

“performance” under which the dramatic representation of a written text (especially as notoriously controlled as Beckett’s) enjoys little prestige.

The way in which Beckett’s after-image circulates through, is distributed in, and dialogues with twenty-first century cultural economies, institutions, and practices invites a critical intervention, perhaps by Cultural Studies or Performance Studies, which the more philosophical *Beckett after Beckett* does not embrace. The elegiac tone of this collection shelters its figure from a post-Beckettian cultural landscape in which it may or may not find a comfortable haunt, in which an after-image (consider, for example, the sheer excess of text and images that results from an internet search of “Samuel Beckett”) might not be one we recognize or wish to find, might no longer be “Beckettian” at all. Here, of course, there is a question of occasion: this volume is a centenary commemoration of a birth, a celebration of Beckett’s life and work. On these terms, *Beckett after Beckett* delivers a satisfying taste of new Beckett scholarship.

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Jensen, Caspar Bruun and Kjetil Rödje, Eds. *Deleuzian Intersections. Science, Technology, Anthropology.* New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2010. Pp. 278.

Relations between science and the humanities have not uniformly improved since C. P. Snow’s famous 1959 diagnosis of their “two cultures.” The Frankfurt School fostered a global suspicion of “technology and science as ideology,” as Habermas’s title had it. Simplistic versions of “social constructivism” (preached mostly in English departments), wherein any reference to science was dismissed out of hand as “essentialist,” hardly helped. On the other side of the fence, Alan Sokal’s 1996 parody of this went hand-in-hand with an equally global dismissal of any understanding of science by post-structuralists; in film studies, the “cognitive turn” has usually been accompanied by sweeping disavowals of so-called “grand theory.” N. Katherine Hayles’ work on the boundaries of science and humanities, Niklas Luhmann’s borrowings from cybernetics, or Friedrich Kittler’s histories of technology have remained exceptional; a great many humanities scholars still prefer a now very conventional culturalism. Since references to science and mathematics are frequent in Deleuze’s work, and more substantial than mere passing metaphors, he makes a logical point of departure for exploring a philosophy of science that would neither reduce the latter to mere “construction,” nor dismiss humanities methodologies as unprovable castles in the air.

For a new body of work to be broadly disseminated beyond the confines of a narrow circle of true believers, that work's concepts need to be critically tested, brought into contact with other discourses and concepts, and illustrated in more intuitive detail through pragmatic application to specific objects and problems. Thus Lacan was popularized through film studies and feminism, and Deleuze's notions of the movement-image and time-image have been made fruitful in analyses of particular films. This has not yet happened with other of his central ideas, however. The greatest obstacle to understanding Deleuze's concepts has been their central emphasis on virtuality and becoming, as opposed to actuality and being. The objection made to this position by even as sympathetic an observer as Alain Badiou is that it results in an "objectless knowledge" that cannot be pinned down or circumscribed in any specific way. If Deleuze's "event" defies any distinction between subject and object, if it is completely immanent within the world, then "everything is event," and how can one thus distinguish an event from the mere facts it is meant to oppose?¹ Without such determination or specification, Deleuzian concepts may risk resembling only rhetorical appeals to a certain style of thinking, rather than the latter's practice and application.

Matters are not helped by some of Deleuze's exegetes, who reinforce this problem with appeals to "the new" or, worse still, "creation" and the "creative"—terms banally familiar from popular everyday usage, thus without much content. What important philosopher was *not* creative or "new," and who would not claim to be? When it is argued here that Deleuze "evaluates the greatness of Nietzsche not in terms of detailed empirical knowledge but rather with a view to the creative potential that can be extracted from his analysis" (16), one immediately objects: why does "creative potential" have to be opposed to "detailed empirical knowledge?" The opposition leaves the "creative" hanging in an objectless void, immune to refutation. (It also misses the point of Nietzsche, the force of whose speculative thought was inseparable from his quite "detailed" and "empirical" philological evidence. Nietzsche, like Heidegger and Derrida after him, was paradoxically a "creative philologist.") The same may be said of catch-words like "heterogeneous," "disparate," and so on, which betray an aesthetic stance toward philosophical writing. In the same way, straw-man arguments are a risk in Deleuze scholarship: the ritual denunciations of Hegel and Plato, or the dismissal out of hand of "Western metaphysics" and "anything grand, solid and major" (13). A good example is the rejection of "the a priori essentialism of the norm of reciprocity" [23]: in a manner typical of straw-man arguments, a Kantian epistemological term is conflated with ontological "essentialism" (hardly

characteristic of Kant!) and sociological norms—with the denunciatory implication that norms, a feature of any and every society, are somehow a bad thing. Deleuze scholarship can only make real progress if it rids itself of this sort of self-sufficient rhetorical padding.

The best contributions in this volume are aware of this danger, and address it directly through genuinely critical and not merely apologetic discussions of their subject. If there is a central theme or topic to the book, it might be that first, the “constructivist” arguments of many practitioners of STS (Science and Technology Studies) claiming that scientific objectivity is merely a mask for ideological and political interests are too simplistic. To denounce science’s claim to truth as relative, while simultaneously asserting the “ultimate truth” of social context or political influence behind science, produces a methodological contradiction and fails to do justice to the complexity of science. This shortcoming thus leads to the question of what Deleuze might contribute to reformulating the problem. Second, however, Deleuze himself was notoriously disinterested in social science or sociology as such, from *Anti-Oedipus* to later works like *What Is Philosophy?* His famous trinity of art, science and philosophy in this last book leaves no place for sociology. To think about Deleuze and science must thus also mean asking questions about this blind spot in his work.

Isabelle Stengers, whose work is frequently referred to by other contributors, begins her essay by noting the divergence between *What is Philosophy?* and Deleuze and Guattari’s earlier work: in this last collaboration, there is no more mention of nomad sciences, but rather a stress on “mature” sciences as the only ones that may “intersect” with philosophy (42). She offers a concise characterization of Galilean scientific practice as an example, and imagines how philosophy might provide a concept for this practice (48). Oddly, Stengers concludes by evoking neo-pagan witchcraft rituals (52-55) as meant to represent a form of “acritical” practice. The unsettling conclusion thereby implied is that it does not matter what you believe, as long as you believe something contrafactual strongly enough to allow you to act. That this sort of decisionism in a void (familiar from the Situationists or the European far right in the 1920s and 1930s) could have problematic (political) consequences is not acknowledged.

Mariam Fraser’s chapter compares Deleuze with Whitehead and Latour, seeing him as closer to the former than the latter. Fraser’s argument pursues the potential of Deleuze’s notions of the virtual and the event, to a point before the divergence of fact and value, or virtual and actual. (A Germanist might think here of Hölderlin’s early fragment “Urteil und Sein” [*Judgment and Being*], which addresses the same question.) She wishes to avoid restricting this potential to the political-ethical judgments

of Latour (71). Her extended comparison with Whitehead is convincing, and yet at the end one wonders: if the virtual may be “minimally defined as a dimension of the actual that is *neither observable nor accessible in itself*” (77, my emphasis), if it may be linked with “what we are aware of [in nature, LP] *even if we have no words to name it*” (70, my emphasis), how can it “offer a ‘beyond’ actual states of affairs for the social scientist to look to” (77)? If, “for Deleuze, event is not solely a conceptual tool by which to critique mechanistic and reductionist understandings of the world” (75), what is it then?

After a piece by Katie Vann on Deleuze, masochism and humor, which although interesting has little connection with the rest of the volume, Steven Brown runs into similar problems to Fraser’s. The strongest sections of his essay are the critical ones, where he points out Deleuze’s own disinterest in sociology and Manuel De Landa’s extremely cavalier and superficial treatment of it. Brown notes that in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari “do not engage with Marx as a social scientist—that is, as someone who may or may not be offering more or less accurate accounts of historical transformation” (111). Instead, they “engage with social science solely as material for philosophical speculation”—in this, not unlike Adorno and Horkheimer’s use of anthropology in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, or Freud’s in *Totem and Taboo*. “Being no longer obliged to take into account a coherent version of human science, in either a Freudian or a Marxist dialect, they roam freely across topics without having to either situate themselves in relation to a tradition of work or clarify their relationship to the empirical details they mobilize” (112). This may be the debit side of the “creative” dimension of their work. Thus De Landa, too, “reproduces the particular (and quite peculiar) way in which Deleuze uses concepts to organize empirical fields without seeking to clarify the status of this creative conceptual work in relation to the objects that are already grasped and the epistemic traditions that have already caught hold of them” (113). Brown’s own suggestions of how this might be corrected, briefly sketched at the end (116-118), include trying to define a particular plane for social science (something not granted it in *What is Philosophy?*).

Geoffrey Bowker, too, is at his best in his criticisms of science and technology studies and actor-network theory. As he wittily notes in his conclusion, “I often think of science studies as being predicated on a set of not particularly useful negative commandments. Thou shalt not judge a work of science. Thou shalt not talk ontology, for that is the work of our subjects. Thou shalt not talk about large-scale social effects, for each scientific practice is peculiar unto itself” (136). So too in some writing

on Deleuze: “if all the fold does is to put scare quotes around insides, outsides, identities and categories without changing practice, then it is not so interesting” (131). In other words, if one cannot say what the fold, the event, or the virtual *are*, or what they *mean* in practice, one ends up again with a purely rhetorical theory, with a series of predictable and inaccurate straw-man attacks. Bowker himself is unfortunately not entirely free of these last, as when he claims that historicism stems from Hegel (130), when in fact historicism defined itself *against* Hegel, or when he asserts that we need to “get away from categories” (130), something Deleuze would never have suggested, or when he indulges in gratuitous potshots at Aristotle and Descartes (134). Another mistake lies in his claim that any definition of boundaries between inside and out is automatically “trans-historical.” “When the body gets trapped behind the skin, the soul within the body, or the state within the wall, then they become trans-historical entities about which one can speak lasting truth” (129). This is the sort of crude, sloppy Romanticism that does Deleuze most harm. Deleuze himself was far from this simplistic attitude. In fact, he wrote the exact opposite: Kant’s redefinition of the subject resulted in its radical *temporalization*, not some “trans-historical entity.” For Kant, “la forme sous laquelle l’existence indéterminée est déterminable par le Je pense, c’est la forme du temps... Les conséquences en sont extrêmes: mon existence indéterminée ne peut être déterminé que *dans le temps*...”²

A fascinating chapter by Adrian Mackenzie offers a media-theoretical view of Deleuze, linking *Difference and Repetition* to the nearly simultaneous patenting of early digital transmission technologies. Mackenzie reads the codec (compressor-decompressor or coder-decoder, a computer device for coding and decoding digital streams) as a “center of calculation” (Latour) or a “center of envelopment” (Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*). Extending Deleuze’s idea that “every thing thinks,” Mackenzie argues that codecs too “perceive.” This offers a radically different take on communications technology than, for instance, that of Friedrich Kittler’s information theory-based version, in which media, in a Hegelian “fury of disappearance,” must dematerialize into hardware and mathematical formulae, conceived after the model of the Lacanian Symbolic. The mathematical transform written into codecs “synthesizes space and time differently. The movement of contraction and the elementary consciousness it presupposes no longer occur only in the bodies of seeing subjects, but also in the technical apparatus of the codec... Already here, we see how a thing expresses an idea, if an idea can be understood as a problem-setting system of differential elements (eyes, infrastructures, screens, images, calculations, etc.) that form centers of envelopment around singularities”

(148). Codecs thus “envelop relations between eye and infrastructure” (153). One could add that in Luhmann’s terms, they are couplings between perception and economics. Mackenzie’s piece develops Deleuzian notions of seriality and shows an interesting kinship to chaos theory (cf. the discussion of “communication between heterogeneous series” [150]). The “excess” and “intensities” generated by codec technology spill out beyond the frame of perception into “video material culture” (153) as well: Mackenzie implies that the culture of violence often associated with video is linked to its partly imperceptible microtechnology, its program.

This is followed by another of the strongest pieces in the book, by Andrew Pickering, who offers a brief sketch of cybernetics as a “nomad science” of complexity, emergence and becoming. Pickering’s history of this field again offers a view diametrically opposed to the better-known coupling of cybernetics and information theory with the military in the work of Kittler and Virilio. One could expand Pickering’s perspective to include figures like George Spencer Brown, Ranulph Glanville, Gotthard Günther, or Rudolf Kaehr, on the esoteric fringes of systems theory; this view of history has also been filmed in Lutz Dammbeck’s 2003 documentary *Das Netz (The Net)*, on the wild 1960s prehistory of the Internet and its links to hippie and Merry Prankster subcultures.

After Erich Schienke’s somewhat specialized mapping of Deleuze’s thought on cinema onto scientific diagrams, the chapter by Arturo Escobar and Michal Osterweil on “social movements” is the weakest in the volume. Deleuze and Guattari’s questionable linkage of capitalism and the state is taken over here (202), in complete disregard of transnational capitalism’s tendency since the 1980s to *dismantle* national states as regulatory obstacles to the flow of capital. Cliché after cliché from current American *bien-pensant* academic jargon are ritually piled up, with little attention to Deleuze’s specific arguments: “we need to move away from ways of thinking based on binaries, totalities, generative structures, pre-assumed unities, rigid laws, logocentric rationalities [*sic!*], conscious production, ideology, genetic determination, simple dialectics and macro-politics, and embrace instead multiplicities, lines of flight, indetermination, tracings, movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization, becoming, in-betweenness, morphogenesis, chaosmos, rhizomes, micropolitics and intensive differences and assemblages” (208). In this very characteristic sample, Deleuze is reduced to a litany or a laundry list, a creed demanding religious assent and not thought.

The book’s last essay, by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, is however, outstanding, and is devoted to Deleuze and anthropology. Castro has precisely the careful sensitivity to nuance that Escobar and Osterweil lack:

unlike them, he notes that hermeneutical part-whole relations are not relevant to Deleuze (224; compare 193), and corrects Jameson's misreading of Deleuze as a dualist (226). His essay is divided into two parts, the first relating Deleuze and Guattari's work to the anthropological tradition (rather as Steven Brown earlier suggested we should do with sociology) and the second analyzing their reformulation of kinship theory. Among the many interesting points in his first half, one might mention the idea that difference is asymmetrical, "not the same in both directions" (226). This could be illustrated by Proust's noting that the bourgeoisie and aristocracy have of each other "une vue aussi chimérique" as do the inhabitants of the beaches of Rivebelle and Marcouville: "de Rivebelle on voit un peu Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse; mais cela même trompe, car on croit qu'on est vu de Marcouville, d'où au contraire les splendeurs de Rivebelle sont en grande partie invisibles."³ Difference, for Deleuze, is not only non-dialectical, but also distinct from Luhmann's differentiations or binaries (although, like the latter, it may create a "blind spot" or "unmarked space"). One intuits in Castro's essay the possibility of a different kind of cultural history than the Geertz-inspired thick descriptions of New Historicism, one characterized by "intensities" and "singularities" which would still be disjunctively related to each other, not merely described.

The second half of Castro's piece traces the shift, from *Anti-Oedipus* to *A Thousand Plateaus*, regarding kinship. Where *Anti-Oedipus*, in its critique of the incest taboo and the family, prefers filiation and production to alliance and exchange, the latter book inverts this, rejecting filiation for alliance (233, 237). Alliance however changes its shape and place in the process: "The concept of alliance ceases designating an institution—a structure—and becomes a power, a potential—a becoming. From alliance as form to alliance as force, bypassing filiation as substance. We are no longer in the structural-mythical element of totemism, but neither are we in the serial-mythical element of sacrifice; we are in the real-magical element of becoming" (240). Castro points up his argument with cross-references to other anthropologists like Marilyn Strathern, Roy Wagner or Marcel Griaule.

The best contributions in the book, like Castro's, neither reduce Deleuze's "philosophy to another great divide theory" (227), as Escobar and Osterweil's above-quoted litany does, nor subsume it into the clichéd sameness of pop postmodernism. So Castro notes that Deleuze and Guattari "do not suppose that dualisms are a surmountable obstacle through the sheer power of wishful unthinking, like those who fancy that it is enough to call someone else a dualist to stop being one themselves;" nor do they think that "dualisms are the event horizon of Western metaphys-

ics" (227). One must not confuse Deleuze with deconstructivism, nor with predictable attacks on "totalities" or "systems." As Deleuze himself said in a 1980 interview: "systems have lost none of their power,"⁴ and philosophy's formation of concepts—not mere rhetoric—must answer this in kind. To consider anew the relation of science and humanities beyond the simplistic finger-pointing of "social constructivism" or the reductivism of STS, as this book does, is an important direction for continuing Deleuze's project.

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Notes

1. Badiou, "Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque," in C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski, *Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 51-69.
2. *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF 1968), 116 (Deleuze's emphasis).
3. *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 336-337.
4. "8 ans après: Entretien 1980," *L'Arc* 49 (1980, rev. ed.): *Deleuze*, p. 99.