THE LIMITS OF TRANSGRESSION

Elizabeth Wilson

Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991; £35 cloth, £9.95 paper.

I wrote this review shortly after watching Gore Vidal dispose of Michael Ignatieff on *The Late Show*.[1] 'Interviewers are so *cute* these days,' Vidal murmured wearily at one point. Impassively Buddha-like in the face of Ignatieff's anguished squeakings of 'conspiracy theory', he repeated with sublime urbanity his conviction that the United States is an empire – no republic, no democracy, no culture, just the world centre of barbarity and corruption. Michael Ignatieff looked as if he'd caught a sensitive part of his anatomy in his trouser zip when Vidal denounced the creation of the postwar 'red scare' by American governments, beginning with Harry Truman, and clearly found unbearable Vidal's insistence that the communist threat was entirely mythical, a demoniacal invention of American militarism. Ignatieff's bright-eyed, little boy liberalism was no match for Vidal's stony irony. He seemed out of his depth, uncomprehending – indeed at one point he appeared (unless I misunderstood him) to be attempting to turn what he saw as Vidal's hatred of 'macho culture' into an *effect* of homosexuality.

This encounter between postmodern man and what many of us might be tempted to dismiss as a now outdated American radical liberalism sheds light on Jonathan Dollimore's enterprise in a way I hope to clarify, for *Sexual Dissidence* in a sense itself contains opposing, or at least divergent, attitudes towards its subject(s). The postmodern and the oppositional work their way through this dense and very woven text, which draws together – or at moments simply juxtaposes – many strands of theory. Dollimore frequently uses one theory to interrogate another. Yet at the heart of the theoretical thickets gay activism and cultural politics keep a radical impulse in view.

It is a difficult text to summarize, and not until almost the last page does Dollimore tell us: 'My consideration of difference originated in a turn to history in order to repudiate ... [the] theory ... which construed homosexuality as an embrace of the same because of a fear of the different.'[2] This is a political and also a cultural agenda, for the theory to which Dollimore refers is psychoanalysis. Gay Liberation and the early women's movement would have no truck with Freud, but psychoanalysis has returned with a vengeance in recent years. Now, however, it dominates literary, film and art studies rather than regulatory practices such as social work. Who is to say whether it is more dangerous in this latest guise than in its former one? The problem with psychoanalysis as a theoretical tool of cultural studies is that some of it is indispensable – who could deny the importance of the unconscious in the creation of imaginative works and indeed any discursive text or other representation – yet its seduction may divert us from its lurking moral judgments which were easier to unmask when they resulted in attempts to cure homosexuals or stop mothers going out to work.

---

[1] *The Late Show* is a nightly cultural and arts programme on BBC2.

[2] Dollimore, p355.

Jonathan Dollimore creatively addresses the tension for culturalists presented by psychoanalysis, acknowledging that he deploys psychoanalytic categories in order to reveal their inadequacies. This may be, as he concedes, inconsistent, yet itself creates an interesting dissonance.

He is, however, concerned with much more than psychoanalysis. One reading of *Sexual Dissidence* would be to see it as an extended meditation on the nature of sexual and cultural identity, and particularly in this case, homosexual identity. After all, contemporary lesbian and gay politics was quintessentially a politics of identity, and it is out of this politics that lesbian and gay studies has come. By the time lesbian and gay studies emerge, however, we are in a very different place: we find ourselves in an academic setting in which the crude certainties of 'Gay is Good' and other such embarrassing slogans have long since ceded to, and been superceded by, much more complex constructions and interrogations of identity, of what used to be called ideology. and of politics.

It is therefore appropriate that a discussion of essentialism should be positioned near the beginning of the book. Dollimore is, of course, aware of the critique of essentialism: the search for the 'true', 'authentic' self may lead to new, rigid categories: in *The Well of Loneliness*, for example, Radclyffe Hall resorts to ideas of Nature as a justification for the Third Sex, coupled with a romantic conception of the Invert as saintly martyr (an idea that Dollimore also finds, more surprisingly, in Rita Mae Brown's *Ruby Fruit Jungle*, albeit minus the martyrdom). Worse, essentialism reinvents or reinforces the very binary oppositions it would seek to subvert. Yet Dollimore to some extent defends the essentialist stance and rightly reminds us that it has at times significantly raised the visibility of the deviant, and can have progressive effects. It is nonetheless strange to find lesbians making more or less their only appearance in the book at this point – as bearers of essentialist ideology. I will return to the general absence of lesbians in *Sexual Dissidence* later.

Essentialism, notwithstanding its partially progressive potential, is not adequate to Jonathan Dollimore's definition of sexual *dissidence*. This he describes as a 'kind of resistance' which 'unsettles the ... opposition between the dominant and the subordinate'. Transgression and perversity are two terms which he explores and, I think, invites us to endorse.

The concept of transgression was explored by Michel Foucault in the 1960s in 'A Preface to Transgression',[3] in which he described a transgressive spiral. This constantly seeks to cross a limit – or *the* limit – of the permissible, but this act of transgression then sets up a further limit which then has to be crossed in its turn. One implication of this might be that the threshhold of what shocks is progressively raised. Contemporary culture, or aspects of it, are often described – and usually denounced – in this way. For example, anti-porn campaigners draw an apocalyptic picture of a descent from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, through *Penthouse* and *Hustler* to hardcore violence and snuff movies. Once you are on the slippery downward slope there is no turning back. A similar course was predicted by Friedrich von Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom*, in which he argued that state intervention along Keynesian economic lines leads inexorably to totalitarianism. This is the conservative interpretation of transgression.

---

[3] Michel Foucault, 'A Preface to Transgression', *Language, Counter Memory, Practice*, Donald F. Bouchard (ed.), Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY 1977. (Originally published as 'Hommage à Georges Bataille', *Critique*, no 195/196, 1963.)

'Transgression' and 'transgressive' have become buzz words in cultural criticism in recent years, but with rather different meaning. To me, however, it is unclear just what this meaning is, and the initial discussion of it in *Sexual Dissidence* did not help. Dollimore refers to Oscar Wilde's 'transgressive aesthetic', and he relates it to the postmodern decentering of the subject, to the postmodern disappearance of the depth model, and to the debate as to whether the inversion of binary opposites 'subverts or on the contrary reinforces' the original binary order. The relationship of these to Wilde is not very clearly developed. However, the interesting issue is raised whether the very term transgressive – so seductive – is dangerous and self-defeating precisely because it is contained within that against which it rebels; this is what Dollimore refers to as 'containment theory'.

It is at least possible, of course, that the term transgression operates in cultural studies as little more than a new version of bohemianism, the negativity of revolt – that which Walter Benjamin saw in Baudelaire's stance to the world. (Baudelaire, says Benjamin, 'could ... have adopted Flaubert's statement, "Of all of politics I undertand only one thing: the revolt." '[4]) Such a possibility is implicit in the Foucauldian notion of 'resistance'. The problem is not that sexual and other regulatory discourses *produce* deviation; nor is it that these then produce their 'reverse discourses' of resistance. The problem is that the whole scenario confines us forever in a society of surveillance that we can never transcend. There may be a utopia beyond the prison house of discourse, but for sure we are never going to get there. All we can achieve is to be 'dissidents'.

Contemporary suspicion of utopian discourse is an unsuprising reaction to the perceived failures of Soviet utopianism, and has led to this recent preference for 'resistance' over any notion of the now discredited belief in revolutionary moments. The emergence of any truly new world order has been discursively ruled out, and is seen by radical cultural critics as almost rather offensive. Such pessimism – or should one call it discrimination, political refinement – is hardly surprising when the most 'revolutionary' event on the agenda is the return of the Romanoffs to St Petersburg, and of Nazism to Germany. Yet although Foucault's concept of resistance has been questioned, it is largely those such as Gillian Rose,[5] who tend to reject him outright, who have initiated an extended critique. Dollimore's discussion of Foucault is disappointingly brief, but he gives a lucid revised account of the historical emergence of the homosexual identity.

According to Dollimore, Foucault saw the Western construction of sexuality itself as a kind of utopia:

[4] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Verso, London 1973, p13.

[5] Gillian Rose, *The Dialectic of Nihilism: Poststructuralism and Law*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1984.

> What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights.[6]

Dollimore contrasts the divergent accounts of perversity undertaken by Freud and Foucault, and then works them together to good effect. He argues that although Foucault's account contradicts Freud's, both perceive perversity – in this case homosexual perversity – as central to the binary constructions of sexuality and the workings of power. For Dollimore, perversity becomes an 'insinuating' presence, one which begins to undermine the binary oppositions that remain so dominant. In the end, we realize that essentialism and anti-essentialism are no longer binary opposites, rather they depend upon each other. Above all, heterosexual conformity is unstable, built on the quicksands of homosexual desire.

Jonathan Dollimore is at his best when disposing of the homophobic psychoanalytic accounts of homosexuality, and when retrieving a more 'perverse' Freud, and a psychoanalysis able to contribute towards a more complex understanding of homosexual perversity. The way in which contemporary theories and views of the homosexual originated in pre-modern, and certainly pre-Freudian discourse is also well brought out in some of the best sections of the book, on the early modern period.

Genet, Orton, and most of all Wilde, are interrogated, yet above all celebrated for their 'transgressive aesthetic', combining 'the anarchic and the political, the anger and the boredom'. This is one theme of the book, but there is an ever-present – indeed, an insinuating – counter-theme, an unresolved tension which turns into its opposite: instead of tension there is a sense of being muffled and smothered in the play of diverse theories. At times I felt I was treading a minefield of political correctness crisscrossed with theoretical tripwires.

For Jonathan Dollimore appears pulled in different directions. He wishes to incorporate the mass of recent theory concerning identity, cultural positioning, gender – the whole range of concerns addressed by cultural critique – and this leads him towards the 'postmodern' endless play of difference, fragmentation, the dissolution of opposites, the recognition that the 'transgressive' notion of 'gay identity' or 'gay sensibility' may be outdated or surpassed. At the same time, however, he wishes to proclaim and to insist on the importance of 'perverse' homosexuality as a radical challenge to the oppressiveness of Western bourgeois culture, to its racism as well as to its homophobia and its hatred of women. He is clearly aware that the one is in danger of contradicting the other, but for me he never managed quite to escape this dilemma. For all his critique of the psychoanalytic view of sexual difference, what does he offer in its place: a reassertion that we must 'eroticize the social' while liberating it

[6] Quoted in Dollimore, p223.

from the imperatives of sexual difference. And as he himself immediately admits, 'Such theories have been plausibly criticized for their romantic and Utopian strains, also for the way they echo and sometimes invoke a post-Freudian version of the polymorphous perverse.'[7]

Dollimore disclaims both the intention and the very possibility of outlining a correct theory of difference. What is implicitly offered as an opposition to the oppressive norms reasserted – as he quotes – as recently as 1990 by Hanna Segal, one of the most respected *éminences grises* of British psychoanalysis, is the fragmented yet enduring figure of the Transgressive Pervert. This is consistent with the recent trend in lesbian and gay politics to reclaim the 'queer' and renounce the too-positive 'gay' – a move that has outrage potential; and gay has certainly come to seem rather twee. To what extent, though, does the transgressive mode take us beyond a sexualized version of Baudelaire's negative, bohemian revolt, mentioned above? Also, does it not reassert some kind of essential identity? This is the spiral in which Dollimore is entangled. His text is an exemplum of *différance* and deferral, an extended proliferation of texts to be explored which lead to further texts, and the many creative insights along the way do not quite compensate for the absence of a new synthesis.

As the author implicitly recognizes, lesbian writers have tended to exclude the lesbian from the role of sexual outlaw because they have been reluctant to give up an identity politics based on essentialism. For them the lesbian has remained *positively* heroic. The practice of lesbian sado-masochism and butch/femme positionings constitute an exception to this rule, but it is true that lesbianism has too often been celebrated and affirmed as a kind of manifestation of female oneness and wonderfulness, totally at odds with transgression. The best-known and most influential text in this tradition probably remains Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'[8] – lesbianism as universal female love and every woman's answer to the vileness of men. Yet at the same time lesbians are demonized in the dominant culture just as much as gay men. That they play such a marginal role in *Sexual Dissidence* may be partly because the lesbians who are not essentialists perhaps haven't written about it (this is only speculation). Even so, Dollimore could at least have considered the role played by the heroic lesbian as a mannish and unnatural figure in Benjamin's reworking of Baudelaire;[9] and the absence of lesbianism is alienating, and tends to reinforce a lurking suspicion that the Transgressive Pervert of sexual outlawry (male) gains centre stage only at the expense of consigning another group to the margins. This would tend to support the view that, much as one is inevitably and perennially attracted to the figure of the Transgressive Pervert (wouldn't we all like to be that glamorous), it is a romanticized construction, and that the usual condition of marginality is more often what we had always suspected: invisibility and negation.

Sexual Dissidence left me in many ways frustrated. Jonathan Dollimore attempts to retain the radical deviance, the protest of gay identity, but consistently hedges his theoretical bets. I grew weary of a sense of having it both ways. Of course we must recognize the complexities and the ironies, but

---

7. Dollimore, p355.

8. Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*, Virago, London 1986.

9. See Walter Benjamin, *op.cit.*, and Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', *New Left Review*, no 191, January/February 1992.

we must also recognize the way in which their theoretical and discursive exploration has too often deprived them of any cutting political edge. Like, I imagine, Dollimore himself, I am attracted to the irony and richness of much in postmodernism; clearly he, like me, is only too aware of the brutal repression and violence meted out to homosexuals. Too often, he simply deploys them together, contiguously, and the figure of the Transgressive Pervert is inadequate to create the new synthesis: the combinatory of difference, complexity and oppression into a new moment of elucidation. Perhaps this ambiguity is inescapable. Yet, to return finally to *The Late Show*, I missed in *Sexual Dissidence* the uncompromising clarity of Vidal's denunciation of our world. This, paradoxically, for it supports Dollimore's thesis, seemed linked with his 'deviant' sexual identity. It is the clarity that Jonathan Dollimore lacks. It seemed to me – perhaps unfairly – that he has tried to inhabit the places of both Michael Ignatieff and Gore Vidal simultaneously. In the end this must be impossible. For my part, I shall have to side with Gore Vidal.

FREDRIC ON FILM THEORY

Warren Buckland

Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, Routledge, New York and London 1990; £35 cloth.

At the beginning and ending of 'The Imaginary Signifier' Christian Metz analyses the relationship between theory, film, and the theoretician. The primary aim of film theory for Metz is to 'disengage the cinema-object from the imaginary and win it for the symbolic', i.e. to produce a knowledge, or a little more knowledge, of film's discursive properties, rather than reify its imaginary pleasures (as do film critics and a large number of film theorists). But he points out that the cinema's imaginary dimension also instigates the film theoretician's very existence, which is based upon 'the desire to study the cinema'. Metz therefore warns against being 'swallowed up in the imaginary which is sustained by the cinema', but concedes that this is always 'a never-ending task'.[1] His solution consists in maintaining an ambivalent relation to the cinema: 'To be a theoretician of the cinema, one should ideally no longer love the cinema and yet still love it: have loved it a lot and only have detached oneself from it by taking it up again from the other end, taking it as the target for the very same scopic drive which had made one love it.'[2]

Fredric Jameson's very existence in the university is not dependent upon his 'desire to study the cinema' because he primarily writes and teaches about verbal narrative. What, then, can Jameson contribute to film theory? Part One of *Signatures of the Visible* consists of (what Jameson himself calls) 'occasional' essays on film (written between 1977 and 1986), while Part Two consists of one long essay, 'The Existence of Italy' (written in 1988), which Jameson describes as offering 'the most sustained rehearsal of the dialectic of realism, modernism and postmodernism that I have so far attempted'.[3]

In this long essay Jameson notes the simultaneous emergence of each aesthetic practice in this threefold logic with the three fundamental stages of capitalism – the emergence of realism with national capitalism, modernism with the break and restructuration of the monopoly period, and postmodernism with the multinational era. Although noting that the history of film does not coincide with these three stages of capitalism, Jameson nonetheless argues that film history 'recapitulates something like a realism/modernism/postmodernism trajectory at a more compressed tempo' [p156]. But what is remarkable is that Jameson argues for two separate film histories in terms of this threefold trajectory – one for 'silent' film and one for sound film:

> The two film species – silent and sound – each demand their own separate histories, and ... the threefold logic suggested here is observable in both, but

---

[1] Christian Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema:The Imaginary Signifier*. (trans. Ben Brewster *et al.*), The Macmillan Press, London 1982, pp3-5.

[2] *Ibid.*, p15.

[3] *Signatures of the Visible*, p6. All other page references will be cited in the text.

> in unrelated and dialectically distinct ways. For one thing, silent film was never allowed to develop into its putative 'postmodern' version, although it might be interesting to entertain the hypothesis that the independent or experimental film in the post-World War II era (e.g., *Dog Star Man* [1959-64] of Stan Brakhage) developed in the empty space of a silent film postmodernism that never happened. [p157]

Wisely, Jameson does not discuss this contrived delineation of silent cinema any further (although he notes in passing that it developed from 'some inaugural realism of Griffith into the extraordinary modernisms of Eisenstein and Stroheim', [p157] with the American avant-garde conveniently filling-in as its postmodern phase), but instead concentrates on the articulation of the threefold logic in sound film.[4]

To this extent, Jameson covers some of the ground worked over by the 'contemporary' film theorists in the 1970s. The primary function of contemporary film theory was to develop a materialist knowledge of the ideology perpetuated by mainstream cinema and to map out the space for an oppositional cinema that would break the ideological hold of the mainstream. To achieve these goals, the contemporary film theorists sided with Brecht in the Lukács/Brecht debate between realism and modernism, as well as with Barthes in the Sartre/Barthes debate over the French literary avant-garde. For both Brecht and Barthes, the self-reflexive practices of modernism and the avant-garde aim to deconstruct the ideology perpetuated by nineteenth-century bourgeois capitalism, where this ideology is identified (as in Jameson) with the normative, representational practice of realism. To the modernist critique of realism the contemporary film theorists added the consideration of the subject addressed by each practice. They defined the classical narrative film as a realist practice that attempts to construct an illusory, coherent subject position – a position where meaning is realized. They then defined avant-garde/modernist film as a practice that disperses meaning and the illusory, coherent subject position through the deconstruction of narrative. In much the same way, Jameson defines realism as aesthetic representation, modernism as anti-representational, aesthetic (i.e. autonomous) art, and postmodernism as anti-representational anti-art. (Typically, Jameson represents these definitions schematically in the form of Greimas's semiotic square.) [p161][5] Furthermore, he identifies the third, postmodern, stage of sound film with video. [p157][6]

The contemporary film theorists conflated modernism with the avant-garde and established the generic division between realist and modernist texts exclusively in terms of form, resulting in the repression of an historical analysis of these texts. However, in *Signatures of the Visible* Jameson overcomes this formalism, as we have seen, by contextualizing aesthetic concepts within the various stages of the history of capitalism. To this extent, his work parallels the recent tendency in film studies to bring together film theory and film history (although Jameson rarely acknowledges this work). Two instances of this

[4] Jameson's contrived delineation of early cinema is no doubt due to the fact that he fails to cite any research carried out on early cinema within film studies.

[5] The fourth aesthetic practice remains undefined, although Jameson characterizes it as 'representational' and 'anti-art'.

[6] Jameson doesn't write very much about video and postmodernism in 'The Existence of Italy' but confines himself largely to realism and modernism in the cinema. Jameson discusses video in 'Reading Without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video-text', in Nigel Fabb, Derek Attridge, Alan Durant and Colin MacCabe (eds), *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments Between Language and Literature*, MUP, Manchester 1987. This paper is discussed in detail by Nicholas Zurbrugg, 'Jameson's Complaint: Video-art and the Intertextual Time-Wall', *Screen*, Vol 32, no 1, 1991, pp16-34.

tendency are Thomas Elsaesser's analysis of the historical preconditions of representation, spectatorship and visual pleasure in Weimar cinema[7] and Miriam Hansen's analysis of the emergence of spectatorship in American 'silent' film.[8] For Elsaesser a materialist history of Weimar cinema (and, indeed, other national cinemas) radically decentres its object of study: the historian goes beyond the histories of cinema's technological and economic practices, for 'one is faced with relations of power, control and pleasure which reach beyond film history.'[9] He goes on to say that:

> The materialist basis of Weimar cinema would in this analysis be less the overall political development of Germany on the brink of fascism, and more its part in another historical process – to which fascism is quite clearly a response – namely that which transformed, among other things, manufacture into administratively organized industrial production, and which engendered quite different demands on the human senses, faculties and skills, adding greatly to the overdevelopment of the eye. [*FHVP*, p78]

These remarks historicize one of contemporary film theory's primary assertions: that voyeurism is overdetermined in the cinema.

According to Elsaesser, moreover, historical explanation was marginalized from contemporary film theory, because it theorized filmic pleasure as being determined primarily by the immutable cinematographic apparatus, rather than by contingent narrative strategies. This means that, for the contemporary film theorists, 'different narrative strategies do not fundamentally alter the subject positions available to the spectator' which is why they '[did] not give a socially or nationally specific structure to the articulation of visual pleasure'. [*FHVP*, p65] But in his analysis of the specific social and historical structure of visual pleasure in films typical of Weimar cinema, Elsaesser stresses the way they foreground the act of narration through strategies such as framed tales, interlocking narrative voices, nested narratives, a high proportion of non-sutured point-of-view shots etc. These strategies address the spectator in a fundamentally different way to classical Hollywood cinema because 'visual pleasure appears as inseparable from anxiety and is inscribed in a network of power and loss of power, control and loss of control'. Furthermore, 'Weimar cinema' and its '*mise-en-scène* of the look fundamentally alters the relationship of the spectator to film and thus the question of identification'. [*FHVP*, pp73-4] Weimar cinema alters the spectator's relation to the film through a hyperbolic emphasis on looking, which splits the spectator's vision (between power/loss of power etc). This means that Weimar cinema does not perpetuate the illusory, coherent subject position the contemporary film theorists believed to be inherent in the cinematographic apparatus (a fallacy unchallenged by Jameson, as we shall see).

In part one of *Babel and Babylon* Miriam Hansen employs insights from both film history and film theory to locate in silent American film the historical emergence of the category of the classical spectator, a textual construct whose

[7] Thomas Elsaesser, 'Social Mobility and the Fantastic: German Silent Cinema', *Wide Angle*, Vol 5, no 2, 1982; 'Lulu and the Meter Man: Louise Brooks, Pabst and Pandora's Box', *Screen*, Vol 24, nos 4-5, 1983; 'Film History and Visual Pleasure: Weimar Cinema', in Patricia Mellencamp and Philip Rosen (eds), *Cinema Histories/Cinema Practices*, University Publications of America, Los Angeles 1984, pp47-84.

[8] Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1991. All page references to this book will be cited in the text with the prefix *BB*.

[9] 'Film History and Visual Pleasure', p78. All other page references to this essay will be cited in the text with the prefix *FHVP*.

function is to attempt to 'standardize empirically diverse and to some extent unpredictable acts of reception'. [*BB*, p16] Hansen charts the emergence of this standardized form of subjectivity through the analysis of a number of films (especially Porter's *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* [Edison, 1902] and *The 'Teddy' Bears* [1907] and the popular 'Peeping Tom' series of films) whose textuality is inscribed with ambivalent, transitional modes of address, in which the viewer's relation to the film oscillates between 'distraction' and 'absorption'. For Hansen, these distinct modes of address are not simply determined by the filmic text, but also by the context of exhibition: one-shot tableau films, shown predominately in vaudeville, variety shows etc., were assembled in random sequence and offered an unstructured mix of spectatorial pleasures, whereas multi-shot narrative films required their own distinct outlet – the nickelodeon (ensuring their own distinct audience). The exhibition space of tableau films constructed a mode of address 'predicated on diversity, on distracting the viewer with a variety of competing spectacles'. [*BB*, p34] But in the more specialized exhibition space of the nickelodeon, audience reception was gradually standardized. The live elements of the vaudeville exhibition space were internalized in the film itself by means of representational strategies, which 'aimed at suppressing awareness of the theater space and absorbing the spectator into the illusionist space on screen', [*BB*, p44] leading to the formation of the classical spectator. The enumeration of these representational strategies (continuity editing, image composition etc.) has been well documented by film historians, and it is well-known that the story, the imposition of a causal narrative logic from shot to shot, is the most important device for absorbing the spectator into the film. Hansen's main point is not to repeat these facts, but to emphasize that 'the display of diversity [in the tableau films and vaudeville exhibition space] also means that the viewer is solicited in a more direct manner – as a member of an anticipated social audience and a public, rather than an invisible, private consumer [as in narrative films].' [*BB*, p34]

Hansen goes on to discuss how early cinema transformed the gendered boundary between the public and private spheres. Noting that in nineteenth-century Europe and America public life was predominately a masculine sphere and the private realm of the family a feminine sphere, Hansen asserts that cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century functioned as an alternative *public sphere* for women (as well as immigrants), due to the social and cultural variations permitted in the live performances: 'The cinema catered to women as an audience, as the subject of collective reception and public interaction. It thus functioned as a particularly female heterotopia, because ... it "simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" [Foucault] the gendered demarcations of private and public spheres.' [*BB*, p118] The subsequent paradigmatic shift from early to classical cinema, involving the codification of film by means of narrative strategies and the development of the classical spectator based on the masculine psychic mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism, is, for Hansen, a patriarchal defensive symptom which 'indicates the extent of the crisis unleashed by women's massive ascendence to a new horizon of experience [in the public sphere]'. [*BB*, p122][10]

In *Signatures of the Visible* Jameson develops his own historically informed film theory, which can be summarized as follows:

1) As we have seen, his theory does not duplicate such traditional problems as the gap between the formal and the historical, or the micro-text and the macro-structure, or the molecular and the molar. This gap in contemporary film theory tended to favour the formal, or the molecular – as in studies limited exclusively to the analysis of the specificity of the cinematographic apparatus, or in semiotic/psychoanalytic textual analyses. For Jameson, however, we must conceive the cinema as 'a historically new cultural apparatus, whose "material" structure may be expected to reflect (and to express), in its very formal structure, a particular moment or stage of capital and of the latter's intensified, yet dialectically original, reification of social relations and processes'. [p101] Here the perspective is historical at the outset: it conceives the cinema as a social practice, rather than starting with a formal framework and introducing history at a later stage.

2) Jameson defines the cinema as emerging from the capitalist process of *reification*, which he defines as a process whereby 'the traditional or "natural" [*naturwüchsige*] unities, social formations, human relations, cultural events, even religious systems, are systematically broken up in order to be reconstituted more efficiently, in the form of new post-natural processes or mechanisms.'[11] The process of reification simultaneously transforms both the mode of production of the economy into market capitalism and also reorganizes the division of labour in the psyche. The latter process constitutes the illusion that the individual in an isolated, free, coherent, and centred subject. Hence the concept of reification enables us to understand this centred subject as an historical construct emerging from capitalism's mode of production, and parallels Hansen's micro-history of the emergence of the classical spectator, also defined as an isolated, free, centred subject.

3) Jameson notes that reification privileges vision: '[Reification leads to] the fragmentation of the bodily sensorium and the "reification" of sight itself, the new hierarchy of the senses which in very uneven ways begins to emerge from Descartes and Galileo (the primacy of the "geometrical") until it becomes the dominant vehicle for the "will to power" of mature capitalism itself.' [p126] The reification of vision by the capitalist mode of production highlights one of cinema's *historical conditions of possibility*. Here, Jameson's explanation of the transfer of sense experience to sight is very similar to Elsaesser's, no doubt because both refer to Lukács' seminal paper on reification.[12]

4) A further effect of reification, as Jameson points out, is that it establishes the false belief that the imaginary (the realm of the private, the individual and the psychological) exists outside the symbolic (the realm of the public, the social and the unconscious). The problem this generates is 'to imagine that, sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom.' This in turn strengthens 'the grip of

---

[10] Here I have greatly simplified Hansen's far more subtle and complex arguments and have also limited my discussion to the first section of the book, neglecting Hansen's monumental analysis of Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), and of Valentino and female spectatorship.

[11] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1982, p63.

[12] Georg Lukács, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', in *History and Class Consciousness*, (trans. Rodney Livingstone), Merlin Press, London 1971, pp83-222.

Necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual seeks refuge, in pursuit of the purely individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation'.[13] To liberate us from this false belief, Jameson argues, we must conceive the individual and the psychological as historical and political (as part of the symbolic) at the outset. Here, Jameson's comments parallel Hansen's micro-analysis of silent cinema's articulation of the public and private spheres.

5) Jameson notes that cinema emerged within the context of a historical dilemma in the arts, a dilemma that was the result of the artificial, reified division between the public and the private. With the emphasis focused on the illusory construction of the private domain, reception of the arts became nominalistic, in which shared motifs and values could no longer be taken for granted. Artists responded by producing private meanings and languages in their texts (a process of recoding pre-existing signifiers), and created open works of art which could be 'freely interpreted' by the individual consumer in any way s/he felt fit. Jameson writes:

> This is the point when film as an emergent cultural language and apparatus of the twentieth century assumes significant historical meaning. For it is, as Metz has instructed us, a very peculiar language indeed, a 'language without a lexicon' ('this does not mean that filmic expression lacks any kind of predetermined *units*, but such units, where they do exist, are patterns of construction rather than pre-existing elements of the sort provided by the dictionary.' [*Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, p212]) This is to say that the kinds of private language (special signifiers functioning as Lacanian 'upholstery tacks' [*points de capiton*]) we have become accustomed to in high modernist literature are here somehow authorized by the very nature of the cinematographic apparatus itself. [pp102-3]

In other words, Jameson is arguing that the *historical function* of the cinematographic apparatus is to promote the illusion of an individual, centered, coherent subject (as is cinema's function in Hansen's argument).

Jameson successfully identifies the historical determinations of contemporary film theory's findings (the construction by the cinematographic apparatus of an illustory, centered, coherent subject position etc.) but without challenging its essentializing tendency. This essentialism is manifest in both the contemporary film theorists' and Jameson's assertion that the cinema is inherently ideological at the outset. But for Elsaesser, it is 'a mistake to assume that the cinema was from the beginning 'ideological' in the accepted sense. On the contrary,' he continues, 'I believe that it is the task of film history to clarify the points and circumstances under which the cinema was appropriated as an instrument of ideology.' [*FHVP*, p69] In his recent anthology Elsaesser collects together a number of papers on early cinema which broach this issue.[14] As with Hansen's book, many of these papers attempt to determine how cinema developed a particular narrational logic, a problem Elsaesser sees as being tackled by film historians on three levels: the intrinsic development of early

[13] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, op.cit., p20.

[14] Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, BFI Publications, London 1990.

film form; the industrial, economic, legal, demographic, and technological factors which determined the emergence of the narrative feature film, now conceived as a commodity (and therefore open to ideological exploitation); and finally, the simultaneous emergence of continuity cinema and its particular mode of address, one that turns a collective audience into isolated spectators (Hansen's 'classical spectator'). Because this historical research defines cinema's appropriation of narration, not as a 'natural', inevitable fact, but as a contingent, historical addition to the cinema (articulated differently by each national cinema), it avoids at the outset all tendencies to essentialize.

Jameson begins to tackle the problem of essentialism in an analysis of the films of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. His analysis begins by noting that Syberberg reinvents the 'primitive' artist: 'What [Syberberg] produces is the low budget look of amateur actors, staged tableaux, and vaudeville-type numbers, essentially static and simply strung together ... As in the other arts, the stance of the amateur, the apologia for the homemade which characterizes the handicraft ethos, is often a wholesome form of de-reification.' [p64] The static tableau images mimic those of preclassicial cinema, from a time before the capitalist process of reification systematically organized the cinema into a thriving, profitable industry – and correlatively, a time before the logic of the film's structure had been delimited and organized into an efficient, standardized discourse, one that attempts to address the spectator as an individual, unified subject.

Yet the 'originality' of Syberberg's films, for Jameson, lies beyond their destructive (or negative) impulses, for these films also aim towards a Blochian cultural revolution, a revolution that aims to detect and appropriate the 'Utopian (or positive) impulse' at work within negative impulses (ranging from fascism, to nationalism, and consumerism). This positive dimension of Syberberg's films constitute a narrative structure – a structure, however, that conflicts with the films' tableau format.

The purpose behind Syberberg's films is therapeutic – 'a psychoanalysis and exorcism of the collective unconscious of Germany'. [p70] They are made in accordance with a 'spiritual method', which Jameson characterizes as 'a forcible short-circuiting of all the wires in the political unconscious ... an attempt to purge the sedimented contents of collective fantasy and ideological representation by reconnecting its symbolic counters so outrageously that they de-reify themselves'. [p73] But this process of de-reification does not lead, in the case of Syberberg, to a negative free play of signifiers, but to a positive attempt to come to terms with the real, historical significance of the subject matter of his films.

Jameson, however, remains sceptical (although not dismissive) of this positive, utopian impulse in Syberberg's films: 'The trouble is that ... the realities with which Syberberg attempts to grapple, realities marked by the names of such real historical actors as Wagner, Himmler, Hitler, Bismarck, and the like, are at once transformed [or reified] into so many personal signs in a private language, which becomes public, when the artist is successful, only as an institutionalized sign system.' [p80] The only hope of a utopian impulse lies in the transitional period (an historical moment) between the destruction of the old forms of representation and the inevitable reification of the new forms. Incidently, Jameson also sees this process of reification at work in the cultural appropriation of Godard's films: 'Even the films of Godard in hindsight seem susceptible to a kind of retroactive canonization-reification in which ostentatious marks of improvisation or editing interventions are frozen over after the fact (and by the sheer familiarity of numerous rescreenings) into the timeless features of the "masterworks".' [p188]

Jameson successfully avoids many of the pitfalls of contemporary film theory because he does not marginalize questions of history. However, as my discussion of the work of Elsaesser, Hansen, and the historians of early cinema indicates, many of Jameson's insights have also been made, with far more historical accuracy and theoretical systematicity, within film studies itself. His occasional essays are too fragmentary to form into any coherent theory (hence my reason for simply listing the main points), and the arguments presented in Part Two may confuse all but those who already have a detailed knowledge of Jameson's previous works. For these reasons *Signatures of the Visible* is not so much a work of film theory but seems more like the testament of a well-known 'outsider' who has become caught up in the imaginary pleasures of film and film theory.

PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT TEARS

Simon Frith

Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (eds), *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics*, ICA, London 1991; £9.95 paper.

The fourteen essays in this book started as talks at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1990. The speakers were brought together under the auspices of the ICA's Philosophical Forum to consider the relationship of art and philosophy. 'Art has long moved beyond the parameters of its traditional aesthetic idea,' suggest the talks' organisers, Peter Osborne and Andrew Benjamin, and this has had two consequences. First, philosophy now has to engage with individual works and their individual aesthetic claims rather than with the abstract entity 'art': philosophy and criticism are therefore 'inextricably intertwined, and both become bound to art history'. (pxi) Second, as exercises in aesthetic theory, art works have to take account of philosophy, of the possibilities of their own deconstruction. In short, 'if philosophy is to contribute to the deepening of our understanding of art, and art to an increased self-consciousness of the character and limitations of philosophy, each will have to be more open to the other than has hitherto been normal.' (pxv)

Both the words 'normal' and 'hitherto' seem a little lazy. Normal for whom? Normal since when? There's a confusion here about what's at stake – whose aesthetic? Whose history? A confusion that is reflected in the series title. Is the antithesis of 'traditional' aesthetics modernism or postmodernism? And what is meant by 'art'? It is only towards the end of the book that philosophical questions are asked of the performing arts (the book is dominated by fine art criticism); and even then there is only passing mention of popular culture, of the media arts, of the possibility that art might be collective, might not be confined to the West. For a book designed to challenge traditional ways of thinking, this collection remains pragmatically (if not theoretically) faithful to the presentation of art as an autonomous practice, defined by its own history, explicable through close study of individual works. This 'dialogue' between philosophers and artists turns out to be a conversation between philosophers, speaking on the artists' behalf. This is aesthetic theory from the productive point of view – the critic explaining how a work should be read.

But this is to over-generalize. The problem (and stimulus) of a collection like this is that editors can't exercise much control over what is said and written: this is not a coherent account of a coherent position: one paper contradicts another;

the most interesting and fertile ideas tend to lie in throwaway remarks, in passing comments. The pleasure of the book is that it can't be read as a linear argument built up block by block; rather it has to be treated serendipitously, as an awkward moment in one essay resonates with a quite different point in another. Argument here works in echoes and traces; to take the closing essays seriously means reading the opening ones anew. A review can't be a blow-by-blow commentary, a philosophical sportscast, but involves a series of statements (or, rather, restatements) of the issues that, in different but overlapping ways, engage every writer here even when – misled by the starting premise of art *versus* philosophy – they don't know it.

The most obvious account of the problem lies in the recurring reference to the 'autonomy' of art. As Christine Battersby points out in her lucid feminist 'defence' of aesthetics, the British left has long been suspicious of the 'disinterest' that seemed essential to Kantian aesthetic theory and has long sought to rewrite the question of artistic value in terms of a sociology of taste. The problem of this position – in which it is denied that the 'aesthetic' can be described without reference to class or race or gender interests – is laid bare in Margaret Iverson's essay on 'Postmodernism, Feminism and the Anti-aesthetic'. In rejecting Lyotard's apparent return to the 'sublime autonomy' of 1950s art theory (the artist as male hero, expressing his freedom through his alienation), Iverson celebrates those female artists who expose the social construction of their own imagery. But when she writes of Barbara Kruger that 'with her superimposed slogans, she forces out into the open the ideological content latent in the media images she appropriates,' (p87) or suggests that in *Interim* Mary Kelly presents in visual form a position 'similar to the one I have advanced here that Minimalism represented a crucial break in art practice which was to prove fruitful for feminist elaboration and critique', (p92) Iverson seems to describe art as simply an imaginative use of audio-visual teaching aids and artistic skill as the ability to wrap up an argument.

What is left for the aesthetic when art becomes pedagogy? Iverson implies nothing and good riddance, but that doesn't explain the impact of Kruger's or Kelly's work, or why their packaged arguments work on us differently – more pleasantly, more memorably – that in their usual academic setting. Do formal questions have no purchase on artistic value? This is the question that (differently put) dominates most of the essays here. A recurring issue, for example, is whether modern art is associated with abstraction – the refusal of representation – because art can no longer represent anything or because abstraction is, in itself, a way of representing modern experience. Peter Burger suggests this is precisely the problem of modernism, first raised by Hegel: 'Art is the unity of subject and object, of the intellect and the senses, and yet that is exactly what it cannot be since alienation is the fundamental condition of modern life. In a word: art in modernity is forever coming up against the conditions of its impossibility.' (p9) Howard Caygill explores this issue through Beckett's and Heidegger's attempts 'to think of art without aesthetic'. – 'Both writers suggest that the beyond aesthetic cannot be spoken, although it can be not spoken through negation or through excess.' (p27) David Batchelor and Peter Osborne argue that abstraction is not the same thing as non-representation. In Batchelor's words, 'it may be argued that a Mondrian or a Rothko is an image of *something*, but not an image of some *thing*. It seems safer to think of the work as representing, or attempting to express, a kind of conception or understanding of a world, to be *like* that world in an abstract way.' (p55) Osborne similarly understands abstraction as 'both a reflection of the form of social experience in developed capitalist societies and a specific artistic strategy to express such experience (alienation) through its distance from and dissonance with established aesthetic norms'.(p62)

Osborne is taking his argument from Adorno, and Adorno's version of the modernist dilemma is dominant here, even if, as Christa Burger points out, 'the passages in *Aesthetic Theory* which circumscribe the relationship between mimesis and rationality are extraordinarily opaque.' (p135) Adorno can certainly be read as following Kant in treating the aesthetic function as essentially cognitive. Artists represent the world by making an argument about it, know the world by working on it, and the modernist dilemma (the Hegelian issue) is that when subject and object are split – when the world can't be *grasped* – then the aesthetic atrophies. On the other hand, the artist's failure of expression can become, in itself, a way of knowing the world, knowing one's alienation from it. Cultural attention begins to focus on the struggle to express (and its heroics); the artistic process becomes more significant than the artistic object (which is now suspect). As Alistair Williams argues, for Adorno the music critic, modernism begins with Beethoven's 'spiritual isolation from the world' in his late work, and his 'recognition, in musical terms, of the irreconcilability of direct expression and form'.(p145)

Adorno's political concern was, in Osborne's words, how to understand 'the social determinants of artistic practice', without thereby denying its possibilities as a critical practice. What is at issue is not the relationship between expression and construction as such – the fact that what we want to say is always mediated by the forms and objects through which we have to speak – but that 'subjective' expression always involves objectification, means submitting ourselves either to the world of things (and magic) or to the world of reason (and technology). (Adorno, after all, once remarked that ideally Schoenberg's music should be read not heard; once musical instruments, musical bodies, are involved, the sounds become encrusted with extraneous social significance.) Art is, therefore, impossible – the subject can never be expressed through the object – but necessary. Not to try would be to die; death stalks Adorno's pages more poignantly than it does Beckett's.

Adorno's position hardly goes 'beyond' traditional aesthetics; rather, it laments their passing. The lost faculty is our individual ability to grasp the world formally and, indeed, we could say that 'traditional' aesthetics were constructed by modernism in its very frustration. I'm not at all clear that postmodernism goes beyond traditional aesthetics either. We may now pay lip service to the blurring of cultural boundaries, but artistic creativity, the work of the unique, original, 'individual' subject is still contrasted with craft, with the serial, institutional turnover of images. We may now assert that, cognitively, all texts are unstable, but the critical task remains interpretation.

The assumptions here, it seems, only become problematic when attention shifts from high art to the performing arts, to the popular arts, to the collective arts; when we ask not what it means to make art but what it means to respond to it.

To take the last point first, there is a clear belief in this book that the critic's task is to *explain art to its audience*. Michael Newman, for example, questions the value of double mimesis in such postmodern work as Cindy Sherman's not because he thinks viewers might not get the joke but because he thinks they might not get the point. But from a viewer's perspective the pleasure of the *trompe l'oeil*, like the pleasure of Cindy Sherman's photos, is not that we think, even momentarily, that such images are the real thing but that we know immediately that they're not: what we respond to is not the illusion but the creation of an illusion, just as when we're children we enjoy hand shadow rabbits because we know they're hands not rabbits!

This is to come to the problem of interpretation. Benjamin and Osborne agree that the 'crisis' in the aesthetic means that 'the need for interpretation is both intensified and deepened', (pxi) and presumably at least part of the point of this book is to provide examples of good art criticism – such as Howard Caygill on Greg Bright: 'His paintings and sculptures present neither things nor "thingness", but inscribe a route which, refusing to pass through aesthetic oppositions, nevertheless marks the recognition of an obligation. These works offer ways which are both excessive and negative.' (p27) – or Andrew Benjamin on Keifer: 'The approaches taken here to Keifer, while tentative, open up interpretation. Henceforth, interpretation, rather than involving the banality of an opened pluralism, will be linked to the opening of a plurality in which judgment is constrained to act.' (p109)

Says who? In this reader, at least, such authoritarian announcements (about rather indistinct black and white pictorial examples) are unconvincing – that is, they do not account for the artistic experience on offer. By contrast, in his discussion of muscial serialism, Alistair Williams occasionally lets slip a different (and unexplained) sort of descriptive term. 'There is,' he writes of Boulez's *Structures Là*, 'a certain austere beauty in the way certain sonorities or constellations of sonorities gleam through the texture.' (p149) (Note the self-protective use of the word 'certain'.) Boulez's 'extraordinary ear for texture and spacing,' Williams later notes, 'produces moments of sensuous beauty' in the 3rd Piano Sonata, (p152) and what's striking is less the theoretical significance of 'beauty' (for Boulez, as for Adorno, it seems to be defined in terms of a sensual immediacy) than that Williams assumes that his readers (Boulez's listeners) know what moments he's talking about.

The issue is the relevant significance for an aesthetic response of concept and feeling. The philosophers here mostly follow Christine Battersby in rejecting the Kantian notion of 'immediacy' and go beyond her by discounting sensuality too. Now in one respect this way of putting the argument – in terms of immediate response *versus* considered reflection – is mistaken. As Peter Burger elegantly argues, 'aesthetic discourse doesn't attach itself to works of art after the fact but is rather that which makes them possible in the first place,' (p12) and as Georgina Born makes clear in her piece on 'Music, Modernism, and Signification,' 'the core of music as culture is its existence as an organized and meaningful sound, which is already encultured, and which is perceived as "music" only by virtue of its difference from "noise" or "sound-in-general".' (p166) In short, 'immediate' – or sensual – response is already conceptually framed; which is not to say that there isn't an immediate response, even if most of the contributors here do seem peculiarly detached from it.

This is the reason why, for me, the most interesting essays in the book, the ones that do seek to go beyond traditional aesthetics, are those on the performing and 'mass' arts. Born's essay is the most straightforward of these. While still working within the modernist discourse she does question the boundaries of the aesthetic object: the meaning of music (and, by implication, all art) lies in its intertextuality. And the questions this raises about the creative process and the nature of interpretation are taken up, in different ways, in Sandra Kemp's arguments about dance (see pp91-102 in this issue), Jean-Jacques Lecercle's about cinema (again, see pp80-90 in this issue), and Sylviane Agacinski's about architecture.

Kemp addresses an aesthetic object which is unstable, an aesthetic experience which is elusive, an aesthetic material which is literally embodied, an aesthetic text which is both subject (willed movement) and object (of the choreographer, of the spectator, of discourse). Dance is a medium in which Adorno's terms (mimesis *vs* reason, construction *vs* expression) become indistinguishable. Kemp's point (and the argument applies to music too – even serialism) is that in dance aesthetic experience is 'something less than rational cognition; more than sensory awareness'. (p188)

In exploring the meaning of movement, Kemp raises questions about space and time, questions ignored in the fine art focus on the still depiction, in the art music focus on structure, but taken up in Lecercle's witty commentary on Deleuze's *Cinema* and Bergson's theory of the image. For Lecercle the importance of Deleuze's work is that it challenges the primacy of language in aesthetic (and interpretative) theory – the image, in his words, is no utterance; in terms of time and space, what we need to understand is not Freud's unconscious but cinema's – if the cine camera is a metaphor for a body with consciousness then the unconscious is simply that which the camera presently doesn't (but could, and might) see. Agacinski's essay on the monument asks another set of questions, about the purpose of art (putting material rather than perception to the test) and its social basis (a building, unlike a drawing or a blueprint, can only be 'read' as a collaborative act).

All these questions – about performance, about moving imagery, about technology, about collaboration – would have been pushed further if philosophers didn't continue to define art in such conventional terms. There's an irony here. In showing so powerfully the problems of an aesthetic theory dominated by problems of meaning and depiction, of an aesthetic theory which, in the end, equates art with language, Kemp and Lecercle aren't so much going beyond traditional aesthetics as reminding us of alternative philosophies – Bergson, and the eighteenth century rationalists, like Adam Smith, who took for granted music's superiority to the imitative arts. As usual, the way forward turns out to mean retracing the path by which we got here.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Kobena Mercer has worked at the British Film Institute and is currently teaching at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Jane M. Gaines is an Assistant Professor of English at Duke University where she is the director of the Program in Film and Video. She is the author of *Contested Culture: The Image, the Voice, and the Law* (University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming).

Couze Venn teaches cultural studies at the Polytechnic of East London, is co-author of *Changing the Subject* (Methuen), and is currently working on a book entitled *Occidentalism and its Discontents.*

Gregory Stephens is currently doing research on multicultural frontiers at the University of California, Davis. He has previously been manager and songwriter for the Ausin, Elouise Burrell and Trickle Down.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle is Professor of English at the University of Paris, Nanterre. He is author of *Philosophy Through the Looking Glass* (Hutchinson), *Frankenstein: mythe et philosophie* (PUF), and *The Violence of Language* (Routledge).

Sandra Kemp lectures in English at Glasgow University, and is author of *Kipling's Hidden Narratives.* She is also a 'Shelf Life' columnist for the *Times Higher Education Supplement,* and has trained previously in both ballet and Graham technique.

Graham Dawson teaches cultural studies at Brighton Polytechnic and has recently completed a PhD on 'Adventure, Masculinity and Empire'.

Daglind Sonolet is a sociologist of culture associated with the *Association pour le Développement des Recherches et Etudes Sociologiques, Economiques et Statistiques*, Paris. More recently she has worked on Sartre's and Kundera's novels and is currently engaged in research on questions of European cultural identity.

David Morley teaches in the Communication Department at Goldsmiths' College, University of London.

Kevin Robins works at the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He is co-author of *The Technical Fix* (Macmillan).