

## Universalizing the *ayllu*

José Aricó, *Marx and Latin America*, trans. David Broder, Haymarket, Chicago, 2015. lii + 152 pp., £20.00 pb., 978 16 08 46411 1; Álvaro García Linera, *Plebeian Power: Collective Action and Indigenous, Working-Class and Popular Identities in Bolivia*, selection and introduction by Pablo Stefanoni, trans. Shana Yael Shubs et al., Haymarket, Chicago, 2015. 346 pp., £20.00 pb., 978 16 08 46409 8.

In 1858 the *New American Cyclopedia* published a little-known article by Karl Marx on Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), the ‘hero’ of Spanish-American independence. In Marx’s version, however, he is no hero. Marx represents him rather as an opportunist buffoon: Bolívar was a creole landowner who, having been seduced by the rituals of European courtly life (he was present at Napoleon’s coronation as Emperor), when not attempting to assume ‘dictatorial powers’ spends most of the long anticolonial military campaign either in retreat or, indeed, fleeing the Spanish imperial enemy. If it were not for European assistance (advisors, mercenaries), Marx implies, independence would not have happened: ‘like most of his countrymen, he was averse to prolonged exertion’, ‘the foreign troops, consisting mainly of Englishmen, decided the fate of New Granada’, ‘this campaign ... was nominally led by Bolívar and General Sucre, but the few successes of the corps were entirely owed to British officers’, Marx writes of Bolívar and the campaign. Rather than possessing the courage and virtue of a ‘nation-maker’, in other words, an image celebrated over the years by much of the anti-imperialist intelligentsia of Latin America and beyond, including the late Hugo Chávez (who famously had Bolívar’s body ceremoniously disinterred and reburied so as to discover whether he had been poisoned – he hadn’t – whilst simultaneously marking his own populist and ‘Bolívarist’ refoundation of Venezuela), in Marx’s portrait the ‘General’ – as García Márquez called Bolívar – emerges as incompetent in almost every way.

Marx’s article on Bolívar provides the occasion for José Aricó’s (1931–1991) important book *Marx and Latin America*, originally published in Spanish in 1980, and it is included in the volume as one of its appendices. From Aricó’s perspective, one might conclude that Marx’s article itself is what is in fact incompetent (it is); but, more importantly, in his view it constitutes a symptom of intellectual malaise – specifically, of a historical unease of Marxism with Latin American societies as such. For Marxism, according to Aricó,

the region was an ‘evaded reality’ to which it arrives only belatedly and, then, mistakenly.

Marx’s account of Bolívar is surprisingly conventional, remaining for the most part biographical in approach. It contains very little of the social and political content that might explain the process of independence Bolívar was involved in – especially, for example, the contending, decentralizing, forces seeking, via an assortment of local *caudillos*, to impose their own interests in the struggle against the Spanish Crown. This dispersal threatened to undermine the formation of an independent nation-state, or even (and this is a utopian image that still moves many on the Latin American Left today), a Latin American federated state, which Marx interpreted as merely a ruse of Bolívar’s to extend his ‘dictatorial powers’. According to Aricó, however, Marx’s interpretation suggests he knew very little about such anticolonial struggles, the ‘national questions’ associated with them (what we might now call the constitution of ‘a people’), as well as the complex social relations of production and the mix of labour regimes from which they emerged. And this in addition to the evident signs of historicist developmentalism in Marx’s text, from whose perspective the local population was clearly just not adequate to its historical task, for lack of cultural formation or political *Bildung*.

A common accusation levelled against Marx in this context – one made, for example, by Carlos Franco, who introduces the book – is that of *Eurocentrism*, which here indeed seems to ring true. Aricó, however, will insist on resisting such an interpretation, including in the long epilogue to the Mexican second edition of 1982 (of which this is the belated English-language translation) in which he responds to further criticisms of this type. According to Aricó, Marx’s article on Bolívar is a symptomatic exception; and the accusation of Eurocentrism both depoliticizes and dehistoricizes his article, as well as his work more generally, as it was developing at the time. It consists, he insists, in attributing to Marx’s work a kind of geographical ‘destiny’ that cannot account

for the shifts and developments in his critical endeavours. If Marx's anomalous article thus provides Aricó with the occasion for writing, it is the conceptual labour Marx was involved with at the time that is the real historical object of his essay. In Aricó's account, moreover, such critical labour is what also distances Marx from Marxism as it was codified by the Second and Third Internationals and theoretically contained by the 'stagnation' of orthodoxy (historicism) – as pointed out by Rosa Luxemburg in 'Stagnation and Progress of Marxism' (1927), a second occasion for his book, perhaps. In this sense, Aricó's essay paradoxically makes Marx's critical anomaly – his account of Bolívar – the exceptional symptom of historical Marxism's codified and institutionalized norm. Indeed, Aricó begins his essay saying that it constitutes the (necessary) beginning of a critical analysis of orthodox Marxism and the history of its relations to Latin America. It is crucial for a democratic socialist future in the region. What, then, is his account of Marx's text, which at one and the same time appears both theoretically exceptional (for Marx) and, though hardly read, historically normative (for Marxism), so far as its ignorance of the specificities of Latin American social relations is concerned?

In a series of brief, condensed chapters Aricó begins by setting out Marx's intellectual path from 1848 onwards: after the failure of the revolutions throughout Europe, Marx moves to London where his attention shifts to the critical analysis of capital in the context of the *world* market. This is not the moment of an epistemological break, in Althusser's 'scientific' sense, but a shift into the critique of political economy: as is well known, Marx will go on to produce a theory of capital accumulation centred on an account of value, commodity form, the valorization process and exploitation. In addition, however, he would also relativize the European experience of capitalism and, to a degree, begin to 'peripheralize' his vision of it, with important political consequences. If he and Engels had previously suggested that the future development of colonies depended on that of their imperial hegemony, now Marx was beginning to reverse the Hegelian motif of 'peoples without history' that at times still characterized his writing, to suggest, for example, that social emancipation in Britain depended on Irish national independence, now socialism's condition. As he deepened his critique of capitalism in the writing of *Capital*, Marx even began to deindustrialize his thought such that the experience of industrial capitalism was no longer – he insists in correspondence

with his Russian readers such as Vera Zasulich – to be conceived as the necessary historical condition for communism; and that, indeed, peasant communal forms of socialization might provide an alternative to it. In sum, according to Aricó, Marx's critical development suggests a path in which his deepening critique of capitalism as an international system entailed the 'provincializing' of the European experience as a developmentalist model. In other words, there was a clear *anti*-Eurocentric tendency – involving attention to specific historical experiences of capital – emerging in Marx's late work. This is the Marx lost to the orthodoxies of Marxism in Aricó's view.

However, what then explains the exceptional character of Marx's article on Bolívar? According to Aricó, it seems to be a question of Marx's (more or less permanent) embattled relation to Hegelianism and its inversion. Here Aricó's account becomes both conjunctural and philosophical. On the one hand, he suggests that Marx is bounced back into a kind of Hegelian developmentalism by Bonapartism, representing Bolívar thus in the cartoonish mirror of Bonaparte's farcical nephew. In this light, his article becomes a work of political parody; but here, in contrast to his complex account of the situation in France, without any analysis of the anticolonial nation-building specifics of Latin America. On the other hand, Marx also redeploys, now in a well-established anti-Hegelian fashion, his anti-statism, in which political subjects emerge, not due to the work of the state, but from the conflicts and contradictions driving civil society. From this perspective the state – and those who inhabit it, such as Bonaparte's nephew and Bolívar – becomes a kind of empty theatre, lacking in any real determining substance of its own. As Aricó points out, however, now putting on his Gramscian hat, in contexts of passive revolution like Latin America, in which the emerging ruling classes are weak (and fear 'the masses'), the apparatuses of the state (both repressive and ideological) become fundamental. Blinded by Bonapartism, however, Marx cannot see the relevance and importance here of political determination.

In sum, Aricó's essay on Marx (in the end he never extended his analysis into the history of orthodox Marxism) carries out two important tasks: first, it presents a Latin Americanist version of the by now more or less established critique of the lack of a theory of the political in Marx; second, it maps out the coordinates of a heterodox tradition of Latin American Marxism in the light of the late Marx's theoretical development. It is the latter that is taken

up by Álvaro García Linera, currently the vice president of Bolivia, in his *Plebeian Power: Collective Action and Indigenous, Working-Class and Popular Identities in Bolivia*, originally published in 2007.

José Aricó spent the late 1970s and early 1980s in exile in Mexico City, having fled Argentina after the military coup of 1976. There he joined many other exiles, from Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America. Many brought with them the experiences of failed armed struggle as well as a variety of heterodox Marxisms. Many also came to study there. One of these was a young García Linera, a budding mathematician. There is no doubt that he read *Marx and Latin America* whilst in Mexico. Returning to Bolivia, he too became involved in armed struggle and was briefly imprisoned. Whilst there he wrote what remains one of his key works with the somewhat old-fashioned title of *Value Form and Community Form: An Abstract-Theoretical Approach to the Civilizational Conditions Preceding the Universal 'Ayllu'* (1995) (*Forma valor y forma comunidad: aproximación teórica-abstracta a los fundamentos civilizatorios que preceden al Ayllu Universal*).

In the years that followed, García Linera produced further important works in Marxist economic and political analysis, which he has continued to do since becoming vice president. Many of these are available

in a fascinating public archive – the archive of the vice presidency – at the heart of the Bolivian state, providing it with a revolutionary, Marxist tone as well as a reflection and partial record of its recent history: democratic revolution turned into reform, contained and instrumentalized (this is crucial, I think) by the state, but which is also magnified and broadcast as if through a loudhailer. This is the sense, then, in which *Plebeian Power* can be described as one of García Linera's 'statesbooks'. It contains essays on the history of the labour movement in Bolivia (particularly, a moving account of the eventual political – and historical – defeat of the miners during the 1980s), as well as on the themes of re-proletarianization and politico-cultural democratization, native Indian politics, the 'community' and 'multitude forms', and an important essay, originally published in 1999, on the contemporary relevance of the *Communist Manifesto*. Rather than presenting these essays individually, I will attempt instead briefly to locate García Linera's work more generally in the Latin American heterodox Marxist tradition suggested by Aricó.

There are three component parts of García Linera's Marxism, all of which are mediated by the work of others in Bolivia such as René Zavaleta Mercado and a group of García Linera's contemporaries associated with the 'Comuna' group. The first is that of



the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, the region's most important Marxist thinker. Resisting Second International (that is, both social-democratic and emerging Stalinist) orthodoxy and developmentalism in the late 1920s, Mariátegui turned towards the communitarianism of the peasant communities (*ayllu*) – and did so before Marx's late investigations into the peasant communes of Russia as alternative non-capitalist foundations of communism became known – seeking to mediate and transform the inherited notion of the subject of social emancipation located in the industrial proletariat. This is, arguably, one of the founding gestures of Latin American Marxism. In doing so, his work became marked by a productive tension between a romantic *indigenismo* and a positivist historical stagism (or developmentalism) that, arguably, still marks the work of García Linera in its concern – evidenced in the subtitle of his *Value Form* book – for the eventual universalization of the community (*ayllu*) form in alliance with other possible subjects of emancipation more generally.

The second important ingredient of García Linera's thought is the work of Bolívar Echeverría, whose seminar on Marx's *Capital* he remembers attending, in the 'Introduction' to the 2009 edition of his above-mentioned 'prison notebook' *Value Form*. Fundamental here is the will to recover and extend not only the philosophical but also the political significance of Marx's concept of 'use-value'. In an important essay originally published in 1984, "Use-Value": Ontology and Semiotics' (translated in *RP* 188), Echeverría insists with regard to Marx's account of the 'valorization of value' (that is, of exploitation and accumulation through commodification) that, theoretically, the objects of everyday practical life conceived as 'use-values' – including labour power – *precede and determine* their contradictory form as commodities – values to be exchanged in the process of accumulation. It is this practical (he refers to it as 'natural') form of use-value and its *social reproduction* that Echeverría seeks to rescue from Marx's 'unilateral' account, so as to provide a political 'counter-balance' to the logics of accumulation at its very heart. This extended version of use-value is crucial both to García Linera's conception of the community and to his post-Negrian account of labour and the class struggle. In the footsteps of Echeverría, it provides for a moment of 'non-capital' within capital that it both needs and consumes, but which it cannot destroy.

The illumination and development of the socio-natural character of use-value as it 'resists' exchange value would concern Echeverría for the rest of his

life, and is the basis, for example, of his account of the *baroque* 'no' that both inhabits and resists the experience of subordination to the commodity form and emerging mercantile capitalism in colonial Latin America, the key to the subcontinent's supposed 'baroque ethos'. In this way, as 'natural form', Echeverría's expanded version of use-value takes on a culturalist dimension. One might thus suggest that in García Linera's writing, Echeverría's account of this broader social and cultural significance of use-value *mediates* Mariátegui's Indianization of the subject of social emancipation in the 'community form' (*ayllu*) – with a view to its future universalization/actualization. In other words, Echeverría's notion constitutes the socio-cultural ground of his overlapping versions of the 'value form' with the 'community form'.

The third component part of García Linera's Marxism contextualizes the other two vis-à-vis the history of capital in Latin America and beyond, giving his work a further original twist in the direction of Marx's critical development, as outlined by Aricó: the deployment of Marx's reflections on the subsumption of labour to capital, which he generalizes socially and culturally – out of Mariátegui and Echeverría – via the notions of use-value and the common (use-value always accompanies exchange-value as non-alienated social labour in its subsumed coexistence with the latter's appropriation and commodification). Marx's reflections are outlined in his famous draft text for Part 7 of Volume I of *Capital*, 'Results of the Immediate Process of Production', posthumously published as an appendix, where he differentiates between formal and real subsumption based largely on the commodification of the constitutive elements of the labour process such that 'the immediate process of production is always an indissoluble union of *labour process* and *valorization process*, just as the product is a whole comprised of *use-value* and *exchange value*.'

Apart from processes of post-mining re-proletarianization (including the deployment of new technologies) and urbanization – important here in many of García Linera's works from *Value Form* to *Plebeian Power* and beyond – is his analysis of the *effects* of the formal subsumption of Indian communities (*ayllu*) to capital and the mercantilization of their production such that communal labour is broken up and subordinated to forms of family-based production for the market (a local form, perhaps, of the differentiation of the peasantry). And in so far as real subsumption is modelled by Marx on an industrialized wage economy derived mainly from Britain, such conditions, including those of the urbanized working

classes in Bolivia, suggest subordination of other kinds of labour regimes, some of which, nevertheless, remain – in their apparent communality – relatively autonomous qua use values or ‘natural’ forms. In many ways, these logics of capitalist subsumption – ‘permanent primitive accumulation’, writes García Linera more recently in his ‘9 Theses on Capitalism’ – constitute the basis of his mapping of the geography of Bolivia (its particular spatio-temporal fixes, to speak in David Harvey’s terms), as they emerge from its various overlapping ‘trajectories of accumulation’ (Jairus Banaji), across the Andean highlands and the Amazonian lowlands:

In different parts of the world ... agrarian and Indian struggles are emerging that seek to resist the capitalist exploitation of the traditional organization of their ways of life, placing their nations in a situation in which to preserve their community structures they must struggle for an expanded and universalizing communitarianism, transforming them into a productive force of production of the universal community, of socialism and communism. (‘9 Theses’)

The problem for García Linera has been that the actual conditions of such a universalization of the

*ayllu*, in alliance with other forms of working classes, do not, he suggests, exist. Hence his more recent insistence on the struggle for hegemony and the occupation of the state. In such a context, moreover, perhaps the much commented-upon ethnic (and racialized?) remapping of the political in Bolivia since 2005, when he came to power as part of the government of Evo Morales, might respond in part at least to the revolutionary reformist state’s attempt to defend and *restore* the communal community (*ayllu*) – against the logics of subsumption – through a re-functioning of culture and democracy and the recent juridico-political (constitutional) creation of a new citizen, the ‘originary peasant indigenous’.

And, it is here, perhaps, that Mariátegui’s romantic-positivist tension reappears, via Echeverría, in the work of García Linera, and the state apparatus he now partially occupies: attempting to contain the ‘cunning of capital’ as it imposes its logics through its others (including the community forms he defends throughout *Plebeian Power*), risking the production of a reified social romance of use-value qua hegemonic politico-cultural resource.

John Kraniauskas

## Hypotheses on hope

Ana Cecilia Dinerstein, *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organizing Hope*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2015. 282 pp., £65.00 hb., 978 0 23027 208 8.

One of the pleasures of this book is its total disregard for the disciplinary boundaries that police contemporary academia. The range of learning on display – across philosophy, history, sociology and politics – is exemplary on many levels. Dinerstein navigates with ease through Marx’s critique of political economy, Ernst Bloch’s principle of hope, and the theory and praxis of autonomist Latin American Marxism, accumulating insights and provocations along the way. It is also immediately refreshing in another register. In viewing the contemporary Latin American Left from the bottom up, unapologetically, and, in the main, unromantically, Dinerstein offers an antidote to the state fetishism of so many other accounts. Dinerstein’s analysis begins with popular movements, and takes as foundational points of departure the principles of self-organization and self-emancipation of the oppressed.

The book demands a shift in orientation, then, away from the predominant optic of variations between regime types and party forms – Lula contra Chávez – towards an examination of some of the most crucial Latin American struggles in the last two decades: the experience of neighbourhood assemblies, road blockades, factory seizures and workers’ co-operatives during the Argentine crisis of 2001–02; the vicissitudes of the Zapatista uprising and forms of autonomous self-governance since their explosive emergence from clandestinity in January 1994; the complexities of left-indigenous rearticulation in Bolivia between 2000 and 2005, as well as the contradictions of constituting a (capitalist) plurinational state in the period since Evo Morales assumed office in 2006; and, finally, the massive movement of landless rural labourers in Brazil (MST), before and during the period in which the Workers’ Party (PT)

has occupied the state apparatus, first under Lula and now under Rousseff.

These days one begins a book on autonomy or horizontalism in Latin America with a peculiar trepidation, and an abiding expectation that what lies ahead is rather too well trodden terrain. Dinerstein surprises here as well, offering genuinely novel arguments that adjust our horizons from 'autonomy and the state' to the prefigurative potential of social movements in a Blochian frame of hope: what she terms 'Marx's critique of political economy in the key of hope', or 'the prefigurative critique of political economy', which 'is itself a process of theoretical prefiguration that follows the movement of autonomous organizing, the forms of which depend on the movements' struggles'. Drawing deeply on the Open Marxism of John Holloway and Werner Bonefeld, the state theory of Simon Clarke, and the philosophical encounters with Latin American social movements advanced in recent years by the 'Puebla School' (Holloway again, but also Raquel Gutiérrez and Sergio Tischler), Dinerstein defines autonomy as '*the art of organizing hope ... [entailing] four simultaneous modes: negation, creation, contradiction and the production of excess*'. Negating refers to the confrontation of collective action with capitalist, patriarchal and colonial relations.

Creation captures the novel social practices and relations spawned within movements as they model Bloch's concrete utopias. Contradiction, meanwhile, is the constant dynamic in autonomous movements of navigating and resisting appropriation and translation of their practices and demands into the logic of the state, capital and the law. Autonomy signifies enduring a recurring tension between rebellion and institutionalization. Excess, finally, is the category which captures Bloch's notion of the *not yet*, here meaning the way in which movements make visible and anticipate heretofore unrealized elements of reality. Autonomy, in this sense, acts as a 'hypothesis of resistance that encompasses the delineation of new horizons beyond the given truth'. The excess of social movements amounts to their various modes of organizing hope – new collectivities, social relations, practices, dreams – in a fashion that is not easily manipulated and incorporated by forces on high.

Sophisticated interrogations of the state and capitalist social relations are also a core feature of *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America*. Autonomous struggle in contemporary Latin America is 'neither outside nor totally absorbed into the capitalist realm', according to Dinerstein. She argues that

Prefiguration is criss-crossed by the *tensions* and *contradictions* that inhabit capitalist/colonial social relations; for autonomous practices are embedded in, and shaped by, their past and contemporary backgrounds and context of production and therefore the autonomous struggle triggers struggles over the meanings of autonomy – for the state will be always ready to integrate and subordinate autonomy to the dynamics of the value production process.

The state, for Dinerstein, is a mediation of the capital relation, one which does not stand outside of, or external to, the autonomous subject. Money, the law and the state 'constitute our subjectivity, they are constitutive mediations'.

Any strategic sense of avoiding the state, therefore, is a political and theoretical cul-de-sac. Far from being a neutral instrument, the state cannot be wielded to meet this or that radical purpose; but it doesn't follow that the state can therefore be ignored. The idea is 'to *change the focus* from the state, the law, policy or the economy to autonomy', Dinerstein contends, '*without* disengaging with the former'. In this view, 'the political and organizational struggle to eliminate the distance between means and ends as a necessary dimension of prefiguration is mediated by the multiple form-processes that intervene in the maintenance and expansion of the social relation of capital.'

Once this is taken into account, prefiguration is necessarily about more than the rejection or negation of given realities and the creation of novel social relations and new realities. It also involves the more mundane facets of 'steering through the predicaments produced by capitalist, patriarchal and colonial social relations, and about navigating the challenges of the struggle over the meanings of autonomy'. These abstractions find more concrete expression in the urban and rural territorial features of contemporary social movements in the region – peasant land occupations, indigenous communities of resistance or popularly organized poor urban neighbourhoods. These, Dinerstein stresses, 'are not ... "liberated zones" but deeply embedded in the capitalist/colonial/patriarchal power relations. It is precisely because they are embedded that they can confront value with hope, thus producing radical change.'

One of the clearest examples of the antagonism between value and hope in the book appears in a passage in which Dinerstein is reflecting on the complexity of the landless struggle in Brazil:

Landlessness is hopelessness: a form of subjugation that deprives peasants from their means of

survival and/or incorporates them precariously into the labour market for the benefit of transnational conglomerates. The MST's settlements are translated into 'family farms' to suit market-led agrarian reform and agribusiness. But landlessness can also be the pursuit of land, for dignity, self-respect and food sovereignty. Continuing with the example, the prefigurative critique of political economy enables us to grasp the excess produced by the MST's struggle: while the landless – organized *politically* and autonomously in the MST – confront the government, the landowners, challenge the law and transnational agribusiness conglomerates, at the settlements, the MST's members experience an alternative practice and values that create the possibility for another agrarian reform (i.e., a concrete utopia that contests the [World Bank] led reforms that aim to transform settlements into family farms to suit Monsanto).

The MST militants, for Dinerstein, are here negating the inevitability of their landlessness, creating concrete utopias through direct action and settlement communities, entering into contradiction as they relate to the state, landowners, the law and capital, and producing excess through alternative practices and values.

In many of the areas highlighted above, this book constitutes one of the more sophisticated articulations of autonomist Marxism vis-à-vis social struggle in Latin America today. Nonetheless, it also stumbles empirically and theoretically at different points. For example, there is the issue of movement selection. The Zapatista movement and certain currents within the Argentine cooperative, neighbourhood assembly, and unemployed movements seem to fit easily within the theoretical category of autonomy. Indeed, these movements often embrace the term themselves. The Bolivian and Brazilian cases, however, are much less straightforward. If the Zapatistas have consistently proclaimed that the conquest of state power is not a part of their agenda, this can only be understood in its full significance when it is also noted that the strategic possibility of such conquest has not been on the cards in Mexico at any time since 1994. It is possible, then, to see the Zapatista formulation as, in many ways, merely making a virtue of necessity. The crisis of the Bolivian state between 2003 and 2005 – mass mobilizations capable of bringing the country to a standstill and overthrowing two presidents in under two years – is entirely incomparable. In Bolivia, the question of state power (variously conceived) was the order of the day for many of the core movements involved.

It was the issue of the conjuncture not because it corresponded to first principles of movement ideology, but because the strategic possibility of conquest forced itself onto the historical agenda. In Brazil, as Leandro Vergara-Camus points out in *Land and Freedom* (2014), the landless movement has been intimately entwined with the governing Workers' Party at various stages of the movement's history, and the rather orthodox democratic centralism practised by the movement's leadership is difficult to capture or to understand through Dinerstein's notion of autonomy. In short, the argument that 'Latin American movements ... seriously suspect the state, [that] they reject state power in principle', flattens out the region's much more complex concrete history over the last two decades, and is difficult to sustain empirically.

Similarly uneven is Dinerstein's treatment of indigenous struggle. On the one hand, the concept of *real subsumption by exclusion* to capture the particular way in which indigenous oppression has been integral to capitalist development and the reproduction of internal colonialism in the region is innovative and provocative in the best of senses. It is necessary to inquire, Dinerstein argues, 'about the ways in which *real subsumption* has transformed indigenous peoples' position in the global world of capital, particularly since the 1970s'. As she points out: 'Land grabbing and the commodification of indigenous lands have put indigenous demands and struggles at the centre of the struggle against capitalism.' 'For the Zapatistas and other indigenous movements,' Dinerstein suggests elsewhere in the book, 'identity is a form of political resistance against internal colonialism and it is experienced as a point of departure from where to destabilize dominant regulatory processes from the state that continue to oppress, render invisible or regulate indigenous cosmologies.' If the theoretical discussion of indigenous resistance is frequently sharp and compelling, Dinerstein's historicization of indigenous struggle is, however, at times misleading and distorting. These weaknesses are at their starkest in descriptions of Aymara indigenous movements in contemporary Bolivia.

'Aymara people', often treated in this text as if they were a homogeneous entity free of history and internal class stratification, are said to 'not regard the "future" ahead – as others do, but as memory in motion, which surely shaped their practices and insurgencies and the role of their ancestors in them'. When indigenous people defend memory, Dinerstein contends, this



constitutes their *present* form of resistance, a resistance that brings the 'past' into the future. Aymara people 'are' Aymara. They have not stopped being Aymara or will return to being Aymara in the future. Aymara is a form of being, not an external identity that can be changed or manipulated politically. Identity affirms what they are not allowed to be as a result of coloniality.

But Aymara identity is precisely characterized by political manipulation, for good or for ill, from below or from above, in actual history. 'The terms "Aymara" and "Quechua" derive from twentieth-century linguistic anthropology,' historians Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson note, 'rather than any historical self-attribution by native peoples; but positive self-identification has spread rapidly since the 1990s.' Elsewhere, in another too casual separation of indigenous peoples from concrete historical time and complex political contestation, they are said by Dinerstein to 'have been oppressed since time immemorial by colonial powers and capitalist democracies'. So ends the discussion, alleviating us from the duty of concrete analyses of concrete situations.

Finally, we arrive at the wider question of strategy, on which the book is least convincing. Dinerstein argues that 'prefiguration is the movement's strategy in Latin America and that such strategy is not consequentialist but necessitates' the conflation of 'means and ends'. Utopia for these movements 'cannot reside in the "future" which is expected to be better as a result of a consequentialist strategy that regards the progression of time as linear'. It is far-fetched to suggest that contemporary Latin American movements are not interested in consequentialist results. But even if they weren't, would that be something to celebrate? There is little room in Dinerstein's framework to assess strategic failures of social movements, or to learn from the past so as to avoid its fruitless repetition. This is perhaps most apparent in the discussion of the normalization of Argentine capitalism under centre-left Peronism following the subsiding of the explosive 2001–02 conjuncture.

'The fact that both crisis and social mobilization in Argentina in 2001 found, at the end of the road,' Dinerstein writes, 'a recomposition of the elites in power, and the integration of concrete utopia into the state agenda brought about, once again, the question of where the possibility of political change resides.' The argument is that the movements of that period 'cannot be judged from an abstract model of revolutionary – abstract – utopia. Nothing "went wrong"

with revolution in 2001 as many left activists' have suggested. 'The facts show', Dinerstein argues, 'that power has been recomposed in the hands of the Peronist centre-left, but this is not a good enough reason to object to utopia.' Surely these are false options. We needn't choose between measuring movements against an idealist, abstract, revolutionary model and uncritically celebrating social movements and their spontaneity. Why not ask, counterfactually, what might have been done differently in the 2001–02 conjuncture by social movements and the organized Left to achieve something better than the restoration of Peronism via Kirchner? Was another exit from the crisis impossible? If it is reasonable to conclude that the conjuncture of 2001–02 was relatively (not infinitely) open to distinct outcomes, it seems worthwhile to analyse the limits of social movement and left-wing strategy at the time given the actual historical outcome.

The realms of history and the 'politico-strategic', in other words, cannot so easily be discarded into the dustbin. The conquest of political power, concentrated still, in the first instance, at the level of the national state, continues to be a priority of revolutionary politics. Analytical recognition of the fact that the capitalist state is not a neutral instrument which can be wielded to advance socialist ends, or that individual states cannot escape the discipline of the law of value and the international money markets, does not lead logically to a strategic orientation of autonomy and the anti-political. Dinerstein, following Holloway and Bonefeld, too easily assumes that this is the case.

A more promising theoretical turn might be what Daniel Bensaïd calls 'strategic hypotheses' – not models from the past to be copied, nor 'instructions for use', but a hypothesis in the sense of a 'guide to action that starts from past experience but is open and can be modified in the light of new experience or unexpected circumstances'. In order to learn from the Latin American laboratory and to sustain a strategic horizon of power, we need more than hope, autonomy and prefiguration. We require rigorous (not idealist) assessments of past social movement successes and failures (partial and total). It is 'the only material at our disposal'. Autonomy and prefiguration, yes. But also transitional demands, united fronts, struggles for hegemony, wars of position, state power, and continental and international horizons of anti-capitalist struggle.

Jeffery R. Webber



# Are you now or have you ever been a bourgeois philosopher?

Michael Wayne, *Red Kant: Aesthetics, Marxism and the Third Critique*, Bloomsbury, London, 2014. 226 pp., £65.00 hb., 978 1 47251 134 8.

This book intends to proffer a Marxist or, more specifically, 'anti-bourgeois' reading of Kant's critical project and the third *Critique* in particular, and to draw out the political value of the aesthetic as a 'critical communicative act in a sensuous imaginative form'. 'Bourgeois' here generally describes that Kantian scholarship which is 'constitutionally incapable' of interrogating the historical and class-conditioned basis of Kant's project, and tends to read it as a static philosophical system, missing what Wayne perceives as a 'more unstable', dynamic and proto-materialist critical interrogation of subjectivity itself. This is an ambitious project indeed, and Wayne begins by making a series of further distinctions between his project and other 'Kantian-Marxist'

political-philosophical positions. These he subdivides into three areas – the dominant 'liberal bourgeois tradition' (in which he, perhaps oddly, includes such anti-bourgeois thinkers as Deleuze, Lyotard and Rancière, albeit as a radical subgroup within this tradition), a Kantian-Marxist tradition which fails to be sufficiently critical of the positivism and dualism in the first critique, and an 'orthodox' Marxist reading, which sees Kant as inherently contradiction-bound, and thus reinforces, even if it rejects, the 'bourgeois' interpretation of Kant that Wayne believes to be dominant to this day.

For Wayne, a more authentic anti-bourgeois understanding of Kant will emerge once we place aesthetic experience back at the heart of the critical

project, allowing us to reframe broader political issues of freedom, community, reification and the spectacle. This 'red Kant' will negate the dialectical need to turn idealism 'on its head' in Marx's famous formulation – certainly saving a lot of philosophical labour, and, for Wayne, allowing a thoroughgoing critique of the bourgeois conception of subjectivity based on Kant's writings alone. Wayne thus offers, for example, a productive account of how the Kantian aesthetic emerges out of a dynamic 'gulf' identified by Kant himself (with 'courageous honesty') between the technically practical and the morally practical, or Reason as determination and as (potential) freedom. Whilst previous ('bourgeois') Kantian scholars such as Paul Guyer have subsumed such contradictions under the identity of a unified transcendental subject, Wayne wants to re-emphasize how these gulfs or breaks are in fact symptoms of actual historical problems which Kant identifies in a proto-materialist manner. The



project as a whole is thus an attempt to philosophically critique a 'collapsed' modernity – where the majority of aesthetic experiences are subsumed under the 'functional ends' of commodity culture – by finding a critical conception of the aesthetic which escapes bourgeois utilitarianism or commodification. Chapter 3 ('The Aesthetic, the Beautiful and Praxis'), for example, stresses the importance of the *noumena* as a non-sensible idea of freedom and the role this plays in the methodological development of the critical project. Wayne builds upon this to provide compelling re-evaluations of the sublime, labour and metaphor – all read via the aesthetic – while juggling and briefly critiquing numerous Marxist and post-Marxist philosophies along the way (Lukács, Kracauer, Benjamin, Althusser). Given the breadth and volume of the post-Kantian philosophical history he wants to cover, Wayne's accounts are inevitably brief and, sometimes frustratingly, end up begging more questions than they answer. However, as high-level overviews they largely work well.

It is worth reflecting on the title of the book itself. Although Wayne acknowledges Robert Kaufman as the first to name and seriously delineate a 'red Kant', one senses a certain playfulness in the choice of title. The term 'red' as a political appellation of course has strong historical (and perhaps even quaint) connotations – a 'mid-century modern' example of political shorthand, which here signals the ironic juxtaposition of Kant's name (and all the innate conservatism that popularly connotes) with radical politics. It is a neat way to signal the intent of this book, as a counter-intuitive attempt to read Kant as a secret 'red' all along. Perhaps one is being led to expect a sort of McCarthy witch trial in reverse: a public grilling of those who ever professed to be Kantian Marxists with 'are you now or have you ever been a bourgeois philosopher?' But this of course begs a further question: as with McCarthy and his victims, is Wayne trying too hard to find 'redness' in Kant? Is the political description more projection than reality?

Despite the ironies of the title, the method revealed here is a not uncommon strategy in philosophical rereadings – if it is possible to retrieve something truly 'red' in Kant it will help us understand and even undo the wrong turn of subsequent political philosophy and create a new interpretation of Kant, different even to the previous 'red' readings which Wayne goes to such lengths to compartmentalize. Perhaps all philosophical 'returns' have this in common – something got lost, got misinterpreted, and it is this author's job to lead us back to the source

and take a different turn, find the right path. Kant already underwent a series of such 'returns' in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, for example with the 'left' and 'right' neo-Kantianism of Hermann Cohen or Ernst Cassirer, where what was at stake was what had been occluded by the narrow systematicity of the Kantian inheritance itself, or the possible grounding of experience and the value of historical knowledge.

But symptomatic of many such philosophical 'returns' (and this was the criticism of neo-Kantianism itself) is their frequent inability or unwillingness to address the specific conditions of the contemporary, or to confront the latent anachronism of, for example, addressing current political problems from an eighteenth-century philosophical point of view. The failure of neo-Kantianism – whether diagnosed by Heidegger, Husserl or Benjamin – was on the broadest level its inability to successfully identify and confront philosophical issues unique to their 'now', however they may be conceived. This is a problem that repeats itself within aesthetic theories that attempt to revive Kant: how relevant is Kant's own understanding of aesthetic experience to artistic or cultural experience in the contemporary world? How much can this enlightenment thinker – even if widely recognized for first articulating the core issues of a burgeoning modernity – tell us anything about art and aesthetic experience after modernity?

Despite the compelling account of an 'anti-bourgeois' Kant, ultimately variations of these two problems manifest themselves again in Wayne's project. First, there is the looming and largely unexplored question of what value this 'red Kant' has in terms of a contemporary philosophy of politics and/or the specific demands of our current political situation (framed either in general terms as 'late' or 'post' modernism; that is, as something radically different to the proto-modernity which Kant addressed, or in the more specific terms of a fully defined contemporary political situation). The contemporary here is defined only in vague, mournful terms ('the twilight of reason') or in more general Marxist terms (capitalism's violation of our species-being) whose contemporary relevance is not evaluated at length. Only briefly does Wayne signal a view of contemporary politics as 'the rise of cognitive capitalism, the culture industries, the rise of intellectual and symbolic labour and so forth...' Second – and perhaps more worryingly given the central role played within this political philosophy by aesthetic experience – there is little truly critical reflection on the conception of aesthetic

experience in the *Third Critique* or how this might need reworking in light of the subsequent historical development of art, art practices and aesthetic experiences since the 1790s. Perhaps this is an impossible task for a single book, but it is a consideration which is conspicuously absent once ‘modern’ art examples begin to play a role in the project.

So how is ‘art’ conceived here? Works of aesthetics or art theory are often judged, rightly or wrongly, on the art that appears within them, both what works are chosen (crudely, the quality and quantity of examples) and how art itself operates in relation to the philosophical method. In terms of quantity, the two extremes of course are Kant and Hegel – the *Third Critique* famously described no actual artwork in any detail (though a palace, a dinner party, Voltaire and a native American make passing appearances) whilst Hegel’s mammoth *Aesthetics* overflows with the tangible manifestations of *Geist* through the ages, piling up, analysing and classifying its objects just like the national museums which were being constructed at the same time. For many post-Kantian philosophical positions, the relationship between writing and aesthetic production is so intimate that they need in fact to be adequate to each other and not mere ‘illustration’. Hegel of course also conceives of the relationship between art and philosophy very differently – as self-reflection before philosophy, *Geist* taking material form on the way to fuller self-realization in philosophy. This introduces another key issue around the aesthetic and its role in modernity about which Wayne remains silent – despite his reckonings with Hegel, Adorno and Heidegger – namely the problem of the end of art as it has been variously conceived both in philosophy and in the avant-garde itself.

The first artwork makes an appearance just over a third of the way through the book, and, as with the title, one might feel that Wayne is deliberately going against expectation by picking an artwork which is non-canonical and perhaps even, for many, *artless*: the 1999 film version of *The Mummy*. Nearly all the examples after this are films. But, oddly, there is no consideration or rationale offered for the examples chosen, nor for the implicit insistence on these cinematic examples as the best exemplars of anti-bourgeois aesthetic practice. Even Kant’s model of consciousness gets refracted, anachronistically, through film (Wayne feels that it ‘is not unlike Hollywood continuity editing, where we move from long shot to medium shot while retaining in our minds the wider context’). Yet this project does not at any

point describe itself as a work of film theory. In fact, we soon come to realize that not only are nearly all the examples discussed films, but they are picked from a rather narrow spectrum that never travels very far from mainstream cinema (Disney, Danny Boyle, George Romero) or familiar twentieth-century *auteurs* (Buñuel, Hawks, Lang). There is no discussion of experimental, avant-garde or other alternative film practices (with the possible exception of Haneke’s *Hidden*, but this is only briefly mentioned) or anything which might offer alternative models of cinematic practice. Nor is there any consideration of the historical context of film, as, for example, a discourse which develops in a specific relationship with technological modernity. The only non-cinematic artwork discussed in any detail is a painfully overfamiliar one, Magritte’s *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*, around which debates from Foucault and psychoanalytic theory are rehearsed.

Furthermore, there is an issue with the ways in which Wayne utilizes his film examples here. They appear largely as philosophical metaphors based on a reading of their *content* (so *Little Nemo*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and *Night at the Museum* offer, at the narrative level, a Kantian ‘optical pedagogy’ of the sublime, nature versus culture, power and miniaturization) and are rarely considered as issues of *form*. Where formal issues are considered (the sublime, the role of metaphor, and, briefly, defamiliarization) this is undertaken largely at the theoretical level. There is some account of opposing viewpoints within film theory (Eco’s conventionalism versus cognitivism), but film itself as a formal, medium-specific or visual transformation in the history of human visibility, and the qualitative effects this may have had on subjectivity or aesthetic experience itself after Kant, are not really addressed. In short, one gets the sense that the examples appear based on subjective choice or because they usefully illustrate the red Kant thesis. In the end, this ambitious project to find a politically effective ‘critical communicative act in sensuous imaginative form’ is rather undermined by the narrowness and, in some cases, banality of examples. Of course revolutionary experiences can emerge from mainstream or middlebrow culture, but if we really want to ‘extract an image from all the clichés and set it up against them’, as Deleuze puts it, quoted here by Wayne, then we require a better model of the non-cliché in the first place.

**Nickolas Lambrianou**

# Time and time again

Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Non-Linear History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014. 236 pp., £60.00 hb., 978 1 13741 315 4.

Although the impulse for auto-critique is nothing new within feminist scholarship, over the past few years a sufficient number of reflexive historiographical evaluations have appeared to suggest that feminism is undergoing a significant development in its intellectual commitments. Victoria Browne references this ‘time and history boom’ in the opening pages of her new book, suggesting that as ‘feminism itself has become a political tradition, significant questions have emerged’. These questions tend towards a reassessment of the dominant narratives shaping the logic of feminism’s *own* recent history. Such challenges to the ‘hegemonic model of feminist history’ generally seek to destabilize framing devices, including, for instance, the generational waves metaphor, overinvestment in social and political progress, and the clichéd division between activism and theory. Here, however, Browne is chiefly preoccupied with the problem of fixed ‘historical time’ and how it emerges within feminist historiography, although she searches far beyond the field of explicitly feminist writing in her wide-ranging exploration into the connections between modern history, time and politics.

At present, feminism seems less interested in recovering ‘hidden truths’ from the archive than with dismantling the various temporal and narrative configurations that underpin historical accounts and, arguably, (re)secure hegemonic knowledge and power relations. Too often, however, reflexive historiographical critique can fall into the trap of detaching ‘real’ events from their subsequent narrative arrangement, and one of the vital contributions made by Browne is her effort to conceive of a dynamic two-way connection that would allow feminists to remain wary of history’s discursive qualities whilst recognizing and engaging the material trace of past struggles. This conflict emerges time and again throughout the book: that is, how should feminists negotiate the competing claims of materiality and discursivity when writing histories, and how can the movement conceive of feminist politics as both a historical subject and an urgent demand in the present?

The book is organized thematically with each chapter introducing a new temporal concept or framework, where Browne summarizes and meticulously

tests the limits of existing theories before suggesting expansions or improvements. It opens with an extensive introduction to ‘Feminism and Historical Time’, in particular tracing the emergence of a “‘great hegemonic model’ of feminism’ that, according to Browne, ‘fosters problematic historiographical orientations and habits of thought’. A thorough glossing of Hegel’s speculative philosophy of history (which is alleged to result in developmental patterns invested with teleological values) is followed with the fundamental claim – largely motivating this study – that, ‘Nonetheless, when it comes to narrative histories of feminism *itself*, feminists have often imported those very historical models and temporal logics they have so vehemently criticized.’ If this claim seems contentious, Browne proceeds to demonstrate its veracity with a series of well-known examples, including Julia Kristeva’s classic essay ‘Women’s Time’. Here she follows the ‘trenchant critique’ of others, including Clare Hemmings, Chela Sandoval and Elizabeth Grosz, that suggests feminism urgently requires more specific languages to examine and better comprehend its own historical and temporal models. Significantly, Browne contends that it is a more rigorous *philosophical* critique that is required here, as such challenges have remained generally under-articulated with relation to the specific issue of historical time, and prompts the reader to consider larger questions compelling feminist philosophical enquiries about time – namely, how do assumptions about past, present and future produce fixing temporal logics that limit current political contingency? As Browne compellingly argues, ‘the treatment of the past as a complete story that has led up to the present can also lead to a “closedness of the future”’, an outcome that should worry those on the left who do not wish to see prior political struggle closed off as a historic curiosity or exceeded moment.

In the first chapter Browne articulates her proposal for a ‘*polytemporal*’ conception of historical time, which lays the necessary groundwork upon which to build the following chapters’ intersecting configurations of temporality. Exploring these overlapping and possibly even conflicting temporal regimes would, according to her argument, be ultimately generative of a denser and more politically nuanced fabric of history. Rejecting the regulative totalities projected by Ricoeur or Jameson, this approach suggests that ‘if historical time is a form of lived time, historical temporalities will necessarily be diverse and disjunctive, and to take this diversity seriously, we need to think in terms of specificity and relationality instead of a

higher totality.' Nevertheless, in order to avoid this diversity's potentially estranging cultural relativism, Browne draws on the writing of Johannes Fabian to posit a theory of 'complex coevalness' that would allow feminists to 'share time and discursive spaces' without flattening or overlooking their characteristic political and temporal differences. The value of this coeval proposition may not be immediately transparent here (and, in fact, in its complexity is hard to pin down at any point), but it recurs throughout the following chapters as Browne elaborates the multifaceted 'mechanisms of temporalization' through which ordered historical time emerges, and thus the powerful necessity of participating in an equally multifaceted, lived space of contestation.

Each of the remaining chapters in the book deals with a separate model of historical time, starting with the Ricœurian 'Time of the Trace'. Here Browne covers some familiar ground with a discussion of Roland Barthes' and Hayden White's 'anti-realist' mode of historiography. The subsequent analysis of Hemmings's 2011 book is maybe slightly protracted given the vast quantity of debate devoted to her writing within feminist discussion in recent years, although Browne's lucid criticisms are not unwelcome. A key question frames the chapter: 'If there can be no objective knowledge of the past, what kind of knowledge do we gain from archival research and historical narratives?' For feminism this has been a profound problem: paraphrasing Gillian Howie, how to 'claim that our theories and narratives are tied to "real" events or states of affairs [without] claiming that they are "objective"'. To open ourselves to a dynamic exchange between the lived trace and its subsequent inscription, Browne posits a tripartite approach that offers both practical and theoretical tools for feminists working with the archive. She suggests: (1) an *active* historiographical mode that seeks to generate new perspectives on the past by asking what (or what else) happened; (2) a *reflexive* mode that queerly disrupts existing narratives by presenting unruly alternatives; and (3) a *receptive* mode of historiography that foregrounds the subject's 'willingness to be transformed or surprised by encounters with past feminisms that have been long forgotten, or had never been within our orbit'.

Developing logically from a consideration of the historical trace, chapter 3 shifts focus on to time as it emerges within the narrative configuration of lived historical events. The key contention made here, however, is that temporal continua are not solely imposed by external narrative forces, but inhere

within lived events themselves. The chapter opens by restating the customary argument that arranging the past into a recognizable narrative form can have the effect of 'sealing up or masking the restlessness of the past' so that it achieves an 'aura of inevitability and appears to be "closed"'. This suspicion of narrative configuration has rightly characterized many feminist (and indeed non-feminist) challenges to historiographical convention since the mid-twentieth century. Yet, as Browne argues, an established dualism that contrasts secondary external representation against lived historical experience not only runs the risk of reaffirming the authentically 'real' but is in fact 'glaringly false'. Rather, drawing on a Husserlian phenomenological analysis, we are resituated towards an understanding of lived time as irreducibly containing its own temporal thickness (much like a musical melody) that relies on a suspenseful relation between moments.

Yet, although this distinction is very useful, Browne argues that the first-person standpoint of classical phenomenology runs into difficulties when we try to extrapolate outwards towards an intersubjective historical time, because it fails to account for how differently situated subjects experience and share time and history in various ways (a key contention of feminist theory more generally). Here the chapter proceeds by taking a complex turn towards an 'ontologically oriented hermeneutical tradition', before demonstrating its theoretical manoeuvres with practical illustrations from feminist scholarship. However, clarity is lost in the chapter as it moves swiftly through a large range of sources and, as a result, the arguments at times appear haphazard. Moreover, I remain a little unconvinced of the distinction between the fractured, discontinuous narratives advocated here and the perspective of Hayden White, examined earlier in the book. Although Browne argues for a materially grounded approach to narrative studies that would acknowledge both individual and collective experiences of phenomenological time, in practice I wonder if the subtlety of this method would too easily fall back into the formalist approach to narrativity that it is situated against.

One of the persuasive rhetorical methods employed by Browne is to open each chapter with an axiomatic assertion, before proceeding to ask whether it's useful for feminist historiography to retain its logic. In the fourth chapter this twist centres on fixed calendar time, widely understood as another 'obstacle to developing creative and nuanced approaches to history'. And yet, Browne argues, an outright dismissal of

calendar time would 'overlook its significance as both a practical and public time'. As such, the task for feminist historiography is to 'engage more deeply' with this temporal structure in order to determine a more productive deployment of its logic. In turning this assumption on its head, Browne initially considers the constructedness of calendar time, which is often presumed to be out there in the stars waiting to be discovered and increasingly refined by scientific methods. Instead calendar time is shown to be an organizing system already 'deeply enmeshed in power relations'. In general Browne traces a tension between the desire for a shared *public* time that calendrical systems fulfil and the reification of these frameworks, suggesting instead that feminists adopt a qualitative approach that recognizes a complex entanglement of dating systems. This approach is convincingly put to the test to 'illustrate the potentially subversive purposes to which dating can be put, when dates are used to *disorient*, to engender surprise, and initiate a thinking-again'.



In the final chapter Browne begins to evaluate probably the most contentious time-related subject within recent feminist debate, that of generations. Criticism has largely arisen 'because the familial imagery [of generational time] is so closely associated with Oedipal models of relationality, which revolve around rivalry, prohibition, repression, and rebellion'. Browne attempts to recuperate generational paradigms from their almost absolute dismissal as 'wholly linear, patriarchal or Oedipal' by maintaining that different ways of relating, both historically and among immediate kin, 'will produce different kinds of temporalization'. Irigaray's classic writing on the topic is mined for its useful opening up of feminine (or 'between-women') genealogical relations *within* existing patriarchal paradigms. However, Browne is clear in establishing the limits of this philosophy: 'it is not enough to interrupt and trouble

already-dominant narratives. We need to find and tell different ones.' In order to isolate these different narratives, Browne looks to the diverse conditions of queer and raced family structures, as discussed by Judith Butler and Hortense Spillers. This 'wider range of work on kinship and family' is set in distinction to its hetero-patriarchal metaphors to demonstrate that these different familial and generational narratives already exist if we look for them.

Towards the end of the chapter Browne turns to the writing of Alice Walker and to Gayl Jones's novel *Corregidora* (1988) in order to comment on the complex temporal relations inherent to these fictionalized accounts. While its disciplinary fluidity is one of the major strengths of her book, it is revealing that some of the most compelling passages are, perhaps unexpectedly, prompted by Browne's engagement with feminist literary texts. Readings of Walker, Jones and (in chapter 3) the Combahee River Collective reveal that the past experience of African-American women has created a literary tradition in which historical truth and its rhetorical configuration give rise to a fluently complex organization of historical time. Lynne Segal's memoir *Making Trouble* (2007) is also referenced for its troubling 'temporal strangeness', a narrative rupture that disrupts any 'authoritative narrative voice'. What Browne's highly instructive use of literary precedent demonstrates is that feminist historiographers may need to negotiate more creative approaches to rendering historical time in their writing, if they are to avoid passively conforming to the temporal conventions of the academic discipline.

*Feminism, Time and Non-Linear History* offers an astute and notably wide-ranging consideration of our mediated, and always profoundly political, experience of historical time. Considered against the freshly reanimated feminist project of critical historiography, Browne's examination prompts me to ask how we could read this trend symptomatically: what does it reveal about the time we currently inhabit? Although this is not addressed directly in the book, Browne's carefully synthesized research provides feminism with a richer comprehension of the political stakes involved in answering such a question, where the temporal logics of feminism's own history must first be negotiated. Tellingly the book concludes by encouraging an unfinished and evolving consideration of feminism in terms of a 'temporality of struggle' which, Browne insists, would become imaginable by assuming a shared, polytemporal perspective on the past.

**Victoria Horne**

# Surplus poetics

Frances Stracey, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International*, Pluto Press, London, 2014. 173 pp., £63.00 hb., £15.00 pb., 978 0 74533 257 8 hb., 978 0 74533 526 1 pb.

When Frances Stracey died of cancer in November 2009, she left behind the manuscript of this book. Though it is presented as a 'new history', *Constructed Situations* is not a chronological or comprehensive narrative of the Situationist International's existence between 1957 and 1972. Instead, it takes up what was at least nominally the avant-garde group's central concept, the constructed situation, which Stracey describes as 'a "lived", embodied, dynamic event, the outcome of which (its success or failure) was not knowable in advance of its particular manifestations'. Constructed situations were meant to offer a brief moment in which a participant might glimpse an organization of social life freed from the conditions of what the Situationists called the spectacle. In other words, the constructed situation might provide some intimation of how life might be lived directly rather than passively.

Across the book's eight essays, Stracey selects various Situationist practices to demonstrate the different forms that the constructed situation came to take. Most of these practices are based on the *détournement*, or subversion, of activities otherwise recuperated, or co-opted, by the spectacle. For example, the book's first chapter considers the process of archiving, and how the spectacle monumentalizes the past as a means of freezing and reifying it. Stracey reads the collaged text *Mémoires* (1959) by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn as an effort to create an alternative, Situationist archival method, one in which memory is 'eruptive' and the past dynamic and fluid. The second chapter considers the processes of valorization in industrial as well as artistic production. Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's industrial painting, which used a crude machine to produce abstract expressionist-like painting by the metre, is read as a challenge to notions of the individual artist, the auratic original, and exchange-value itself. Subsequent chapters focus on the Situationists' engagement with gallery exhibitions, news reportage, graffiti and the commodification of sexuality. Along the way, Stracey addresses the Situationists' conception of potlatch, avant-garde temporality, radical subjectivity and gender politics. A final chapter surveys more recent forms of the constructed situation since the late 1980s.

*Constructed Situations* serves as an excellent introduction to the SI precisely because it keeps its focus on the practical applications of the Situationist project. However, I suspect that readers of other recent critical studies of the SI might feel overfamiliar with some of the case studies chosen. Stracey uses readily available sources, primarily articles and books published by the SI, and the visual materials that she considers are all included as illustrations in those publications. This book is not based in new archival uncoverings. Unfortunately, in the time between this research being conducted and the book's posthumous publication, other studies have pipped Stracey to the post in terms of novelty, not least McKenzie Wark's two volumes with Verso (2011, 2013) and – on the Situationists' gender politics, which long escaped sustained critique – Jen Kennedy's 'Charming Monsters' in the journal *Grey Room* (2012). Likewise, the examples of contemporary activism in the final chapter already feel somewhat dated, due to the rapid evolution of social media and its impact on protest tactics in recent years. Nonetheless, this does not undermine or devalue Stracey's project. The availability and familiarity of her sources are central to her book's argument. *Constructed Situations* is more interested in questions of historicity – specifically, timeliness and historical returns – than it is in staking out and defending a newly identified field of study.

Historicity, the necessity for a revolutionary critique to directly address the conditions of its specific historical moment, is an overriding concern of Stracey's analyses of both the Situationist project and the stakes of her own book. *Constructed Situations* begins by proposing 'failure as a point of departure' for the Situationist project. The SI emerged from the failure of earlier avant-garde and revolutionary movements to overcome the problem of co-optation. The book ends with Stracey's recognition that any revolutionary practice will inevitably become obsolete in time. However, historical obsolescence becomes a sign that once, in different historical conditions, certain revolutionary practices did maintain some potential. Stracey recognizes that this logic will even apply to her own project: 'And as these practices inevitably age with this book, I hope my considerations will offer at least a useful reflection on the historical moment in which I am writing.'

Stracey makes clear that the efficacy of any effort towards a constructed situation must be judged in light of its historical context. Occasionally, this stipulation presents a problem for Stracey, who, for the most part, wants to celebrate the Situationist project.



In her chapter on the SI's account of the 1965 Watts riots as a revolt against the commodity rather than a race riot, and in her chapter on the SI's reproduction of images of 'bikini-babes' in its journal without explicitly critiquing such sexist imagery, Stracey has to concede that by contemporary critical standards the Situationists fall short. There may be some truth in the SI's belief that the spectacle's division of people into 'order-givers' and 'order-takers' requires a type of radical subjectivity not predicated on identity as such, but oppression is experienced differently by different social groups, so it is difficult to read the SI sideline the issue of race in its analysis of Watts. The Situationists' tactical hyperbole, in these instances, appears historically short-sighted.



Alongside questions of timeliness, *Constructed Situations* is also concerned with historical returns. In the book's third chapter, Stracey uses the SI's only group exhibition – 'Destruction of RSG-6: A Collective Manifestation of the Situationist International', held in Odense, Denmark, in June 1963 – to discuss the group's sense of 'nowness', its refusal of the 'receding horizon of future action' imagined by previous avant-gardes. For the SI, all revolutionary action must be predicated on the present, but lost histories can be salvaged and revitalized. Michèle Bernstein's 'Victory' paintings, exhibited in Denmark, use lashings of plaster, paint and embedded toy soldiers to depict moments of revolutionary history but without the revolution's defeat. In Bernstein's work the Paris Communards of 1871 and the Spanish Republicans of the 1930s appear as victors. As counter-memorials, these paintings demonstrate the SI's belief that

history can be imaginatively rewritten. Indeed, the construction of alternative histories was necessary for the SI to resist the 'pseudo-history' constructed by the spectacle. Debord believed in 'the reversible coherence of the world': Stracey reads Situationist practice in light of this principle. As Wark has argued, the task is to reclaim a version of the SI that speaks to our present. It is in this sense that *Constructed Situations* is properly a 'new history' of the group.

However, the most satisfying aspect of this book, and the aspect that most clearly pays tribute to Stracey's intellectual vitality, is its attention to moments of pleasure and possibility in the Situationist project. This is an important and necessary approach, but one that is rarely taken. It is easy, faced with rhetoric as ruthless and hyperbolic as the SI's, to become defeatist, to retreat into pessimism. But just as the coherence of the world is reversible, so is recuperation. Absolute recuperation is impossible. Things lost to history or to the spectacle can be reclaimed. Across the SI's various activities, Stracey identifies different forms of resistance to recuperation, such as the 'eruptive' memory mentioned above, which she places together as the contours of a Situationist poetics. She applies this term to the Situationist project not because of any investment in poetry as such – Raoul Vaneigem called for 'the abolition of poetry' – but rather because she sees it as having developed 'a language of events'.

At the centre of these poetics are notions of excess and pleasure. For instance, Stracey explains how Pinot-Gallizio's industrial painting is leant to overproduction. Straightforwardly, such overproduction contravenes the logic of the art market. More interestingly, it also creates a surplus that can only be resolved through potlatch, the gift economy discussed by Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille that prefers excessive giving to equivalence. Surplus thus becomes a model for a non-instrumentalized mode of creative production. Stracey recognizes a similar excess, in terms of quantity as well as affect, in the graffiti that appeared around Paris during the strikes of May and June 1968, photographs of which are included in the SI's account of the events, *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations* (1968). This graffiti loudly presented 'fluidity, promiscuity, jouissance, impropriety, contamination and insubordination' to 'the shielded homogenized body' of the police. The sheer, exuberant excessiveness of this 'anti-writing' signals, in Stracey's account, that all is not lost.

**Sam Cooper**

# Consuming life

Carl Cederström and André Spicer, *The Wellness Syndrome*, Polity, Cambridge, 2015. 163 pp., £50.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 978 0 74565 560 4 hb., 978 0 74565 561 1 pb.

In Foucault's disciplinary society, it was the 'lazy' and 'stubborn' who were condemned as perverse, their diagnosis conferred by a pseudoscientific discourse of medical psychiatry in cahoots with a legal system only too happy to prescribe moral correction. The pathologization of an inability to submit to the demands of factory life perhaps made sense in an era where virtuous humanity was defined by its labour, not just by Marx and Fritz Kahn but by regimes of production hell-bent on creating docile bodies for unremitting physical graft. The rhetoric of 'workshy' and 'scrounging' lives on in the ongoing reclassification of the sick and disabled as fit for work. But in the control societies of contemporary consumerism, as Cederström and Spicer so expertly demonstrate, the most revealing pathologies now lie on the side of desire, symptomized in the failure to consume with joyful, life-loving abandon. We are desiring-sexual and above all adaptable, liquid, beings, after all – except when we dehumanize ourselves with a lack of self-love and regimes of junk food tantamount to self-abuse, which place a debilitating cap on our highly evolved ability to bend to the whims of labour supply.

The categories of delinquency that Foucault described as generating 'a sort of scaled-down criminality for children' nowadays home in on the obese and the depressed: those whose surfeit and lack of enthusiasm for consumption risk exposing the logic of what Beatriz Preciado terms 'pharmacopornographic capitalism', designating the blueprint for the postwar economy's manufacture of narcotic enjoyment. Conveniently, obesity and depression also serve as taxonomies for resistance to the energetic performance of health that sceptics might read as a disavowal of underlying misery. And their undesirability is underwritten by a swathe of quackish schemes happy to pile the blame for misfortune on an insufficiently positive appetite for long hours and unstable employment.

Cederström and Spicer's essay interweaves (mostly, but not exclusively, psychoanalytic) theoretical commentary and case studies of once-indolent-now-thriving, self-marketing consumers. One chapter focuses on Martin Seligman, an elusive former president of

the American Psychological Association, who devised the compellingly intricate formula of  $H = S + C + V$ : 'happiness is determined by the person you are, and the circumstances you have – some of which are more amenable to change than others', as the authors gloss it. Seligman's enjoyment of the art galleries and public talks he prescribes will be further nourished by an interest in the multibillion-dollar industry he helped to spawn, to say nothing of the fees earned from advising David Cameron on welfare reform. Others are less lucky, though no less optimistic. In a move that Frederick Winslow Taylor could only have fantasized about, one-time unemployed Chris Dancy found work by connecting himself to sensors that constantly record his pulse, sleep, skin temperature and bowel movements, all of which somehow contrived to make him feel productive, employable and competitive. We aren't told for what Graeberian 'bullshit job' this qualified him, nor whether he now logs the level of crap he has to endure in the workplace. There's no mention of Gwyneth Paltrow either, though the loveable celebrity chef Jamie Oliver comes in for a harsh, if not wholly gratuitous, kicking, on account of a crusade that links poor nutrition to all manner of social ills.

The 'wellness contract' is a semi-mandatory form filled out by workers and students across the global West, called upon by businesses and colleges to pledge abstinence from insalubrious living and commit to exercise and a diet of lemongrass gruel. As a cultural artefact, it exemplifies the ideological shift that means individuals are increasingly held responsible for their 'personal market value', managing identities like brands whose dissolute stock will fall if neglected, but rise without limit for those who cultivate publicity as a way of fetishizing their product. In this ungainly mashup of health, happiness and a conspicuously fortuitous echo of wealth, the forced choice of wellness masquerades as a liberation from the immiserations of poor lifestyle habits. Its proponents promote a range of motivational strategies, from life coaching, mindfulness and company gym subscriptions to relentless self-monitoring and target setting, all of which come garbed in the fun of what Slavoj Žižek has termed the 'superegoic injunction to enjoy'; and all of which ascribe failure to shortfalls in individual motivation, rather than, say, to a systemically broken job market that actively cultivates precariousness.

Cederström and Spicer's analysis is implicitly Foucauldian, identifying a new regime of truth in which the body serves as a 'truth system', judging the

value of wellness on ‘feeling’, not evidence. It also culminates in a discussion of the burgeoning points of resistance to the tyranny of sanitized healthfulness, borne out in the growing popularity of heart-attack burgers and subcultural practices like barebacking, whose bug-chasing practitioners play fully loaded Russian roulette with HIV. The unifying concept of *The Wellness Syndrome* is ‘biomorality’, a term coined by Alenka Zupančič to describe the equation of virtue with cheery affirmationism, and which also captures the turn taken by biopolitics in the age of the retreat of the political. Foucault himself isn’t name-checked, but that’s no big deal. The book’s great virtue is its lightness of theoretical touch, which combines Darwin-award style tales of idiocy with punchy commentary to make for the kind of readability conducive to cult status among undergraduates.



For all their rhetorical verve, the authors’ readings are mostly suggestive and for the most part steer clear of overinterpretation. The qualifying ‘mostly’ and ‘most’ are not insignificant, though. Is Jamie Oliver really so wrong for thinking that consumerist culture has eroded basic life skills – what Bernard Stiegler would call the short-circuiting of *savoir-faire* – and for not wanting schoolchildren to eat cost-cutting processed dirt? There is no neat line that divides ideological critique from a Jeremy Clarkson-style defence of consumer choice and the right to wallow in *jouissance*, and it is not always clear that Cederström and Spicer quite navigate the undecidability. The seven-page tirade against Oliver is a highly entertaining case in point, denouncing the chef as a moralizing, interventionist, middle-class reformer at the helm of a ‘biomoral panopticon’ zooming in on the nation’s uneaten vegetables, oblivious to issues of class, gender, industrial policy and grotesquely inadequate government services. But it’s not like he ever claimed that food is the only

crime befalling the school system. Recall the 2011 follow-up to *Jamie’s School Dinners*, entitled *Jamie’s Dream School*, a reality-TV documentary that tried to invigorate young dropouts with a host of celebrity teachers like David Starkey and Alastair Campbell. The programme didn’t hold back from showing that celebrity is no substitute for professional pedagogues with a real appreciation of the myriad social causes underpinning educational failure.

If there is a bigger criticism to be drawn out from this, it is that the book relies on anecdote and polemical force to drive home what might have been a more persuasively sweeping, integrated theoretical argument against the pseudosciences that legitimate the reigning economic order. Pernicious though they undoubtedly are, the sub-academic genres of self-help, nutrition and positive psychology are only the most exposed and parasitical tip of a new economic Darwinism that fetishizes evolutionary adaptiveness, turning commodified biology into a basis for market exploitation. Boltanski and Chiapello are among those to have theorized what Paul Krugman once described as ‘biobabble’, namely the iniquity-naturalizing language of mutation and adaptation that now pervades the so-called ‘Darwin economy’. Stiegler and Catherine Malabou have likewise criticized the ‘adaptationist ideology of performance’ and worker ‘flexibility’ as the ‘ideological avatar’ of neuroplasticity, respectively. The industries charged with recasting the lives of the precariat as thrilling tests in survival of the fittest should surely be seen as the extension of a new adaptationist metanarrative, their mission being to demonstrate that flexible working – much like the great biomoral virtue of marathon-running – is not just a tolerable prospect, but an ideal high for endorphin-loving creatures of natural selection. If the obese and depressed are the new delinquents, their protocime is to have violated the aesthetic of performed fitness by exhibiting symptoms that point to a profound discord between capitalism and vitality. In the age of bio-consumerism, life itself is the ultimate product experience and the ability to consume it with disciplined gusto seemingly becomes the transcendental condition of all other forms of consumption. Yet there comes a point when myths of fast-paced dynamism run up against the grim reality of experience confined to sitting in wheely chairs and staring at screens, festering in the ‘new cancer’ of deskbound immobility.

**Gerald Moore**

# Border gardes

Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, The Multiplication of Labour*, Duke University Press, Durham NC and London, 2013. 384 pp. £68.00 hb., £18.99 pb., 978 0 82235 487 1 hb., 978 0 82235 503 8 pb.

Increasing global migration has put contemporary borders in the spotlight: borders around the world appear to be proliferating and more and more heterogeneous. The focus of this book is the relationship between the multiplication of borders and global capitalism. For the authors of *Border as Method*, the control of migratory movements around the world is essential to the functioning of global capitalism. For this same reason, migration could also be a potential challenge to the structure of global capitalism as we know it. As the title makes clear, however, Mezzadra and Neilson do not only consider borders as an object of investigation. Borders are also crucially assumed as a method: an epistemic perspective from which to discern the forces and struggles determining the limits of inclusion and exclusion within situations and concepts.

A further theme running through this volume is the relationship of borders to labour. This is subject to an essentially Marxist interpretation, revisited in light of the advent of global capitalism, although the book also traverses several different historical periods and geographical domains, and includes a number of other theoretical perspectives, such as post-structuralism, feminism and postcolonial studies. The range of literature drawn on is impressively broad, ranging from studies in ethnography, anthropology, geography, sociology, history, philosophy, legal theory, and so on. The way in which Mezzadra and Neilson draw together these multiple perspectives is reminiscent of much postcolonial theory. However, the dominant framing of such eclectic embroidery is the perspective of autonomist Marxism, and its emphasis on the autonomy of class struggles beyond traditional Marxism's more monolithic emphasis on the industrial worker. Hence, for example, *Border as Method* takes up the autonomist concept of immaterial labour to describe any type of labour which produces 'immaterial' goods such as knowledge, services, cultural artefacts or communication. Underlying this is the idea that, in contemporary global capitalism, labour depends upon multiple forms of cooperation, or what is described by Hardt and Negri as the 'common'. Mezzadra and Neilson's

book appears to be on the same wavelength. Yet, Mezzadra and Neilson also see borders – captured in their connection between migrant labour and global capital – as the main privileged site from which to frame the contradictions as well as the production of the common that characterizes our era.

For the authors, contemporary borders are strategic in so far as they filter migratory flows and impact on the structure of labour power. On the one hand, Mezzadra and Neilson attempt to demonstrate with quite a few examples how global capitalist developments have transformed the orthodox Marxian concept of exploitation and accumulation of surplus value. On the other, the authors appear to suggest that, similarly to Marx's own era, bearers of labour power in the age of global capital are still defined by the fact that they are never entirely coincident with the labour power that they trade as a commodity. This is so because originally, regardless of its forms, labour power is a 'form of power that exceeds, and in a certain sense precedes, processes of discipline and control'. For the authors, such excess reveals itself in border struggles, which include: urban battles for inclusion in the French *banlieues*, Chinese internal migrants' labour strikes, protests against migrant deportation in the EU, undocumented Latinos' struggles for regularization in the USA, and so on. Mezzadra and Neilson contend that these border struggles have implications 'extending far beyond migrant issues' in so far as they have the potential to prompt a profound redefinition of institutional and theoretical notions of political subjectivity. Exceeding the political and conceptual space of the nation-state, border struggles both reflect and advance changing class struggles in the age of global capital. Given that the common aim of these struggles is a reorganization of social relations shaped by the logics of global capital's exploitation, for Mezzadra and Neilson the common enemy of border struggles – despite its global multiplication – remains singular: Capital. Citing as evidence the thousands of migrant deaths regularly taking place in the attempt to reach or cross contemporary borders in the global North, the authors trust that border struggles are going to intensify. The battle against global capital, they conclude, 'has just begun'.

Mezzadra and Neilson's book rekindles the notion of class struggle in an age of global capital. It does so in an eclectic way, embracing streams of thought other than Marxism, in a fashion that distinguishes Mezzadra and Neilson's account from many other (neo- or post-) Marxist approaches. At the same time,

the book productively places itself in conversation with border studies, and importantly problematizes the compartmentalized notions of borders in circulation. Mezzadra and Neilson's account also crucially differentiates itself from common depictions of global South migrants moving to the global North as mere victims of increasingly securitized borders policies. Moreover, this is aimed at redeeming the category of migrants as active agents, not only of their own existences but also as a figure of class struggle. To be more precise, Mezzadra and Neilson see migrants as the potential avant-garde of contemporary class struggle and an emblem of political subjectivization in the era of global capital.

While all this is commendable, the density of bibliographical references in *Border as Method* can make the argument at times unclear, leaving it to the reader to gather its various strands together. Moreover, with the one exception of China's internal borders, all the borders Mezzadra and Neilson refer to are sited in the so-called global North. In spite of its aim to achieve a comprehensive narrative of borders and migratory movements in a global world, *Border as Method* does not deal with the subject of South-to-South migration. Given that currently such migration almost equates in size to South-to-North migration (according to 2013 OECD figures) this omission is problematic. Further doubts can be raised, too, regarding the book's depiction of migration as a phenomenon which mostly pertains to the mobility of low-skilled labourers. While this type of migration is perhaps the one which most often makes the news, labour migration consists of much broader flows that include highly skilled labourers, investors, academics, entrepreneurs, and so on. Mezzadra and Neilson's post-Marxist account can appear to leave out of the picture whatever does not fit the given frame. This is also the case in the discussion of the internal borders drawn by China's household registration (*hukou*) system, where the fact that China's internal borders were once the main pillar for capital accumulation during Maoism is omitted. Furthermore, despite the generous space dedicated to Teubner's argument concerning fragmented legal spheres, the impression is given that, for the authors, law is predominantly (or only) a function of neoliberal rationality. Law is here interpreted à la Pashukanis: stitched to the

commodity form and masking personae as owners of commodities. Yet the focus on migration in recent political theorizing in fact draws important attention to the fundamental role played by law in instituting national identities and borders. Equally, it should not be overlooked that border struggles are often formulated as legal claims (for example, in struggles against inhumane treatment in detention facilities or migrants' claims for unpaid wages). Mezzadra and Neilson acknowledge the existence of such struggles – complying with the prevailing parameters of procedural justice – but, for them, 'far more interesting and challenging are those border struggles that view both borders themselves and the threshold immanent to justice as mobile, permeable and discontinuous.' While border struggles putting into question what institutes borders or justice do offer a productive



opportunity to rethink political concepts and practices, migrant struggles on the ground are normally characterized by the pursuit of more concrete and, alas, conservative goals.

A final note is that, despite talking globally, like any theoretical perspective *Border as Method* is nonetheless addressing a specific audience. This audience for the most part lives in the 'developed' countries of the global North (where the majority of borders discussed in the book are sited). For sure, this space of theorization is put in conversation with situations and illustrations refreshingly coming from the rest of the world. Yet the impression sometimes remains in Mezzadra and Neilson's work that the rest of the world is there to prove specific points rather than to be regarded as a subject in its own right.

**Paola Pasquali**

# The universal is back

Denis Guénoun, *About Europe: Philosophical Hypotheses*, trans. Christine Irizarry, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2013. 352 pp., £65.00 hb., £20.99 pb., 978 0 80477 385 0 hb., 978 0 80477 386 7 pb.

Europe is an old continent. Yet only 20,000 years ago, Scandinavia and much of Britain were almost totally covered by a thick ice sheet. The Alps were solid ice and sea levels were so low that Ireland and Britain were joined to continental Europe. Where there once were glaciers is today the middle of the North Sea and the English Channel, demarcating where Continental Europe begins. Denis Guénoun does not ask where Europe begins. Posing Europe as a question, he begins in the middle of a great sea, at a mid-point between the idea of Europe and universalism.

Guénoun reminds us that the sea is not flat. It is movement and transportation, on which nothing can stay in one place. 'Europe is not a patrimony of native people but of passengers, which it carries on board or on its deck.' Europe is in flux. It is in progress – a passage, a traversing or crossing. His 2014 Algerian family history, *A Semite: A Memoir of Algeria*, narrates a personal journey from Algeria to France. Thinking about Europe in terms of the Southern Mediterranean and its crossings is a way of thinking through continentality. In *About Europe*, the author describes his ancestors' passage moving around the Mediterranean. Born in the Maghreb, Guénoun crossed from Africa to Europe, when 'Europe took me away' to France.

Guénoun's reading of history and philosophy is exhaustive. Among *About Europe's* many strengths are the book's overabundance of anecdotes, concrete examples, and a series of numbered hypotheses and schematic diagrams, which depict Europe as this movement of the universal. He begins the book with 'hypothesis zero': that Europe is non-originary, intermediate and a work-in-progress. It is not, therefore, an attempt at a chronological history of European thought. Guénoun does dedicate plentiful space to some pre-eminent men of European thought: Kant, Husserl, Heidegger, Hegel, Marx, Herodotus, Plato, Jan Patočka, Guy Debord, Étienne Balibar and Jean-Luc Nancy. Reading *About Europe*, one could mistake Europe for a continent devoid of any female figures. There is one particular woman, however, around whom Guénoun's narrative revolves. A recurrent trope is Princess Europē in the myth of Europē. In the legend, the princess is seized from her birthplace in the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre. After dreaming

that she will be taken away from Asia to a nameless fatherland in the West, she is abducted by Zeus disguised as a magic white bull. Zeus carries Europē across the sea to Crete. The idea of Europe is born out of this passage to the West from the shores of Asia. 'It plainly seems', Guénoun writes, 'that Europe designates *the thing toward which one travels, the area where one lands when coming from the shores of Asia.*'

One interesting dimension of Guénoun's book is the challenge it makes to the notion that Ancient Greece was in Europe. 'Europe' is a Greek word, yet the word occurs only a handful of times in Greek antiquity. The idea that Europe was born in Greece as the rise of the universal, Guénoun deems a teleologism. Guénoun prefers to think history against its ending. 'One should think of Europe as a moment, or era. As a crossing. Traversing and getting across it – to get out of it.' In fact, the name 'Europe' was not applied until the end of the Middle Ages. Before Europe, there was 'simply the universe', the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. Universe comes from 'versus', meaning 'turned'. For Guénoun, the universal undergoes a turning movement. After the Roman Empire, Europe turns around the universal or gives figure to the universal as it returns to itself. Just when you think the universal has reached its zenith, it turns around back to itself. Like a call and a return, the figure of Europe appears at the middle of turning back. The universal at this point is not a kingdom, an empire, a church or a people. The universal is two stages of movement: expansion and return. First there is a moment of enlargement, extinction and expansion, as the universe grows. The growth stops and there is a moment of retraction. A turning back movement gives way at a stop point. The figure of Europe makes an appearance at the middle of this turning. Ancient Greece was not in Europe, and nor could the universal have been born in Greece. This is because there is no origin, no beginning – only a stop point. That point is the figure of Europe. Guénoun graphically illustrates the figure of Europe as a point sketched along drawn loops. Schematics give movement to the universal's turning around and returning to itself, as Europe returns to itself as figure.

When it comes to the French Revolution, the stop point is war – the point when revolution turns to

war and brotherhood turns to questions of boundary. 'The war brought the return, just as clouds bring a storm.' What comes back in the return of revolution? Does the revolutionary reversal from kingdom to nation actually bring back a kingdom that is the same as the one it overthrew? Guénoun sees the same (as self-same) produced as identity in the space of the return. France and Germany in their unity are merely stages in Europe's historical process or progress. He conceives of their national identity as an imaginary naming of their own phase of the process.

When Gayatri Spivak questions national identity, she draws a distinction between the Latin root of 'identity', *idem*, translated as 'same', and the Sanskrit word, *idam*, meaning 'not exactly same'. *Idam* is not one self-same sameness. Rather than marking unique characteristics of a same thing, *idam* denotes what is not unique.

This is a useful distinction because, in its singular-plurality, *idam* is an identity of what is alike in multiplicity. It is the opposite of national or personal identity. Guénoun follows this thinking, as he winds up with a confrontation between two Europes, neither of which is possible. One Europe is world globalization itself, thus dissolving the need for its very self. However, when this 'world as world' is born, Europe will clearly be no more. Another Europe is a continent of nationalities and identities. But in turning itself around, it sees itself as Europe. Not a self-same, but a multiple-same. In the universal's movement of self-figuration, Europe images itself as

its other. This other is Islam. Europe's identity faces Islam and represses it. Islam is not an external other, constantly fended off of Europe's borders. Islam may seem external, but its exteriority marks its proximity. Islam was an alternative – an internal exteriority. 'Repressing Islam, for Europe, is repressing the gesture that forms it.' As the Roman Church and Empire fell apart, invasions that sparked internal difference formed Europe's core.

Taking over from Rome, Europe becomes the new empire of world capitalism. Guénoun bases a kinship between the Roman Empire and capitalism founded in imperialism on worldwide capitalist globalization. To justify the relation, he argues, the world presents itself as image. Recalling Marx's 'world of commodities', world commodification creates the commodity as an image. Guénoun closes out part four with a close reading of Marx, before *returning* to his first hypothesis and the myth of Europē. Guénoun achieves the non-teleological historicity he sets out to do, making this a difficult book to write an ending for. Published in French in 2000, *About Europe* leaves us with a range of questions about the future: about Islamophobia, jingoism, the desire to colonize and twenty-first-century wars. This is one of the book's successes, and not a failure. Readers expecting a history of philosophy or a philosophy of history will be intrigued to find Guénoun challenges the very notion of a beginning of philosophy. *About Europe* marks the end of the beginning of philosophy.

Carrie Giunta

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