

TOUCHES, TRACES AND TIMES

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Although this is officially an ‘unthemed’ issue of *New Formations* - collecting simply the best unsolicited submissions received by the journal over the past two years - the resonances and convergence between its various contributions are remarkable. Every article here is concerned in one way or another with issues around the theorisation of experience, affect, and temporality: with the technologically, temporally and socially distributed nature of experience. Several essays concern themselves in novel ways with the unstable relationship between the interior self and the surfaces on which it is reflected or expressed, and whose interrelationships are its condition of im/possibility. The irreducibly social and technological character of existence is a key theme which runs across several contributions. The historical specificity and/or the conceptual insufficiency of orthodox psychoanalytic doctrines is a recurring theme, explored here in an array of polemical and analytic contexts. The importance of the early twentieth century as a key point of historical and intellectual reference comes up in several different ways, even while other key moments - from the moment of Kant’s formulation of the modern subject to the events of 1968 to the present day - are crucial as well.

Lisa Baraitser’s essay considers the return of the ‘peace camp’ form of protest which has characterised recent pro-democracy uprisings, and re-reads Luisa Passerini’s classic 1988 study, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968*, as a way of understanding the intergenerational dynamics of protest. Baraitser argues that through an engagement with the psychoanalytic tropes of rememoration and delayed action, we can see how this text both engages and reverses the classic feminist slogan, ‘the personal is political’, showing that it is through a capacity to attach to one’s own generation and to establish retroactively the lateral relations of ‘my time’, that the work of psychoanalysis can take place. Drawing on Bracha Ettinger’s notion of the matrixial, the paper further proposes that this capacity for attachment to ‘my time’, is linked to what it is not possible to separate from, lose, or abject, which Ettinger traces as an alternative substrata to psychic life, marked in the feminine as a form of positive difference. Baraitser reads the matrixial in political rather than personal terms, linking it to a return to the aesthetics of communal living proposed by the ‘peace camp’. The paper concludes by tying together the double meaning of generation: generation as the collective time-frame of the political with generation as the matrixial substratum of psychic life.

Victoria Coulson makes a comparably radical engagement with psychoanalytic theory, contending that contemporary practices of literary criticism continue to reproduce and reiterate idealist propositions about the nature of subjectivity and the mind/body split. To explore this claim, her essay examines the reception by late twentieth- and early twenty-first century Anglophone scholarship of Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault’s work on shoplifting in fin-de-siècle Parisian department stores. The essay demonstrates that recent scholarship on de Clérambault reproduces the idealist assumptions that informed critical accounts of his work in the early 1990s, and locates these philosophical postulates within two interrelated poststructuralist interventions that enjoyed significant intellectual prestige in the 1980s and

1990s: the critique of the 'culture of consumption,' and the feminist deployment of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. The article proposes that a new interpretation of de Clérambault's work may challenge the sexual politics of the philosophical idealism that structured some of the most influential feminist scholarship of the poststructuralist era, and that continues to shape critical thinking today.

Rex Ferguson's essay covers adjacent ground, examining the emergence of new conceptions of selfhood, memoration, depth and surface around the turn of the twentieth century. In 1901, fingerprinting was first implemented by Scotland Yard for the purposes of criminal identification. Recording identity in the imprint left by a body's digits allowed for the identification of individuals on a mass scale, 'fixing' their identity with apparently incontrovertible certainty. But Ferguson argues that the fingerprint also served as an example of a much more enigmatic and 'impressionistic' identity that appears also in the discourses of two contemporary figures - Sigmund Freud and Joseph Conrad. In the development of psychoanalysis, particularly in texts such as *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud continually utilised the notion of the 'impression' to articulate his ideas, promoting theories that had a profound effect on how identity could be conceptualised. Likewise, the novel *Lord Jim* (1900) serves as a prime example of Conrad's literary impressionism: a style of writing self-consciously created as a response to a novelistic realism that failed to capture the essence of lived experience. In lifting prints, analyzing traces and reading impressions the discourses examined in this essay all display a dominating concern with the unintentional, the fragmentary and the imaginary, all of which had to be enhanced, analysed and represented by authoritative experts who could make the layman *see* true identity.

The political and conceptual status of the permanent record is a key theme of Helen Graham's essay, exploring as it does the implications of the fact that museums exist both to keep material culture safe and to make it available and 'accessible'. The article reports on the 'Museums for Us' project in which Graham was a key participant at the Smithsonian Institution 2010-11. This project involved people with intellectual disabilities, their families and teachers, exploring and sharing their experiences and views of museum visits. Using poetic ethnographic description, Graham re-encodes the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities visiting museums within an academic register, in order deliberately to explore the epistemic techniques through which certain ways of knowing 'access' as both life and contingency might become registrable as 'tacit' knowledge for a wider range of museum practitioners. The politics of knowledge and affect, the material infrastructure of experience and the mediated modalities of selfhood are key issues here as they are throughout the contributions to this issue.

Gary Hall's '#MySubjectivation' explores some of the implications of changes in the contemporary media landscape - including those associated with the development of corporate social media and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook - for the ways in which theorists and philosophers create, perform and circulate research and knowledge. Hall takes as his starting point Bernard Stiegler's claim that, in the era of the World Wide Web and digital reproducibility, we find ourselves in a context in which subjects are created with a new form of awareness of time. Hall pays special attention to the medium which Stiegler himself employs most frequently to analyse the relation between subjectivity, technology and time: the linearly written and organised, print-on-paper codex text, with all its associated concepts, values and habitual practices. Hall's essay asks if the ongoing changes to the media landscape that are said to be shaping our

memories and consciousness can be understood, analysed and rethought by subjectivities that continue to live, work and think on the basis of knowledge instruments originating in a very different epistemic environment; or conversely whether the continued reliance of theorists and philosophers on print-on-paper books and journals is an example of how capitalism's cultural and programming industries invent us and our own knowledge work.

Pursuing related themes to an ambitious level of abstraction, Scott Lash's essay addresses the question of the nature of experience as such in the epoch of 'technological modernity'. Lash explores the classically modern notion of experience in Kantian critique and argues that it is irreducibly dependent upon Kant's posited self-identical subject. Lash interrogates the temporal dimension of Kant's transcendental aesthetic, then moves on to consider the position shared by Badiou, Žižek and Lacan according to which the subject is constituted through a *subtraction* from experience in the context of a mathematical notion of time. Against this position, Lash seeks to rescue a positive conception of experience via phenomenological understandings of temporality in the work of Heidegger and Stiegler and a radical engagement with the religious thematic animating the late science-fiction writing of Philip K. Dick, which he sees as providing the basis for a socio-technical imaginary that engages structurally with cultural objects while understanding the technically mediated nature of time. The conception of experience which Lash draws from these sources is resolutely empiricist; yet its re-conceptualisation of the subject as a socio-technical system at the same time largely effaces the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental upon which theories of experience, subjectivity and temporality since Kant have often rested.

A key implication of Lash's argument is the determined rejection of any form of bourgeois or humanistic individualism. Gillian Swanson's essay explores just such themes, while connecting with earlier essays in this collection through its examination of psychological and psychoanalytic thought early in the twentieth century. Swanson points out that today, the social feeling which is understood to be the foundation of civil society is most commonly described using the concept of 'empathy': a transpersonal state of emotional extensiveness. But, as she demonstrates, this term was only introduced into Anglophone cultures in the first decade of the twentieth century, gaining purchase on social explanation over twenty years later. Her article examines competing understandings of social feeling in this period of transition, in particular noting those approaches which resisted defining it in terms of presumed individual processes of perception, 'inner imitation' and projection: these being assumed features of human psychology that modern ideas of empathy have derived from aesthetic theory. The psychologists, sociologists and political theorists discussed by Swanson invoked an innate capacity for association and 'fellowship' - the 'gregarious' and 'herd' instincts - while positing altruism as the expression of that transindividual tendency in externally directed action. According to these models, emotional extensiveness was tangled up with questions of creaturely sociability, the dynamics of collectivity and mutual tenderness: moving beyond the problem of simply perceiving 'other minds' to imagining the inner states of others in their social embeddedness. Hence the work of these long-neglected thinkers speaks directly to contemporary concerns with our capacity to respond to 'distant suffering', the everyday consolations of association and human presence, as well as the ability to effect social change in a complex world.

New Formations is very proud to present this collection of essays representing some of the most innovative and conceptually ambitious work in contemporary cultural theory.