

Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation. By Simon O'Sullivan. Pp. 256. NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, \$29.95.

Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari uses the Deleuzian encounter as a model for bringing art and philosophy into productive relation. In his interdisciplinary work, Simon O'Sullivan avoids the temptation to instrumentalize philosophy – to use it merely as a means of interpreting complex works of art. And he rejects reductive views of art that would treat it as the material expression of pre-formed philosophical concepts. Instead, O'Sullivan presents his work as an encounter between Deleuze's philosophy and contemporary art, taking Robert Smithson's earthworks and Gerhard Richter's abstracts as his case studies. In the first pages of his book, quoting from *Difference and Repetition*, O'Sullivan defines the encounter as 'something in the world [that] forces us to think' (p. 1). As an alternative to representation, which reinforces comfortable habits of thought and confirms our existing belief systems, the encounter, by means of its affective force and not without certain violence, stimulates in us the need to comprehend the confusion that follows its disruption of habit. As a break or rupture, an encounter forces us to reconfigure our way of interacting with the world.

Art Encounters is both an attempt to revive art history, which, O'Sullivan argues, operates through representation (or, more recently, through representation's crisis: deconstruction), and a lively introduction to Deleuze. But O'Sullivan's work also has more general implications, insofar as he posits 'thought beyond representation' as common to philosophy and to certain art practices. Both art and philosophy seek to create or construct what is radically new, whether by 'actualizing virtualities' or by generating 'possible worlds' based on innovative reconfigurations of existing materials. O'Sullivan imagines art's role in society as similar to that of philosophy: both must renew thought and stimulate us to see and think differently.

Of particular relevance is O'Sullivan's attempt to devise an affirmative and creative model for philosophy amidst the predominantly critical landscape of contemporary theory. Specifically, O'Sullivan seeks a constructive alternative to the 'melancholy' determinate negation of Adornian aesthetics — Adorno describes art's transformative power in terms of its negative capacity to unsettle 'what is,' thereby creating room for future possibilities — and to deconstruction. While critique is important, O'Sullivan faults Adornian aesthetics — he calls it a 'melancholic echo

chamber' — as well as the critical paradigm of deconstruction for remaining 'reactive rather than creative' (p. 77). Deleuze's work, which O'Sullivan praises for its 'creative and fundamentally constructive character', enables O'Sullivan to conceive of the function of contemporary art in society and philosophy as more constructive than critical (p. 13). O'Sullivan resituates Adorno's project, aligning it with the Barthes of *Mythologies* and ideology critique more generally, by giving it the task of ensuring that the new worlds created by art are not fascistic (hierarchical) or exclusionary, but rather, encourage the 'stuttering and stammering' that Deleuze associates with innovation.

The organization of *Art Encounters* is clearly given at the outset, and each of the five chapters contributes uniquely to the book's general project. The first chapter prepares the ground for a later discussion of art as both a 'minor' and a potentially subversive practice, and it describes 'rhizomatic structures' as a-centered root systems that subvert hierarchical order and encourage the forging of transversal connections between parts. The focus of chapter two is affect, which O'Sullivan describes variably as the virtual, the invisible, the general influence of a *body* on another body, or as 'the stuff that goes on 'beneath', or that always parallels, signification' (p. 43). Here O'Sullivan attempts to direct emphasis away from art's signifying function and toward its sensuous, intensive force, and its ability to operate on multiple signifying registers. The third chapter looks at art in relation to the political by drawing a connection between 'minor' literature (developed in Deleuze and Guattari's book on Kafka) and the left-wing terrorist group in 1970's Germany, the Red Army Faction (RAF). O'Sullivan's description of the RAF's *collective* expressions of defiance leads him to discuss Deleuze and Guattari's (respective) views on the construction of the subject, and the ways in which contemporary art practices encourage reconfigurations of subjectivity.

O'Sullivan's final two chapters focus on contemporary art practices as 'actualizations' of virtual worlds. In his discussion of Smithson's 'Yucatan Mirror Displacements' and 'Spiral Jetty', O'Sullivan stresses the idea that Smithson's art encourages alternate ways of seeing and experiencing the natural world: the mirrors placed amidst a desert landscape produce strange images — butterflies flying across a sky of gravel, for instance. The film that accompanies 'Spiral Jetty' involves a camera that operates as a 'machine eye opening us up to worlds beyond the human' (p. 120). In the case of

Richter, O'Sullivan views his abstract paintings as non-representational pictures of other 'possible worlds' (p. 128). For O'Sullivan, Richter's abstracts are both *realizations* (insofar as they are *material* artworks) and *actualizations* (insofar as their content points to virtual worlds yet to come).

It is not to the detriment of the book that the art practices discussed in O'Sullivan's final chapters do not explicitly exemplify the concept of the rhizome, affect and the use of 'minor' practices to resist the status quo. Smithson's earthworks and Richter's abstracts seem to invite, as if on their own, discussions of virtuality, the plane of immanence, subjectivity as a fold, the Baroque (understood here as art that exceeds its frame), and deterritorialization. O'Sullivan allows Smithson and Richter's artwork the freedom to relate and respond to Deleuzian concepts — and not merely the ones O'Sullivan describes in his own earlier chapters. This is refreshing, in that we do not have the sense of forced connections, but one drawback to this approach is the vertigo a reader experiences as Deleuzian concepts appear haphazardly throughout the text. The collision of concepts creates a mildly frustrating reading experience, though O'Sullivan insists that such disorientation is part of the effect he is trying to create.

O'Sullivan succeeds in mapping a constructive, affirmative philosophy in an intellectual climate of criticism, and his discussion of Smithson and

Richter's work in particular signals a rethinking of the role of contemporary art and philosophy in society. The strategies by which art and philosophy may stimulate innovation have been explored more recently in Elizabeth Grosz's book, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (Columbia University Press: 2008). Though Grosz focuses more on the natural, animal, and evolutionary instincts that motivate art — she defines art's origin as the 'framing' or organizing of space according to the interests of a body — she shares O'Sullivan's view that art leads to the 'other' and to new sensations and ways of being. Contemporary art practices themselves may even be more occupied than previously with the idea of stimulating new ways of seeing and being. The work of the Danish-Icelandic artist, Olafur Eliasson, is one such example. His project, 'New York City Waterfalls' (opened 26 June, 2008), is designed to alter the urban viewer's experience of the East River landscape; his work in general is designed to engage the viewer's body as it attempts to influence the way in which she experiences the world. O'Sullivan's discussion of Deleuze convincingly shows us the way in which art, instead of functioning as representation (a reflection of what exists), can stimulate us to reconfigure our interaction with the world.

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Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation. By Peter Hallward. Pp. 199, London/New York, Verso, 2006, £14.99.

The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze is fundamentally theological. This is the claim of Peter Hallward's new book. Hallward takes creation and redemption to be at the core of Deleuze's thought and supports this claim through an examination of a dazzling array of Deleuze's writings, from his two books on cinema to his books and essays on painting, literature, psychoanalysis, and, of course, philosophy. Although Deleuze proclaimed himself an atheist, Hallward argues that the logic of Deleuze's thought is undeniably religious.

This is a novel approach to Deleuze's work. Hallward takes Deleuze seriously as a major philosopher, but he also critically engages with his thought — in contrast to the typical star-gazing approach that characterizes much of the English language literature on Deleuze. Further, Hallward's approach markedly differs from the last attempt to read Deleuze through a theological lens: Philip Goodchild argued that Deleuze was in need of a theological supplement for his thought to be relevant to theology. For Hallward, no supple-

ment is needed: Deleuze's writings are all about theology, all of the time.

Hallward is a young British philosopher who rocketed to the top echelons of Anglophone Continental philosophy with his very solid — and felicitously timed — book introducing Alain Badiou to English language audiences. Badiou's interpretation of Deleuze has clearly influenced Hallward's new book: both go against the pieties of Deleuze scholarship by reading Deleuze as much closer to Heidegger than Deleuze himself would admit. However, the location of theological concerns at the center of Deleuze's thought is Hallward's own innovation. Hallward's prose is crisp and his points clear, supported by a thorough familiarity with Deleuze's *oeuvre* — although, unavoidably perhaps, Deleuze's own notorious obscurity is only mitigated, not eliminated, in Hallward's discussion.

Creation and redemption are the two themes which animate Deleuze, and a focus on these themes transforms the apparent complexity of Deleuze's