNER

Jane Gallop. *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time*. Duke University Press, 2011. 180 pp.

The moment one reads Jane Gallop's book, *The Deaths of the Author*, is the moment one becomes an author. Such banal description about engagement and creative exchange between work and reader has become something of a truism since Roland Barthes penned what Peter Wollen once described as his "squib-like" essay, "The Death of the Author." Although Barthes took up similar theoretical terrain in his article, "From Work to Text," it is "The Death of the Author" that resonates — if not for its critical concept, then certainly for its "militant, elegant slogan" (Gallop also refers to the "slogan" as "world-renowned," a "poststructuralist catchphrase," "theoretical," "familiar"). Indeed, the renown of Barthes' memorable title has been such that it has come to obscure the complexity of the problem it originally named, reducing his description of a rich relationship to a dull defense of personal interpretation. Gallop wants to remind us that matters are not, and never were so simple.

Nevertheless, Gallop must necessarily return to and raise the specter of Barthes, and the sloganism that attends his "renowned essay." Revisiting this by-now familiar trope re-engages the authorial-reader experience, an experience that is resonant with a sensual-ness precisely because of the author's death. Her return, then, depends on the obligatory (yet, thankfully brief) historical detour around the oft-paired essays, Barthes's "The Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's essay, "What is An Author?" Gallop thus begins her book by rightly pointing out that these two writings are *the* 'go-to' texts where critical authorship discourse is concerned. If one essay ostensibly kills off the author, the other is more properly read as a discursive recounting of authorial practices in Western commodity culture. Gallop is also right to note that neither of these well-rehearsed (arguably, *over*-rehearsed) articles do away with the author as such. Foucault is easy to defend on this count because his essay makes clear that he is not declaring the author dead; the essay's title, in fact, poses a question about the author's existence as discourse, not its annihilation (he is asking, after all, *what is an author?*). Barthes's offering, however, requires a more attentive and close reading.

For Gallop, "to go back and reconsider the death of the author" (4) requires "a slow, detailed reading" (39) because, at its heart, *The Deaths of the Author* tests Barthes's

provocative claims. The details are significant. To move slowly is not only a stylistic turn; it is, for Gallop, a theoretical imperative. When, for example, in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* Barthes calls for a “friendly return” to the author (not long after penning “The Death of the Author”), Gallop works through Barthes’s seductive suggestion in order to deliberately account for his “friendly return” to the author’s writing, death, and body. Reading Gallop’s beautiful and effective work, therefore, one becomes acutely aware of the critical significance “close reading” has, even if it has lost favor in the humanities. Thankfully, Gallop avoids this academic current when she proceeds deliberately, critically, and attends to Barthes’s and others’ writings with precision. In so doing, she realizes the authors’ deaths as a *givenness* to life: “The author returns from the world of the text to life, but if the return is a return from the dead, the life returned to is not the author’s but our life. The author returns to us” (39).

As I write these lines two thoughts come to mind (I raise a third below). First, I am curious about Gallop’s returning author insofar as it evokes the Parousia, a second coming. What are the implications for raising a theological specter in this discussion? Second, what sets Gallop’s argument apart from other readings of Barthes’s noteworthy slogan? In other words, does her study resist the more reductive claims about the death of the author mentioned above? She writes, for example, “The author returns from the world of the text to life, but if the return is a return from the dead, the life returned to is not the author’s but our life. The author returns to us” (39). If “the author returns to us,” is this not similar to the suggestion that “the death of the author” gives way to the reader, “to us”? As such, in what way does Gallop’s close, slowly engaged, and *sensual* reading return the author to us in such a way that does not split the difference so neatly? The authors Gallop selects to sort through this task are in no small part crucial to reimagining the implications of death and the author/reader experience. They have all addressed this dynamic in one form or another. Although others explore these sensual and porous boundaries, Gallop provides a turn on the Freudian-Derridean mystic-writing pad through and upon which authorial traces remain and emanate.

Gallop, for instance, closely touches on the textual hauntings that Derrida and Spivak evoke. A key instance both authors share is that they bring to life Marx in such a way that “treats [him] as a dead-but-still-going author” (16). Through the “dead-but-still-going” Derrida and Spivak resurrect the dead or, more accurately, they revive the non-dead. In Gallop’s account, the author and reader for Derrida and Spivak are not dislodged from one another. Rather, the reader is entangled with the author, or with the one who is always already “dead-but-still-going” (Does a “post-Marx” moment really exist?). Spivak—who, as I write this review, is the only author about whom Gallop writes that is “still with us”—grasps the anxiety of the “writing present.” That is, Spivak urgently writes in such a way as to be perpetually catching up. Her endless

endnote “updates” reveal “the exasperation, the sense of futility” that are crucial to the way we understand her “continual revision” (128). Spivak’s writing is the critical wrangling with an aporia. Her “writing present is, to be sure, vanishing, but it is also, nonetheless, persistent” (128); it reaches for the possible in the impossible.

While this brings us back and around to the matter of second-comings, the ‘persistence’ *to write* (for which Derrida and Spivak are recognized) rings peculiarly queer. The theological Parousia-effect is thus rendered perversely in *The Deaths of the Author*. Not insignificantly, Gallop’s book “is a reconsideration of the death of the author in the era of queer theory” (5). The connection between “queer” and “theory” in *The Deaths of the Author* is “palpable” since the critical necessity to think theoretically for queers is not only phenomenologically essential but also politically essential. Queer theory undoubtedly remains one of the few academic outposts where the stakes for life and death are not only crucial to how one thinks about so-called LGBTQ progress; “queer theory” (more vitally, I think) wrestles with the limitations of language to express the inexplicable experiences that make queer lives *and* deaths queer. The Parousia when offered through queer theory, therefore, does not merely evoke the second coming. Even in death—nay despite death and those who wish it dead—queer theory comes again and again.

Gallop realizes this point saliently when she conjoins the authorial shadows in the “continuing moments” that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Craig Owens, and Michael Lynch share at once across and through their writing. At stake are precisely their (anticipated) queer deaths: Owens and Lynch will die from AIDS; Sedgwick from an “unexpected diagnosis” of cancer (110). The hinge on which Gallop recounts Sedgwick and Owens’s relationship is pivotal for how we envisage and render the writing about inexplicable queer desire (I think about “writing” here along the lines that Derrida draws where *écriture* conjures cinematography, choreography, and so on). Sedgwick’s “relation to Owens is in fact a relation of reading and writing.” They discover one another through books in a bookstore. Gallop’s telling of this encounter is especially tantalizing for my cinematic mind since “[Sedgwick and Owens’s] relationship starts when Sedgwick reads an essay” by Owens in the bookstore. She reads in this public space that the “openly gay” writer “singles out [her] 1985 book *Between Men* for praise” in his essay, “Outlaws: Gay Men and Feminism” (94). Through, as Sedgwick puts it, “this strange, utterly discontinuous, projective space of desire, euphemistically named friendship, lost at a distance, or even just reading and writing,” the “touches of a body” unfold (quoted on 93).

Surprisingly, Gallops quickly brushes by (in one of the few hurried moments in the book) the bookstore *as* place and the “palpability” this holds for Sedgwick and Owens’s relationship. Indeed, while Gallop reiterates temporality as central to the “writ-

erly perspective on death,” she neglects what is only hinted at in *The Deaths of the Author*: space. “*This strange and projective space of desire named reading and writing*” is but one of the few remarks on space (96—emphasis in original). The all-too-brief nod to space makes me wonder what Gallop thinks of Sedgwick’s later insistence (and I choose this word carefully) in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* where she asks queers *not* to forget or to reject queer spatiality at the expense of queer temporality. Like “the death of the author,” “queer temporality” has reached saturation due to lusterless overuse.

Nevertheless, Sedgwick, Owens, Lynch, and Gallop find themselves engaged in memorializing one another through writing before, during, and after their deaths (Sedgwick for Owens, Sedgwick for Lynch in advance of his death; Lynch in advance of Sedgwick’s death; and ultimately Gallop for Sedgwick while *The Deaths of the Author* is revised (114)). The “ironic temporality” Gallop brings into play at multiple intersections in these queer authors’ writings (to and for one another) is rendered by Sedgwick’s oxymoronic phrase—in which she must make the gesture *to write*—“continuing moment.” Writing is, in other words, anachronistic: “the printed word can’t be updated instantly” (113). On the one hand, this is frustratingly true particularly during the “continuing moment” when Sedgwick pens these comments (in 2000); she, like others, reflects on her writerly attempts to keep up with the shifting terrain on which the AIDS pandemic spreads. On the other hand, while this urgency to “keep up” is not dissimilar to the anxiety with which Spivak grapples in her writing, Sedgwick’s “continuing moment” homes in on a queer aura that limns *The Deaths of the Author*:

It is in the context of talking about AIDS that Sedgwick embraces the anachronism of the printed word. A decade earlier, it is in this context of mourning gay men dying young that Sedgwick come to value, not the ‘culture of the moment,’ not keeping-up-to-date, but holding on to what has passed. It is this experience of mourning, I suspect, that transforms her relation to the temporality of writing . . . While the writer may go about revising and updating, the printed word is the province not of the writer but of the author. The printed word, necessarily anachronistic, is where the writer confronts her status as a dead author (113-14).

Across time, the dead author’s mark lingers, resonates, and queerly touches what has passed—for author and us.

Where does this leave us? To what extent does Gallop guide us through a new turn on “the death of the author”? To what extent does her reading make perverse both the literal stamping-out (stomping out?) of the authorial gesture and its theological transcendence? Authorship—the malleable yet formidable creative dynamic where author and reader co-mingle—is, I argue, perceived by Gallop as the necessary work

involved in expressing the seemingly inexpressible. Gallop's close readings in and around queer lives, the "fragments" that the "dead-but-still-going" author leaves behind, elegantly invite us into the traces, ghostings and shadows that viscerally render the imbrication between the theoretical and the personal — a dynamic often disregarded in many academic circles.

"Taken together," Gallop writes, "our four chapters aim to revitalize the overly familiar death of the author so that we take it as both-theoretical-personal—so that we can take a fuller measure of its moving and unsettling effects on the reader and writers, on reading and writing" (18). Queers have long known that Barthes's "The Death of the Author" was not meant as a guidebook to liberate the reader from the writer; it is an "unsettling" contribution. Such delusions of democratic grandeur have proven time and again to ignore the ideological trappings capitalism lays bare in the culture industry (Foucault spells this out most clearly with the "author-function" concept). Gallop, like queers before her, recognizes a more perverse and vibrant fantasy for Barthes's "death of the author." Again, hinging on a fragment, Gallop "linger[s]" on Barthes's "extraordinary and perverse fantasy: 'If I were a writer, and dead, how I would love it if my life . . . could travel outside any destiny and come to touch . . . some future body'" (48—emphasis in original). She is "compelled by this fantasy" not because of "biography." Rather, she "glimpse[s]" a "slightly twisted, somewhat displaced fantasy of a reader's connection to the author" where the "fantasy of bodily touching" occurs (48). By writing Barthes (then Derrida, then Sedgwick, then Owens, then Lynch, and then Spivak), Gallop breathes life into the future-perfect corpses that are never really dead as such in the first place.

The Deaths of the Author conjures a *corps de ballet* in which Gallop cinematically choreographs shadows and bodies so that in their performance they commingle.

I am thankful for the invitation to dance.

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David A. Gerstner is Professor of Cinema Studies at the City University of New York. He most recent book is *Queer Pollen: White Seduction, Black Male Homosexuality, and the Cinematic* (University of Illinois Press, 2011). He is currently coediting an anthology with Cynthia Chris entitled, *Media Authorship* (Routledge).

The Future of Anti-racist Feminism in Canada

ASHLEY DRYBURGH

Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani, eds. *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century*. Between the Lines, 2010. 248 pp.

Despite its forwarding-leaning title, *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century* is as much about the past as it is about the future. The collection opens by looking backward, with an eight page preface detailing the history of critical race feminism in Canada over the past decade. The contributors to the collection are in a unique position to tell this story; all are members of RACE (Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equity) and many of these authors are responsible for the development and continuation of critical race feminism in Canada. As such, the collection offers an exciting moment of conversation between these influential thinkers as they reflect on the colour line in the 21st century. The preface welcomes readers who are unfamiliar with this history, at the same time as one gets the sense that the book might aspire to take a preemptive strike against those who would deny Canada's ongoing colonial history and racial hierarchies. History and memory are important themes throughout the collection; the essays continually demonstrate how institutional or state memory purposefully forgets how race underscores the modern liberal subject and the introduction takes aim at mainstream scholars who are equally guilty in "fail[ing] to account for the ways in which race-making is political and a central project of the modern liberal state" (10). As such, the collection stands as an important contribution to the literature of critical race feminism and a reminder of just how much work we in academe have yet to do.

The eight essays are divided into two sections with the first focusing on race, gender, and class in the Canadian context. It opens with Patricia Monture's personal essay, which acts as a second introduction for the entire collection. She notes that her essay is based on a 2001 talk but published here because she "could have written it yesterday" (24). Indeed, what is striking about the collection is that even though the last decade has been marked by claims of so-called "racial progress" (claims Sedef Arat-Koç challenges in a later chapter), many of themes explored remain urgent and unameliorated. As Monture and other contributors to this volume explain, the persistence of familiar debates speaks less about the effectiveness of critical race feminism and more to the intractable nature of structural racial inequalities and the contemporary

neoliberal order. Monture also reflects on her lack of “Grandmothers” – racialized feminist mentors in the academy. Her piece, and the collection as a whole, stands in for this continued absence by offering young and old feminists of colour three important strategies of survival in the ivory tower: “knowing yourself, understanding the space (or territory) you are in, and respecting what you have learned from experience as knowledge” (27).

Malinda Smith begins her chapter by asking a recurring question: how do we understand equity? In particular, Smith troubles the growing privileging of “women’s issues” as the equity struggle *par excellence* in academic contexts. Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s distinction between “this Other and other Others” (37), Smith details how equity practices and priorities create a two-tier equity system: [white] women first, and visible minorities, Aboriginal people, and people with disabilities as an undifferentiated second. Taking Monture’s third strategy for survival seriously, Smith grounds her analysis in her own experiences of academic equity planning, a move that not only strengthens the piece but demonstrates the continuing vitality of feminist methodologies.

The theme of “other Others” makes an appearance in the next chapter, but on a very different register. Here, Yasmin Jiwani meditates on how the veiled Muslim woman is a floating signifier whose “image can be corralled to fit particular hegemonic designs” (79). Specifically, Jiwani looks at media representations of Muslim women in Canada and Afghanistan. A particularly incisive comparison of *The Globe and Mail’s* week-long series, “Behind the Veil: Inside the Lives of Afghan Women” and CBC’s television program *Little Mosque on the Prairie* form the basis of Jiwani’s analysis. In the former, Jiwani notes that the principal investigator – a white woman – uses her gender as a gesture towards a universal womanhood that simultaneously re-establishes the reporter’s privileged position as a Western woman and casts Afghan women as victims of an ultrapatriarchal society who ultimately need rescuing. This same universalizing tendency holds true for the character Rayyan, a feminist physician on CBC’s popular series. Rayyan is the inverse of the almost-anonymous figures in the *Globe* report: she is assimilated into “Canadian” culture and her conflicts – with a patriarchal mosque, for example – are presented as quintessentially Canadian. However, Jiwani warns that this universalising tendency erases the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims while upholding the discourse of Muslims as threats and Other.

Sherene Razack rounds out the first part of the collection with a different approach to Canada’s Islamic “Other” by focusing on the bureaucratic mechanisms that contribute to state abandonment of racialized subjects. Foregrounding the cases of Suaad Mohammed, Maher Arar, and Omar Khadr, Razack asks whether abandonment reflects racial prejudice, marks a moment of ignorance on behalf of state officials, or

signals how people of colour “must be policed and kept at the margins of law and community” (89). Arguing for this last interpretation, Razack draws on interviews with “security delayed” individuals in Canada to paint a horrific picture of families lost in the cracks of a bureaucratic system that is paradoxically “committ[ed] to legal rules that suspend the rule of law in the interest of national security” (103), showcasing a system that treats racialized people as extraterrestrial. Drawing on the work of Agamben and Bauman, Razack concludes that, “race is not only necessary in order for abandonment to occur but also for the state of exception to function” (90).

The second section of the collection builds on the themes of the first and discusses race, gender, and class in broader Western contexts. Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez begins with a rousing defence of Indigenous feminism against claims that the two terms are mutually exclusive. Altamirano-Jiménez defines Indigenous feminism in part as a discourse that recognizes sexuality as informing axes of gender difference amongst women. She is careful to acknowledge the very real debates surrounding this issue and pays tribute to the multiplicity of voices and experiences of Indigenous women. She compellingly outlines the necessity of Indigenous feminism while still remaining sympathetic to Indigenous women who are reluctant to claim (if not outright hostile to) feminism. What Indigenous feminism offers is a way to criticize an Indigenous nationality that is often sexist and based on rigid definitions of Indigeneity. An Indigenous feminism rejects this rigidity and Altamirano-Jiménez concludes with a hopeful eye toward the future: “Without seeing them as timeless, fixed, or hermetic, we can bring forward notions of history, knowledge, the local, the colonized, and the Indigenous woman to construct an Indigenous feminism that is expansive, liberating, and committed to decolonization” (122).

Sunera Thobani implicitly details why Indigenous women (and others) may be reluctant to take on a feminist mantle in her discussion of how the history of feminism has led some white feminists to support the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thobani begins in the 1990s, when white feminists began wondering if feminism’s transformative potential had been exhausted. Thobani describes the forces that led to this crisis: state cuts were eroding services established by second-wave feminists in the 1960s, feminism was becoming institutionalized in the academy, conservative feminists began to claim that feminism victimized women, and white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied feminists began to resent the challenges made by their more marginalized “sisters.” The attacks of 9/11 and the resulting War on Terror breathed a new life of sorts into feminism. Thobani contrasts the lives of Muslim women used as an excuse for invasion with the sudden appearance of women in high-profile positions and demand for feminist commentators and argues that although Western feminist responses to the wars were mixed, the general underlying analysis upheld distinctions between a hegemonic “West” and Islamic “Other.” Her conclusion is worth quoting at length:

Although white feminists, including [Judith] Butler and [Zillah] Eisenstein, were opposed to the war, they refused to engage with an analysis of the racialized inequalities within the global economy, or with Islamists in their *political* specificity. Their analysis strengthened the dominant discourse that the motives and demands of Muslims-as-terrorists are unspeakable and unknowable. Refusing to acknowledge the Other as a *political* opponent makes it easier for him or her to be presented as the *existential* enemy of the West. The Other remains a mythic, abstract figure, the looming face of death and destruction. (142, original emphasis)

Thobani reminds us how Western feminism can problematically propagate a notion of white innocence, and she provides yet another salient example of how to criticize a movement without abandoning it all together.

One of the themes that separates this book from existing collections focusing on critical race feminism, other than the legacy of 9/11 and related events, is whiteness. In the past twenty years, Whiteness Studies has burgeoned into a rigorous subset of anti-racism studies and its influence is apparent in this volume. While other authors in this collection integrate whiteness in their analyses, Sedef Arat-Koç addresses whiteness directly. In particular, Arat-Koç examines the “destabilization of whiteness along the colour line” (155), arguing that the confluence of class and race creates a racialized poor white subject. The chapter is primarily an update of Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray’s work on “white trash” in the 1990s. Focusing on the post-Soviet era, Arat-Koç begins with a particularly useful reminder of the current racial contradictions in South Africa and America: advancements such as the election of a black US President, the emergence of a burgeoning black middle class in South Africa, or the “browning” (148) of a transnational middle-class more generally hide a growing racial divide, despite claims about “racial progress.” Thinking about “race as a technology of power that goes beyond skin colour” (148), Arat-Koç complicates this contradiction by demonstrating that marginalized whites are both invited in and excluded from whiteness. This push-and-pull – anti-immigration laws and other xenophobic sentiments help bolster a white Western identity while global capitalism pushes marginalized whites down the racial ladder – helps to ensure white participation in the new imperial order.

The last chapter in the collection neatly book-ends Monture’s essay and returns the focus to activism. Asking the question, “how do we analyze racialized power in social justice movements?” (169), Gada Mahrouse uses the examples of direct action solidarity in Palestine and consumer-based ethical tourism to uncover the continuing colonial “benevolence” that undergirds many well-meaning attempts to “do good.” While Mahrouse does a very thorough job unpacking the dangerous neocolonial

impulses behind these forms of activism, her chapter shines when she discusses the pedagogical implications of her criticism. She notes,

while most critical educators might feel heartened when their students are incited to become actively involved in social justice activism, I prefer to caution my students to be vigilant about what injustices their participation may inadvertently reinforce ... [and] show them how real change fails to take place as a result of certain initiatives. This is not to discourage them, but to help them to see with some candour just how hollow many claims to social justice can be. Perhaps most importantly, students need to notice how our involvement with social justice activism obscures our complicity in current power imbalances and allows us to conceive of ourselves as innocent. (183).

Mahrouse takes aim at all of us who purport to do social justice activism, within the academy or outside of it, and in so doing summarizes the ethos of the entire book: we must remain vigilant and self-critical about what kinds of effects our attempts at social justice have on the world around us.

Despite the collection's commitment to exploring the intersections of race, gender, state, culture, and colonization, I was surprised to see very little engagement with queerness or sexuality (disability was also a theme conspicuous in its absence). Certainly no collection can attend to everything, but given how closely questions of sexuality are to gender, race and nation the absence is striking. While I would never advocate for a token queer presence, other anti-racist feminism collections (notably *Race, Space, and the Law* [Between the Lines, 2002] and *Scratching the Surface* [Women's Press, 2003]) also suffer from this lack. I cannot help but wonder if this absence reflects the limits of intersectionality in a single volume, or if it is a reminder of the ongoing uneasy relationship between feminist and queer theory.

This is, however, my only criticism. The book stands against the growing anti-feminist backlash and the continued plight of Indigenous people and people of colour in Canada and the Western world by offering rich analyses, compelling arguments and, above all, a reminder that the voices of anti-racist feminism in Canada are as strong and vital as ever.

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The People's Media Critique

NICHOLAS HOLM

Charles R. Acland. *Swift Viewing: The Popular Life of Subliminal Influence*. Duke University Press, 2011. 307 pp.

There is a good chance that those who have taught cultural or media theory will have, at some time or another, come up against the popular persistence of subliminal messaging: a belief that mass media can convey potentially powerful secret messages below the level of sensory perception. As Charles Acland notes in *Swift Viewing*, “on an anecdotal and personal level, teachers of media and culture studies know that the idea of subliminal influences enjoys popularity among students, a popularity that curiously exists side by side with the view that the media have little or no impact upon an individual’s thinking” (18). Such ideas often prove frustratingly stubborn, operating as a form of background interference against which all subsequent attempts to explain ideology, mythology, discourse and connotation will be measured, assessed and potentially dismissed. It is therefore tempting to consider the subliminal simply a form of contemporary superstition for the mass media age: a mystifying belief to be revealed, reviled and disproven. *Swift Viewing*, however, takes up the question of the subliminal in a more generous and ultimately more rewarding manner. Rather than take a stand against the subliminal, Acland instead seeks to understand its tenacious long-term appeal and the fears and desires it continues to incite, despite extensive, repeated and ostensibly successful attempts to debunk the notion. Ultimately arguing for an understanding of the subliminal thesis as a “vernacular cultural critique, that is, a popular and common language of interpretation and analysis” (33), Acland charts the historical manifestations of subliminality as a form of lay analysis that has both shaped and motivated conceptions of mass media as a site of affect, domination, consumerism and epistemological assertion outside of the academy. Tracing the history of the subliminal from nineteenth-century notions of the unconscious, the subconscious and hypnotism through rapid learning machines and advertising scares of the mid-twentieth century to Al Gore’s accusation of subliminal messaging by the 2000 Bush Presidential campaign, *Swift Viewing* uncovers a hidden history of media critique that bears much in common with contemporary calls for “media literacy” (27) and speaks to a variation on Antonio Gramsci’s argument that not only are we all intellectuals, “we are [also] all media critics, though only a few of us are paid as such” (31).

Taking its lead from popular conceptions of the subliminal thesis, *Swift Viewing* is more concerned with tracing the understandings and implications of its everyday usage than with imposing any etymologically-informed 'correct' definition of the subliminal thesis. Suggesting that "much of what is characterised as subliminal is not subliminal in the strictest meaning of the term," Acland embraces the variation "in popular usage [where] the term refers to the unknown, the imperceptible, the almost imperceptible, the subtle, the quick, the backgrounded, or simply the connotative" (25). Drawing together these multiple interpretations, Acland's central argument is thus that the subliminal acts as a "command metaphor" of mass media society: "the frontline of an elaborate apparatus of discourse – talk and expression – that produces understandings of the world and through which decisions are taken and institutional initiatives launched" (29). Understood in this way, the subliminal operates across a broad swathe of cultural texts – including situation comedies, lawsuits, newspaper editorials and scholarly studies – as a core expression for shaping attention and public understanding of the role of mass media. Accordingly, the subliminal means different things at different points in *Swift Viewing*, something that certainly makes sense within the bounds of Acland's conceptual framework, but which can also lead to momentary feelings of disjointedness, as an account of 1950 critiques of consumerism gives way to a consideration of Marshall McLuhan's interventions in US education policy. In these shifting contexts, *Swift Viewing* appears alternately as a genealogy of mid-century pseudo-science, a critical account of popular resistance to advertising, a material analysis of pre-computer learning technologies, and an aesthetic analysis of avant-garde film techniques such as "flicker." That these diverse perspectives hang together is testament to the persuasive construction and execution of Acland's argument, even if at times the reader might struggle to retrace the mental steps by which discussions of the 1958 horror film *My World Dies Screaming* prefigured the introduction of overhead projectors into American classrooms or to align a detailed history of the tachistoscope with the wider project.

The scale of *Swift Viewing* is evident in the book's broad historical sweep which unfolds with the fluidity and accessibility of a popular history, but without sacrificing theoretical and critical rigour. From the very beginning – with the prologue's careful deconstruction of the public panic that greeted Orson Wells's 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast as a foundational moment (and potentially the first methodological failure) of the scholarly study of mass media and media influence – Acland assembles a host of colourful figures, forgotten technologies and unlikely public debates as evidence for the subliminal thesis's role as the 'other,' unauthorised media critique. This is perhaps nowhere as evident as the second chapter, "Mind, Media and Remote Control," which weaves together nineteenth-century research into the unconscious and hypnosis, *fin de siècle* fear and contempt of crowds, and scientific approaches to telepathy and early radio broadcast technologies to describe the cultural conditions

out of which the subliminal thesis arose. Such an approach illustrates *Swift Viewing's* method of argument through montage, which proceeds through the assemblage of unlikely alliances, out of which emerge surprising, coherent insights regarding public perception of agency, autonomy and the ideological power of media.

Swift Viewing even has something of a central protagonist in the figure of James Vicary, who is introduced in the fourth chapter, "Mind-Probing Admen." A leading figure in early "motivational research," Vicary was the man behind the notorious experiment that introduced the concept of subliminal messaging to the world when New Jersey filmgoers were exposed to subliminal imperatives to "eat popcorn" and "drink Coca-Cola" (92). The experiment became something of an urban legend, and Acland carefully unpacks the various contradictory accounts of the event and the surrounding controversy: an especially treacherous task given Vicary's ongoing refusal to release the results of the test, or indeed of many other of his experiments into subliminal effects and advertising. Straddling a line between innovative researcher and conman, Vicary returns several times throughout *Swift Viewing*, whether he is peddling psychoanalytic methods in advertising, founding a firm, Subliminal Projection Company, to (unsuccessfully) market his technology, or attempting to mount the careful argument that subliminal advertising does work, though not so effectively as to be a form of brainwashing. Caught between skeptical advertising executives and fear-mongering politicians (Acland quotes Senator Charles Potter's vehement opposition to evil geniuses robotising the American public [126]), Vicary serves as a metonym for wider debates surrounding subliminal messaging and indeed advertising culture in general. However, *Swift Viewing* is far from a biography, and though Vicary is a constant presence in the discussions regarding the effects and ethics of subliminal messaging, Acland's focus is upon the wider cultural context and the terms of debate which shaped social ideas about media, consumerism and the democratic potential of mass culture. With an eye for the telling anecdote and the colourful textual illustration, Acland marshals a wide array of examples to demonstrate how the subliminal thesis expressed the worries of a liberal political establishment increasingly anxious about the influence of the consumerist media environment on the autonomy and rationality of its citizens. Fears that "advertisers [were] tampering with the unconscious for commercial purposes" (115) are presented alongside political denunciations of Soviet brainwashing, and an exhaustive and somewhat exhausting account of the wide range of mind-controlling super villains active in comic books of the mid-twentieth century to support Acland's argument that "here during the triumphal era of the end of ideology, was a powerful and popular understanding of, and debate about, false consciousness" (174). Indeed, Acland argues that representations and debates regarding subliminality not only expressed popular critique regarding media, but also served as a form of political theory by proxy: mapping out the key assumptions and desires of American politics in an age of increasing corporate media influence.

Subliminal messaging, then, is positioned in *Swift Viewing* as a key site at which public concerns regarding the affective and ideological effects of mass media are worked through and shaped. The ongoing circulation of the subliminal thesis thus speaks to an sustained interest in, and suspicion of, mass media – what Acland refers to as “a form of *practical consciousness about false consciousness*” (42). Framed in this manner, his critical project bears a similarity to both Ien Ang’s account of the “ideology of mass culture” in *Watching Dallas* – whereby viewers take up derivations of the mass culture critique in order to justify their own viewing choices – and Luc Boltanski’s “sociology of critique,” which seeks to acknowledge the critical capacity of all social actors to understand and interrogate their environment. Hovering in a sense between these two, Acland’s account of the subliminal thesis seeks to retrieve the ways in which media consumers are far from passive recipients of media messages, but instead articulate their own indirect critiques through the epistemological resources of everyday discourse. Expressed in terms of a popular prejudice against popular culture, the subliminal thesis serves as a means by which to indirectly convey public concerns about the role of mass media in a democratic society. Thus, in contrast to the image of the viewing public as slack-jawed couch potatoes who have historically figured as both the straw men and boogymen of media studies, Acland argues that persistent concern with subliminal effects reveals a popular suspicion of media that contains the seeds of a careful, critical media-reading practice – even if most other media audiences are thereby configured as hapless victims of false consciousness.

Perhaps the most immediately striking implication of this understanding of the subliminal thesis is not directly addressed in *Swift Viewing*, but emerges in the argument’s inverse: taking the subliminal thesis seriously as a form of ideology critique also implies the extent to which the sanctioned media and cultural critique of the academy shares much in common with popular concerns over the subliminal. As Acland notes, “there are still academically acceptable analyses that reiterate claims to reveal secret, hidden, but powerful meanings, especially found in some forms of structuralist ideological critique” (35), and though he does not return to this provocation in particular detail, it echoes nonetheless throughout the book. Indeed, throughout *Swift Viewing* there are moments when the subliminal critique appears worryingly familiar, such as with the advertising industry-approved notion of “third communication,” an “extra impression, attitude or opinion [that] sounds very much like a Barthesian definition of connotation” (151). The subliminal thesis here emerges as a variant of what Clare Birchall refers to as the “secret” of cultural theory: a family resemblance to potentially illegitimate bodies of knowledge or ways of knowing, such as the subliminal thesis, that have to be constantly disavowed in order to maintain disciplinary credibility. Perhaps this anxiety is the reason we are so quick to renounce students’ recourse to the subliminal thesis: the intellectual gates must be constantly guarded, lest a student, or worse, an unsympathetic critic, mistakes the subliminal thesis for ‘proper’ forms of

critique. The subliminal thesis of *Swift Viewing* speaks, then, to more than just a conspiracy-minded side note in media history, instead acting as an intervention into both the pedagogical and theoretical practice of cultural studies. Rather than attempting to undo popular understandings of mass media, Acland calls for a cultural theory that it is more “more respectful, efficient and advantageous pedagogically to take seriously whatever understandings are already at play” (32). At the heart of this approach is a demand for cultural studies to neither moralize, nor prescribe, but rather engage with popular accounts of the contemporary media world on their own terms. *Swift Viewing* refuses the theoretician’s claim to a monopoly on “the everyday lived nature of cultural life, which cannot be reduced to brute economic explanations nor textualist acrobatics” (33), insisting instead on a need to respect the critical value of the nuances, dead-ends, insights and assumptions of the people’s own media critique.

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The Culture of Urbanization in (Post)Socialist China

JOSHUA NEVES

Yomi Braester. *Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract*. Duke University Press, 2010. 405 pp.

Robin Visser. *Cities Surround the Countryside: Urban Aesthetics in Postsocialist China*. Duke University Press, 2010. 362 pp.

Yomi Braester's *Painting the City Red* and Robin Visser's *Cities Surround the Countryside* offer complementary engagements with urban transformation in P.R. China—though Braester also has a single chapter on Taipei.¹ Each takes as their focus the cultural restructuring that has shaped and been shaped by (post)socialist urbanization and the shifting designs on the city. The works extend the robust conversation about bricks and mortar changes to Chinese cities by emphasizing the importance of cinema, art, theater, literature, design, and disciplines like cultural studies to re-packaging the urban imagination. Visser concentrates on post-reform urban culture, particularly the 1990s and early 2000s, while Braester takes a longer view, charting cinema and urban planning from 1949 to the 2008 Olympic games.

Visser attempts the bigger picture—*urban aesthetics*—even if she takes on a slimmer periodization. She opens by emphasizing the enormous gap between Mao's mandate that the countryside surrounds the cities—both a military tactic and key texture in the socialist planned economy—and the focus on urban development that became official policy by 1980 with the establishment of the first Special Economic Zones. Not only has the city emerged as the demographic center in contemporary China but, Visser argues, “the city became a subject in its own right” during this period (9). Her central aim is to explore how marketized urban development is transforming Chinese culture, offering an “aesthetic dimension” to supplement and reframe the many historical and sociological studies of Chinese cities. Beyond the focus on spectacular statistics—like the announcement in 2000 that China would build 400 new cities by 2020—*Cities* traces how an agrarian culture has re-acclimated to an urban cultural imagination in less than three decades.

¹ See the two authors discuss their books together for Duke University Press: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lykO1EPMs70>.

Following Guy Debord, Visser defines aesthetics as “a new way of seeing and perceiving the world” (4). Her examination of postsocialist urban aesthetics is structured around three new ways of seeing the city. Part One focuses on ways of “conceiving” of the urban and provides the horizon through which the book unfolds. The first two chapters, for instance, explore urban image making, planning practices, the market economy, and the birth of urban cultural studies in the Chinese academy. While broad in scope, the overview is rich in street-level details and will be quite useful for those seeking a deeper understanding of current policies, key figures, intellectual debates and artistic responses to change. What comes across most strongly in the opening pages of Visser’s account, and throughout the book, is that while Chinese-style neoliberal development is destroying China’s urban heritage, despoiling the environment, and leading to greater income disparities, “it has also fostered new realms of agency by provoking creative solutions to urban development, new forms of critical engagement, and nascent civic governance” (20). As such, the work is tilted toward an examination of the emerging agency of intellectuals, artists, writers and filmmakers. I will return to this issue below.

One of the strengths of Visser’s analysis of urban culture is its ability to situate China’s transformation within imbricated global processes, including the new global imaginaries tethered to urban revolution. She describes Chinese intellectuals’ inquiries into market development in the wake of 1989’s Tiananmen Square Massacre, arguing that the question “whither China?” that had so dominated the cultural politics of the 1980s, and before, has given way to regional and global understandings of the urban condition. This turn *beyond* the national is a key element of postsocialist aesthetics. In this context, issues related to global sustainability emerge as key concerns for critics, theorists and practitioners who increasingly recognize the importance of Chinese cities for regional and global futures. China, too, has a world picture.

With this foundation for understanding urban aesthetics in place, Parts Two and Three of the book explore “The City as Subject,” and “The Subject in the City,” respectively. The former centers on Beijing and Shanghai, offering a solid overview of how urban aesthetics are negotiated differently at these key sites: Beijing *performs* the nation, while Shanghai, a hybrid consumption center, “eschews the national.” Visser argues that Beijing natives and immigrant artists, from Wang Shuo and Qiu Huadong to Wang Xiaoshuai and Zhang Dali, are caught up in the political energy of the capital and directly take on local culture, national status, urban identity and the politics of transformation. This process is further complicated by China’s market socialism, where artists’ successes increasingly rely on global markets and capitalist circulations. This fact is key to Visser’s understanding of neoliberalism as both destructive and, at the same time, enabling civic agency. She asserts that it is the very same commercial mechanisms that allow “Beijing artists, now numbering in the

thousands and living in dozens of artist zones and villages around the city's suburbs [to] exploit unique opportunities to perform the national to its citizens" (174).

From the emergence of the city as subject, the final section of the book moves to explore the "psychic" topology of the city, paying particular attention to the impact of the marketized city on gender, ethics, and citizenship. Drawing on urban sociology, psychoanalytic theory and philosophy, the final chapters focus on the construction of subjectivity and everyday urban ethics in 1990s literary fiction.

Like Visser's study, *Painting the City Red* offers a varied methodological approach to media and urbanism—drawing on archival research, textual analysis, urban history, ethnographic observation, and government policy. The book is an intervention in the field of Chinese cultural studies on several accounts. First, contrary to the recent emphasis on the novelty of the so-called *Urban Generation* (Zhang, 2007), Braester charts the intersections of cinematic visuality and city planning projects over six decades. The scope of the study constructs a rich historical framework for thinking about both urban cinema and the cinematic city as such. In fact, *Painting* opens with a compelling account of playwright Lao She's involvement in penning a propaganda play recounting the Communist Party's efforts to improve life for ordinary citizens around a stinking and clogged ditch known as Dragon Whisker Creek. *Dragon Whisker Creek* appeared first as a stage play (1951) and shortly after as a film (dir. Xian Qun, 1952). Importantly, these fictional works prefigured any actual construction in the southern Beijing neighborhood—an instructive illustration for Braester's understanding of film and theater's role in shaping Chinese cities.

Painting is roughly divided into two halves. The first centers on government-initiated plays and films, and on the sometimes awkward collaborations between artists like Lao She and the state. The second half of the book focuses on filmmaking outside of the official PRC production system, including a chapter on post-Chiang Taiwanese cinema. For Braester, the independent production system and the films (and video) it has generated act as a window into the renegotiation of the urban contract—a space linking government, developers and residents. To work through this expansive material, he turns to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope* to explore "the coupling of specific locations and temporal perceptions" (18). For instance, Braester describes *Dragon Whisker Creek*, the focus of Chapter One, as constituting a "prescriptive chronotope" in that it creates a fictional space where pressing social problems are imaginatively engaged through cinematic and theatrical works before the material space of the city is itself rebuilt.

Similar spatio-temporal chronotopes organize each of the chapters. Chapter Two moves away from Beijing to consider the cinematic remaking of Shanghai's notori-

ous Nanjing Road—a commercial center rebranded by the Party after 1949. While the main thrust of the work charts the interactions of cinema and planning policies, theater is also key to the study, providing the central focus for Chapter Three’s exploration of Beijing courtyard houses (*sibeyuan*’r). In particular, the chapter focuses on the state sponsored plays after 1980. Often referring explicitly to *Dragon Whisker Creek*, the post-reform productions provide rationales for demolition and relocation policies and connect new development projects to a long history of making Beijing new. *Goldfish Ponds*, for instance, a sequel to *Dragon* and staged in 2001, depicts the transformation of the very same community from slum to modern apartment buildings. Key elements of the play are even narrated through statues and signage in a new high-rise complex that occupies the site. The turn to official cinema (and theatrical) productions is perhaps the most significant contribution of Braester’s study. Often bracketed as an implied background and sounding board for the discussion of more interesting or provocative works, the attention to official/popular productions throughout is a much-needed addition to current scholarship.

Midway through Chapter Four the book shifts its focus to the impact of non-state productions on urban redevelopment. Successive chapters explore Tiananmen Square, Taipei, and the cinematic engagement with recent experience with demolition and relocation policies in Beijing. Braester’s chapter on Tiananmen, for example, explores not only the way in which the symbolic space has been imbued (and re-imbued) with official significance, but how it is also reappropriated by film, video and artworks that present alternative views of the city. As such, one of the most compelling aspects of the book is the detailed view it brings to development in Beijing over the last 60 years. Four of the book’s seven chapters, for instance, directly engage the remaking of adjacent neighborhoods in central/southern Beijing—from Tiananmen Square to neighborhoods in the traditional “outer city.” After a detour through the gentrification of Taipei, and the overlapping urban aesthetics of Taiwan and the Mainland, Chapter Six examines cinematic responses to demolition and relocation (*chaiqian*) from the early 1980s to the New Documentary Movement.

Both Braester and Visser are interested in how recent media practices engage the politics of transition and suggest forms of civic agency. While no doubt capturing important shifts in everyday Chinese politics, producing a better understanding of the mechanisms that undergird this emergent space is one of the tasks currently facing historians and theorists of Chinese media and culture. If Visser’s study at times unreflexively relies on the logic of neoliberalism and of civil society, Braester’s conception of the urban contract and of “negotiating with power” is too often a Foucauldian blur. These important contributions to post-socialist urban aesthetics thus leave many questions related to contemporary media and political society to be worked through.

In sum, both *Painting* and *Cities* manage to critically engage China without reproducing a Cold War-styled binary that brackets Chinese excesses from many of the very same problems elsewhere: gaps between rich and poor, ecological degradation, conflict over resources, violence, and commercialization, among many other issues. As Braester puts it: “this book . . . does not simply seek to present another account of art in the face of autocratic and ideological state control” (2). Instead, the respective studies can be viewed in relation to both local conditions and the broader transformation of both neoliberalism and (post)socialism under globalization—what Jason McGrath has usefully termed *Postsocialist Modernity*.

Braester and Visser’s accounts are welcome contributions to contemporary Chinese media studies and will be useful to specialists and newcomers alike. They suggest the potential for an emerging field of urban media research by reflecting not only the textual engagements with the city, but the role of representation and practice in animating the city as such. While some may criticize the continued emphasis on Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, *Painting* and *Cities* also suggest just how much more work, current and historical, these emergent media capitals will generate.

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Women in Academia: How (re)Discovering Feminisms Can Empower You

JENNIFER BURWELL

Brown, Susan, Jeanne Perreault, Jo-Ann Wallace, and Heather Zwicker, eds. *Not Drowning But Waving: Women, Feminism, and the Liberal Arts*. University of Alberta Press, 2011. 472 pages.

Not Drowning But Waving offers twenty-two feminist essays focusing on the complex relationships between women academics and the liberal arts. Separated into three sections – “Not Drowning/Waving,” “History/Temporality/Generations,” and “Activism” – the anthology gathers together a broad range of topics, including the relationship of liberal arts to academic institutions, the many pressures that women in academia face in their attempts to balance personal life with professional duties and aspirations, the costs and opportunities for women academics who hold administrative positions, and the relation of feminism to the liberal arts. Covering such a breadth of topics, the text nevertheless succeeds remarkably in sustaining a consistent thematic and structural dialogue between the articles. This active dialogue is in part a result of the fact that the anthology emerged out of papers presented at a conference held in 2006 to celebrate the achievements of Patricia Clements—the first woman Dean of Arts at the University of Alberta. In addition to providing a thorough historical context for issues facing women academics and an instructive history of feminism and Women’s Studies in the Canadian academy, this anthology provides a valuable resource for all women working in what can be an insensitive and unwelcoming academic environment.

The introduction to the anthology provides a cogent overview of the above issues while effectively integrating references to the specific articles therein. Many of the articles provide important and often sobering statistics about women in academia; of particular note are those statistics that expose the wide gulf between the number of women academics in the ranks versus those who have managed to attain administrative positions or elite positions such as Tier One Canada Research Chairs (CRCs). Cecily Devereux’s “What to Expect When You’re Not Expecting” is one such article, providing and interpreting a raft of statistics that illuminate the long road that women in academia still have to travel in order to achieve equity with their male colleagues. Along the same lines, Louise H. Forsyth’s “Desperately

Seeking Equity” specifically addresses the issue of women’s relative exclusion from CRCs, using evidence gathered by eight senior academics who then took their claims—with little effect—to the Canadian Human Rights Committee. The “post-secondary pyramid” (included on p. 215) compares, in stark graphic form, the stunning differential between the men’s successful movement up through the ranks versus the much less successful movement of women, illustrating again the challenges faced by women wishing to advance their career. The graph is a powerful reminder of this inequity, and the anthology might have benefitted from introducing it earlier, in tandem with statistics-oriented articles such as Devereux’s and Forsyth’s.

On the topic of the personal challenges faced by women in academia, Donna Palmtree Pennee’s “I Forgot the Attachment” and Susan Brown’s “School/Work, Home/Work” are especially relevant. Pennee’s article is organized around an innovative structure that integrates her spontaneous and imaginative conference presentation with her present reflections on the topic. Her writing is engaging and elegant, and her inclusion of statistics concerning visible minorities provides valuable data not present in some of the other articles. Her reference to the “cult of speed” and the pressure to accomplish more and more as administrations increasingly “download” labour onto professors will resonate with all academics, and is nicely echoed by Aruna Srivastava’s exploration of “the cult of exhaustion” in “On Justice, Exhaustion, Apology and Alienation.”

In “The Way They Stayed,” Heather Murray presents a historical account of a unique topic: the story of the women alumni and the roles that they could and did play relative to Universities. Murray’s discussion of the practical institution-wide struggles for women to be integrated into the university, and the conflation of women’s educational needs with their residential requirements, provides a seldom discussed historical context for women’s struggles to achieve parity in academia.

There exists a noticeable division in the anthology between the longer articles in the first section, which come in around the twenty to thirty page mark, and the much shorter articles in the other two sections (many of which are not much over ten pages). While the breadth of perspectives is welcome, the anthology might have benefitted from including fewer, and longer articles in these sections. This would have allowed writers to develop their arguments in a more thorough manner—and provide an opportunity to offer more interpretation of the experiences that they recount, as well as more developed strategies for change. Heather Zwicker’s “Things We Gained in the Fire” is the exception here: she manages, in ten pages, to offer a personal account of burnout in tandem with a model for what she calls “radical collegiality,” a form of collegial engagement within academic institutions that “puts our needs as people first.”

Several of the articles explore in sophisticated ways the connections and disjunctures between “second” and “third” wave feminism, frequently problematizing how these categories have been conceived and deployed. Tessa Elizabeth Jordan’s and Jo-Ann Wallace’s “Waves, Tangles, and Loops” offers a particularly insightful historicization of second wave feminism in the form of a corrective to assumptions that third wave feminists hold about those who were active in the second wave, doing so in the context of the third wave’s preoccupation with the rhetoric of “high theory” and the manner in which this focus dismisses the language used by the earlier generation of feminists. In “Not a Post-feminism Feminist,” Elizabeth Groeneveld offers an excellent account of the origins of third wave feminism and assumptions about it, while at the same time critiquing the entire notion that feminisms fall neatly into the “wave” metaphor. The number of contributions aiming to correct theoretical and historical blind-spots among “third wave feminists” tends to highlight the relative underrepresentation of the latter throughout. While not a significant drawback, the anthology might have included more articles by younger “third wave” feminists. The inclusion of Erin Wunker, who was a graduate student at the time that she wrote her piece, and Phil Okeke-Ihejirika and Julie Rak, who were hired in the late nineties, is a small corrective to this; however, the anthology would have been further strengthened by including more women who have joined the ranks of academia in the twenty-first century.

The metaphors of “drowning” and “waving” in title of the anthology provide fertile ground for the analysis and references that abound throughout the anthology to “drowning” and “wave.” However, these metaphors are used to the point where they threaten to become emptied of meaning. Virtually every article makes reference to “drowning” and “wave” in one way or another, and Aritha Van Herk’s “Drowning in Bathtubs,” indulges in the drowning metaphor to the point of exhaustion (although she does identify her “bathtub” metaphor as “something of a hoax”). Groeneveld’s article and Phil Okeke-Ihejirika and Julie Rak’s “Between the Waves” both offer critiques of this metaphor (“Between the Waves” adding a welcome critique of the Western generational model of feminism and suggesting it be replaced with the idea of “feminisms as communities of difference” that attend and listen to one another). Even the critiques of the wave concept, however, emphasize the extent to which this metaphor dominates the book.

Given the fact that many of the articles and their writers in the other sections fall under the category of activism, one wonders why there is a relatively short separate section for the subject. The articles in this section could easily have been integrated into the other sections without any compromise to their structural coherence. Christine Bold’s “Who Benefits?,” an analysis of memorials dedicated to “women who have been murdered by men” offers a trenchant analysis, as well as offering a way to medi-

ate between social justice workers and academics. This article would have fit nicely in the second section. The other articles included under “Activism,” while dealing with issues of social justice and material culture that do not expressly fall within academia, nevertheless offer pertinent and cogent analyses and could be similarly integrated.

Not Drowning But Waving is written by, and to some extent for, feminists; as such, it is able to provide a nuanced examination of the very complex relation between and within academic feminisms, expanding out to include the relationship between feminists and academic institutions. This does not mean, however, that the anthology has nothing to say to women (and men) who have not necessarily or consistently engaged in academic activist feminism. The articles’ explorations of burnout and extra demands on women—particularly in relation to childcare—would go a long way toward contextualizing the isolation and stress experience by many women, while enjoining women to work together as allies. As someone who feels that her inclusion of feminist perspectives within the classroom has become less than robust, I appreciated Isobel Grundy’s article “Mentoring,” and I would have liked to hear more on the integration of a feminist orientation into the classroom.

The anthology might benefit from more institutional breadth; because the conference took place at the University of Alberta, and many of the authors hail from this institution, the personal perspectives from the U of A are somewhat overrepresented. Most of the articles written by women at the University of Alberta do, however, manage to transcend their immediate institutional concerns and one can, with modest effort, extrapolate from these personal experiences to broader contexts. Christine Overall’s “What I learned in Deanland” is most successful on this account, partly because she provides detailed practical advice for any woman aspiring to an administrative position.

This anthology is worth reading for all women who feel isolated by academia’s failure to address their personal needs and who feel a sense of failure at not living up to unrealistic workloads and the pressure to advance their careers at any cost. Many of the articles made me consider the fact my department runs as such a well oiled machine has because the difficulties faced by the women academics in the department are never formally addressed. Instead, discussion of these difficulties is consigned to brief hallway exchanges between the women in my department—exchanges dominated by accounts of feeling overextended and overwhelmed. *Not Drowning But Waving: Women, Feminism, and the Liberal Arts* does much to address the formal silence around challenges facing women academics. In its historicizing and problematizing of women’s place in academia, woven into textual exegesis and accounts of personal experiences, *Not Drowning But Waving: Women, Feminism, and the Liberal Arts* has much to offer for anyone open to examining and articulating women’s experiences

within academia.

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Critical Practice as Desire

ELIZABETH GROENEVELD

Robyn Wiegman. *Object Lessons*. Duke University Press, 2012. 398 pp.

Robyn Wiegman's *Object Lessons* is an extended meditation on the disciplinary frameworks, concepts, and narratives that have shaped the field imaginaries of identity-based studies, focusing primarily on how these have developed within the context of the U.S. academy. *Object Lessons* theorizes the ways in which the concept of social justice shapes these fields, including Women's Studies, Queer Theory, Whiteness Studies, and American Studies, in order to ask what can be learned from their organizing practices, particularly the relationships between these fields and their objects of study. The book's title thus serves as an invitation to the reader to think with Wiegman about the lessons that a discipline's object of inquiry can teach us about both the discipline itself and the affects that motivate its study. According to Wiegman, "*Object Lessons* aims to interrupt faith [. . .] that if we only find the right discourse, object of study, or analytic tool, our critical practice will be adequate to the political commitments that inspire it" (2-3).

In her Introduction, Wiegman frames the book by arguing that while identity-based studies have an acknowledged tie to the political, "the operation of the political within identity-based fields has not been sufficiently engaged" (13). She introduces the concept of the "field imaginary" as a way to identify the ways in which disciplinary frames shape how a field of study is imagined. She asserts that "belief in critical practice as an agency of social change" (10) is one of the key assumptions underlying identity-based scholarship. While *Object Lessons* is about the desires that motivate the disciplinary practices in which scholars engage, her work does not explicitly theorize the concept of desire itself. This is not the project of the book, and indeed Wiegman makes no claims to offering a comprehensive account of all the identity-based disciplines, and argues that such a project is an impossible one (it is). Nonetheless, there are some areas that Wiegman touches on less directly that seem surprising, such as the rise of affect theory, which has been constructed as "*the way forward*," as Clare Hemmings puts it, from the critical practice that comprises Wiegman's focus (550). Wiegman also does not dwell directly on the concepts of "the political" or "social justice" themselves, and the ways in which these terms are mobilized within identity-based disciplines. While these particular areas seem under-addressed in the Introduction, and throughout, what the reader does leave Wiegman's book with is a set of critical readings of particular disciplinary narratives that are instructive for thinking through

the key concepts, scripts, and stories of other identity-based fields.

In her first chapter, “Doing Justice with Objects,” Wiegman identifies a progress narrative shaping the discipline of Women’s Studies: the notion that shifting to a discourse of gender will solve the problems inherent to the concept of “women.” That is, that the concept of “women” attempts to circumscribe the uncircumscribable, and in ways that frequently fail to account for the experiences of women of colour or trans-women, for example. Wendy Brown’s (1997) “The Impossibility of Women’s Studies” is a key essay in the archive of feminist writings outlining the problems with the term “women” and its implications for Women’s Studies as a discipline. Wiegman’s essay on “Feminism, Institutionalism, and the Idiom of Failure,” published in *Women’s Studies on the Edge* (2008) critically rereads Brown’s essay to argue that a narrative of failure shapes discourses around the institutionalization of Women’s Studies. In *Object Lessons*, Wiegman revisits the idiom of failure within Women’s Studies to argue that it comprises part of a larger progress narrative that also includes: dependence, “in the compulsion to overcome what has failed” (52); incorporation, through the transferential power of moving from one signifying practice to another “newer” and “better” one; and, finally, disavowal, through the denial of any similarity between the “old” concept (women) and the “new” one (gender). “Doing Justice with Objects” is a strong chapter, demonstrating the breadth and depth of Wiegman’s analytic capabilities. The chapter is meticulously footnoted, clearly demonstrating the seismic shift from “women” to “gender” within Women’s Studies scholarship and Women’s Studies at an institutional level, while also offering a focused, illustrative reading of this shift through Leora Auslander’s (1997) optimistic essay, “Do Women’s + Feminist + Men’s + Lesbian and Gay + Queer Studies = Gender Studies?” that first appeared alongside Brown’s more cynical assessment.

Like Chapter One, Wiegman’s second chapter, “Telling Time,” offers an illustrative reading of Ian Halley’s provocative essay, “Queer Theory by Men,” in order to think through both the relationship between feminism and queer theory and the impulse towards divergence that shapes the field imaginary of queer theory. Wiegman critiques Halley’s homogenizing and reductive portrait of feminism as only concerned with male/female difference and female subordination across all contexts, offering an alternative feminist archive of sex-positive lesbian writings as a counterexample. Ultimately, Wiegman’s close reading is less effective in this chapter, as it seems at times more concerned with critiquing Halley than with foregrounding the narrative of divergence shaping queer theory. While “Telling Time” does discuss the ways in which queer theory emerged out a different temporal context than feminism—indeed, as Wiegman argues, queer theory’s divergentism “requires the prior arrival ... of sexual identity as an area of inquiry onto the academic scene” (117), an area developed primarily through feminist thought—this chapter’s analytic frame often feels too nar-

rowly focused upon Halley's work.

Chapters Three and Four mark a shift in the text's focus from the minoritarian discourses of Women's Studies and Queer Theory to the majoritarian fields of Whiteness Studies and American Studies, disciplines which are predicated on disavowals of their objects of study; as Wiegman puts it, both Whiteness Studies and American Studies are "aimed at unmasking, critiquing, and even destroying the object of study that names them" (138). The argument in Chapter Three is framed around a central paradox within Whiteness Studies: the paradox of particularity. That is, Wiegman tracks three streams of Whiteness Studies—scholarship on poor whites, white abolitionism, and class-based analyses of whiteness—in order to argue that white universalism underwrites these particularities rather than existing in a binary relation with them (188). While scholarship in the area of whiteness continues to be produced, Whiteness Studies as a discipline did not gain purchase within academia. Studying a "failed" discipline allows Wiegman to contextualize Whiteness Studies within the recent past of 1990s and early 2000s, offering a compelling discussion of broader shifts within popular culture around the construction of the white liberal subject during this period.

In Chapter Four, Wiegman explores the post-Cold War turn of American Studies to a critical stance favouring disidentification with its object of study. As Wiegman puts it, "New Americanism posits itself as *exterior* to the object of study that names it in order to guarantee an analytic position commensurate with the political desire that animates it—a position that is simultaneously outside the object's geopolitical power but inside the disavowed histories, affects, and violences that attend and support such power" (202). Wiegman elaborates on this point by focusing on the discourse of internationalization that pervades New Americanism (in critical work on imperialism and diasporic and transnational studies, for example), and suggests that, despite the desire to disidentify with the nation state, New Americanism's move to internationalization can not be dissociated from the move to neoliberal globalization and governmentality that marks the U.S. university. In light of this imbrication, Wiegman focuses on internationalization "as a critical aspiration" (206), suggesting that "the fantastic wish for an uncontaminated future" (238) is one of the key desires motivating the field imaginary of contemporary American Studies. This is another strong chapter in which Wiegman masterfully traces the key trajectories of, and debates within, American Studies. Her work in this chapter belies the fantasy that "*practitioners are the agents of field revision,*" arguing instead that "changes in the narrative formation and critical priorities of fields of study are generated by the very processes critics hope to decipher and transform" (215).

The fifth chapter, "Critical Kinship," focuses upon intersectionality, which has argu-

ably become *the* leading paradigm within Women's Studies and, more broadly, "*the* primary figure of political completion in U.S. identity knowledge domains" (240). This chapter functions not as a critique or indictment of intersectionality itself, but rather explores both the desire for kinship mobilized through intersectionality and a paradox that helps sustain intersectionality's critical value (242); that is, intersectionality pursues both universality (through its comprehensive aspirations) and particularity (through taking black women's experiences as the paradigmatic intersectional location). Wiegman's meditation on intersectionality revisits the particularities of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) essay, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," which brought the term into circulation, rereading the key insights of Crenshaw's work through more recent legal cases. Readers travel with Wiegman through the complex muddle of gender, race, and reproduction in legal and media contexts, in order to arrive not at a resolution of these complexities, but at an understanding of "the contingency of critical practice" (296) and insight into the ways in which the desire for kinship is imbricated in the shifting terrain of U.S. white liberal subjecthood in the 1990s and beyond. In addition to these insights, the chapter concludes with an assessment of intersectionality that builds on Jennifer Nash's (2008) evaluation of the term.

Wiegman's concluding chapter, "The Vertigo of Critique," returns to Queer Studies, and is framed by a narrative that may be familiar to many scholars: a conference paper that seems like it will write itself starts to raise more questions than it answers, once the critic begins thinking through the assumptions underlying their research questions. Wiegman uses this narrative as a way to ask questions of both Queer Studies and critical practice in its broadest sense. With regard to the former, Wiegman argues that while the queer critique of heteronormativity assumes its intransitivity for the purpose of mobilizing the anti-normative aspirations of queer theory, it may be the case that gender and sex are *always transitive* (318). With regard to the latter, Wiegman uses her self-reflexive narrative to argue that "the critical authority derived from critique belongs not to the critic but to the questions she learns to hone" (318). In this sense, our objects of study also constitute *us* as researchers. In this final chapter, Wiegman offers a perceptive analysis of the ways in which fantasy and desire are imbricated in, and sustain, critical practice.

Object Lessons is an excellent contribution to the field of critical scholarship on the ways in which Women's Studies defines and understands its own disciplinary project; Wiegman's project takes the kinds of questions that Women's Studies has been asking of itself and extends these questions to other identity-based fields to ask the broader question of what we expect critical practice to *do*. The text is meticulously footnoted and the scope and depth of Wiegman's analysis is impressive. Recommended for scholars and graduate students working in the areas of Women's, Gender, and Sexu-

ality Studies, particularly, as well as other identity-based disciplines. Wiegman is a brilliant thinker and her text provides a site for considering the stakes of the projects with which we're engaged and how the "stakes" are defined in the first place. While Wiegman offers no easy answers, for scholars who have ever asked questions of themselves, like: "Does my work *do anything?*" and "Does this work *really* matter?" what Wiegman does offer is a thoughtful meditation on the narratives that work to sustain the aspirational hopes of disciplines emerging out of left critique; specifically, the hope that critical practices will deliver the futures of which we dream.

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No Local: Globalization and the Remaking of Americanism

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Sarika Chandra. *Dislocalism: The Crisis of Globalization and the Remobilizing of Americanism*. Ohio State University Press. 2011. 303pp.

In the final section of *Capital*, Marx makes a striking observation: despite destroying the land-holding peasantry, the birth of manufacturing in England did not wipe out the small, disconnected villages of rural England, but rather refashioned them in capital's image, as sites of subsidiary resource production, even poorer and more marginal than they had been before (Marx 918). This insight runs counter to what passes for conventional wisdom regarding the cosmopolitan nature of capitalism, that as capitalism expands from town to nation-state to finally engulf the entire world, the vanishing "local" will be brought in line with a uniform worldwide market for labor and goods. It seems Sarika Chandra has a similar kind of counter-intuitive argument in mind with respect to the literature of globalization. Taking on the notion that the "local" is a site of resistance to the inroads of an increasingly "flat" and commodified globe, Chandra argues that the new era of globalization has neither "flattened" the world nor prevented "the local" from emerging as an important site of capital circulation. Indeed, as Chandra's neologism "dislocalism" suggests, globalization has not so much destroyed the local, but rather reproduced it as a new form of capitalist production, consumption, and circulation. While I'm generally suspicious of academic monographs marketing new words as a form of product differentiation (and indeed, one could argue that globalization has increased the pressure on academics to market their ideas like individual Madison Avenue firms), "dislocalism" captures a phenomenon that hitherto we lacked a precise language for.

As Chandra reminds us, the connotation of the term globalization is inherently spatial, making it "appear as though the erasure of the local were itself the meaning of 'globalization'" (Chandra 5). Many critics, from Marxists to free-market liberals have reinforced the spatiality of globalization, including David Harvey's "spatial fix," Fredric Jameson's "cognitive mapping," Hardt and Negri's "smooth world," and Thomas Friedman's "the world is flat." In "Jihad vs. McWorld," Benjamin Barber takes the analysis a step further, suggesting that the local, the traditional, the pre-modern have been the central terms of opposition against this new spatial coordinates of capitalism. What all of these critics have in common of course, is that the "annihilation of

space” by new technologies and new discourses have finally brought the world into a single global market, erasing all local particularities with the abstract universal of the commodity form. Whether this is a “race to the bottom” as labor historian Kate Bronfenbrenner phrased it, or a “global village of freedom” as Tom Peters reassures us, this new form of spatiality is often taken as a given.

And yet it is precisely through this drive to displace the local that, paradoxically, Chandra sees the local reemerging as a new form of displacement itself. In an insight reminiscent of Walter Benjamin’s claim that the future arrives in the clothes of the past, Chandra surveys much of the literature of globalization, from business writing and travel writing, from food tourism to the recent academic vogue of immigrant literature, noting the ways in which localist categories of place and nation are used to protect the very boosters of globalization from ravages of the world they created. Beginning with business literature, Chandra demarcates the way in which cheerleaders of globalization, from Tom Peters’ bestselling books such as *In Search of Excellence* and *Management Liberation* to the vast and underscrutinized world of MBA Organization Studies (OS), celebrate the arrival of the “global village” while at the same time respond with an instinctive fear of the “denationalized organization” that may very well displace them (44). Management literature as well as OS have in common a “nervousness and anxiety” that they should find themselves “adrift in a global, transnational no man’s land with nothing left to organize or manage” (38). “Creative destruction” is OK, in other words, until it is your job or position of power that is being creatively destroyed.

In a move that may surprise humanities scholars accustomed to bemoaning their own irrelevance, literary culture has been the primary means by which business writers such as Peters and Drucker and top business schools such as Tuck and Wharton increasingly shore up their potential loss of power and influence in an multi-polar world. In recent years, business writers and management gurus deploy post-modern theorists such as Deleuze and Guatarri, Derrida, and Foucault to explain the new “more egalitarian” role of corporate culture in managing conflicts and controlling “difference” (45-48). While this may seem like an embrace of the transnational corporation, companies that can experience difference, decentralize, and contain multitudes, it is also a strategy by which management and management theorists attempt to “prevent their own obsolescence”(44). The incorporation and deployment of post-modern theory is part of a larger strategy that Chandra refers to as “management fictions”: management theorists’ use of literary devices as a way to re-narrate their place in an increasingly uncertain world.

In a world of fictitious capital, managers and gurus turn to literary theorists and literature itself—teaching MBA students the “classics” as strategies to both articulate

as well as contain the sprawling global enterprise of the new transnational corporation. Fiction, particularly US fiction taught in MBA classes and used in management literature, becomes a way to find meaning when national markets and national narratives no longer suffice; the corporation, business students are taught, like the nation, deploys narrative as a way to construct a unified and portable identity. That this literature is often written in the US and disseminated by US universities allows MBA programs to assert the need for US cultural production and management expertise while at the same time disavowing the American roots of corporate expansion. This articulation of the global and national simultaneously is at the heart of Chandra's project: power becomes "dislocalized," no longer part of a particular national space, yet not part of a cosmopolitan transnational project either. It's Americanism as a global identity, and yet without the pesky responsibility to the actual Americans in whose country the corporate HQ still resides.

While it may surprise some that management theorists and top business schools incorporate literary theory into their business models, anyone who has taught or taken an undergraduate literature course within the last 15 years cannot miss how much the discourse of globalization has shaped the study of literature. Like the corporate managers, the academic discipline of English is under intense pressure to remain relevant, not only in a world of increased austerity, but also one in which the entire project of national literatures is said to be passé. Chandra thus charges that the field of "immigrant literary studies" is, like the field of management theory, a "dislocalizing" strategy, both displacing the nation-as-space, and yet failing to acknowledge or capture the radical displacement brought by the latest regime of capital accumulation. As Chandra points out, by choosing the immigrant as the new subject of globalization, the narrative of "global" literature still emerges as one negotiating an identity within the culture and boundaries of the United States, rather than imagining that "the conditions of immigration"—including urbanization, cultural estrangement and displacement, a life of motion and movement in search of employment—may be felt globally. Focusing on Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*, Chandra examines the way in which both texts present a vision of multiculturalism that ultimately reinforces the notion of the US as an exceptional nation. Indeed, the "border-crossings" that appear to move "under the sign of a...transnational, ethnic borderlands" represents the US as a "diverse place where ethnicities shed their distinct boundaries" making invisible those for whom the "borderlands" "expel, repel, and decimate" long before they even reach the shores of the US (139).

Dislocalism concludes with two chapters that are likely more familiar to people as cultural representations of globalization—travel writing and food tourism. In some ways, both genres are at opposite ends of the globalization debate, even if they have

arrived at similar places. Travel writing, Chandra reminds us, is a genre that, if we were to take the celebrants of the “global village” seriously, should no longer exist. The entire project of travel writing was, and one could argue continues to be, about bringing the “exotic” home to a domestic audience, to experience both the frisson of the foreign, as well as to make the empire an aesthetic experience. Paul Theroux’s *Hotel Honolulu* and Robert Kaplan’s *The Ends of the Earth* both locate the Americanization of the world as their object, and while Kaplan celebrates this and Theroux despairs by staying put in Honolulu, both reinforce the US traveler’s discerning gaze and ability to interpolate the global-surround. In perhaps Chandra’s most cutting critique, she takes on the recent vogue of woman writers who find liberation through travel, citing Mary Morris’ *Nothing to Declare* as a reification of the United States as safe “domestic” space, presenting the reader with titillating yet sexually dangerous Mexican women and abusive Mexican men. And as a new arrival to the more established field of travel writing, food has emerged as perhaps the most celebrated aspect of globalization, bringing flavors and sensory experiences to a flavor-starved US market: one can travel around the world without leaving Trader Joe’s. As perhaps the most visible marker of globalized tastes, “fusion cuisine” represents the fiction of a “global village” more concretely than any other medium, a kind of multiculturalism on a menu. And yet “fusion cuisine,” like other dislocalist strategies, appeals to a perceived “smooth” US taste, precisely by making it seem as though the US has no indigenous food.

As a theoretical work, *Dislocalism* crucially heightens our awareness to the ways literary culture is mobilized by globalization to foreclose more radical possibilities of spatial freedom. And certainly, it’s an old story—from the workhouses of the early modern period to the carceral mesh of today’s cities, the increasing mobility of capital has often been met with more impenetrable borders, boundaries, and walls for a greater number of people. That the reaffirmation of national borders and national identity is through globalization’s own language thus begs the question of whether “globalization” as such was really as much about “annihilation of space” at all for its architects, so much as an unsettling side-effect of new modes of accumulation. And yet for its theoretical brilliance and astute, insightful readings, much of *Dislocalism* is a work of literary criticism, explicating ways in which the various works and genres reproduce and further the book’s central concept. While Chandra does make a stab at theorizing the ways in which “fiction” is a containment strategy by management for the ephemeral nature of “fictitious capital,” at times the text seems ambiguous about whether “dislocalism” is merely a posture taken by writers, or an actual modality of accumulation itself. My hunch is that “dislocalism” is more than simply a literary device deployed by the cultural hacks in MBA programs, but is an important way in which global capital actually circulates. US firms are simultaneously global while at the same time highly dependent upon US government largesse and the US military;

globalization has not “denationalized” the corporation so much as rewritten the rules by which corporations act in their host nations to the corporation’s benefit. US-dominated financial markets have also long used devaluation and debt obligations as a way to weaken some economic blocs to the benefit of their own home industries and financial institutions. In a similar sense, deindustrialized cities such as Detroit, South Bend, and Cleveland have not, as many assume, been simply erased as “local” sites of capital accumulation and have rather been “dislocalised” as new sites of privatization and real estate speculation, hosting toxic industries such as metal recycling, ethanol production, and waste-disposal. While it’s most certainly a sign of *Dislocalism’s* strength that its concept can be applied to the way in which capitalism actually operates, it would have nonetheless been helpful to the reader if some of the close reading of literary texts also engaged a bit more extensively with the economic realities they are said to represent. Nonetheless, *Dislocalism* is a vital contribution to the literature of globalization, and should spark many new important conversations about the material culture of our present era.

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