Memory, Territory, Moods

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This issue of *New Formations* brings together a typically diverse selection of work in contemporary cultural studies and critical theory, as well as a major translation project of direct interest to ongoing debates in the field. Our recent issue (82) *Mood Work* started from and contributed to the very well-established interest in affect across a range of disciplines, while raising the question of 'mood' as a specific area of inquiry for cultural analysis, aesthetics or ethics. Following on from this, we here present a translation of a major essay by David Wellbery (first published in German in 2003), on the concept of *Stimmung*. This notoriously untranslatable term is closer to 'mood' than to any other in English, but also implies a whole conceptual problematic that closely relates to the idea of affect. Wellbery shows, in this incredibly comprehensive survey of uses of the term in philosophy and aesthetics, that *Stimmung* can at times be taken to designate a kind of 'comprehensive affectivity' that exceeds (or precedes) any simple logic of description or predication. We are very grateful to Rebecca Pohl for her excellent translation of this text.

Tina Kendall's article '#BOREDWITHMEG': Boredom Management through Networked Media' concerns itself with arguably the most modern of all moods: boredom. Kendall seeks to theorise boredom in the wake of the new technological modes of capture and commodification that have emerged in a digital network culture, by focusing on the popular 'What to do When You're Bored' sub-genre of YouTube video tutorials that are addressed largely to teenage audiences. These videos discursively frame boredom as both an everyday reality of adolescent life, and as a lurking affective threat that can only be managed through networked modes of communication. In her provocative and persuasive conclusion, Kendall suggests that a vital task for 'boredom studies' lies in acknowledging both the human and the non-human dimensions of boredom in the twenty-first century.

Also concerned with changing modes and modalities of contemporary media culture, Zara Dinnen and Sam McBean's 'The Face as Technology' reflects upon the emergence of the face in digital culture. In particular, they examine how the recent films of Scarlett Johansson tell stories about the face as made by and in relation to digital technology, but also in relation to discourses of celebrity, whiteness, and femininity. Building on work in the fields of art history, cinema studies, and surveillance studies, which have long established a technological interest in the human face, they move this critical discourse on significantly by locating in contemporary popular culture, and Hollywood narrative cinema in particular, anxieties about the face as a new kind of digital object.

Isabel Hesse's important essay, 'Competitive Memories: The Holocaust

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and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Contemporary British Culture', engages with recent attempts in memory theory to propose a pluralistic notion of 'non-competitive' memories, allowing multiple and different accounts of events to co-exist. Hesse argues that Israel/Palestine can be seen as a litmus case to show that even though in theory such concepts of memory are able to avoid a competition of suffering, in practice the Holocaust is still perceived as a validation of exclusive Jewish rights to territorial sovereignty in metropolitan discourses, thus often overriding the Palestinian history of suffering as well as Palestinian claims to a national homeland.

Simone Bignall's 'The Obscure Drama of the Political Idea: Postcolonial Negotiations, Deleuzian Structures and the Concept of Cooperation' is also concerned with ways of elaborating and negotiating relationships between different sets of territorial and ideological claims. Bignall makes a characteristically lucid use of some key Deleuzian concepts, arguing that Deleuze rarely countenances concepts such as 'rights' or 'democracy' not because his thought is apolitical, but because these typically refer to properties of political identities or to intentional processes occurring between coherent moral agents. From a Deleuzian perspective, politics primarily concerns the force of virtual desire and the preconscious conditions of coupling and interaction; its virtual infrastructure is a subterranean drama of relational individuation, directed by 'partial' and non-subjective 'agents of communication'. For Bignall, this 'obscure' plane of differential force relations is where the substance of Deleuze's political concepts must be sought. In this paper, she understands Deleuze's 'structuralism' in the light of a current political practice of negotiation that is shaping a new kind of relationship between the Indigenous Ngarrindjeri Nation and the South Australian State Government to produce a significant structural effect of decolonisation, arguing that a vital concept of cooperation is implied in Deleuze's depiction of a systemic 'difference operator' that 'relates difference to difference'.

Finally, in a fascinating analysis of the genealogy of contemporary neoliberalism, Michael Gardiner's 'Eco-Catastrophe, Arithmetic Patriotism, and the Thatcherite Promise of Nature' describes how the radical liberalism of the 1970s - the intellectual undergirding of Thatcherism - grew on the back of public perceptions of general crisis, while shifting attention from environmental issues to questions of a 'financial ecology', or money supply. As is already well known, the New Right came to power by taking advantage of a general mood of national crisis while shaping the prevailing interpretations and policy responses to that mood to their own end. In a valuable contribution to our understanding of that process, Gardiner analyses the 'political physics' of 1970s British neo/liberalism and the appeals made to Locke's understanding of nature by liberal Tory think-tanks, for whom price inflation indexed a fundamental social crisis that they interpreted as the result of a 'despotic' attack on natural law made by the trade unions.