

Well, the Ukraine girls really knock me out...

Djurdja Bartlett, *FashionEast: The Spectre That Haunted Socialism*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2011. 300 pp., £25.95 hb., 978 0 26202 650 5.

One of the more interesting recent Russian blockbusters, Valeriy Todorovskys 2008 *Stilyagi*, is a musical set in 1950s' Moscow. The historical Stilyagi were the Soviet Union's beatniks, enthusiasts for modern jazz and rock and roll, who dressed in approximations of American fashion, simulating quiffs and zoot suits as much as adaptation and improvisation could allow. In the film, they are constantly harassed by the Komsomol, the Communist Youth League, who are dressed in identical, rough-hewn boiler suits, and who submit them to (occasionally rather fetishistic) beatings and public humiliations. In the film's valedictory ending, the Stilyagi march down the Tverskaya, Moscow's main commercial street, and suddenly the 1950s' hipsters travel forwards in time, walking alongside the goths, metalheads and freaks of the capitalist metropolis. The message is unsubtle. But rather than presenting them as ancestors of contemporary subcultures, here the Stilyagi appear more as Moscow's first New Russians: bright, charismatic, nonconformist, sex-obsessed and sexualized in their dress, the first to establish a style that would come to dominate this most aggressively capitalist of contemporary cities. The flagrant liberties *Stilyagi* takes with history are obvious, whether sartorial or political. The public fights between Komsomol and Stilyagi are historically unlikely, to say the least, but the major difference is one of dress. Nobody in the 1950s looked like these Stilyagi, with their enormous, gravity-defying quiffs, their bright green and purple suits and gowns, their plunging cleavages, not even the most fearless of American rock and rollers. It's a fantasy as wilfully ludicrous, and as much a historical just-so-story, as one of the 1930s' musicals of Grigory Alexandrov; a rock-and-roll *Volga-Volga*.

It does, however, confirm an enduring stereotype about really existing socialism – that it was as grey, depressing and sadistic as *Stilyagi*'s army of conformism-enforcing Komsomol. Djurdja Bartlett's *FashionEast* is the latest, and perhaps the most comprehensive, of several attempts by historians and theorists to catalogue and conceptualize the sartorial

politics of the Warsaw Pact countries, to alternately support or nuance the existing picture, where fashion is alternately suppressed or, at least, clumsily incorporated into the ideological edifice. Fashion theory, as an academic genre, is still largely stuck in a particular degeneration of Birmingham School cultural studies. In the late 1970s, the likes of Dick Hebdige posited a 'resistance through rituals', and dress-as-spectacle – a response to particular changes in the socio-political conjuncture at the level of everyday life, affected no doubt by prejudices and deflections, but still in some way oppositional. What this has effectively become in the thirty years since is a discourse where 'resistances' of a sort are still offered, but where it is consumption itself that has become the definitive political act. Through consumption, capitalist subjects resist paternalism, universalism, modernism and, of course, a Marxism that would 'totalize' them, link their practices to the economy, or, most appalling of all, suggest that ideology or even 'false consciousness' might just underpin some of these 'choices'. Authenticity is always suspicious, except at the counter till, where mediation is suddenly stripped away in favour of the unambiguous act of choice. The Soviet Bloc is, in this regard, a gift to fashion theorists – here, they can imagine that consumer desire itself capsized an entire command economy, with lines of Trabants crossing the border to accumulate Levis. And there is much work in this vein. Nonetheless, *FashionEast* follows in the train of some rather more critically sharp studies. Judd Stitzel's *Fashioning Socialism* (2008), on the fashion industry in the early years of East Germany, was especially astute in its undermining of the ostensible ideological underpinnings behind the DDR's constantly shifting perspective on the desirability (or otherwise) of fashion.

Early on, Bartlett outlines the focuses of her study as 'utopian dress, socialist fashion and everyday fashion'. The first encompasses both the Constructivist engagement in clothing reform in the early USSR and the sudden strictures on dress in post-1948 Eastern

Europe; the second, the attempts to create and incorporate a state-sponsored fashion industry to compete with that of Western Europe and the United States; the last is the 'unofficial, fast-moving modernity' of illicit black-market imports, and subcultures of dress. That term, 'fast-moving', is key to *FashionEast*. Fashion is a matter of speed, dynamism, as opposed to the sluggish stagnancy of really existing socialism. Although this stagnancy, at least in economic terms, only really pertains to the 1970s and 1980s, it is nonetheless apparent that the constant transformations of European clothing in the 1940s to 1980s were only inadequately emulated, later on, by the 'socialist countries'. Benjamin wrote of 1920s' Moscow that fashion had declined because for the first time political change outpaced sartorial change. Bartlett would have it more that fashion was suppressed, because its changes could not be accommodated by an allegedly socialist economy and because they were regarded as ideologically suspicious – they were the 'spectre that haunted socialism', as her subtitle has it. On the way to this conclusion, Bartlett uncovers a world of dress and imagery that is deeply fascinating, a parallel universe that is similar to, but subtly jarring with, the Western fashion of the era. However, she doesn't make much of an argument as to what makes it specifically socialist.

FashionEast begins by quoting Le Corbusier on Lenin's impeccable dress, his favouring of well-tailored, functional men's clothing. The Le Corbusier of the 1920s was a Platonist, a searcher after eternal, pure, geometric forms which could be raised above history and raised above change. Bartlett argues that similar ideas underpinned the Soviet fashion of the 1920s. 'Can fashion', she asks, 'a phenomenon deeply rooted in its own past and the past of Western civilization – start from zero?' Although she valorizes change, Bartlett appears to imagine that fashion is part of some unshakeable essence of 'Western civilization', so rooted in the past that to extract it from that civilization would leave a void, irrespective of the fact that most inhabitants of that civilization were only engaged in this phenomenon in the most partial, after-the-fact manner. *FashionEast* is the sort of study where the worst thing that can be done is to be 'normative', yet from the very start of the book Bartlett sets up a norm – Western fashion – and holds in great suspicion anything that tries to contest it. So with regard to the attempts by avant-gardist Varvara Stepanova to design clothes, she writes that 'in the Constructivist world, there was no space for frivolous or unpredictable changes brought about by fashion trends, nor any place for a fashionable woman. She was overdecorated

for their functional taste, oversexualized for their puritanical values, and alienated in an ontological sense because she belonged to a past that they did not recognise'. Yet Bartlett's own research creates a much more complicated picture. Aside from a conflation of Constructivist and Bolshevik ideas, which takes too literally the avant-garde's own wishful thinking about its political importance, Bartlett finds the Constructivists had 'an urge for change, a drive towards novelty, and an appreciation of innovation', including in dress, irrespective of the fact that they 'still opposed bourgeois styles'. She quotes the short stories of Alexandra Kollontai, a figure whose enthusiasm for free love can hardly be considered 'puritanical', reprimanding her for disliking 'oversexualized' dress. The early Soviet sex-economy that was perhaps over-romantically described by Wilhelm Reich, where dress and advertisement were relatively asexual but where sexual relationships were far less censured than in the West, is hardly considered a viable option. Instead, it is an illegitimate suppression of the Western standard.

One image in this gorgeously illustrated book shows a 1925 poster by N. Valerianov colourfully titled 'Under The Red Star, Together with Men, Let's Frighten the Bourgeoisie'. Here, the hefty, headscarfed, womanly but not 'feminine' female proletarians who so often featured in early Bolshevik iconography march, in loose-fitting, easy-looking and somewhat folksy red dresses, towards a cowering, cartoonish bourgeois. The poster sparks a discussion of how the Soviet 1920s, particularly in the especially politicized wings of Bolshevism and Constructivism, entailed a disdain for the thin, unproletarian figure of the Jazz Age, in favour of these big, powerful proletarians. The flapper body, useless for production, designed for pleasure, was



commonly associated with the compromised capitalism of the New Economic Policy and, often, with prostitution. Yet Bartlett's research is too scrupulous to ignore the fact that this conflation was opposed within the Bolshevik Party by Anatoly Lunacharsky, and opposed within the avant-garde by Lyubov Popova, and most of all by Alexandra Exter, who designed much more feminine and fashionable women's clothing during the same period. When Stalinism rehabilitated fashion in the second half of the 1930s, Soviet couture also started to align more closely with the feminine figures of the West. At this point, the body of the female proletarian was ignored and anathema, in the same way that the body of the flapper was regarded with suspicion ten years earlier. Yet, given the fact that the look matches that of the European mainstream, Bartlett no longer regards this new norm with such suspicion.

However debatable this perspective might be, there's no doubt whatsoever that Bartlett's visual research is formidable. The argument is made at least in part through that material, and it's often there that it is most convincing. The vicissitudes of dress policy in the 1920s are analysed as much through the changes in magazine covers – from the hybrid folksy flappers of *Iskusstvo Odevatsia* to the Constructivist flappers found half-naked and engaged in edifying *fizkultura* on the Stenberg brothers' covers for *Zhenskii Zhurnal* – as in the text itself. There, the argument against socialist normativity is more a matter of omission than of distortion. The Soviet suspicion of an orgiastic Jazz Age is exemplified by a cartoon of a workers' club (skirts to the knee, activism) and jazz club (skirts above the knee, decadence) in the satirical magazine *Krokodil*. Where would, say, Alexandrov's film *Jolly Fellows*, where anti-bourgeois satire is reinforced rather than opposed by jazz and slapstick, be placed in this dichotomy?

The most viable, serious attempt to create a changeable, dynamic form of dress that is an alternative to and replacement of the established fashion system surely took place in the 1920s, and subsequently *FashionEast* presents less a series of alternatives so much as a series of more or less adequate attempts at emulation. The attempt to class the discourse of dress in post-1948 Eastern Europe as a 'utopian' moment along with that of the 1920s is unconvincing. Certainly, the official rhetoric towards Western fashion became a great deal harsher and more heated during the 1948–56 period, but this violent Cold War discourse masked the fact that nothing new was being proposed to replace it; as Stitzel makes clear in *Fashioning Socialism*, the favoured garment of Stalinist East Germany was the

Tyrolean dirndl, a peasant dress also much favoured in Nazi Germany. Moreover, it's hard to imagine a socialist version of the main Western craze at the time, Christian Dior's New Look, a deliberately cumbersome, ultra-feminine accompaniment to the removal of women from the factories after World War II; a style that was also attacked by women in the UK's not especially Stalinist Labour government. More interesting, at least for its darkly fetishistic frisson, is the cataloguing of High Stalinist high fashion in the USSR itself. A version of haute couture became the style of the new Soviet empire's centre, and a new engagement with display, spectacle and femininity went along with 'life getting gayer'. Here, the argument is made by two remarkable drawings from the magazine *Zhurnal Mod*, both from the later 1950s, when austerity was just starting to creep into the luxury aesthetic. Women in tight black dresses pace the interior of the Riga House of Fashion, and a gaggle of glamorous ladies in fur coats line the escalators of the Moscow Metro. It's hard to work out exactly what is specifically socialist here except perhaps for the setting of the latter, but at least this is vividly surreal imagery.

That's the crux of *FashionEast*'s limitations. It remains an intriguing read, and particularly an intriguing boggle – but what about these clothes and magazines is intrinsic to socialism, rather than intrinsic to any developing, peripheral economies cut off from the centres of fashion production? After the Soviet system solidifies, and with the failure of the last, inadequate efforts by the Khrushchev government to create a desirable functionalism of dress, we are left with interesting images and anecdotes, whether interviews with 1980s' proponents of Soviet fashion, accounts of the black market, vivid images from Polish 1960s' women's magazines or Hungarian photographs of girls with tractors. It proves that state-sponsored design in Eastern Europe was frequently impressive, much as was state-sponsored design in the social-democratic West. However, the suspicion is hard to shake that what this 'socialist fashion' really constituted was a rather slower version of Western fashion. Vivid imagery inadequately covered up two inescapable factors. First, the regimes' inability actually to mass-produce the goods seen in women's magazines, and second, their unwillingness to create mass unemployment through the destruction of their textile industries that would result from the mass importation of Western fashion. The latter, of course, is what eventually resulted in post-1989 Eastern Europe, and to its credit *FashionEast* does not romanticize this final change.

Owen Hatherley

Romanticism of the multitude

Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2011. 376 pp., £56.00 hb., £15.50 pb., 978 0 81664 714 9 hb., 978 0 81664 715 6 pb.

Posthegemony is an ambitious and often pugnacious project, which, as its title indicates, seeks to go beyond neo-Gramscian accounts of the operation of politics, and to offer alternative ways to think the political in a number of instances of modern Latin American history. It is an intervention that would, so to speak, displace the hegemony of hegemony as a way to understand the mechanisms of power. As the basis of his alternative, Beasley-Murray deploys Negri's (and Hardt's) notion of the multitude, and its array of attributes – habit, affect, *connatus*, and so on. The logic of the book also borrows from Hardt and Negri's trilogy (and perhaps Deleuze and Guattari's *Mille Plateaux*): chapters take their titles from named places and dated times and have systematic interpolations that are to be read configurationally. So, 'Argentina 1972' is an attack on Laclau's political theory, which is inset with blocks of text and *matériel* on Perón, Argentine history, other writers on Argentina, and so on; 'Ayacucho 1982' engages with Peru, the armed conflict between state and Sendero Luminoso (among others) and theories of civil society; 'Escalón 1989' focuses on El Salvador, and the guerrilla war; 'Chile 1992' concentrates on Chile, new social movements and the 'return to democracy'. Interpolations are distinguished by typeface, not always too successfully, and often by date of composition. In some trivial way, the book is a diachronic assemblage but non-trivially marked by the history of its polemics. The logic changes as Beasley-Murray's final chapter turns into a more sceptical (and obviously much later) reading of Negri's multitude as immanent potential: by now 'multitude' is more problematic and less immediately promising as *explanans* than it was at the start. Yet this move destabilizes much of what has gone before: what must be adduced to decide between 'good' and 'bad' multitude, between 'multitude' as the subject of refusal and multitude as creator itself, goes unthought. Rather, an epilogue reprints an account of the Venezuelan situation of 2002: the anti-Chávez coup and its defeat at the hands of the Caracas multitude, constituent power in the streets. The import is obvious: away from theory to the place of real politics, a *passage à l'acte*.

This is, then, a project that in its continental scope and critical dissatisfaction must be taken seriously, even if doubts arise as to its success. For one thing, its compositional logic militates against its very synoptic drive: the line of flight through recent Latin American political history leaves out so much – Brazil, notably, where the ground for hegemony might seem most fertile; Mexico, where the decomposition of the party-state shows no real gain in constituent power; Colombia, where non-hegemony might just be the ground for the successful articulation of militarized state and para-statal forces; or Bolivia, perhaps the most compelling example of insurrection in Hardt and Negri's terms, which offers a potential counter-example to their theorization. (See *Imperio, multitud y sociedad abigarrada*, the record of exchanges between Negri, Hardt and Bolivian intellectuals such as Luis Tapia, García Linera and others, on the relevance of the notion of multitude to the Bolivian case, published in 2010.) The fragmentary and local production of critical theory – immanent critique – displays an admirable attention to specific formations, but leaves us without the capacity for comparison, an omission only partly addressed in the conclusion. More worryingly, the polemic ferocity of much of the writing seems to warp the argument and lead to various distortions of history and theory. All this can be seen at its most exaggerated in the first chapter, where the inaugural gesture of dismissing hegemony requires both rhetorical sleight of hand and conceptual violence that suggest an anxiety of unconvincedness. The treatment of Laclau is deeply ungenerous and contrasts with a much kinder critique of Negri's arguably far more dangerous onto-theology.

The revitalization of Gramscian accounts of the state and the question of non-coercive aspects of rule have been central to a certain post-Leninist thinking both in Europe and in Latin America. The 'war of position' (and its basis in the imbrications of the expanded state of welfarism) meant re-evaluating the ways in which the state itself was porous to civil society and vice versa: indeed whether the distinction can be made to hold at all. Thus the place and character of ideology became a fundamental problematic of much post-1960s' political thinking. Hegemony offered one account of how ideology operated: and there were a number of competing accounts of its workings, many of them contested during the same period. Concurrently, the problematic of culture emerged within the university, expressing a reaction to both the previous forms of elite and elitist culture canonized within the institutions and the shift in the forms of culture disseminated by the mass entertainment industries of

late(r) capitalism. These developments were separate, and paralleled the new histories of Foucault and others, which began precisely with a rejection of communist or even Eurocommunist ideas of ideology (after Althusser and Lacan).

It is this history that forms the basis for the re-articulation that Beasley-Murray provides to skewer the theory of hegemony. Hegemony as the name for a problematic emerging from the characterization of the non-coercive in politics is reduced to a particular version of hegemony theory, that of Laclau (and Mouffe, though the genealogy is shaky here) and Laclau's version is further reduced to a moment of his 1977 text *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, even though it is his later claims about populism as a moment of all democratic politics that provide the real object of critique. This involves conflating Laclau's later post-structuralist account of language with his post-Althusserian reading of ideology and then stitching in the dynamics of 'the hegemonic operation' which begins to break away from the simple (rationalist) notion of articulation. 'Laclau' is a composite figure who is, in fact, a bearer for 'populism', the real antagonist. But populism also has a bearer closer to Beasley-Murray's academic position: cultural studies. Here the substitution is as follows: the problematic of culture is reducible to cultural studies as an academic institution, which in turn is reducible to its populist variants. Hegemony theory has been used to underpin some versions of cultural studies: both are populist, hence both, and their underlying problematics, can be dismissed as merely 'screens' which occlude the real workings of power, or are themselves forms of substitution for a theoretical engagement with the state; 'culture' stands in for the state as a site of struggle, hegemony is an 'anti-politics'. This account seems far too simplistic and curiously dated.

Over the last thirty years there has been severe criticism of both the idealizing tendency of certain variants of cultural criticism (which itself must not be equated with the institutional workings of the discipline of cultural studies) and of hegemony theory, especially its overstatement of the reach of its operations, the privileges it grants to the rationalist moment of politics and the contestation of interests, and its historically delimited scope, its central role perhaps superseded in the present epoch. Laclau himself has responded to some of these, turning to a Lacanian account of *jouissance* as a necessary accompaniment to the articulatory work of signification, especially in *On Populist Reason*, a work Beasley-Murray alludes to but barely engages with other than as more of

the same. In any event, 'Laclau' hardly exhausts the account of hegemony; nor does cultural studies exhaust the concern with culture.

What is really at issue here is the understanding of the state and the production of what, for want of a better term, we could name subjectivity. For Beasley-Murray, if the workings of hegemony depend on the state, in some sense, then, hegemony can only ever be in the service of power. Populism is just what state capture of consent looks like. 'Populism is hegemony is politics'. Yet Laclau might be wrong without hegemony losing all purchase. Indeed, Beasley-Murray seriously misreads Laclau, who sees 'populism' (that is, the invocation of the people), its construction as a necessary moment of politics (especially the politics of crisis) and hegemony (as an endless contestation) as only possible within certain historically specific social formations. Within Argentina, for example, hegemony as the manufacture of consent emerges as a historical political possibility only with the extension of suffrage and the withdrawal of military rule: 1916–28; 1946–55; 1973–76; 1983–? Peronism functions as an order of consent during much of this time in part because it has access to state power but also in part because no other force succeeds in presenting a viable coalition of interests and a language, imagery and set of practices to displace it: think of the ill-fated Alianza coalition that lost power in the cataclysm of December 2001 (passed over in one brief mention in the Conclusion) and the re-establishment and radicalization of Peronism with the Kirchners. The protean and insistent quality exerted by Peronism testifies both to its own strength as articulation (support for Laclau and an exemplary instance, as Beasley-Murray somewhat deterministically acknowledges) and to the failure of competitors, with much longer term access to state and economic power. The inability to interpellate non-Peronist mass political actors is a remarkable feature of contemporary Argentine history.

But for Beasley-Murray, 'hegemonic processes stand in for the other, more complex, means by which dominance is asserted and reproduced.' Hegemony is thus a misunderstanding, a misrecognition of other operations, just as 'culture itself operates as a screen, a fetishized substitute for the political logic of command'. These formulations are somewhat opaque, but seem to suggest a way in which the language of politics and the content of culture are no more than epiphenomenal, or, possibly, a deliberate obfuscation. The real 'logic of command' operates otherwise, directly on bodies through affect. Here we can see a displacement of the classic problem involved in false consciousness – why

the 'screen' in the first place? A possible answer might be that this illusion promotes consent – a second-order (if unsatisfactory) version of hegemony. The rather more sensible notion that 'affect' might be affected by language is abandoned with the claim that the only virtue of populism is to have left the terrain of representation.

On the new terrain of 'unrepresentational and unnarratable affect [and] habit' a theory of dominance will emerge that shows how the state operates its legitimacy 'well below the threshold of consciousness'. At one level, this is just Althusserian interpellation: the Pascalian 'act as if you believe and the belief will follow' was modulated into an account of behaviour and its repetitions. Butler's 'performativity' is close to this, with 'gender' being a (fallible) iteration of *gestus*, albeit tied to image-for-the-Other and signification (indeed Butler moves towards something like hegemony to account for both iteration and its critique). Beasley-Murray claims a different lineage: Bourdieu, James, Auyero and Kraniauskas. And their work does indeed expand the understanding of Peronism to include its coding of place and body, and its enactments of collective identity, but not to the exclusion of signification as a moment of the implantation of rule. The figure of Eva Perón as a means to suture hegemony proves its dangers with the fissures in Peronism in 1973 and the revolutionary (if ultimately failed) rearticulation of the Montoneros.

The dismissal of 'hegemony', then, is a dismissal of language as a medium and means of political subjectivation, or perhaps a judgement on language as only capable of producing political subjection. The invocation of affect, however, merely displaces the problem of subjection and its counterpart: if the state exerts power through an unconscious colonization of affect as habit, what counter can be made to this pervasive direct and real subsumption of bodies and agency by the state? A partial answer comes in the discussion of terror in 'Escalón 1989': the guerrilla both forms a war machine as 'an alternative mode of social organization' and reorders affect through visceral means, yet precisely effects this (exemplarily) and is shown to do so through a 'combination of testimonio and literary collage'. Here a signifying practice does the work of counter-subjection. So local hegemonic practices but no hegemonic work at a national level: this seems an arbitrary and self-amputating restriction.

Somewhere here is a peculiar self-denying ordinance of the intellectual. One argument against theories of hegemony has always been their privileging of the articulatory function of the intellectual. (Gramsci's

own emphases are a case in point.) But equally the post-'68 critique of Leninism has downgraded the function of the party as the site of counter-sense and strategy. Negri's multitude as self-organizing and self-presenting is one consequence of this: a noumenon/phenomenon in flight from the old model of a working class to be led. But this curiously Heideggerian monism generates its own problems of theodicy and the genesis of the capturing state. One route for explanation has been the insidious role of the intellectual and the apparatuses of discipline and control. Beasley-Murray is trapped in a repetition of this manoeuvre: his own work attempts to think beyond representation in a highly discursive fashion, choosing literature of all things for the few illustrative examples of non-theoretical texts. 'Hegemony' and 'populism' are the signifiers of comprador capture, whilst affect and habit mark a line of flight for emancipation. But the distinction won't work, and the gesture is one of a romanticism of the multitude rather than one of the people.

Philip Derbyshire

Pro-choice

Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2010. 286 pp., £16.95 hb., 978 0 69112 762 0.

In *Empire for Liberty*, Richard Immerman states: 'the key debate, as one historian frames it, was whether American imperialism resulted from the conscious choices of statesmen ... or [was] the inevitable result of the industrial capitalist economy and social structure.' It is clear on which side the author falls. 'The American empire developed into what it is today because individuals make – or made – choices.' Immerman thus proceeds to 'historicize and contextualize six American leaders [from Franklin through to John Foster Dulles and Paul Wolfowitz] whose choices affected the growth of the American empire'. Though these leaders sought to promote the so-called 'national interest', they also concentrated, Immerman writes, on 'preserving and often expanding a particular definition of individual and collective liberty'. Despite this apparently ideal, individualistic approach that he promises, the subjects he chose nonetheless 'represent attitudes toward, and visions of the American Empire that are grounded in a specific time and environment', and therefore also reflect the views held by the political

class more broadly. Moreover, since they ‘debated other representative Americans whose attitudes and visions differed’, we are supposedly able to gain an understanding of the larger forces at play in the building of the American empire.

Empire for Liberty presents an America more or less entirely devoid of class conflict and wholly ignores any relationship between the state and its capitalist infrastructure – realities that Immerman evidently deems to be irrelevant to the development of the American empire. Instead, his approach rests on two central claims: first, the praxis of American political leaders, taken autonomously, represents the primary factor in determining the character and growth of the American empire; and, second, ideology was a primary motivation for the decisions of these leaders, and by extension on US policy itself.

Yet Marx, of course, taught that ‘men make their

needs, the material conditions of their existence, and the nature of their work. Immerman’s statement that ‘when one sifts through the multiple influences that are the stuff of history, one ends up with individuals who choose to do one thing and not another’ is then a fact, but it is not truth; it expresses only one part of the story. Immerman has amputated the structural environment within which these actions are undertaken, which conditions them and allows us to understand their historical significance, without justification. If we are to restore truth to historical facts, it can only be through a total understanding of both individual praxis and the manner of its existence in the world.

In the course of *Empire for Liberty*, however, Immerman barely even suggests the existence of class divisions in American society or in the world more broadly, nor does he discuss the former’s capitalist foundation. Despite his affirmation of the role of

‘context’, and his insistence that the positions of these leaders are ‘grounded in a specific time and environment’, Immerman clearly fails to provide a complete portrait of either. He paints a remarkably vivid portrait of American bourgeois idealism, and he may be correct that the bourgeoisie perceived its acts through a specific ideological lens. But we have no information with which to explain the historical necessity of this ideology; nor to situate it within social and economic developments in the United States and the rest of the world. We know, in short, the statements



history on the basis of prior conditions.’ This statement, as Sartre points out, does not eliminate the reality of ‘men’ making their history; it declares that man *is* conditioned, but it does not necessarily *reduce* him or her to that condition. Since every person exists in a situation, their actions cannot be interpreted except as an attempt to surpass this situation. He or she acts through the tools that are placed at their disposal, in order to take advantage of the opportunities that are available. In a capitalist society divided into conflicting classes, existing within a milieu of scarcity, the material conditions of one’s life constitute an important element of the *practico-inerte* which confronts the *praxis* and must be surpassed; thus individual actions are an expression not just of the actor, but also of the class to which the actor belongs. The leaders whom Immerman considers are themselves *defined* by their

and some actions of key American state leaders at various moments in time. What we do not know is *what made them what they were*. What drove these men (as they all are) to deploy an ideology of liberty so reminiscent of the Revolutionary Enlightenment ideals that propelled the American bourgeoisie to power, to defend their aggressive foreign adventures? What were the conditions that these men confronted – in their individual and particular lived experience – in carrying out their various projects?

Of course, the effect of superstructural ‘collectives’ (the state, university, family, etc.) on individual behaviour, as Sartre points out, cannot always be reduced merely to one’s economic conditions. The point is rather to take into account ‘the concrete men who were involved in [the action or work], the specific character it took on from its basic conditioning, the ideological

instruments it employed', and so on. By 'totalizing', or drawing these 'disparate elements together to form a meaningful, complex whole', we reconstruct meaning. By contrast, Immerman's insistence on the autonomy of bourgeois political praxis is enabled by his willingness to silence voices that most threatened it. What about those who were not invited to the table for a 'debate'? What about those making up the other component of the class conflict, which expresses its will not in the halls of power, but in the streets, met with police beatings and jail? What about those in the victim country? Immerman's response to these concerns is both wholly unpersuasive and alarmingly totalitarian. He acknowledges that 'only an elite few get a "vote"' in the conduct of US foreign policy, but then asserts that 'by their rhetoric and by their actions, these individuals gave voice to the values and aspirations of the many who remained silent, thereby shaping both politics and policies'. Leaving aside the question of how Immerman can conclude that the 'rhetoric and actions' of state managers 'gave voice to the values and aspirations of the many' without a definitional link, he seems to suggest that it is acceptable simply to assume that society either supported the acts of its rulers or 'stayed silent'. Those in the former category are at least allotted the dignity of full-fledged human beings, completely in possession of their own voices and actions, unlike their counterparts, whose lives are righteously confiscated and used by authority. The latter, in Immerman's view, through their silence gave their implicit consent for the state to speak for them, as well. Furthermore, this statement assumes a uniform set of 'national interests', the execution of which was entrusted to an admittedly undemocratic but enlightened group of elites. Obviously, this approach completely obscures the reality of the division of society into classes with conflicting interests. The maintenance of empire requires that society's resources be diverted away from serving the needs of the public, including health care, public housing and anti-poverty programmes, and instead devoted to securing the overseas interests of ruling elites. As such, the promotion of such interests necessarily entails a direct attack on the lower classes both at home and in the victim country. Yet they are generally still described as the 'national interest', a myth Immerman gladly perpetuates.

Another consequence of Immerman's myopic approach is that he seemingly accords the *ideas* of the American bourgeoisie primacy over *experience* (the outward characteristics of the empire as experienced in the world), leaving us floating above history. We are shown that certain leaders in the US state

proudly proclaimed, and perhaps even believed, that US power was inherently linked with human liberty; if it ever *appeared* otherwise, it was precisely the appearance that was the issue, and it was inevitably a temporary aberration. Since Immerman deprives us of vital information with which to compare the ideas of the men he presents to experience of the acts they refer to, however, we are compelled along with these leaders to – in the words of Sartre, again – 'do violence to reality', forcing it to conform to an ideology adopted *a priori*. The 'empire', 'liberty' and history, which Immerman presents, existed nowhere but in the imagination of the American bourgeoisie:

Indeed, there has been one constant in the evolution of the United States ... The American Empire, regardless of what the term denoted and connoted at any given time, has always been inextricably tied to establishing and promoting liberty in the contemporary context. Further, the extension of America's territory and influence has always been inextricably tied to extending the sphere of liberty.

Could one even begin to conceive of such an 'empire for liberty' in the real world, outside the subjective conceptions of the bourgeoisie? In the Invisible Committee's *The Coming Insurrection*, empire is more coherently defined as, in fact, 'the mechanisms of power that preventively and surgically stifle any revolutionary potential in a situation'. And if empire exists as the very negation of liberty (an element of the *practico-inerte* which must be overcome by praxis embodied in the project of revolution), the idea of any 'empire for liberty' is made absurd.

'Perceived through the lens of America's ideology', Immerman writes, 'empire and liberty are mutually reinforcing'. Alas we soon uncover the role 'liberty' plays in Immerman's book: a concept whose only possible definition is synonymous with the expansion of American power itself. This hollow equation results in a grotesque perversion of reality, and we are presented with a classic Orwellian formulation: empire *is* liberty. With liberty defined as state interests, it is hardly unexpected that state leaders would agree that the 'advancement of liberty' is a virtue, and should be a priority. Indeed, the very 'lens of American ideology' through which Immerman tries to see the world developed and proliferated precisely out of the need to avoid acceptance of the actual consequences of US empire: incredible violence, destruction and murder; environmental degradation; domination and oppression; and the devotion of endless resources to militarism, killing and conquest. It should thus not be surprising that crimes committed in pursuing

state goals are absent from *Empire for Liberty*. That there is a *correlation* between ideological character and imperial expansion and oppression is clear; but Immerman's attribution of *causation* is, unsurprisingly, far from convincing. As Noam Chomsky has said in an interview with David Barsamian:

Why do you have to present yourself as somehow doing it for the benefit of the people you're crushing? Well, otherwise you have to face moral degradation ... It's hard to find an imperial system in which the intellectual class didn't laud its own benevolence.

Although, then, Immerman may be correct to focus on individual lived experience, according men and women the ability to shape their own history, his neglect for the material forces that define individual human beings and restrict our freedom, and therefore guide our actions, results in the thoroughly flawed and incomplete history that is his book. While it might indeed be important to understand and to study ideology, and the manner in which groups of people perceive themselves (accurately or not), without the material and social context within which to situate and evaluate these actions we are unable to understand properly their historical significance.

Steve Maher

Ecce ego

Jacob Rogozinski, *The Ego and the Flesh: An Introduction to Egoanalysis*, trans. Robert Vallier, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2010. 352 pp., £66.95 hb., £24.95 pb., 978 0 80475 988 5 hb., 978 0 80475 989 2 pb.

Originally published in French in 2006, *The Ego and the Flesh* attempts to inaugurate a new branch of philosophy, which, being a 'return to Descartes' and not to Freud, Jacob Rogozinski, Professor of Metaphysics at the University of Strasbourg, names 'egoanalysis'. Egoanalysis's starting point is Descartes's *cogito*, best stated in the nonsyllogistical form 'I am, I exist'. Rogozinski anchors his entire analysis on the Cartesian apodictic certainty of the ego's originary self-givenness, revivifying and updating this insight as well as projecting Descartes into the twenty-first century. But Rogozinski does far more than this, since Descartes's concept was itself stillborn – having established the ego's self-givenness Descartes went on in the third *Meditation* to ground the *cogito* in the Other, or

God, and so, for Rogozinski, was the first in a long line of philosophers to commit 'egocide'. It is thus Rogozinski's mission to pick up where the first two *Meditations* left off and draw out their consequences in the fields of contemporary ontology, psychology, politics and ethics.

For Rogozinski, the egocidal tradition reached its reverse-apotheosis in the writings of Heidegger and Lacan, whose work he is at pains to denigrate in the first section of the book. Rogozinski considers Heidegger's ontology (or 'thanatology') to entomb a deeper, living egological difference which is singular and not anonymous. This criticism is extended to Lacan, whose mirror stage is seen as nothing but a 'mortuary'. Even though these two opening chapters are intended to be polemical they are still the book's weakest point. In the first chapter Rogozinski equates Heidegger's *Dasein* with the existing ego, which is especially unconvincing. One also senses that these chapters permit Rogozinski to distance himself from concepts that he will go on to appropriate in the second half of the book, particularly in regard to Lacan.

The second, constructive, part of the book begins by paying homage to Husserl, one of Rogozinski's only allies and one of Descartes's only true heirs. But it is really the phenomenology of Michel Henry – Rogozinski's teacher – that takes centre stage. Rogozinski's analysis requires a 'radical' phenomenological reduction which eliminates all transcendence from the ego's originary field of self-givenness. Husserl's transcendental subject is criticized for being transcendent to immanence and thus for having an undecidable ontological status, like Heidegger's *Dasein*. Rogozinski wishes to found a pure originary 'field of immanence' of the ego populated by dispersed instances of *life*, and not by Husserl's still overly metaphysical notion of the 'lived body' or *Leib*, Merleau-Ponty's too Heidegger-influenced 'flesh', nor by Deleuze's anonymous divergent series comprising 'a life'. For Rogozinski everything transcendent, especially the Other, must be considered as derived from this field of immanence. The way Rogozinski characterizes this field constitutes the core content of the book. Rogozinski considers the immanent ego as an 'ego-flesh' potentially involved in four 'carnal syntheses', the first three roughly corresponding to Kant's first critique, and the fourth pointing to Kant's second and third critiques. Appropriating Kant's first two syntheses of transcendental apperception, and radically perverting Deleuze's ontology and Artaud's body without organs, the ego-flesh is defined as a foundational multiplicity stretched between sensational poles. Each multiplicity is double, being both a perceived quality and a

perceiving state of the ego-flesh. Each new sensation is initially encountered as a real otherness since it is not encapsulated in a transcendent form of consciousness. However, these multiplicities self-organize along axes of convergence. Here Rogozinski advances the problematic assumption that the world's primordial chaos becomes consistent because of an inherent tendency for sensations to converge on their objects–subjects, 'proof' of which is the self-evident fact that there is something rather than nothing.

The carnal syntheses found spatio-temporal syntheses. Time's own continuity of multiplicity serves as a parallel to the One ego-flesh's originary multiplicity, allowing the ego-flesh to synthesize its initially independent multiplicities into a functional unity on the basis of this objectively given parallel. It is however *because* the ego-flesh is a functional unity that its multiplicities become synthesized, and time only serves to reflect this process. As for space, the ego-flesh's 'auto-hetero-giveness' provides its own self-placement and displacement, thus allowing for spatiality. Auto-hetero-giveness thus founds the truth of the subject–object. But this truth requires a non- or counter-truth – the 'remainder'. For Rogozinski, drawing on his earlier work on Derrida, self-touching is impossible. This is not because of the impossibility of simultaneity, as Merleau-Ponty had believed, since we have seen that the carnal syntheses ground space–time, but because of the auto-hetero-giveness of the ego-flesh. Each sensation, already dual, must split into an identification supplanting the sensation's originary alterity, and a disidentification or remainder preserving the sensation's originary otherness. Thus in the first, 'horizontal' synthesis the set of all identifications 'incarnates' a unified ego-flesh, while in the second, 'transversal' synthesis the set of all remainders 'incorporates' itself into the *Thing*, a phantasmatic Other which lines what is now the ego-flesh's body with an unconscious or superego, in accordance with Freud's *The Ego and the Id*. While this Other saves us from ourselves, from the anxiety-provoking *aphanisis* of carnal homogeneity, by alienating us in a body, it is also the root of all evil, at both the psychological and societal level: hatred and maddening love. It is because of our own immanently and solipsistically generated Other that we are split subjects, and all our relations to real others, at first our parents and then society, are prefigured by our relation to our own body. This 'chiasmic' relation of love and hatred, or the third synthesis, knots the ego-flesh to the body's spectral layer.

However, Rogozinski considers there to be a fourth carnal synthesis, in which the ego must unknot and

reknot itself together in a way that unties its own counter-truth, allowing it to recombine with it in a more positive way. Superficially reminiscent of the late Kant as well as the late Lacan, whose concept of the *sinthome* allows the non-triggered psychotic to knot herself to her own master signifier, but far more optimistic than Lacan ever was regarding the end of analysis, the fourth synthesis claims to lead the way to our deliverance. What Rogozinski designates with the term 'instasy' is this moment of self-realization which is founded on a Kantian ethics of respect, wherein a distance is opened up and maintained between the self and the Other as a defence against the destructive collapsing of difference brought about by love, which Rogozinski believes is grounded in hatred. Building on his Kantian *Le Don de la loi* (1999), Rogozinski claims we need a *synthesis* of respect and love in order to unwrap and reassemble our unconscious. So, just as the self is divided between the ego-flesh and the remainder, the Other is itself divided between the remainder and real Others. Instasy is about not only realizing that we ourselves are divided but that so is the Other, and Rogozinski argues that we need to establish new relations to ourselves and to others on this basis.

It goes without saying that Rogozinski's project is highly innovative and daring, and impressively comprehensive. Unfortunately, despite its elegant logic, or indeed because of its swift neatness, the core theory of the carnal syntheses strikes the reader as rather *too* convincing and perhaps even simplistic, and certainly lacking in experimental data. One finds a sizeable number of references throughout the text taken from a large range of disciplines, but the nature of Rogozinski's project seems to require something like the quantities of data drawn on by Freud and Merleau-Ponty to develop their own carnal syntheses, whom Rogozinski cannot avoid directly competing with since he contests them. Rogozinski accepts that there would be nothing to prevent us calling his theories idealistic if they did not help shed light on such practical mysteries as love and hatred. But this is clearly not enough since the theories develop precise hypotheses about unconscious mechanisms and genetic processes which far surpass our ability to verify them through reflection.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most pertinent criticisms of egoanalysis comes from within psychoanalysis, and relates to the way the phantasm processes exogenous causes. While the phantasm usually schematizes the stimuli the psychic apparatus receives, acting as a transcendental screen, in cases such as child abuse external causes will surpass the phantasm's ability to

prefigure and mollify violence, irrevocably altering the incipient ego's ontogenesis. Rogozinski would retort that child abuse is the result of the Other's ambiguous relation to its own body, but it nonetheless has real effects on the abused subject. Timing is crucial when we are dealing with ontogenesis, which founds Rogozinski's theory, and the real imbalance of power one finds in early infancy can always break through the ego's solipsistic shell. If we extend these consequences into the realm of politics we see that the real Other is a more significant threat to the self than either the Other or the self's own hatred of its body. It is thus dangerous to ignore intersubjectivity. Nonetheless, we can hope that Rogozinski's *Introduction* will be followed by further work that can respond to egoanalysis's critics.

Guillaume Collett

Le crunch

Paul Virilio, *The Futurism of the Instant: Stop-Eject*, trans. Julie Rose, Polity Press, Cambridge and Malden MA, 2011. ix + 109 pp., £18.50 pb., 978 0 7546 4863 7.

Against the current of consensus that would identify ours as the 'century of the city' with, it has been predicted, around 70 per cent of the global population inhabiting urban areas by 2050, Paul Virilio, in his *The Futurism of the Instant*, declares that we are at the commencement of a 'post-urban revolution that will drive the twenty-first century'. This revolution he describes as 'portable', a '*révolution de l'emport*'. Rather than directly contesting the evidence for urban growth, his concern, it appears, is to argue that the mass mobilizations of contemporary humanity – the conditions and experiences of migration, exile and displacement – constitute an epochal event 'unmooring' us from the *experience* of the urban as a stable locus of inhabitation.

Citing a report published in 2007 by Christian Aid, in support of this thesis, Virilio opens *The Futurism of the Instant* with a series of ominous statistics:

the number of future environmental migrants is estimated at close to one billion. This document makes the claim that 645 million people will be displaced from their homes over the next forty years because of large-scale development projects like intensive mining activity or the building of hydroelectric dams. Of these, 250 million will be displaced by phenomena related to climate change, floods and submersion of coastal land and, ultimately, at least 50 million people will be displaced by conflicts pro-

duced by such catastrophic upheavals entailing the demographic resettlement of the planet.

As further evidence of this *révolution de l'emport*, Virilio reports proposals to accommodate an influx of Polish labourers to Western Europe within the harbour containers of Rotterdam, the global rise of capsule hotels for business travellers, and the massive mobilization of China's once rurally settled population. Tourists, workers, exiles and migrants alike, he argues, 'have come adrift from their moorings in urbanity, as they did once, not so long ago, from their customary moorings in rurality'.

Whilst he pauses, briefly, to suggest certain causes for this historical turn – 'just in time' production methods and corporate 'outsourcing', for instance – and to identify some of its consequences – the growing prevalence of the 'camp' as a paradigm of precarious accommodation – Virilio's direct concern is not to analyse such phenomena in depth, but rather to read from them the omens of a truly terrifying future. Extrapolating from these and other 'signs' Virilio predicts not the 'End of History', but the 'end of geography and its continuum'. Central to this prediction are his claims that 'certain astrophysicists' are engaged 'in a desperate bid to discover, somewhere in the universe, a Super Earth, capable, in its gigantic dimensions, of providing a positive answer to Mother Earth's negative ecological footprint due to the damage done by progress, our tiny telluric planet finally proving insalubrious and unfit for life'. It is never made clear how seriously we are to take such proposals, attributed only to unnamed 'mad scientists', yet they serve Virilio to mark the end point of an 'accelerating reality'; a 'prospective dromosphere that will be able to do away with expanse, tomorrow, in the very latest of historic globalizations'.

Virilio participates here, as throughout so much of his writing, in a long-standing discourse directed against modernity and concerned with the effects of what David Harvey termed a condition of 'space-time compression' wrought by advances in transportation and communication technologies. In a much quoted passage on this theme, Heinrich Heine, prompted by the opening of the Paris–Rouen railway line, observed in his 'Tremendous Foreboding' of 1854:

What changes must now occur, in our way of looking at things. Even the elementary concepts of space and time have begun to vacillate. Space is killed by the railways, and we are left with time alone. Now you can travel to Orléans in four and a half hours, and it takes no longer to get to Rouen. Just imagine what will happen when the lines to

Belgium and Germany are completed! I feel as if the mountains and forests of all countries were advancing on Paris. Even now, I can smell the German linden trees; the North Sea's breakers are rolling against my door.

Over a century and half later, Virilio's own variant of this lament departs little from its standard and well-established refrains. Indeed, he is remarkably unabashed about articulating these in their most conservative forms. Macroeconomic systems and 'interactive globalization', he writes, are 'destroying the domiciliary inertia, the "staying put", that we have known throughout History'. 'Progress', he adds, 'destroys, one by one, the statics of common places, along with the stability of social bonds.' Further on still he claims 'the sedentary' as humanity's 'primordial priority', soon, and regrettably, to be overturned by a generalized nomadism; a statement whose contrived opposition between a humanity constructed as *transhistorically* sedentary and its *uniquely* modern condition of mobility remarkably obfuscates the long-term history of patterns of human migration and settlement, particularly over the kind of expansive time-frames that Virilio is engaged with elsewhere in this book.

The phenomena Virilio takes as omens of an impending rupture in human history are themselves, at times, strangely anachronistic. The skyscraper, for example, an established feature of metropolitan life since the early years of the twentieth century, appears

to register with the author as a 'shock of the new' whose vertical axis, in which 'the high dominates the low', suggests a further displacement, an 'ungrounding', from what are supposed to be our essential conditions of habitation. Other phenomena, such as the capacity technology affords to certain powers to track and record our every movement through an interactive and networked space, are more contemporary, yet the point, to anyone familiar with Deleuze's notion of a 'society of control', is hardly new and the analysis, compared to that of, say, the Italian post-autonomists, superficial.

Though Lev Manovich, in the book's back cover blurb, refers to Virilio as the 'one true intellectual descendant' of Walter Benjamin, and Virilio himself approvingly quotes Adorno, twice, on the evils of the automobile, his mode of analysis has, in fact, little in common with the dialectical and critical methods developed by such figures in their own engagement with late capitalist modernity, or indeed with what these drew from Marx, and others, in order to do so. Where Benjamin could identify, within the new photographic and cinematographic conditions of image reproduction of the twentieth century, the possibility of new modes of perception through which the subject might master the shock conditions of metropolitan life, Virilio sees in twenty-first-century interactive media only an irretrievable loss of 'natural' perception:



With habituation to multiple screens, the focus of the visual field diverts us from peripheral vision, from the open field that gave its everyday fullness to the real space of the verges of our activities and, as a result, causes disorientation in being-there.

Similarly, Marx sought to understand dialectically the longer-term revolutionary potentials of the urban proletariat that capital had produced, and mobilized, in its own immediate interests, whilst acknowledging, at length, the brutal fashion in which this had been accomplished. Where Virilio addresses the mobilization of the rural peasantry in contemporary post-reform China, by contrast, he can only offer a lament for the 'massive flows of people who will soon be set adrift from their social moorings as well as their specifically territorial ties'. Yet, however traumatic these mobilizations may be, they have surely to be understood in relation to the conditions they overturn in a clear and unromanticized fashion. As urban historian David Graham Shane has recently argued in this context, for example, 'Beijing, with a population of two million, was the largest city in the world for many centuries. The result was that by 1953 it ruled a population of 580 million people, with 480 million agricultural serfs, many living in abject poverty cultivating the river valleys.' Such migrant populations, in other words, might equally well be described as 'released from', rather than 'set adrift from', such 'social moorings'.

The conditions of mass mobility, exile and displacement with which Virilio engages, together with their environmental, social and political implications, are surely urgent concerns. Yet the lens through which such concerns are addressed in *The Futurism of the Instant* are encapsulated in such extraordinarily dispiriting passages as this from the closing sections of the book:

We note, then, one more time: since planet Earth has, it would seem, become too small for Progress, and, in a word, insalubrious, we are so pressed on all sides that we not only no longer have time to feel fear, we don't even have a future for our plans.... All that then remains is space, all the tragic-comic space of an expanding universe accelerating towards the Big Crunch, the end of time as well as of cosmological history!

Such an apocalyptic tone tends only to reinforce a politics of despair where our role is reduced, in Virilio's own words, to 'looking on, powerless'.

Douglas Spencer

If it keeps on raining

Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun*, Penguin, London, 2011, 368 pp., £8.99 pb., 978 0 14104 681 5 pb.

Writers influenced by science studies argue that we live after nature, that a city is best understood as a socio-technical assemblage and that the world deserves a new epistemology. The important political point hidden in these academic formulations can also be made in a more approachable way, for example by showing how natural disasters are human disasters. This is one way of reading this book – originally published in hardback in 2009 by the American magazine *MacSweeney's* – about New Orleans resident Abdulrahman Zeitoun's ordeal after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The flooded landscape that Dave Eggers conjures up is apocalyptic not just because the water quickly becomes filthy and oil-specked, or even because it engulfs and paralyses an entire American city with all its complex technologies and cultural monuments. The ghastliest destruction here is social.

In 2005 it had already become apparent that far more worrying than the damage and disorder in the flooded city was the misjudged and highly prejudicial response by the authorities to the hurricane. But if the human-scale tragedy that this book brings so vividly to life was always there, albeit submerged in mainstream media accounts, as always the news soon drifted on to other stories, leaving most Europeans unaware of the extent to which catastrophe in New Orleans was shaped by the War on Terror. The other reading of the book, then, is as an indictment of America's xenophobic government policy.

Eggers's book has been highly praised but it has also been criticized, notably for being too syrupy, too willing to give America the heroes it apparently so desperately wants. Yet apart from Eggers's fluent writing and his capacity for turning a tragedy into an uplifting story, the paperback reissue of *Zeitoun* is timely. The injustices and policy mistakes that Katrina brought into focus still need to be aired and analysed, and not only in the USA. Furthermore, in the spring of 2011 one reads the book in a new context. Tsunamis and earthquakes have drawn our attention more generally to the vulnerability of large cities, and to disasters we still call natural although their devastation is shaped more by cultural and economic factors. As eccentric as it may be, New Orleans and its experience of Hurricane Katrina should thus be considered typical of contemporary circumstances, perhaps even an indicator

of things to come in coastal areas everywhere. With global urbanization rates continuing to climb, and most of the new construction taking place along coastlines, the management of large coastal cities has become an urgent problem, not least for their poorest residents who are most vulnerable to the environmental risks. Anyone paying attention knows that the problems are real and that they will have frightening consequences. For the rest of us, rapid urbanization, like the misery that goes with it, is just another one of those wicked but distant problems that are best left to international agencies and heroic philanthropists to deal with. To misquote a well-known American politician, disasters happen. But if one did want to write an approachable account of the problems created by coastal urbanization in an age of growing inequality and intensifying climate change, a great way to do it would be through the story of an extraordinary person living in a remarkable city. Even better if that city were already well known for its cultural achievements before it became identified with natural disaster. *Zeitoun* is crafted from just such ingredients.

The book is about the nightmare that begins several days into Syrian-born Zeitoun's stay in the drowned city, when he is unexpectedly imprisoned and then held for weeks in a detention centre that looks uncannily familiar to its inmates, immediately reminding them of the pictures they have seen of Guantánamo Bay. In and around the camp those sent by the authorities to New Orleans to help and to protect in fact harm, physically and psychologically, acting out a paranoia fuelled by foreign policy. These gruesome experiences were first recounted in a compilation published by the non-profit publishing house Voice of Witness, founded by Dave Eggers and Lola Vollen. Seeing the power of Zeitoun's story, Eggers expanded it into a full-blown book of narrative non-fiction, the proceeds of which go to the Zeitoun Foundation, 'dedicated to rebuilding New Orleans and fostering interfaith understanding'. Yet what could easily have become an evangelizing or judgemental work, or even a commentary on Islam, is a measured but vivid story of an exceptional and good man in a confused and distressing situation.

When they came in August 2005, the news of a hurricane and the call to evacuate were nothing new for residents of New Orleans. A successful painting contractor, building manager and entrepreneur, Zeitoun wanted to remain in the city to keep an eye on his business. As usual his wife, the children and the dog joined the queues of cars heading to safer ground. Staying behind, Zeitoun experienced the eerie rise of the waters, saved what he could from the ground floor

of his home, moved upstairs and spent several days paddling around the city in an old canoe that he had bought but barely used until then. His first trips took him to his properties but gradually he found himself using his canoe to help people and animals in distress. After a few days he also realized that whatever else was going on and whatever new and old acquaintances did to support each other through the difficulties, an individual in uniform promised no guarantee of help. After a week in the devastated city, he considered leaving after all. Then suddenly, together with three other men, Zeitoun was arrested and taken to what became known as Camp Greyhound, a product of official paranoia where the administration's speculations on 'possible terrorist exploitation of a high category hurricane', as official documents put it, were made concrete. It was a bus station speedily transformed with harrowing efficiency into an inhumane and spiteful detention centre where inmates were degraded, tortured and threatened with further violence while kept in open-air cages.

The book also dwells on Zeitoun's wife Kathy, who had converted to Islam after a failed early marriage and unhappy experiences of evangelical Christianity. Dwelling on Kathy's experience shows how the everyday is as important as the unexpected. In addition it makes for a gripping page-turner as one identifies with the mother who has managed to get herself and her frightened children to safety but who struggles once the phone calls from her husband cease to come.

In yet another sense the book is also the account of the Zeitouns' adventures in globalization, complete with amusing and not-so-amusing cultural misunderstandings. What makes these details even more compelling is the backstory about Zeitoun's flourishing family and his childhood in the Syrian coastal town of Jableh that is intertwined with the day-by-day account of Katrina. These passages will irritate some readers but make it easier to understand Zeitoun's courage, determination and faith. It also helps alleviate the feeling that the suspiciously all-too-perfect American hero is more the product of eloquent and passionate writing than of real life. Parts of the text are a little cloying despite this, but readers who persevere will be rewarded with a well-researched and shocking story.

Eggers is further to be congratulated on creating what is ultimately a calm account carried along by its own dynamic. What reflections there are on the state of the American polity, on the evaporation of justice, on the callousness of frightened and greedy individuals come out of the story and are deftly woven into the narrative. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina,

particularly its exposure of how racial and economic status shapes life and liberty, was a shameful episode in American history. But if the lines of solidarity and mutual recognition were drawn in frighteningly racialized as well as self-defeating ways there, one could hardly imagine they would be drawn in any more enlightened ways in today's Europe. Perhaps natural disasters *are* increasingly recognized as human disasters. Insights have been gleaned from the shortcomings witnessed in New Orleans and comparisons made with Japan in the wake of the earthquakes there. However, wherever pressures towards rampant urban growth accompany the tendency to marry justice to ethnically imagined solidarities, ordeals like Zeitoun's, and the traces of trauma like those it has left on his wife, will continue to happen. These tendencies are strong in contemporary Europe. It would be wonderful if a talented writer could work out a way of telling the story that connects today's European parochialisms to transnational migration and global environmental change in as fluent a way as Eggers tells Zeitoun's important tale.

Eeva Berglund

Valuable tools

Turbulence, What Would It Mean to Win? PM Press, Portland OR, 2010. 160 pp., £10.99 pb., 978 1 60486 110 5.

Team Colors, *Uses of a Whirlwind: Movement, Movements, and Contemporary Radical Currents in the United States*, AK Press, Oakland CA and Edinburgh, 2010. 420 pp., £16.00 pb., 978 1 84935 016 7.

The notion of 'inquiry' as a critical practice has its origins in Operaist or more broadly autonomist thought. In arguing that, as opposed to any assumption of a 'timeless' notion of working-class identity, a grasp of the composition of working-class movements was crucial, and that bourgeois sociology should not have a monopoly in this area, both Operaists and French and American council communists published examinations of workers' conditions, such as Daniel Mothe's diary of a French autoworker in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* or the Johnson-Forrest Tendency's *American Worker*. More recently, the notion has become popular among Western scholars, artists and activists engaged with social movements in a rather broader sense, though it has often remained more of a proposition than a developed methodology or practice, something suggested

by the proliferation of initial terms around militant inquiry, militant investigation, militant research and so on; as well as by various attempts to extend this inquiry not only to particular working conditions but also, for example, to the role of affect, or even sound, in the composition of movements (see, for instance, the work of Ultra Red or the Carrot Workers Collective). Reclaim the Streets and other groups immediately prior to the current conjuncture produced a number of *Reflections on...* texts inviting and collecting critiques and evaluations of particular actions, but in the present there have been fewer examples of these broadly autonomist ideas being marshalled directly as part of the self-critique and strategy of movements.

In the UK the Free Association have been a notable exception, with five issues of the irregular publication *Turbulence: Ideas for Movement*, first distributed for free during the mobilization against the G8 in 2007 in Heiligendamm, Germany, and more recently among the UK's Climate Camp mobilizations. The journal builds a kind of accessible toolkit of post-structuralist materialism which uses broad metaphors (Summits and Plateaus, What Would it Mean to Win?) to open up timely, grounded and practical examinations of the ideas and practices of particular movements. Many of these articles have been collected together in the excellent *What Would It Mean to Win?*, published by PM Press. (Recently, something similar was attempted by a different group, in the midst of the UK Student Protests, in two issues of a journal simply titled *The Paper*.) *Turbulence's* book springs from a particular moment of crisis, critically examining the state of the anti-globalization movement when it seemed to be waning, becoming something else. As such it is far more than a document of the changing ideas, debates and practices of a movement; it offers valuable tools and provocations for the present moment.

In the USA, the collective Team Colors appear to be influenced not just by this current of inquiry, but by the particular example of *Turbulence*, who have a similar political background in autonomous social movements since the 1990s. Unsurprisingly, they thus attempt a similar publishing strategy, transposed into the context of social struggles in the USA, as the metaphorical extension of the book's subtitle, 'movement, movements...' suggests. Team Colors have produced a number of articles previously, as well as the pocket-book *Winds from Below: Radical Community Organizing to Make a Revolution Possible*, but rather than collecting a cumulative series of critical interventions penned by one group and distributed across the sites of particular mobilizations, their latest book functions

more as a conceptual overview of movements in the USA; a project both more and less ambitious. Less because it functions as only a single publication, but more because it attempts to use an edited collection of diverse writing to survey a vast area across four thematic sections: Organization Case Studies, Movement Strategies, Theoretical Analyses, and Interviews. The text takes to this difficult task admirably, and rather than Turbulence's broader and strategically focused conceptual accounts of movements, offers a fascinating comparative survey including older groups such as Roadblock Earth First! alongside the Starbucks Workers Union, Student/Farmworker Alliance, and Picture the Homeless. Perhaps this approach is also – and this is my own European supposition – because these autonomist tendencies are less widespread among



movements themselves in the USA, or because across the USA such movements are more diffuse in their focus and strategy, and the text functions partly as a conversation between these tendencies. In either case it is a substantial text that still manages to include valuable and timely critical reflections on current movement concerns internationally, such as in Daniel Tucker's account of the work of AREA Chicago on the particular relevance of urban contexts, 'Getting to Know Your City and the Social Movements That Call it Home', or Chris Carlsson's essay on the affects of ageing, tiredness and the life of movements, 'Radical Patience: Feeling Effective Over the Long Haul'.

Both texts, focusing on the current moment of European and American radical social movements, form not only an impressive and useful document of their changing debates, focus and constitution over the last few years, but more importantly – especially given the recent turn to anti-austerity movements on both continents – offer grounded and practical strategic provocations that consider what we've got, and where we go from here.

Gavin Grindon

Served cold

The Occupation Cookbook, or, the Model of the Occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, trans. Drago Markisa, Minor Compositions, London, New York and Port Watson, 2011. 80 pp., £8.00 pb., £ 978 1 57027 218 9.

'Imagine: in Moscow, a miracle happened. Lenin has risen. Anyone who dreams of a radical change, hurries to hear from Vladimir Ilyich the answer to an old, well known question: What is to be done?' So begins Boris Buden's Foreword to *The Occupation Cookbook*. Lenin answers 'I am hungry', and the radical dreamers serve him a meal from *The Occupation Cookbook*. Apparently satisfied, he settles back into his coffin. We might feel some relief that Lenin has returned to the dead, but making a meal to feed a dead man is hardly a ringing endorsement for a cookbook. What's more, the legacy of Lenin might well make the living suspicious of such recipes for political action, about all such prescriptions concerning what is to be done.

The occupation of Zagreb's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) in the spring of 2009 was an incredible achievement – the numbers of people involved, as well as its length, were impressive. Amongst other things, the occupiers managed to get 800 people to their first meeting, produced a daily newspaper, and continued to be politically active after the occupation was over. Even better, the occupiers rejected the politics of both Croatia's old socialism and its new representative democracy, cutting out all leaders and explicitly avoiding party control. As part of this effort to move towards different ways of organizing, *The Occupation Cookbook* was written by a number of individuals, and amended by the collective. Yet, disappointingly, despite the authors' stated aversion to party politics, *The Occupation Cookbook* itself reproduces the bureaucratic structures of political parties, providing us with page upon page of rules and guidelines. It hence misses the opportunity to tell us what the occupation was really like, to properly discuss its content, conflicts, context and limits, how the occupation changed and developed, and why it took the shape that it did. The authors do warn us that "'revolutionary" atmosphere does not occur spontaneously, it is created – usually by methods that, at first glance, may appear banal'. And, admittedly, recipe books are rarely a great read. Still, we might be happy to trawl through the banalities if there was even a suggestion of the revolutionary atmosphere that did or might result. There is none. Buden's Foreword

attempts to gloss this lack positively, congratulating it as a 'post-hysterical' piece, free from 'oedipal drama' and 'collective hormonal outburst.' But this preference for 'self-control' over 'radical negation' makes for dull reading. Some hint of hormonal outburst would be a welcome release.

Because its authors suggest we should follow their model, the skeletal structure they present risks suffocating other occupations before they've even got off the ground. For, like all cookery books, *The Occupation Cookbook* is based on the belief that what the authors made 'worked perfectly' and can be reproduced by everyone else. They forget that their occupation was not its rules and guidelines, but its content: the particular people and situations that made it happen. As easy as it would be to graft their rules onto another occupation, it would be impossible to recreate the recipe in its entirety: take one humanities faculty; add neoliberal education reforms, the recent memory of Eastern European socialism, parliament and media peddling of fees as part of the 'modernization' needed to join the EU, no serious student protests for decades, hundreds of students, staff and members of the general public; bring to the boil, and your occupation will spread to five weeks and over twenty faculties in eight cities. This is a record of what happened. But this does not mean that we can – or would even want to – do it the same way again.

Like a recipe book, *The Occupation Cookbook* is filled with bold unexplained instructions regarding what the reader should and shouldn't do. For instance, in a few sentences they dismiss thousands of ways that groups make decisions, by declaring that the only 'consistently democratic way of making decisions concerning the entire collective' is through a majority vote. They also insist that any occupation demand should 'have its basis in one of the basic human rights', and even argue that 'only goals that are based on the fight for equality have the potential for wider mobilization.' The final chapter – in which the wider political context is most extensively discussed – describes how in Croatia social rights are presented by the media and government as an irrational hangover from socialism, to be destroyed under the modernising influence of the EU. But even if the occupiers' defence of rights might be explained by these circumstances, the book does not attempt to question the language of rights, let alone consider why so many occupations decide to drop demands altogether.

At the same time, although they argue that humanities students are inclined to reflect critically on social processes, the authors seem to think that, once made by the collective, their own rules should be followed

without question. We are told that occupiers should take it in turns to play the role of 'security guard' in a constantly rotating division of labour. The rules around the guards could have been lifted from the law-books of any state: if you are a guard you have the right to physically prevent someone from doing something, and if you are not a guard you must obey the guards' instructions 'without complaining'. If someone ignores you when they are breaking the rules you are asked to 'report them to the nearest guard, who will act in accordance with the guards' duties'.

The occupation not only reflects state structures, but explicitly proclaims the laws of the state. 'All laws of the Republic of Croatia and the regulations of the FHSS that ban the consumption of illegal drugs and alcohol at the Faculty premises will be enforced without exceptions.' Property damage is banned. No one can use either physical or verbal violence against police, even when provoked. Perhaps the Zagreb occupiers had tactical reasons for obeying some of these laws, but *The Occupation Cookbook* makes no attempt to explain or reflect on these reasons, or to consider why it is that so many occupations across the world set out to break the law.

There is discussion of effective political actions outside of the occupation, including blocking a major road in Zagreb in support of protesting farmers, and working collaboratively with other occupied and striking workplaces. But they explicitly limit their other actions to influencing public perception either directly or through the media. These include getting cars to sound their horns, synchronising people across the city to symbolically stand in line, exhibitions and workshops in an arts festival, and something grandly called 'the ethical interpellation row', which means handing leaflets to professors as they enter council meetings. Although some might argue that an occupation is action enough, by representing these methods as examples to be followed by others, the authors risk limiting the expectations of future occupiers.

Either the book reflects the occupation's actual limitations or it fails to reflect the real substance of the occupation. I would like to think it was the latter. Either way, to be useful, *The Occupation Cookbook* should be read critically, and considered as a partial account of this particular occupation, one among thousands of accounts of very different occupations around the world and through history. But if you are thinking of going into occupation, be wary of a book that put Lenin to sleep. Maybe better to read something that makes you feel alive.

Clara Pope