Cultural Studies In Its Mirror Phase

Ben Highmore

Catherine Driscoll, *Modernist Cultural Studies*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2010, 292pp; paperback £26.95

Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, 356pp; paperback £16.99

Paul Smith (ed), *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2011, 266pp; paperback £19.99

Graeme Turner, *What's become of Cultural Studies?*, London, Sage, 2012, 180pp; paperback £23.99

In the first pages of *What's Become of Cultural Studies?* Graeme Turner retells an apocryphal story: at a large cultural studies conference in Birmingham (it was the third *Crossroads in Cultural Studies* conference in 2000) one of 'the founding fathers of cultural studies' - my guess is that this is supposed to be Stuart Hall - is looking through the large book of abstracts. Turning to a colleague he mournfully asks: 'is this what we've become?' Of course you don't have to attend a cultural studies conference to get a sense of alienation crawling into your bones when reading through conference packs; that's the nature of the sprawling beast that is the 'international association conference'. Cultural studies, though, was meant to be different: this is the ambition many still cling to; and the petard that many are hoist by. The tale that Turner recounts sounds like a midlife crisis, where youthful promises and hopes are returned as a series of compromises, mis-directions and paths all-too-easily-trodden. Looking hard into the mirror of middle-age the difference that was or is cultural studies begins to look all too much like something familiar, something that no longer makes much of a difference. The four books under review here can be taken as symptoms of cultural studies' middle-age 'mirror-phase'. Yet if the male midlife-crisis familiar from TV dramas classically results in psychic meltdowns, 'inappropriate' liaisons and a spendthrift approach to fast cars, then here, as might be expected, we find a more moderate response to frustrated dreams and unrealised ambition - irritation and indignation but also mature reflection.

What are the differences that were meant to make the difference for cultural studies? Cultural studies was famously meant to be 'a project', and it was going to be a project that was in the business of producing 'really useful' knowledge. To gloss this somewhat; it wasn't going to be another discipline, but an ill-discipline driven by the urgencies of its analytic tasks rather than

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by a set of sclerotic conventions that produced cookie-cutter objects of knowledge.[1] Similarly, the job at hand was never going to be scholarship-for-scholarship's-sake, but knowledge that could face the test of social reality and find some purchase there. At its most damning the mirror held up to cultural studies shows an unwitting complicity with academic managerialism, whereby 'really useful knowledge' is repackaged as 'impact factors' for an audit culture that wants to quantify the usefulness of knowledge in terms of 'well-being' indicators, and ultimately in the currency of hard cash. The anti-disciplinarity of cultural studies is returned in the guise of a permission slip for ruthless university administrators to reconfigure schools and departments according to the assumed demands (always deemed 'necessities') of real estate, of staff pruning, and of student enrolment (the endless chasing of new markets and new 'useful' subjects - which includes anything that a character from *CSI* might call a job).

1. For an account of cultural studies in the 1980s as sclerotic convention and cookie-cutter production see Meaghan Morris, 'Banality in Cultural Studies', in Patricia Mellencamp (ed), *The Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990, pp14-43.

Such a view of cultural studies, which is sketched in the early pages of Turner's book, could well lead to a melancholic defeatism. Yet Turner is quick to shrug off such a mood and to turn his hand to the task of equipping cultural studies for the future - even if much of what he has to say casts the actuality of cultural studies (as it is practised in Australia, the United Kingdom and North America) in a fairly gloomy light. Turner does not hold back when it comes to diagnosing the problems that he sees facing cultural studies. Recognising that much of the perceived 'coolness' of cultural studies (for students and others) has been lost to programmes in the creative industries or new media, Turner offers an excoriating account of these 'new kids on the block'. Cultural studies, in refashioning itself in the guise of 'creative industries', for instance, not only cedes institutional space to projects with dubious political intentions but also relinquishes the assumed heritage of cultural studies to instrumental and affirmative ends. But the intellectual arguments that Turner might have in relation to this 'new cultural populism' propagated by 'convergence culture', new media and the creative industries is followed through with an audit of their institutional practices:

> The academic flimsiness of the creative industries and new media programmes I examined for this chapter proved to be quite shocking, in fact. I had not realised how little ground there was for the claiming of a cultural studies heritage, until I began searching the undergraduate programmes for evidence of that heritage. I found very little; indeed, in some cases, I found very little to suggest that these programmes bore allegiance to *any* academic tradition (pp176-7).

Ow. But if Turner is tough on new media and creative industries teaching he can be just as caustic in characterising what he sees passing for teaching within cultural studies programmes. The image he conjures of 'cultural studies 101', where students new to higher education and to cultural studies are made to

read great slabs of uncut theory, often couched in impenetrable prose, and then made to 'apply' it to the instructor's favourite bit of cult TV, is cutting. What is less clear is where this teaching actually occurs. Turner warns that it might be specific to Australia but that it would be recognisable elsewhere too. It is recognisable of course, but perhaps in the same way that dragons are: we know what they look like (in our myths and nightmares) but never where precisely to find them. He is less pessimistic about the possibilities for forms of cross-cultural dialogue and indigenised forms of cultural studies. Here his main example is centred on the journal *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* where, as Meaghan Morris puts it, there is 'the ambition of thinking *from* (rather than merely 'about') Inter-Asian localities'.[2] Such a journal, now twelve years old, is not content to just extend the purview of cultural studies (adding new objects and contexts): instead it seeks to re-imagine cultural studies with Asia as method rather than as object.[3]

2. Meaghan Morris, 'Inter-Asian Banality and Education', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 11, 2, (2010): 163.

3. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010.

At its heart the argument that underpins *What's Become of Cultural Studies?* is aimed at 'actually existing cultural studies' (in its various locales) and polemically disparages claims made for cultural studies' ill-disciplined status. For Turner cultural studies behaves exactly like a discipline but without reaping any of the intellectual and pedagogic benefits of being a discipline. So it has a raft of journals, a host of national and international associations, a canon of authors that simply must be referenced, and a strong sense of boundedness in terms of approach and appropriate objects. What it doesn't have is an agreed method and set of scholarly values that can be taught, used to make judgements about rigour, and argued over and critiqued. Early cultural studies practitioners benefitted from training in subjects such as literary criticism (the majority) or sociology and anthropology (the minority). This is to acknowledge that there are always disciplines within any interdisciplinarity and that they often provide the basis *from which* to approach the world and to approach other disciplines. To claim cultural studies as an anti-discipline is to rob generations of students of just such anchorage. For Turner, then, cultural studies suffers from too much poaching and not enough farming.

To establish a set of interpretative methods and scholarly procedures for cultural studies would be profoundly useful - pedagogically, intellectually, as well as contributing to its institutional recognition. The question of what those methods would be and how they would be taught is to open up the proverbial can of worms that Turner does his best to keep shut. His very hesitant account of how he used the Open University's (under Stuart Hall's leadership) 'circuits of culture' approach is to my mind inadequate, not least because it already establishes the sorts of enquiries that could usefully be pursued.[4] It is, to be fair, a reasonably expansive approach, but it might find it hard to deal with investigations concerned with environmental fear and security anxieties, for instance. More valuable, to my cast of mind, would be some form of meta-methodological training of the sort that historians designate by the term 'source criticism'. Here, though, we would need to direct it away

4. See, for instance, Paul du Gay *et al*, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Sony Walkman Story*, London, Sage, 1996 - which now also 'suffers' from being based around an outmoded piece of technology.

from its positivistic leanings and aim it towards the evaluation of sources that cultural studies scholars (as well as historians of a more culturalist hue) have often found most compelling. The question then would be what does source criticism look like when it is directed at 'the real world of theology and horses' (to quote Grossberg, quoting Richard Hoggart, quoting W.H. Auden)? To equip students and researchers with the ability to explain the epistemological value and character of what is often taken to be unreliable evidence (whether this is Reality TV or accounts of dreams) and to show what sort of explanatory fields it could serve as evidence for, would go, I think, some way to grounding cultural studies as a discipline without prescriptively determining its future direction.

If Turner's book is a short, sharp, shock, so to say, then Grossberg's book is a much slower, denser read that works to provide an exacting and ambitious disciplinary framework for contemporary cultural studies. Anyone who knows Grossberg's work will not be surprised by the evangelical tone that it often assumes: he is a cultural studies fundamentalist - a keeper of the keys - and his book benefits from this sense of total identification with the 'project' of cultural studies. But alongside his unswerving faith there is a rigorous generosity that is constantly inviting the reader to think along with him. Thus the dense theoretical clarifications are not done in the name of intellectual pyrotechnics but in terms of a ground-clearing to make cultural studies more productive and ambitious. For Grossberg the sense that cultural studies is a 'project' is not a matter of anti-disciplinarity, nor is it a matter of identification. I'd always shied away from repeating the mantra that cultural studies is a project (it always smacked of 'in' groups and 'out' groups, of demanding too much belonging), but here Grossberg offers a much more useable set of meanings to associate with the word project: simply that cultural studies work is ongoing, necessarily provisional, and is always going to be unfinished labour.

In a liberating move Grossberg insists that cultural studies is precisely not to be confused with the study of culture: 'too often, people have mistakenly assumed that cultural studies is about culture, while its real concern is always contexts and conjunctures' (p169). Culture is not the end for cultural studies analyses but the means: the end is always (for Grossberg) the clarification of the conjuncture. In this he clearly follows Stuart Hall's (who is Grossberg's mentor and muse) insistence that cultural studies is conjunctural studies.[5] 'Conjuncturalism' for Grossberg 'is a description of change, articulation, and contradiction; it describes a mobile multiplicity, the unity of which is always temporary and fractured [...] [it] looks to the changing configuration of forces that occasionally seek and sometimes arrive at a balance, or temporary settlement' (p41). The sense of invoking 'the' conjuncture, as a political and cultural horizon, might be less apposite than recognising that multiple conjunctures (with different temporalities) might exist alongside one another and that while they exist out there in the world, they are also,

5. For a recent conjunctural study see Stuart Hall 'The Neo-Liberal Revolution', *Cultural Studies*, 25, 6, (2011): 705-728; for an older one see Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, London, Verso, 1988.

importantly, the analytic product of cultural studies. This aspect becomes more important as Grossberg wants to support the deimperialising impetus of recent scholarly projects (such as *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*): to do this means recognising that Euro-modernity constitutes a limited field, that often coincides, conflicts, connects and disconnects with other modernities. This sense of how conjunctures in the plural might be researched and analysed is something that needs to be pursued further.

In one of the most exciting chapters of *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, Grossberg encourages cultural studies scholars to take up economics. But this isn't the usual move to remind us that political economy is important, and it isn't the usual interdisciplinarity that wants to adjust the disciplinary mix by adding a little bit more economic materialism. Grossberg's relentless ambition is at its most vivid here: he doesn't want cultural studies practitioners just to read a few books on economics (though he does admit that this might be a good place to start) but to go beyond the endless modelling that preoccupies much of academic economics ('economies are too important to be left to economists' p168). This is the other side of interdisciplinarity: the desire to critically extend the disciplinary fields that you're interacting with. If interdisciplinarity can often feel like 'blagging it' in several places at once, Grossberg's demand is to reach a level of critical competence in the discipline to be able to convincingly intervene within it. The result might mean making common cause with radical heterodox economics scholars and activists.

While *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* can feel, at times, that it lacks purchase in the world (it is, after all, primarily an exercise in what sometimes gets called 'theory building') it is remorselessly aimed at an engagement with where and what people actually are. Thus his discussion of affect, a theoretical field which can be bafflingly abstract, is addressed to what could be called the suturing of the social into lived experience. For Grossberg affect 'defines the way any relation is lived, the way any value is "attached" to the real. It is the multiplicity of ways in which people are anchored into their lives, the ways they belong at certain places and along certain trajectories' (p194). And it is here that the cultural acts as the conduit and condition of attachment, and the reason for the importance of the cultural in cultural studies.

There are clear continuities between Lawrence Grossberg's book and Driscoll's approach in *Modernist Cultural Studies*: both want to productively extend and destabilise the relationship between modernity, modernism and cultural studies. If Grossberg's book is a series of theoretical elaborations whereby the 'problem space' (his term) of modernity is pluralised outwards in what could be thought of as a general process of provincializing all territories and epochs such that a full range of modernities could gain clarity through their relational connections and disconnections, then Driscoll's book works to pluralise modernity 'from the inside' - so to say. Modernism (with a capital M) is, for *Modernist Cultural Studies*, a historical formation that exists in anthologies, curricula, and critical arguments; but 'modernism' as

a much more heterogeneous assortment of responses, feelings, description, prescriptions, and analyses (an assortment that could also include canonical works of Modernism) is unfinished and talks to us as the history of 'our' present (and the references to cultural forms in China and Japan suggest that this is at least a working hypothesis).

For anyone who has felt cultural studies' actuality to amount to a heavily policed embargo on anything that might be deemed elite culture or high art (apart from, of course, shelves and shelves of the sort of 'high' theory that can make *Ulysses* read like easily accessible prose), this is a breath of fresh air. But lest you see this as an encouragement to return to 'lit-crit' business-as-usual, be warned, this is a highly ambitious and reflexive book. Its 'argument is less a plea for (slightly) more established disciplines to take cultural studies seriously than it is a plea for contemporary humanities and social sciences, including cultural studies, to take modernism seriously' (p2). Partly this plea is pursued by showing how modernism (in the expanded and inclusive sense) is involved in exactly the same work that cultural studies is (telling productive stories of how we exist in the modern world), and partly by including cultural studies and other human sciences (modern anthropology and popular sexology, for instance) as modernist cultural forms. It is, however, hard to think of this book within the usual terms of scholarly argument. Driscoll's book doesn't so much argue as lay out a curriculum and set of research projects. As such the chapters are often detailed sketches for what could easily be a series of book length studies. It is at root cultural studies as historical enquiry: but it is neither a form of cultural history that seeks its evidence in literature and film, nor is it a form of social history that attempts to contextualise literature. There is a restless relational impetus here that makes it hard to distinguish objects-requiring-analysis from objects-that-can-be-used-to-explain. And this is for me what makes Driscoll's book so pleasurable: there isn't the usual design of figure and ground, object and context; in what is itself a modernist form (for instance in the all-over painting) Driscoll gives us nothing but ground, nothing but figure.

The chapters are constellations of disparate material that offer vivid and disquieting images of modernity. In a chapter that is bookended with a discussion of Martin Heidegger's 'The Age of the World Picture' we are shown World's Fairs and Disney, we encounter Malinowski and Boas, and read science fiction literature. In a chapter on modern love we meet the ingénue as a social figure, remember *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, discuss Freud and Marie Stopes, and stop off for a moment at *Playboy* and the pulp magazine *Thrilling Love*. At times this is itself thrilling at other times slightly vertiginous. Where it works best is in bringing to the surface social figures that only emerge through such digressive work because they are only traced within the margins of culture: 'the shopgirl is everyday modernism. I have no canonical, institutional, or historical access to her of the kind that would

allow me to write the thousandth book on Joyce or Woolf, except between the lines of some other text - she is someone a commentary passes by' (p106).

The method is clearly indebted to Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*; indeed one way of characterising *Modernist Cultural Studies* would be to see it as an attempt to extend Benjamin's arcades work into the twentieth century, but also to marshal it into a more manageable project. Driscoll quotes Benjamin's early understanding of the arcades as presenting surreal juxtapositions that offer a form of a cultural rebus: 'A world of secret affinities: palm tree and feather duster, hair dryer and Venus de Milo, prosthesis and letter-writing manual come together after a long separation. The odalisque lies in wait next to the inkwell, priestesses raise aloft ashtrays like patens' (p109). Of course the arcades present the (window) shopper with these cultural puzzles in the name of the commodity form. As a methodology it is appropriate to ask, though, on what grounds do some items get included and others excluded when writing cultural studies. And here again is where it is worth reading Driscoll in conjunction with Grossberg: it is conjunctural and contextual enquiry that directs the method. It is thereby not the cultural items in themselves that is the object of study; rather the cultural becomes the way of getting a line on the conjunctural. And it is this that connects 'modernism' and cultural studies as a conjunctural enquiry into an amalgam of feelings, manners, practices, sentiments; ways of being that we can call modernist. The conjunctural here is that complex admix of ways of loving, ways of being an adolescent, ways of holding your body, that are gendered, multiple, conflictual and alive today. And the reason for a cultural approach to the conjuncture is precisely because here we can glimpse the traces of the way that cultural forms anchor these feelings, these ways of being, in those dense documents and practices that invoke the cultural. By grasping the modernist conjuncture as a deep condition of gendering affect, Driscoll's book is profoundly, productively and constitutionally feminist in orientation.

If these books don't satisfy your craving for cultural studies' positioning then look no further than *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, an anthology of position 'papers' edited by Paul Smith. Each of the twenty five essays is short enough to read over breakfast and I imagine them being used by academics as early morning callisthenic exercises or performance enhancement supplements: you can use them to sharpen your sense of your own position (through agreements and disagreements); to find new ones; or simply to relish the arguments that matter to others. I can do little more, here, than to give you something of a flavour of one or two of them.

I was immediately drawn to one essay by Eric Cazdyn, called 'Toward a Vulgar Cultural Studies' hoping to find a more sweary, impolite form of cultural studies. Of course it was no such thing: rather it was a nuanced response to what the author takes to be the new 'vulgar capitalism' - a form of capitalism that has given up on the business of winning hearts and minds, and can instead parade brazenly in front of us all as the

'only show in town'. From the disciplinary field of Asian studies within the North American academy (the University of Toronto) Cazdyn asks how cultural studies could analyse the recent exponential rise in the use of antidepressants in Japan. What sort of 'vulgar cultural studies' could examine the interests of the pharmaceutical industry (where money and death are instrumentally configured) within a context such as modern Japan which could be approached as either exceptional (seen stereotypically as allergic to supposedly 'shameful' conditions like depression) or general (a culture within the relational sphere of global capitalism)?

Other essays pursue a more personal tonality, offering examples of what cultural studies self-fashioning looked like in Turkey during the 1970s or how difficult it has been at times to be a feminist and to identify with cultural studies. Political economy, Marxism, ethnography, pedagogy, media studies, and aesthetics are all polemically and productively explored in these little essays. At times it is clear that there are a range of commitments amongst the authors to cultural studies' actuality. On a very basic level very few of the writers work in departments or schools that are named cultural studies; instead institutional affiliations signal departments of English, Women's Studies, Global Affairs, Media and Communication, Political Science, Anthropology, Art and Public Policy, Sociology, and so on. On another level there is a degree of uncertainty and ambivalence about identifying wholeheartedly with cultural studies. The book ends with a lively conversation between Paul Smith and Andrew Ross. Ross is Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University and has practised a compelling form of activist cultural enquiry around labour conditions, political ecology, and most recently the occupy movement. In the conversation here there is a sense that for Ross the future of cultural studies is more or less a non-issue: more urgent is the form of analysis that can be performed within the academy for the benefit of social activism. For Ross it is both important that the kind of work that is done in the academy could only be done there (or why else stay there) and that while it should connect with activism it is not determined by the immediate temporality of activism: 'The goal is not to be in sync, because you are moving at different speeds, but to be subject to the same gravitational pull as the activists' (p246). This sense that cultural studies (or social and cultural analysis) might find variable rhythms in its connections to social reality is I think crucial and echoes with the sense of multiplying the notions of conjuncture and modernity.

The health of cultural studies will continue to be measured by academic programmes, refereed journals and conferences, but perhaps as importantly it should also be measured by the willingness (or unwillingness) of those who are doing important work 'elsewhere' to identify as cultural studies. Does current work on public feeling connected to queer studies or critical race studies think of itself as cultural studies? What are the spaces of identification that could allow work to be imagined as performance studies

and cultural studies, with critical anthropology *and* cultural studies? Can you practice philosophy and cultural studies or has the 'desire' of cultural studies migrated into a panoply of disciplines now 'cultured' (cultural geography, cultural sociology, and so on)? In its middle age and in its mirror phase cultural studies is having to cope with a success that has meant that it is already everywhere else.

Of Birds And Hands

Wendy Wheeler

Tom Tyler, *Ciferae: A Bestiary in Five Fingers*, (Posthumanities series no 19) Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012, 376pp; £22.50 paperback, £67.50 hardback

Tom Tyler's *Ciferae: A Bestiary in Five Fingers* is playful philosophy with a serious purpose. One imagines from his book's pragmaticist arguments that Tyler would dispute that there is any other meaningful kind. It joins that now rapidly growing field of animal studies which is a part of thinking beyond the human-centred which Cary Wolfe's Posthumanities series for the University of Minnesota Press has done so much to support. In hanging his bestiary from five fingers, Tyler means to release both our arguments and our nonhuman animal others from enslavement (from 'mancipium, literally "taken by hand"' to the emancipation of 'manumissus, "released from the hand"' (p264)) to the anthropocentric view which makes man the measure of all things. That the human animal's measure is both extraordinary and a source of much pain must form a later part of the argument upon which animal studies (and posthumanism generally) has embarked.

Tyler's book is a meditation on anthropomorphism, realist universalism, nominalism (i.e. human fictive categories) and pragmatism. Many have argued that our dexterous human hand is intimately tied to our dexterous human mind: a pragmatic and evolutionary version of mind as doing and becoming which Tyler's arguments will broadly support; as with anyone taking ecology, evolution and our biological confraternity with other species seriously, Tyler is out to argue against the nominalist idea that reality is an unknowable thing in itself which is clothed in human fictions.

The book is hung from the human hand, and from the (as some will know) vexed question of whether or not nonhuman animals have something sufficiently like it. Noting Protagoras's opposition to realism (i.e. the truth of mind-independent universal categories) and his claim that 'Man is the measure of all things' (p2), Tyler opens with the semiotics of indexes, the pointing of first fingers, and the cipher status of animals in philosophical texts. Derived from the Sanskrit *sunya* (meaning 'empty'), ciphers are (empty) placeholders for 'nothing' and then, eventually, secret codes for what must not be spoken directly. As Tyler notes, 'Although all manner of entities are fair game for cipherous appropriation, philosophers have been especially keen on animals' (p23). Ciferae are thus both 'meaningless' placeholders - mathematical zeros, *cifers* - and also wild animal (*ferae*) codes which philosophers think to domesticate in the service of their arguments, but which, Tyler will argue, may run riot with uncontrollable meanings: 'This wild side

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endures in even the most domesticated beasts, and we will find that whenever we meet a cipher, there is every chance that all the careful work undertaken for their master has already begun to come undone. These animals are not content to remain mere ciphers and demand to be treated otherwise' (p29).

Although Anglophone cultures (especially the scientific and worldly bits) are generally inclined to believe that the word 'metaphor' always has a silent 'only', 'just' or 'mere' before it, Tyler wants us to take both the word and its ramifications seriously. Of course, this means engaging with that arch nominalist finger-poker Friedrich Nietzsche and all his marching armies of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms. There is a long history, going back to F.W. Schelling at least, of understanding metaphor not as illusion, but as world-disclosing. Although Jakob von Uexküll, who might have served as an interesting counterpoint to Nietzsche here, doesn't appear in the index, Tyler understands that animals have worlds, and reminds us that Nietzsche thought so too. One imagines that Nietzsche's apparent nominalism must have been intended as something of a cattle-prod for hapless human animals overwhelmed by false humility: egotism out of its depth, as Hugh Kingsmill once said. Why, after all, if animals have access to worlds (good enough for them to survive, reproduce and thus evolve - Boltzmann's evolutionary pragmatism is invoked here contra Kant and idealism - see particularly chapter 4: *Digito Minimo*) why should human animals be so denied? Indeed, the truth of evolution biological and cultural is something which Nietzsche himself of course acknowledged (pp106-7). Thus chapter 2 ('Laugh Loudly and Flip Them the Bird') closes with the observation that 'there is no inherent anthropocentric bias to the component properties of epistemological realism' (p108). Against the remorseless and deeply problematic anthropocentrism of human constructivist relativism, this a welcome advance aided by the march of the animals.

Chapter 3 ('*Medico Testiculi Arietini* - On the Ring Finger a Ram's Testicles') grabs the ramifications of relativism (a bit of a balls up) ever more firmly. A discussion of Kant's dogged descriptions of the 'digestive system of our mind' (p115), as Karl Popper put it, reminds us of how much this idealism has in fact influenced the very limited realism of modern science. As Tyler writes, 'Kant has no doubt that there is *something* that is the ground for phenomena, but about that something we can know absolutely nothing' (p118). Or, as science puts it, all we have are data and models. In other words, and despite the common misconception that modern science is a fervent realism, even modern scientific 'realism' remains strongly infected by nominalism. Kant's own model is a labouring mechanism of computation. It is extremely unlikely that this is what either human or nonhuman animals do when they think (or arrive at 'judgments' as Kant puts it - as though immediate cognition, once past infancy, is a kind of ratcheting journey). Woe betide the survival of any animal with that kind of clunking cognitive mechanism at work between 'intuition' and 'understanding'; the fell Cartesian doctrine casts a long

computational shadow on the modern mind. Neither human nor animal mind and thinking are overly governed by the rules of logic - or not at least logic in the narrow sense in which it is too often understood in the Western philosophical tradition as self-conscious human calculation. As Tyler notes, Foucault called this anthropomorphism of mind and world 'transcendental narcissism' (p125). Thus onwards to Ferdinand de Saussure and Benjamin Whorf. Again, the absence of von Uexküll (and, after him, Thomas Sebeok), who argued that all organisms live in *signifying* worlds, although only humans have *language*, remains a puzzling omission.

This is a cogently argued and beautifully produced (and illustrated) argument for why the persistent invocation of animals in philosophy is significant, and for why animal knowing (as Nietzsche recognized) drives a cart and horses through anthropocentricism. It was his understanding that language (and culture) is evolutionary which led Nietzsche to the charge of linguistic relativism. Both Nietzsche, and Rorty after him, think that knowing simply *is* activity in the world; that's semiosis, but not reducible simply to language. Tyler rightly rejects relativism, and thinks (despite more than one mention of Peirce who was both semiotician and advocate of truth as emergent revelation over time) that realism is necessarily one-dimensional rather than (as Peirce himself thought) processual. Tyler thus comes down on the side of Jamesian pragmatism (inherited, slightly distorted, from Peirce: knowledge is doing; truth is lived rather than simply said). In fact, his own deeply interesting discussion of truth invoking the legend of the sphinx (part woman, part bird and part animal) tells us that there is more than one answer to the riddle: truth is (to put it in Peircean fashion) what will be revealed at the end of our processes of philosophical and scientific enquiry.

The observation that animals beyond only the human kind have semiotic lives and live in what are, to them, meaningful worlds, and that semiosis and meaning are universal truths beyond anthropocentric and relativist claims, should help to move both philosophy and its more earthly spawnings (in science and political economy especially) beyond the moral imbecilities which modernity has given birth to. These include, of course, our utilitarian attitude to animals, as well as to other human beings. Universalism in the hands of nominalists does, indeed, lead to totalizing catastrophe, but semiotic universalism and realism as such, as evolutionary ontology and epistemology, need not do so. That, like all other animals, we can get in touch with truths about our world - even where those truths are cultural extensions of antecedent natural patterns and forms of growth - is one of the benefits of animals studies when properly and thoroughly pursued. It is so pursued in Tom Tyler's timely *Ciferae* of wild animals running riot through supposedly settled questions.

The Transference In Culture

Molly Anne Rothenberg

James Penney, *The Structures of Love: Art and Politics Beyond the Transference*, Albany, NY, SUNY Press, 2012, 246 pp; $24.95 paperback

James Penney belongs to the valiant band of theorists who reach out to their cultural studies colleagues to explain why certain of their cherished assumptions derived from Derrida, Foucault, Butler, and Deleuze, among others, demand interrogation and to show how psychoanalytic theory, properly understood, would benefit them. (Disclosure: one of Penney's essays was included in a volume I co-edited with Dennis Foster and Slavoj Zizek on perversion and the social relation [Duke 2003]). He successfully challenges a formidable array of contemporary prejudices that are virtual pieties in the liberal humanities, such as 'appeals to the universal are inherently unethical'; 'subjects are functions of ideological interpellation and occupy multiple subject positions'; 'the political imperative of the humanities is to analyze how the victim of a power relation is denied a voice'. By articulating his theory in accessible terms and applying it to works in philosophy, postcolonial theory, cinema, and painting, Penney makes one of the strongest cases I've seen for the significance of psychoanalysis in work that aspires to ethical and political value. Students of cultural studies, especially those interested in the political and ethical implications of their work, would be well advised to take note.

At its most fundamental, Penney's work demonstrates that (contrary to current dogma) psychoanalysis is a theory of sociality. We become subjects when we become aware that the love we demand issues from an Other who is inaccessible and unknowable. The demand for love is the same as a demand to know what I mean to the Other: in this relationship, I locate the knowledge of the truth of my essential being outside of myself. To the extent that I share certain beliefs about the way to attract the love of the Other (what makes me significant to the Other/others), I feel myself to belong to a recognizable social world, despite the fact that each lure I deploy is both a genuine effort to make the Other declare my true value and a way of avoiding the realization either that I am not worthy of love or that the Other does not exist as such. This transferential relation (transferential because the demand addressed to the Other is transferred to particular human beings who serve as stand-ins) makes me a subject, although it occasions much uneasiness and has to be managed, most notably by imagining that the Other makes a demand upon me to be a certain way in order to receive love. Crucially, it is impossible for any subject to remain a subject without submitting to the transference: the social relation, despite and because of

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its asymmetricality, is essential to subjectivity.

Penney devotes his first chapter to edifying his readers about this relationship both in ordinary language and in more technical terminology derived through analysis of works by Freud and Lacan. He points out that

> the subject issues in the transference its demand for identity, for meaning … which the subject experiences as a demand *from the Other* with which it might potentially comply. Our humanity for Lacan is defined by a radical uncertainty about what society expects from us, what role it wants us to play, what identity it expects us to assume. We respond to this uncertainty with a demand for a path to follow, an ideal to uphold … Inevitably, however, the Other has to respond with a failure/refusal… The social resists all our demands that it provide an unambiguous and just law to which our desire might unconditionally submit. We are never fully satisfied that we have succeeded in conforming to society's opaque expectations, that we have met the elusive criteria for the Other's love (pp8-9).

In fact, the subject experiences that opacity not as evidence of the Other's inherent inability to offer up the subject's meaning (for the subject is thoroughly invested in locating its own meaning in the Other) but rather as the spur to create an unconscious fantasy of how best to provoke the Other into disclosing that meaning. This is the universal dimension of human subjectivity, while the particular ways in which any given individual's fantasy structures the transferential relation can be discerned through a psychoanalytic process. Penney argues that 'we can remain faithful to the work of singular artists and thinkers who take up the challenge of moving beyond the ego's claims to social recognition, and therefore beyond the treasonous ambivalences and compromises that arise when we fail to pursue desire beyond the limits policed by fear and anxiety,' that is, by interpreting the transferences through the 'traces of a sort of psychical *work*' in these texts (pxi). These artists and thinkers have come to understand that subjectivity is structured by the transference: Penney interprets their work not to expose the transferential fantasies of the particular creator (a symptomatic reading) but to show how each interrogates the general condition of subjectivity in order to try to go beyond the transference (a transferential reading).

Psychoanalysis, of course, provides a method for an individual to traverse the fundamental fantasy. Penney's readings show us what is at stake for Plato, Frantz Fanon, Jean Genet, Chantal Akerman, and Lucian Freud in their explorations of this beyond, their attempts to provide another route for their readers and viewers to go beyond the transference. In the process, Penney demonstrates a path for cultural studies that is attuned to historical and cultural specificity as a *consequence* of attending to the universality of the transference as the linchpin of the social relation.

His exposition of the transference does justice to the complexity of its defensive structure, so that when he applies it to philosophy, postcolonial studies, film studies, and painting, he is able to make genuine theoretical and methodological contributions in each field while deepening his readers' understanding of psychoanalytic theory. He repeatedly confronts and exposes *idées reçues* that have gone unchallenged, finding gold in texts that others have thoughtlessly discarded or scorned. At the same time, Penney scrupulously addresses ambiguous, difficult, and problematic moments in the texts of all of the thinkers he discusses, including Lacan and Freud, engaging other scholars' work - especially those with whom he disagrees - accurately and fairly. Penney is an enlightening guide who generates real excitement about his discoveries and a generous teacher who wants to ensure that his readers come away with a clear understanding of how to use the tools he is putting at their disposal.

Readers will benefit from Penney's rigorous yet accessible exposition of the transference in the first chapter. Penney re-visits the ambiguities of Freud's discussion of the transference to clarify the social nature of subjectivity in contrast to 'empirical and cognitive psychologisms' as well as the liberal humanist presuppositions undergirding cultural studies today, what Penney refers to as 'sociological reductionisms' (p19). In the course of this discussion, Penney takes up the standard arguments charging Freud with androcentrism, heterosexism, and bourgeois ideological biases not in order to refute them per se but rather to show, in a series of linked readings, how the places in Freud's texts that warrant these charges disclose the structure of the transference as a double and paradoxical representation, 'an edifying but troublingly inaccessible ideal and a degraded partial object that must remain outside at all costs', each of which corresponds to a different idea of love (p34). It is this structure, implicit in Freud's work and exposed in Lacan's, that provides the promise of a new basis for politically relevant work in cultural studies.

Penney turns to Lacan to explore the implications of this double representation for the analytic outcome and for ethico-political action in the social sphere, creating a tour de force exposition of Lacanian theory and its potential applications. Two notably difficult parts of Lacan's teachings are clarified and put to work here - the graph of desire (*Seminar XVI*) and the lesson on optics (*Four Fundamental Concepts*). Laying out the dynamic relationship among the ideal ego, ego ideal, and *objet a*, Penney convincingly argues for a shift from symptomatic to transferential interpretation in cultural studies. This theoretical framework serves as a much-needed critique of faulty assumptions about identification circulating in cultural studies today, a framework that bears real fruit in the five interpretive chapters that follow.

The second chapter reflects upon *The Symposium* as a theory of the transference. Penney makes good use of Martha Nussbaum's interpretation,

which he considers in large part to recast in ordinary language what Lacan finds in this text. At the same time, Penney goes beyond her interpretation to uncover a triadic 'structure of love' that she misses. One virtue of this chapter is that it clearly exemplifies the framework Penney has laid out in Chapter One, so that the reader can appreciate the analytic power that comes from distinguishing between the ego ideal and the imaginary version of *objet a* in the defiles of desire. The challenge of negotiating three complex texts sometimes leads to momentary confusions of reference, but on the whole Penney does an excellent job of keeping things straight.

Illuminating as this chapter is, the most important contributions to cultural studies appear in the subsequent four chapters. Because Penney is so careful to present his arguments in detail, with all of their warrants, it is impossible to summarize his achievements in each. Let me take the third chapter on Fanon as an example, even though I can only offer a preview. Penney brings together the two parts of Fanon's work that contemporary scholarship bifurcates into '(nominally) psychoanalytic and avowedly poststructuralist approaches' (p95) to show that 'the Fanonian intellectual is neither bi- or multicultural nor hybridized, as the mainstream of postcolonial theory would have us believe' (p93). Making use of the Badiouan concept of the event, Penney argues that Fanon's work constitutes a 'singularity' that gives voice to a radical revolutionary subject which dominant critical idioms fail to cognize (p94). By demonstrating that the psychoanalytic dimension of Fanon's thought is not where his critics locate it (Fanon has no real understanding of Lacan but relies on ego psychology and existentialism), Penney calls Bhabha and other critics to task, while offering through a transferential reading a more profound way of understanding Fanon's project in all its radicalism.

Penney shows that Fanon is trying to understand what gets in the way of the colonized subject's engagement with revolutionary desire and that the transferential framework allows us to grasp Fanon's analysis. He addresses himself to Fanon's famous Manicheanism, especially as it emerges in the response to Fodeba's poem at the conclusion to *The Wretched of the Earth*, making the following cogent observations that criticize the insufficiently theorized identificatory assumptions made by contemporary postcolonial studies:

> The bleak outcome of Fodeba's narrative in all its devastating outrage, symbolism, and typicality finally breaks the colonized's unconscious fascination with the prestige of colonial culture, putting a decisive end to the demand for cultural recognition that motivates the lofty projects of postcoloniality: the nostalgic rediscovery of long-lost African kingdoms or the folkloric recuperation of authentic indigenous cultural practices, for instance. The colonized finally abandons the project to establish a cultural identity acknowledged by the European colonial Other, a project

> that can only function as a politically inhibitory fetish. When Fanon writes that every colonized person will recognize themselves in Fodeba's poem, he isn't evoking the kind of recognition on which assertions of cultural identity depend. Recognition in this instance rests instead on the identification of the self with the colonized subject *as he appears as an object in colonial fantasy*; as precisely, the evil, immoral, primitive subhuman refuse that can be expediently discarded as a casualty of colonial progress or development. The transferential demand to be seen as one wants to be seen through the legitimizing eyes of the colonial master is now replaced by a confrontation with the brutal real of colonialism's death-bearing and ambivalent fascination with racialized alterity. Fanon mercilessly elucidates the seemingly paradoxical logic by which the political radicalization of the colonized occurs precisely through his internalization of the pathological, racializing images of colonialism itself. Unlike the consoling identitarian fantasies of postcoloniality, this wrenching subjective destitution holds within itself the power to wrest the colonized from his unconscious colonial dependency. The concrete suffering that it unveils persuades this subject to run the risk of a rebellion addressed not to the colonial authorities in all their idealized prestige and authority, but rather to her destitute peers among the wretched of the earth (pp115-16).

Penney explains that Fanon's radicality takes shape when he realizes that the response to the racist rhetoric of the colonizer ought not to incite the colonized subject to try to prove it *wrong*. Counterintuitive as it may seem, the colonizer's representation of the colonized potential destructiveness *inhibits* politicization. Instead, the colonized must realize that in their abjectness they 'cannot form the basis of a desirable, socially sanctioned identity' which means, very positively, that 'there is no sociologically defined limit - ethnic, tribal, religious, sexual - on the possibilities for affiliation with the cause' (p119). That is, their identification with the object of colonial degradation - an object so degraded that it is emptied of all significance - is precisely what enables them to achieve a 'generic' universality united against colonialism (p119).

Identifying with the 'evil' abject representation of themselves by the colonizer can dissolve particular identities (black, Asian, pidgin-speaking, Muslim, coloured, etc.): this is the key to establishing a voice of subalternity that 'bears no necessary relation to any social constituency … The Fanonian anticolonial intellectual does not *speak for* the masses' (p121). In this application of Badiou with Lacan (which, by the way, is not exactly the Lacan Badiou himself deploys), Penney makes his case for an 'anti-identitarian socialist universalism against the dominant vectors of differentiating particularization that are mobilized in liberal multiculturalist discourses, which hide a secret complicity with the neo-colonial logic of capital under

the obfuscating cloak of antiracist tolerance and respect for alterity' (p126).

Subsequent chapters reveal erudite engagements with pre-eminent scholars in cultural studies to explore the radical potential within the work of Genet (on Palestine) and Lucian Freud, as well as film director Chantal Akerman. Penney deftly locates the theoretical problems plaguing these scholarly approaches and convincingly makes his case that transferential readings not only rectify those problems but expose the political and ethical value of the artists' work. For example, in a discussion that should have substantial impact on media studies, he re-visits Christian Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier*, now largely regarded as a-historical and de-corporealized; Metz has been discarded in favour of a theory that assumes that 'spectatorship is more or less fully technologically determined and therefore varies experientially with the specific sort of audio-visual apparatus with which the spectator is engaged' (p163). Such phenomenological approaches are taken to be correctives to Metz. While Penney agrees with Metz's critics that the mirror-stage approach is naïve and not particularly helpful, he nonetheless points out that Metz is not working at the level of the experience, but rather theorizing a form of cinematic 'unpleasure' that works against identificatory processes in the cinema. Here Penney's theoretical framework is put to work weaving Metz, Lacan, and Freud together to elaborate an account of a primary identification with an apparatus as crucial to perception itself: 'This is to say, against the discourse of technologicism, that *the phenomenal world is already a screen that separates us from desire's realization*' (p169). Technological mediation per se is not the key to understanding the subjectivity effects of the cinema. Attributing to Metz the Kantian assumption that 'some function outside of experience must be presupposed in order to explain why my experience as a sensate subject can become intelligible as a unit, as a totality of interrelated impressions which reflect the particularity of my own personal engagement with the world,' Penney elaborates the way in which the apparatus serves this overarching function in cinema, 'a mechanism of defence against unconscious desire' (pp177, 180).

Taking on David Bordwell and Laura Mulvey, among others, he contends that Metz's insight allows us to see that cinema need not function as a means of Althusserian interpellation but rather as a means of '*authentic subjectivation*,' that is, as forcing an encounter with the externality of the function that makes the subject's sense of self cohere. This encounter 'destroys the pleasurable amorous synergy by means of which we aspire to see ourselves, from the outside as it were, as both master of and participant in the cinematic diegesis … the unpleasure occasioned by the failure of interpellation in spectatorship is a condition of possibility for what Freud calls the satisfaction of object libido' with the consequence that the spectator is precipitated out of his fantasy identifications and narcissistic sense of mastering space and time into the here and now of actual embodiment

that cannot, however, be psychically mapped (p180). Penney's transferential reading of Akerman's film shows how this failure of spectatorship can be staged and generated, which means that the filmgoer has the opportunity to undergo an experience beyond the transference.

The analyses of Genet's work on Palestine and Lucian Freud's approach to painting are also original and fascinating. The title of the book, unfortunately, does nothing to indicate the significance of its offerings: Penney would have been better served by something more provocative, such as 'Why Cultural Studies Needs the Transference.' The weaknesses of this text - occasional lapses in clear antecedents, a terrible index that often fails to include the names of authors referenced in footnotes, the occasional overreliance on his audience's knowledge of specific theories and debates, and some too-lengthy exposition of Freud's work - are outweighed by the value of the powerful analytic tool Penney has developed for cultural analysis in an ethical and political key.

Still Anthropocentric

Louise Westling

Anne Emmanuelle Berger and Marta Segarra (eds), *Demenageries: Thinking (of) Animals after Derrida*, Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2011, 267pp; £49.00

Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* has become the touchstone for anyone working in critical animal studies. Although, as *Demenageries* editors Anne Emmanuelle Berger and Marta Segarra point out, Derrida was concerned with animals in many earlier works, his posthumously published book is a culminating interrogation of the long humanist tradition exalting *homo sapiens* above all other forms of life. This is a timely critique, because, as Berger and Segarra assert in their introductory essay, humanism seems to have exhausted itself at the same time that ecological disaster threatens life on the planet (p3). Derrida sought to deconstruct traditional ideas of human/animal relations and open the way for fresh thinking about the place of animals in the biosphere, about human animality, about animal thinking and human *logos*. He explained that such a re-examination is necessary because our relations with other animals have reached an unprecedented transformation in the past two hundred years that has turned traditional forms of hunting, fishing, and domestication upside down. Advances in biological, zoological, ethological, and genetic knowledge and the industrialization of food production are causing a holocaust in the stockyards of the developed world, and genetic engineering threatens the very sources of life and species.[1]

Demenageries is a welcome effort to take up Derrida's challenges; however, editors Berger and Segarra have chosen to focus their collection, not on real animals and the major ontological and biological questions Derrida raises in his characteristically playful but deeply serious manner, but instead on how animals stimulate the human imaginary in texts: 'it is ultimately the basic correlation between subjectivity, self-reflexivity and human language that needs to be rethought and reformulated' (p5).

Several essays in the collection attempt to mimic Derrida's habitual word play as a method of exploring the many layers of connotation and complexity lurking in the language we use to consider these matters. Perhaps descending from Heidegger's lexical strategies, such tricks are often productive for Derrida but also occasionally silly and digressive. In the hands of his disciples, they can lead to self-indulgent solipsism that verges on the ridiculous. The title *Demenageries* seeks to pun on attention to, or dismantling of, animal menageries and the ordinary French verb for moving house. Leaving aside the awkward contrast of tone and situation between the two meanings, we might assume the pun suggests that the collection will move beyond Derrida

1. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, (trans) David Wills, New York, Fordham University Press, 2008, pp24-26. Subsequent references cited in the text as *The Animal*.

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to fresh considerations of real animals from biological, ethical, and ethological perspectives and the resulting consequences for better understanding of ourselves and changes in our relations with other animals. In fact, few of the essays move beyond Derrida or have much interest in actual animals. In several early chapters, names of animals are gleefully teased from Derrida's writings, so that for example, the 'que donc' of Derrida's original French title (*L'animal que donc je suis*) becomes an allusion to the word 'donkey' in English for Marie-Dominique Garnier in 'Animal Writes: Derrida's *Que Donc* and Other Tails'. Never mind that the original audience was French and that the French word for that animal is '*âne*'. Similarly, French words such as *vers* for English 'verse', *rêve*, and *pervers* become hunting-grounds for lurking worms (*vers*) that point back to Derrida's late essay '*Un ver à soie*' about silkworms he raised as a child and all the innuendos about identity and sexuality that can be interpreted in the tiny form of this creature. Most of *Demenageries* is concerned with texual matters, particularly in Derrida's writings, that the animal question can lead us to trace and decipher.

Before looking more directly at the range of essays in *Demenageries*, it will be useful to remind ourselves of Derrida's main emphases in the complex texture of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Revisiting Montaigne's famous question from 'The Apology for Raymond Sebond' about whether when he played with his cat, 'who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?'[2] Derrida expands the question into a Freudian primal scene in which his little female cat gazes at his naked body. Who are we under the gaze of a cat? A whole world of alternative subjectivities opens up, as Derrida revisits the question of human identity in the midst of all the animals with whom we share our being.

2. *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, Donald Frame (trans), Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1965, p 331.

Characteristically, Derrida uses puns to expose the complex associations of human animality with his title *L'animal que donc je suis*. In French the verb *suis* for 'I am' is spelled and pronounced in the same way as the verb 'I follow', allowing him to throw human relations with animals into a profound *aporia*. 'For I no longer know who, therefore, I am (following) or who it is I am chasing, who is following me or hunting me. Who comes before and who is after whom?' (*The Animal*, p10). In following up these questions, he deconstructs the Genesis accounts of human/animal relations, questions whether the animal can respond to us, calls for a new ethics in our relations with animals, and insists on attention to the multiplicity of animal kinds and individuals and thus for the abandonment of the monolithic term 'the animal'. He criticizes Heidegger, Lacan, and Levinas, among others, for never considering the possibility of being looked at by the animal they observe and write about, or indeed integrating ethological or primatological knowledge into their thinking. He fails to take this latter step himself, but he clearly opens the way for a necessary turn to the steadily proliferating scientific information about actual animals. His final challenge at the end of the book is a call for 'a radical reinterpretation of what is living' that pluralizes and varies the Heideggerian 'as such', and re-evaluates ontological difference (*The Animal*, p160).

Oddly, given his profound destabilization of philosophical and cultural tradition and his emphasis on the need for attention to animal science, Derrida refuses in rather overheated language to think about what he calls 'biologistic continuism'. For him, this would be like blinding oneself or sleepwalking; it would be naive and scatterbrained. Considering an evolutionary kinship between humans and other animals would be '*trop bête*', he says, too beastly or stupid, and it has sinister connotations associated with the bestializing of human groups in war and genocide. Thus he perpetuates Heidegger's insistence on an abyssal rupture between our species and all other animals (*The Animal*, pp29-31).

Even though most of the essays in *Demenageries* are focused on textual puzzles and human psychological states, many include fruitful commentary on Derrida's work and link it to other literary and cultural materials, both European and South African. The collection offers useful information for readers interested in the international reception of Derrida's work on animals, with essays by scholars from French, Spanish, Canadian, and American universities. Adeline Rother's excellent 'Say the Ram Survived: Altering the Binding of Isaac in Jacques Derrida's "Rams" and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*' takes up Derrida's concern with the killing of other animals for sacrificial purposes in contrast to industrial livestock production and slaughtering. Her analysis of the moral dilemma of euthanizing dogs in Coetzee's novel is especially powerful. On a related note, Rosalind Morris's 'Crowds and Powerlessness: Reading //kabbo and Canetti with Derrida in (South) Africa' places Derrida's ideas in the context of anthropological studies of South African tribal cultures and their attitudes towards animals and their sacrificial practices. Joseph Lavery considers wildness and domestication in 'Deconstruction and Petting: Untamed Animots in Derrida and Kafka'. Two essays offer readings of Derrida's essay on silkworms as extensions of concerns in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: Ginette Michaud's 'On a Serpentine Note', and Claudia Simma's '*Ver(s)*: Toward a Spirituality of One's Own'. Michaud's discussion ends with a provocative examination of Derrida's commentary on D.H. Lawrence's poem 'The Snake', showing how he points out the facial features and behaviors of the snake in a critique of Levinas's refusal to think that animals have the kind of 'face' that calls us to ethical responsibility.

Three other essays move farther beyond Derrida's texts, applying certain of his concerns to nineteenth-century children's literature, French ethnography, and mechanical recordings of animal sounds. Anne E. Berger's 'When Sophie Loved Animals' thoughtfully reads the 'peculiar and conflicted zoophilia' of Countess de Ségur's nineteenth-century autobiographical novels for children against Derrida's thinking. She suggests that these stories of ironic sadism towards animals reflect an epistemological narrowing of the gap between animals and humans in that period that caused a violent reassertion of species borders and an increased animalization of women. Joseph Siegel's 'Tout Autre est Tout Autre' examines French ethnography's approaches to alterity in its

treatment of African cultures, connecting the effect of the gaze of Derrida's cat with the way the gaze of Africans upon white Europeans made them feel uncanny. Derrida's translator David Wills turns to the Cartesian question of animal/machine relationships in 'Meditations for the Birds', musing upon questions raised by recorded bird song about non-rationocinative utterance, repetition, and response. What does it mean if living birds respond to recordings emitted by mechanical copies of birds?

In spite of the clever explorations of Derrida's writings which the collection offers, *Demenageries* is ultimately disappointing to this reader because it represents one more example of anthropocentrism that turns aside from the urgent crisis motivating Derrida's questioning of Western traditions and habits of thought about animals. Derrida indeed opens up the animal question to multiple *aporias*, but what needs to come after his work is a much broader effort of thinking about actual animals and engaging the scientific studies of animals that have been proliferating in the past several decades and now offer the possibility of cross-species communication, as Donald Griffin explains in *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness*. If we take Derrida seriously, we must attend to the work of primatologists like Frans DeWaal and Sue E. Savage-Rumbaugh, to the studies of elephant communication described by Caitlin O'Connell in *The Elephant's Secret Sense*, and to evolutionary biology as in the work of Lynn Margulis that reveals each human body to be its own ecosystem of microbes and viruses in symbiotic cooperation with our human cells. What becomes of Derrida's insistence on abyssal rupture in this context? Derrida condemns the monolithic term 'the animal' and insists on recognition of the multiplicity of differing animals; critical animal studies need to attend to the differences among specific animals and what they mean. How can humans know whether elephants have the 'as such' or how their abilities to perceive may be related to those of whales or bats? When Derrida asks in a theoretical sense whether 'the animal' responds to us, we ought to turn to books by gifted animal trainers like Vicki Hearne (*Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name*) to find fresh answers to that question, or the work of Swiss ethologist Heine Hediger or Hungarian-American linguist Thomas Sebeok. Scholars such as Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe are doing this. Ginette Michaud's essay 'On a Serpentine Note' explores the ways in which the silkworms raised by young Jacques seemed to gaze at him and act upon him, but finally her interest lies only in the ways the experience of watching the worms metamorphose and invisibly produce their silk filaments plays upon the developing psyche of the boy as he begins to awaken to his sexuality. We must stop obsessing about ourselves and actually pay attention to the philosophical consequences of evolution, the homologies between the bodies of *homo sapiens* and other animals, the communicative and sensing abilities of cetaceans, bats, elephants, migrating birds and butterflies, and return to the kinds of serious consideration of other animals as sentient agents who share our world and much of our biological lineage which we find in Montaigne and Darwin.

Booknotes

Pierre Bourdieu, *Picturing Algeria*, Franz Schultheis and Christine Frisinghelli (eds), New York, Columbia University Press, 2012, 230pp; £14.50 hardback

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) is recognised as one of the most influential social scientists of all time. Given his concern for such issues as class, status, taste, education, economy and politics, around which he built his theory of 'habitus' and its involvement in the production and reproduction of social patterns and systems, Bourdieu might be regarded as a sociologist's sociologist, a modern-day Emile Durkheim responsible for enhancing our understanding of the individual within the social and the social within the individual.

But as part of his writings on culture, Bourdieu has also become well known for producing some of the most original commentaries on the meaning and practice of photography, both in its everyday and sociological contexts. And in this remarkable new book we see how photography was not simply a sideline for Bourdieu, not simply incidental to his sociological and ethnological theories, but was in fact *central* to their development. Built around a collection of over 160 monochrome photographs taken by Bourdieu between 1957 and 1960 while he served as a soldier with the French army, *Picturing Algeria* is an intimate portrait of Algerian life amid the chaos and destruction of colonial struggle. The photographs are interspersed with excerpts from Bourdieu's diary notes and other writings on Algeria, as well as essays from other contributors including Craig Calhoun and Christine Frisinghelli.

If photographs represent a curious point between reality and representation, then these images are the perfect metaphors of Bourdieu's own in-between status as something of a double-agent in Algeria, working for a cold and detached colonial administration on the one hand, while connecting and sympathising with his subjects on the other. Bourdieu discusses the methodological role of the photographs as ethnological data in a candid interview with Franz Schultheis, which was conducted at the Collège de France, Paris, in June 2001. As if to corroborate Bourdieu's memories of his time in Algeria, a number of photographs are juxtaposed alongside his responses to Schultheis' questions. Some of the descriptions in Bourdieu's answers correspond with his visual illustrations of people, incidents and objects, emphasising the testimonial power of words and photographs in combination.

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of this book is its exploration of Bourdieu's theory of habitus and its application to the photographs. During the colonial war, the socio-economic basis of Algeria was being transformed by the French. In the name of 'civilisation', an agrarian society and an economy of sentimental bonds and supportive brotherly love was being rapidly dismantled and replaced by a one-dimensional, individuated capitalist system more

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readily recognisable (and apparently more pleasing) to the invading Western eye. Bourdieu's photographs provide a visual record of the displacement and 'resettlement' of Algerians into newly-built villages constructed with such geometric precision that Bourdieu likens them to the settlements of 'Roman colonizers' (p73). Such changes produced irreconcilable disorientation in many Algerians who could no longer understand and master their own social milieu. During the four decades that followed, these experiences would manifest themselves in Bourdieu's theoretical writings on the tightly interwoven structures of culture and economy which are part and parcel of any social fabric.

Picturing Algeria is essential reading for anyone interested in the life and work of Bourdieu. But it will also be of interest to those concerned with ethnography, and particularly visual ethnography and its significance as a sociological method. As compositions in themselves, many of the photographs in this book are compelling and beautiful; befitting of any of the masters of the medium, they attest not only to a disappearing way of life, but also to the extraordinary talent of Bourdieu himself as perhaps the foremost sociologist of the twentieth century.

Erkan Ali

Patrizia Di Bello, Colette Wilson, Shamoon Zamir (eds), *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*, London, IB Tauris, 2012, 288pp; £18.99 paperback

After decades of relative neglect in comparison with mainstream histories of photography (approached as either a canonised art form, or in its expanded social, documentary or scientific cultures), and other relatively under-researched fields such as the photo-exhibition or the illustrated photographic press, in the last ten years photobooks have begun to receive the attention they warrant. *The Photobook* is the latest in a number of recent publications to deal with the genre. It contains twelve essays generated by a series of workshops and a major conference held at Birkbeck, London, in 2009. There is much to commend in the collection, which crosses a disparate range of geographies and histories - from the medium's nineteenth century gentleman inventor Fox Talbot's 'Sun Pictures of Scotland', to the Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk's recent memories of Istanbul. However, such a diverse spread of periods, interests and locations also confuses the kind of focus a more historically- or thematically-specific study might offer. Furthermore, like many collections with conference origins - so popular at present due to the pressures to publish brought to bear on British higher education - the chapters are far too short to offer the reader a satisfactorily in-depth treatment of the many complex subjects and objects examined.

The editors' generalised approach takes any book - and in some cases, simply any *pages*, be they in magazines, newspapers or booklets - as a suitable object for analysis. Although providing only a sketched history of the photobook's

material development, Di Bello and Zamir's introduction fails to make apparent the significant difference between the appearance of photographs in nineteenth century books and the emergence of the photobook as a specific phenomenon and material object in the fraught modern and modernist visual cultures of the 1920s and '30s. Further, this superficial overview of the genre leads to several problematic reductions. For example, the irreconcilable strategies of Bertolt Brecht are conflated with those of Ed Ruscha (p9) - an issue that might also have arisen because of the nineteenth and early twentieth century specialisms of the editors. Further, there is a lack of any strong critical positioning vis-a-vis the genre's political and social cultures and forms. This is particularly the case given that the political and social relationship between image and text, producer and viewer/reader in photobooks are central to any nuanced reading of them. Surely the technology and materiality of the photobook cannot but be connected to the production of different spectators across these periods? Instead, Di Bello and Zamir stress that although ethical, political and cultural issues are by no means of secondary concern, 'they are approached firstly through an analysis of aesthetic practice rather than through a methodology which privileges the social construction of visual meaning over the aesthetic' (p7). Given the fact that the photobook, arguably more than any other genre, is entirely dependent on the knotty, often dialectical aggregation of content/form, and politics/aesthetics, it seems odd to try and separate or prioritise them thus. Paradoxically, however, the strongest essays in the collection all privilege the social construction of visual meaning. Those by Zamir, David Campany, Annabella Pollen and David Evans stand out. Zamir examines Edward S. Curtis' early twentieth century ethnographic study of the North American Indian; Campany considers Walker Evans' work for *Fortune* magazine in the '40s; Pollen explores mass participation and British vernacular photography of the 1980s, and Evans deals with Brecht's 1955 *War Primer* in the context of postwar and post-communist Berlin. In contrast, those essays which get stuck in superficial accounts of the genre's various material forms, such as Liz Well's overview of exhibition catalogues versus booklets contribute little to deepening or extending the present literature on photobooks.

The editors are at pains to stress that the collection is not intended as 'a history or a theorizing of genre', yet at the same time they claim the subject warrants 'new levels of integrated understanding beyond the more scattered studies which have come before' (p1). The non-committal agenda of the book and the brevity of the accounts contained within it arguably means it doesn't really deliver on these promises. This is a pity, as in many instances – such as Pollen's excellent reading of the commercially produced British bestseller *One Day for a Life* (1987), or Evans' fascinating foray into Heiner Müller and East German photographer Sibylle Bergemann's *A Spectre is Leaving Europe* (1990) - leave us hungry to find out more about both their contents and their forms.

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