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REVIEWS

Dreaming about the Renaissance

The Pagan Dream of the Renaissance by *Joscelyn Godwin,* London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002, 304 pp., 238 b. & w. illus., £26.00

This book on the Renaissance is an unusual one that aims to engage with some of the most fundamental issues of that period. Above all, it sets out to explore what is perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of its art, namely the coming to widespread prominence of mythological subject matter, and to examine the motivations of those drawn to such imagery for their commissions. In doing so, it looks at many aspects of Renaissance culture, by covering a wide range of artistic genres, giving special attention to the decorations of *studioli* and other rooms of courtly palaces, and also to a series of related topics, notably garden design, festivals and even early operatic productions.

The book's structure becomes more understandable when it is known that the author's background is in cultural history and particularly in musicology, and that recently (1999) he has also published an invaluable English translation of that extraordinary early Renaissance work of literary fiction, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Examining opera near the end of the book, the author discusses the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* in some detail near the beginning, because he considers it to encapsulate many of the themes that he explores subsequently, and to reflect the same impulses as those taken up in the patronage of the art and the other works under consideration. This is not just because it deals with the world of the ancient gods and with landscapes filled with fantastical circular buildings and other architectural marvels that are represented in its numerous woodcut illustrations, but because the account is one of a dream, so that it is vivid and engaging but at the same time separate from the world of reality.

In fact, this notion of the 'dream' is taken up in the book's introductory and concluding chapters, which is where the whole framework of the author's approach is set out and elaborated in some considerable detail. The key concept here is that the Renaissance fascination with the pagan gods was somehow itself a 'dream', meaning that it was a subconscious, or 'secret', desire of the period that led patrons to engage with pagan imagery. This fascination, however, is still acknowledged as being in some sense a 'movement', with themes and ideas being transmitted from place to place, especially from Italy to northern Europe, and great emphasis is placed on the courtly connections of the period, which are explored extensively in the opening pages. Consideration is also given to some of the important thinkers of the time, especially the 'neoplatonic' philosopher Marsilio Ficino, whose contribution to the Renaissance re-conception of the ancient gods is in later chapters many times reiterated.

What is specifically meant by a 'dream', which is the thematic glue of this book, is initially left rather unclear, although some of its nature gradually becomes apparent.

Early on (p. 2), the author declares that his intention is 'to show how the dream of an alternative pagan cosmos entered the European imagination through the visual and performing arts'. By this he means that the 'dream' was in some sense an alternative to the established beliefs of Christianity, being not of course a direct challenge but nevertheless an imaginable alternative, in that 'people of that period "dreamed" of being pagans', and had a 'secret affinity' for the divinities of Antiquity. In the following pages, we are then treated to a view of the Renaissance that links it with a 'pagan aesthetic', with Venus nominated as the movement's 'patroness', and we are given some account of the origins and subsequent development of this 'pagan revival'. Especially prominent here is the writer George Gemistos Plethon, who came to Italy from Greece and inspired Cosimo de' Medici to commission Ficino's translation of Plato, which in turn prompted the founding in Florence of the so-called 'Platonic Academy'. This subsequently leads to a consideration of mid-fifteenth-century humanism in Rome, in particular the so-called 'Roman Academy' and its conflict with Pope Paul II, which resulted in some of the academicians being charged with heresy and imprisoned. From here, we then trace some of the lines of influence from Italy to northern Europe, and follow the progress of 'a mood, a longing and a hunger for a particular form of beauty' which, as we have now learned, lies at the core of a new artistic and cultural vision. What is rather problematic about all this, however, is that the key theme of the 'dream' has still not been defined precisely enough for it to be applied, let alone charted. So we cannot easily understand how the outlooks of certain scholars working in mid-fifteenth-century Italy actually have any bearing on the art of that time, or how the initial manifestation of the 'dream' then relates to the philosophical inquiries of the later Renaissance (which are excluded from consideration) and the artistic predilections of this subsequent period in either Italy or northern Europe. The 'dream', then, remains for the moment very elusive, and this is in good part why the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, examined in the following chapter, plays such an important part in the overall argument, because it has the indisputable merit of being quite literally about a dream of the pagan gods and the world of Antiquity.

It is not until a long way into in the book's final chapter that the full significance of what is really meant by a 'dream' is finally revealed. We turn there (p. 250) to what are described as some 'more esoteric aspects' of the book's subject, which begin with 'the question of persistence of pagan academies or initiate Orders'. What then follows is a presentation of a most murky and convoluted piece of 'evidence': a mid-nineteenth-century translation (by a Masonic Hermeticist) of an earlier manuscript which 'purported' to relate the long and complex history of the 'Pythagorean Order', a body supposedly established in Antiquity and kept alive during the Middle Ages, before being rejuvenated in Italy as the 'Order of Pednosophers' by the likes of Plethon, Cosimo de' Medici and the 'Roman Academy', and flowering in Renaissance Europe before it was suppressed again in the seventeenth century. Yet what is being said at this point is deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, the author gives some indication that the tale could be true, not least because the 'history' of this order during Renaissance times tallies so very neatly with his own history of the book's central theme, as set out in the introductory chapter. On the other hand he then advises open-minded caution, claiming at this point to be stopping short of 'any theories of conspiracy or initiatic transmission', and to be restricting himself to the 'visible evidence for something not requiring Orders or rites', so that the matter – if this was ever seriously intended as an explanation for the Renaissance interest in the ancient gods – is ostensibly left unresolved. Instead he proceeds to a second of the 'esoteric aspects', and this is where the notion of the 'dream' is at last addressed directly. Following a preamble referring to Jung and other like-minded thinkers, this is finally related to the concepts of the 'collective unconscious' and

the 'Imaginal World', described as being an 'independently existing world accessible through the inward senses', with the conclusion being that 'the artists of the Renaissance regained access to the particular mansion that contains the images of Greco-Roman paganism.' Many, of course, will dismiss this explanation of the Renaissance and its art as unsupportable, unwarranted and misleading, but it is worth saying that it does have certain virtues. Thus we may decide to reject this concept of the 'dream' as the motivation behind the Renaissance preoccupation with Antique imagery but at least it has the merit of providing an overarching framework and a theoretical justification for dealing with such a wide range of Renaissance art and production as a unified phenomenon. And while we may wish to distance ourselves from the related concept of the 'collective unconscious', we may still accept that this Renaissance phenomenon was dependent upon a highly distinctive communality of ideas and ideals, which had its own very particular creative outlets and modes of expression, and which can very reasonably be referred to, for want of a better label, as the Spirit of the Age.

There are some other general problems with the author's approach towards his subject, and not least with regard to his understanding and presentation of supporting evidence. It is, for instance, regrettable that too often we are not made aware of the basis for a particular iconographic reading and have to rely instead on the unsubstantiated conclusions of previous writers. A case in point is his treatment of the early Renaissance reliefs by Agostino di Duccio in the Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini, which are interpreted with reference to an earlier doctoral thesis – unpublished and therefore inaccessible – as amounting to a neoplatonic treatise on death and the afterlife, by being supposedly relatable to the Greek writer Porphyry's philosophical tract entitled *On the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*. But there is no real explanation of this hypothesis, let alone any explicit connection made with either caves or nymphs, and, rather alarmingly, there is a brushing aside of the cited author's own cautions on the matter with the bald assertion that Porphyry's text fully accounts for the 'iconology as a whole'. It soon becomes apparent, moreover, that this way of arguing is symptomatic of a general tendency to adopt only those interpretive theories that just happen to suit the themes of the book, and we even find a partial recognition of this problem when the same Porphyry text is used to explain the late sixteenth-century decorations of the Rocca di Soragna near Parma. Again the interpretation of a previous writer is brought into play without any proper assessment of its merits or otherwise, although we are now told that the interpretation is itself a fantasy which may never have actually been in the mind of the artist or designer, and that the author in fact cares little himself for its 'rightness or wrongness'. Thus it appears that the main purpose of an interpretation is not for it to satisfy any objective standards of verification but rather for it to fit in with a preconceived notion of Renaissance art. And it is very clear that such an approach to interpretation is very convenient, though not really very helpful, when it comes to dealing with ideas or works that are said to have an 'esoteric' significance, because this is to say that by definition they have no meaning that can be corroborated by any independent evidence.

There is also some inclination in the book to misuse or distort the available evidence. There are, for example, certain observational remarks that are without foundation – particularly when it comes to architectural matters. For instance, in his zeal to see connections between paganism and Christianity, the author is unwisely driven to liken the façade of the Grotto Grande in Florence's Boboli Gardens to the west front of a church, and then to compare the water theatre of the Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati to the apse of a cathedral, and even to describe the tabernacle on the façade of the organ-fountain of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli as a being 'like a parody' of an altar. There is also a marked tendency towards a subjectivism that colours the treatment of even the most

straightforward of topics, such as in characterizing the Renaissance perception of the land of Greece as a 'Platonic idea', or referring to the artist Giulio Romano as 'that most pagan of painters'. And there is a propensity, too, for giving an impression that an argument is being advanced merely by providing a mass of factual detail, such as when he describes the layouts and contents of Renaissance gardens in a chapter that often reads rather like a travelogue, or when he lists the themes of the musical *intermedi* that were performed during state celebrations in sixteenth-century Florence.

Perhaps the most curious aspect of the book lies in what is actually covered and what is omitted. Particularly startling is the fact that a work dealing with the question of the Renaissance assimilation of antique imagery should make no reference, or virtually none, to such key artists as Pollaiuolo, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Titian, Raphael, Correggio or Veronese, to name but a few. What is then also strangely lacking is any consideration of the Renaissance origins of mythological painting and sculpture, or of the important role played by Florentine art in its development, or even of the evolution and subsequent re-evaluation of mythological imagery in mainstream art. Thus there is little inquiry into how the most characteristic Renaissance artistic creations of mythological subject, which might be those of, say, Botticelli or Titian, were conceived or viewed, and hardly any engagement with the many divergent interpretations of such works found in recent art-historical literature. Nor is there much scope to consider the wider functions of mythological art, such as how it was used didactically to convey political or metaphysical allegory; or the theoretical issues surrounding the genre relating, say, to its role in antiquarian revivalism or its literary pretensions as *istoria* or *poesia*; or even its plain aesthetic, sensory and emotive capabilities, and its ability to provide an artist with a challenge. To put the matter in another way, we can say that the author has presented a very selective view of mythological art, selective in both its approach and its coverage, and that the book's governing arguments are rather geared to the works presented to illustrate them. It may be the case that these are actually well matched in certain respects, and that we encounter many fascinating similarities in the interests of both artists and patrons, and come to recognize various common patterns of approach in the formulation and expression of underlying ideas; but it is still the case that the works considered are limited by the arguments, and the arguments by the works, so that the view given of the Renaissance revival of mythological – or 'pagan' – imagery is, in the end, narrow and unbalanced.

Yet all in all, despite all these reservations, the book has a genuine value. What is perhaps most important about it is that it reopens the fundamental question, which has remained dormant for so long, of what the art of the period known as the 'Renaissance' was actually concerned with. In doing so, it highlights the notion of fantasy as one of the key motivating concerns of the period, and it re-emphasizes the role of philosophy (or 'Neo-Platonism') in the patronage and conception of works of many different kinds, despite the fact that such matters are now so often played down. Indeed, this is how it now becomes possible to break down the barriers between different types of commission, and to consider the artistic interests and approaches of such figures as Federigo da Montefeltro, Grand Duke Francesco de' Medici, or the Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II in such a way that they can be compared to each other and seen as part of the larger picture, or at any rate an important area of the larger picture. The author may have given too much weight to the esoteric and arcane but he must surely be right to see the revival of the pagan gods as having played a fundamental part in defining Renaissance art, and as something more than just a manifestation of classical learning. The book therefore performs the great service of bringing this whole question once again to prominence, and it may mark a beginning of a new appraisal of Renaissance art that will once again take up the mantle of such illustrious past scholars as Gombrich,

Panofsky and Wind. As such, therefore, it represents a timely foretaste of what could well become a very rich and productive debate.

David Hemsoll
University of Birmingham

Reconstructing Titian

Titian by *Charles Hope, Jennifer Fletcher, Jill Dunkerton, Miguel Falomir, Nicholas Penny* and *Caroline Campbell,* London: National Gallery Company (distributed by Yale University Press), to accompany an exhibition at the National Gallery, London, 19 February–18 May 2003, 192 pp., 150 col. plates, £20.00

One of the most popular and stunning attractions of the recent Titian exhibition at the National Gallery was the physical reconstruction of the original arrangement of the four surviving paintings for the *camerino d'alabastro* of Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. To have succeeded in reuniting pictures now held in Washington and Madrid with one in London, last seen together early in the seventeenth century, must count as a major curatorial coup. Sadly, given different policies on lending, it is highly improbable that one day we will also see reunited the later mythological paintings for Philip II of Spain.

The paintings for Ferrara were commissioned for a specific place, the Duke's study, one of the *camerini d'alabastro* on the *via coperta*, a structure linking palace and castle. The literature on the cycle is considerable. In the catalogue David Jaffé acknowledges the difficulties of a reliable reconstruction: 'Quite how the paintings were displayed remains a matter of debate; in our diagram, we have slightly modified Charles Hope's widely accepted reconstruction in order to take into account the direction of light in the *Worship of Venus*.' (p. 101) Sadly, however, the catalogue does not even begin to address the questions as to why it is that the original display remains a matter of debate and what the issues of these debates are. This is doubly unfortunate, because the one potentially informative item in the catalogue, the diagram of the *camerino* on p. 101, is wrong. It is based on Hope's 1971 reconstruction, not on his amended version of 1987. The windows are facing west, when they should be facing east, suggesting an altogether different position for the *camerino* within the *via coperta*. Access was from the south, from the Duke's bedroom. And according to documents cited by Hope in 1987, there was originally probably only one window. To move the *Worship of Venus* from the end of the long wall around the corner to the much narrower end wall can hardly be called a 'slight modification' of Hope's scheme. Anyone familiar with his immensely intricate reading of the available documentation will realize that such a move would have considerable consequences for the rest of the reconstruction. And these should have been discussed in the catalogue. While none of this would matter very much if it had only affected the diagram, it does matter because it affected the actual installation in the gallery.

This does not mean to say that I disagree with the repositioning of the *Venus Worship*. On the contrary, I think it is entirely in line with the visual evidence of the picture itself. And I have not come across any written evidence that would contradict this arrangement. What is hard to understand is why the curators, who in this case decided to trust their visual judgement, did not do so in respect of the other pictures. Having taken one important step, they might have found that a little re-examination of the written evidence would have supported some further steps that are clearly suggested by the visual evidence. As a result, we might have been spared the gimmick of an empty frame substituting for a lost painting by Dosso Dossi (which almost certainly occupied a different place). Instead, I suggest, we should have been able to see the other three pictures in what must have been their proper arrangement along the main wall: the *Bacchus and Ariadne* on the left, the *Andrians* in the centre, and the Bellini *Feast of the Gods* on the right, followed, around the corner, by the *Venus Worship*. The installation could have been simpler, the overall impact of Titian's marvellously lively compositions even more stunning. The following paragraphs aim to make the case for such a reconstruction.

Given the continuities, often observed and described, between *Bacchus and Ariadne* and the *Andrians* on the one hand, and between the *Andrians* and the *Feast of the Gods* on the other, it seems inconceivable that Titian should not have meant the three pictures to be seen side by side and on the same wall. And given Alfonso's reputation as a discerning patron, it seems equally inconceivable that he would not have arranged them in such a way. Nicholas Penny, in his comment on *Bacchus and Ariadne*, acknowledges its close connection with the other works: 'Although the location of the *Camerino* and the exact arrangement of the works of art within it … remain the objects of scholarly dispute, it is clear not only that the nature of the landscape but also the composition and its direction were calculated by Titian in relation to the other paintings in the room.' (p. 104) One can only assume that, in the end, the curators had less trust in their own assessment of the visual evidence than in the supposedly 'harder' evidence of written sources.

This is a pity because the so-called 'hard' literary evidence is anything but hard. None of it, as far as I can see, necessarily requires us to position the *Bacchus and Ariadne* on the short entrance wall, and none of it prevents us from assuming that it should be on the long wall. Hope's reconstruction of the arrangement depends basically on three sixteenth-century texts and a number of other written sources. The two most important texts deal with the arrangement of the pictures in their absence: the first one, of 1518, precedes the final arrangement by at least seven years; the latter, of 1598, records their absence after their theft by Cardinal Aldobrandini. The third account, by Vasari, is also one of absence, based, as it is, on memory.

Hope has argued that the letter of 23 April 1518 by Tebaldi, Alfonso's agent in Venice, indicates that the *Worship of Venus* was one of three paintings on the main wall.[1] I do not think that this is necessarily the case. The letter simply states that Titian remembers that there are spaces for three pictures on the *fazata*, 'et che quella scrive che questo chellui farà ha ad andare in fazata'. He now wants to know whether his picture was to be towards the palace, in the middle, or towards the castle. The only thing that the letter tells us is that Titian, at that point, thought his picture was meant to go on the main wall. Whether Titian's assumption was correct we have no way of telling, as we do not know what the answer to his question was. Hope assumed that it was 'towards the castle', but there is no written evidence for this. There is also the possibility that Titian himself may have misunderstood the term *fazata*. The artist and, following him, Hope, assumed that *fazata* referred to the long wall, probably 'facing' the window, where there was indeed room for three pictures. It is equally possible, however, that when Titian was told his picture would go to the *fazata*, this was meant to be the wall 'facing' us as we enter. In any case, we must keep in mind that the only picture so far delivered was

Bellini's. Neither the *Andrians* nor the *Bacchus and Ariadne* had yet been commissioned from Titian. Duke Alfonso was still hoping for a painting by Raphael. The decoration of the ceiling, 'depinti con figure, et oro', seems to have been carried out only in 1521.[2] It would therefore seem unwise for the purposes of reconstructing the final arrangement (which may be dated to the mid-1520s) to rely on a letter of 1518, in particular as this letter was itself about a point of uncertainty.

It is, I think, because of his reliance on Tebaldi's letter of 1518, that Hope was led to his reading of the most important bit of written evidence, Annibale Roncaglia's letter of 1 December 1598, reporting the theft of the paintings by Cardinal Aldobrandini. After opening '*i due usci del primo Camerino d'Alabastro*', he found the following works missing:

1. nell'entrata a mano stanca una pittura in quadro di mano di Tiziano dove era dipinto Laocoonte.
2. contiguo a detta pittura un'altra di mano del ditto Tiziano dove era dipinta una donna nuda, che giaceva con un bambino, che gli pisciava su piedi, et altre figure.
3. un'altro quadro di mano di Giovanni Bellini Veneto dove era dipinto un puttino che tira vino da una mastellina con altre figure, et un paese fatto di mano di Tiziano.
4. in capo del detto camerino un'altra pittura di puttini nudi di mano di Tiziano.
5. contiguo al detto quadro un'altra pittura con figure d'huomeni et di donne di mano delli Dossi.[3]

This states that at the entrance there was, on the left, the *Bacchus and Ariadne*. *Contiguo* with it was the *Andrians*, and then followed the Bellini. In *capo del ditto camerino* was the *Worship of Venus*, and *contiguo* with it was a picture by the Dossi. We must remember that Roncaglia's account is that of a man who, having opened the doors, for which he first had to find the keys, is entering the room and describing what he sees – or rather, what he does not see, because it is no longer there.

The position of the *Worship of Venus* is described as *in capo del camerino*. Hope thought that this meant at the far end of the left-hand wall. I think that it means what it says, namely at the head, the end of the room, that is, the wall opposite the entrance. That happens to be the position allotted to it in the exhibition. Before mentioning this painting, Roncaglia listed three others, the first of which, the *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 'nell'entrata a mano stanca'. For Hope, who assumed that there were only two slots left on the long wall next to the *Worship of Venus*, this meant necessarily that the first picture had to be on the entrance wall. But there is no reason that I am aware of for not translating 'nell'entrata a mano stanca' simply as 'on entering to the left', and that would very precisely describe the position of the *Bacchus and Ariadne* as the first of three pictures occupying the long wall. In Jadranka Bentini's recent reconstruction of the room, based on archaeological grounds, the doors to the room were at the west side of the entrance wall.[4] If that were correct, the *Bacchus and Ariadne* would have to have been on the long wall, as otherwise it would have been to the right of a person entering.

Hope's assumption may have been correct for the earlier stages of planning. It seems to me quite possible that in about 1520 the Bellini would have occupied pride of place in the centre of the long wall, with the former Fra Bartolommeo/now Titian *Venus Worship* on its right and a Raphael/Pellegrino da San Daniele *Triumph of Bacchus* on its left. But given the differences in lighting (the *Worship of Venus* is lit from the right, the *Feast of the Gods* from the left) it seems to me unlikely that this early arrangement was intended to be the final one. And anyway, it is likely to have been abandoned after 1520 when, following the death of Raphael, Titian was entrusted with the completion of the whole

series – a decision on Alfonso's part which marked a change from a collection of masterpieces by the leading artists of the times to a series dominated largely by only one painter. And this could have entailed a change in overall planning and arrangement. Nicholas Penny suggests in the catalogue (p. 104) that we reverse the traditional dating of the *Bacchus and Ariadne* and the *Andrians* and date the latter before the former (although David Jaffé, only three pages earlier, seems to disagree). Given the continuities and similarities between the two paintings, they may well have been commissioned and conceived together. And it would seem to me to be entirely in line with Titian's known ambitions for him to move to one side the composition of his old master Bellini, which was obviously old-fashioned less than ten years after its completion, and to absorb it, by over-painting part of the background, into a much larger series of three Titianesque works – all with bacchic subject matter – filling the whole of the long wall of the *camerino*.

This view, I think, is supported by Vasari's description, even though it appears typically unreliable. It talks of only two pictures by Titian, the *Andrians*, and 'contiguo a questo, e primo rincontro all'entrata', the *Venus Worship*.[5] Hope's hesitant assumption that 'primo rincontro all'entrata' meant next to the door,[6] cannot be correct. Vasari probably remembered that the first painting he saw on entering the *camerino* was the *Venus Worship* – because it was hanging on the wall opposite the door, at the other end of the room. Roncaglia's 'in capo' would thus mean the same as Vasari's 'primo rincontro all'entrata'. Read in this way, the literary evidence – even if somewhat soft – would support the National Gallery's placement of the *Worship of Venus*. And given the dominance of the *Andrians* in the centre of the long wall, and the ways in which, both in composition and in subject matter, it extended into the two works on either side, Vasari may be forgiven for remembering it as the main and sole theme of the pictures on the long wall.

This still leaves us with the problem of the Dossi picture, described as contiguous with the *Venus Worship*. Following Hope, I assume that Roncaglia described the missing pictures in a sequential order from left to right. The Dossi cannot have been to the left of the *Venus Worship* at the northern end of the main wall – in a space already occupied, according to the arrangement proposed here, by the *Feast of the Gods*. It must have been on the right side of the *Venus Worship*. And as there would not have been enough space for two paintings on the end wall, it is likely that the Dossi was on the window wall. Hope has suggested that the room originally had only one window. The 1598 inventory includes an individual entry regarding the 'ornamento di marmoro alla finestra del Camarin d'Alabastro'. With this single window probably in the middle of the east wall, there would have been 'plenty of space for furniture or even paintings on the same wall'.[7] More precisely, there would have been room for one picture either side of the window.

We remember that Mario Equicola had invented six *fabule o vero hystorie* for Alfonso as early as 1511. If these were the ones for the *camerino d'alabastro* – and I know of no good reason for doubting this, even if some themes may have changed later on – at least one, and possibly two must have been meant for the window wall. And some thought should be given to John Shearman's suggestion that Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* may not have been meant as a replacement for the *Triumph of Bacchus*, previously commissioned from Raphael. There is considerable merit in Shearman's hypothesis that Pellegrino da San Daniele's version, done after Raphael's *modello*, was the sixth painting in the series and remained part of it. The fact that it is not mentioned by Roncaglia in 1598 is neither here nor there. Shearman thinks that Duke Alfonso II had given it previously as a gift to the Emperor Rudolph II, as being by Raphael.[8] There is, possibly, a much simpler explanation: Cardinal Aldobrandini and his entourage – much more familiar with Raphael's Roman masterpieces – would have recognized the picture for what it was and decided not to take it. And if it had not been stolen there would have been no reason for Roncaglia to record it.

According to this arrangement we would enter the *camerino* from the south via a double door, and we would see, to our immediate left and right, Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* opposite Pellegrino's *Triumph of Bacchus*, followed by the *Andrians* facing the window, and then Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* opposite Dossi's *Bacchanal of Men*. On the northern end wall, *in capo*, and facing the entrance, would be the *Worship of Venus*. Any genuine reconstruction of this arrangement would have to reflect the small scale of the interior, which overall measured only about 3.25×7.30 m, the intimacy of the *studio*, the lack of distance between viewer and painting.[9] This, of course, would be impossible to achieve in a modern blockbuster exhibition with its vast audiences.

Even with its shortcomings the installation of the works for the Duke of Ferrara was the most memorable and visually stunning highlight of the earlier part of the exhibition. An essay-length discussion of its artistic importance and its historical problems would have been most welcome (even if it had come to different conclusions to those proposed here). The essays in the catalogue, all by established authorities, are useful and informative, as far as they go, but they are too short and too generalized; they could accompany almost any exhibition of works by Titian. The installation of the early series found its counterpart in a later section in the brilliant hanging of three large canvases side by side: the National Gallery's own *Death of Actaeon* with the *Flaying of Marsyas* from Kremsier (not in the catalogue) and the Cambridge *Rape of Lucretia*. And in much the same way that the Ferrara pictures bring to the fore serious and longstanding academic discussions, so, too, do these works. The important issue presented here is the question of Titian's 'late style'; of *finito* and *non-finito*. According to Hope, an obviously finished work like the *Rape of Lucretia* should be seen as the standard by which we measure whether or not other pictures are finished. This is a comparison to which the *Death of Actaeon* and the *Flaying of Marsyas* do not seem to stand up. Jaffé adopts a more circumspect approach, pointing to a number of works, both in the exhibition and elsewhere, in which Titian's degree of finish can be seen to vary considerably, according to subject, commission or patron.

These are interesting and genuine points for discussion. Yet the debate only scratches the surface of the real problem of Titian's later art. What is at stake here is not simply a dogmatic question about style and finish. These are closely related to the wider issue of subject matter and the very nature of Titian's late art. Having enjoyed the vivaciousness of the paintings for Ferrara, with their joyful evocation of classical myths, one is struck by the gloom, the darkness of the later works, but also by the brutality of their subject matter. These are pictures of cruelty, pathos, suffering, of horror and fear. And this is not simply the result of the curators' selection; other works from the later years, such as the Edinburgh *Diana* pictures, or the two versions of the *Martyrdom of St Lawrence*, would fit easily into this display of brutal deeds and horrible sufferings. The huge *Crucifixion* from Ancona, hung at the end (*il capo*) of the same room as the three works mentioned above, also fits into this sequence of fearful subjects, instilling horror and pity in the viewer.

In his 'Titian's Life and Times', which serves as an introduction to the catalogue, Hope goes out of his way to reject the notion that Titian's art reflected a desolate and tragic end to his life: 'Associated with the idea that Titian had an intensely personal, tragic late style is the widespread belief that in his last years he was lonely and isolated.' He discards this romantic notion of artistic genius and, pointing out that Titian, in his last years, was surrounded by family, rich and famous, states: 'In his last years, therefore, Titian could not realistically be described as isolated and his circumstances were far from tragic.'(p. 28) This may be so, but it does little to explain the nature of his later art, the fact that his painting technique – whatever the outcome – was different to his earlier one,

or his choice of horrific and often unpleasant subject matter. The last point, at least, is acknowledged by Jaffé:

> By any standards the achievements of Titian's last twenty years were remarkable: the pathos and the straining brutality of the Gesuiti *Saint Lawrence*, the boldness of the Ancona *Crucifixion*, the enchanted magic of *Diana and Callisto*, the violent brilliance of *Tarquin and Lucretia*. These are the peaks of an energy wholly uncommon in such advanced years. (p. 153)

There seems to me to be no doubt about the 'tragic' nature of much of Titian's late subject matter, but I agree with Hope that we should not see it as reflecting the 'tragic' nature of his later life. I think that Titian was pushing his art towards increasingly strong emotional effects, influenced perhaps in part by his first-hand encounter in Rome in 1546 with Michelangelo's *terribilità*, and in part by the strong public discussions, from the 1540s onwards, about Aristotle's *Poetics* and its definition of tragedy, with its emphasis on the tragic effects of pity and horror and its permissive attitude to the representation of cruel and fatal actions on stage. Both Aretino and Dolce were deeply involved in the revival of tragedy, and it is inconceivable that Titian would have remained unaware of it.

There can be no doubt that this was one of the most powerful and visually gripping exhibitions of any old master we have seen for a long time. And for that we must be grateful to the curators. For some time now we have come to expect the catalogues of major exhibitions to present the latest state of research on their respective topic and to add significantly to our knowledge of it. Unfortunately, the catalogue here seems to have been put together in a hurry, with little supervision of, or coordination between, the contributors, and, oddly, with little attention to, or anticipation of, the problems raised by the show.

Thomas Puttfarken
University of Essex

Notes

1 C. Hope, 'The Camerino d'Alabastro. A Reconsideration of the Evidence', *Bacchanals by Titian and Rubens. Nationalmusei Skriftserie*, n.s., 10, ed. G. Cavalli-Björkman, Stockholm, 1987, pp. 25–42, 37. For the text of Tebaldi's letter, see p. 28.
2 C. Hope, 'The "Camerini d'Alabastro" of Alfonso d'Este – I', *Burlington Magazine*, 1971, pp. 641–50, 644.
3 Hope, 'A Reconsideration of the Evidence', p. 25.
4 J. Bentini, 'From Ercole I to Alfonso II: new discoveries about the *camerino* in the Castello Estense in Ferrara', in L. Ciammitti, S.F. Ostrow, S. Settis (eds), *Dosso's Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, Los Angeles, 1998, pp. 359–65.
5 Vasari–Milanesi, vol. 7, p. 434.
6 Hope, 'The Camerini d'Alabastro of Alfonso d'Este', p. 646, note 37.
7 Hope, 'A Reconsideration of the Evidence', pp. 37/8.
8 J. Shearman, 'Alfonso d'Este's Camerino, *"Il se rendit en Italie"*', *Etudes offertes à André Chastel*, Flammarion, Rome, 1987, pp. 209–229, especially pp. 217–19.
9 According to the valuation of Este property in 1598 (Hope, 'A Reconsideration of the Evidence', p. 27), the ceiling of the *camerino d'alabastro* measured 2.44 × 5.49 m (8 × 18 ft): 'Solaro di Camarini d'alabastro p. 8 p. 18 depinti con figure, et oro'. The Ferrarese foot was 40.4 cm (16 in) (Hope, 'The Camerini d'Alabastro of Alfonso d'Este', p. 642, note 6). Hence Hope, and following him Jaffé (p. 190, note 3), assume that the actual measurements of the room were approx. 3.25 × 7.30 m (10 ft 8 in × 23 ft 10 in).

Assembling identities

The Visual Culture of Wales: Imaging the Nation by *Peter Lord,* Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000, 416 pp., 693 col. illus., £30.00

Imaging the Nation is the second part of a trilogy dedicated to the visual culture of Wales. The span of this volume stretches from the late sixteenth-century Renaissance to *c*. 1960, and included within its scope are 'high art' and artisan painting, church memorials, public sculpture, printed illustrations, even inn signs. As the title suggests, the binding thread is a concern with national imagery and identity – images which have something to say about 'Welshness' rather than being merely images of Wales. The volume's subject is the construction of a national visual culture and although it seeks a 'broad and inclusive view', it is questions of an explicitly national identity that provide the volume with its direction.

But what is meant by 'national', and what is a national visual culture? The acknowledged complexities of this issue fit somewhat uneasily into a linear, even progressive, narrative, which culminates with the hope expressed at the end of the volume that a coherent representation of Wales might yet emerge. Central here is the idea of national identity as a unifying force, something founded on shared history and traditions, but also forward-looking and creative, perhaps even aspiring to statehood. There is compelling, sometimes poignant, evidence to support this overtly nationalist definition, as the long struggle to establish and sustain national institutions for the practice and appreciation of art attests. The celebration of a bardic past, and the eisteddfod movement – built on this past but also nurturing contemporary practice – are among the attempts documented here to create a recognizable, dynamic tradition.

Perhaps reluctantly, though, Lord also suggests challenges to a unifying, coherent interpretation. Ideals of national identity were often contested, and were rarely inclusive. The tensions described between, for example, classical rationalism and an emotive romanticism, between high art and craft, or between Welsh environmentalism and the universalist aspirations of modernism, variously suggest the battle of ideas, but also a creative diversity. Resolution of such tensions – were it even possible – might be reductive and limiting.

Imaging the Nation is strong in its consideration of the mechanisms and means by which a visual culture is made, and it thereby illuminates aspects of Welsh society – by looking at patronage, and the changing organization of the art world, and the creation of a public, by the dissemination of ideas and images.

In describing both the patronage and production of images for which a national content may be claimed, the volume brings together high art and the art of the artisan. But in this pageant of talent, the artisan only appears on stage at certain moments of the performance. It is the gentry and the formally educated who more often hold centre stage, taking leading roles not only in the early development of portraiture and landscape painting, but also in the emergence of a more explicit nationalism (closely allied to the rise of public patronage) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This dominance is not suprising: if the concept of nationhood depends on a point of view, there will be some perspectives from which it may be seen more clearly. Peter Lord identifies what he terms an outsider's view – the English view of Wales as repository of its ancient history, or an aesthetic rather than a religious regard – but there is a real sense

in which the Welsh cultural and social elite themselves share the distance of this stance. A very particular perspective is gained by travel and education, and whilst their home ground may have been Welsh, they moved in circles which also embraced metropolitan and even European thinking. Many of the ideas of national identity set out in these pages are the fruits not of an inward-looking society, but of a much more expansive and connected culture. The early twentieth-century pan-European Celtic revival is just one example of this, illustrating the locally creative impact of a wider cultural movement.

For the middle classes with their artisan artists, experience had other mediations – in Wales after the mid-eighteenth century, one of the most powerful of these was Nonconformity, which produced its own rich iconography, also amply documented in these pages. Nonconformity is obviously important – it is also obviously Welsh – but is it thereby national? To look, for example, at the multiplication of different denominations, each with its own iconic figures, each with its own buildings, is to look at a minutely differentiated society in which identity might be dependent on nuances whose arena of significance was intensely local. The ways in which Nonconformist groups envisaged and conveyed their own histories and traditions – firmly founded on personal association with great preachers and leaders, and therefore strong on portraiture and personal iconography – reveal a creative process which has made a strong contribution to visual culture in Wales. The resultant imagery is *sui generis*, powerful historical evidence for the culture of Nonconformity. Though vital in Welsh nineteenth-century society, it did not thereby speak for a unified nation, because it was itself speaking with many voices.

Portraiture was an important element of Nonconformist imagery. In it, particular figures, and particular histories, are revealed in honest detail, both in painting and then in photography, following an established tradition of portraiture by artisan painters. Meanwhile, a corresponding interest amongst artists celebrated a generalized 'folk', the common people in harmony with their landscape. The search for a unifying thread leads Peter Lord to echo the views of late nineteenth-century critics that works such as Whaite's *To The Cold Earth* brought together the rationalist ethic of Nonconformity with the poetry of the landscape tradition. This remained an academic viewpoint, one of many interpretations of what it meant to be rooted in Wales.

A sense of history, a sense of place: these are essential components of identity. But the iconic status given to certain sorts of history, certain kinds of place, further suggest the lineaments of a constructed identity which is not inclusive. Take landscape, for instance: the early landscape paintings shown here are essentially topographical – describing a particular place. This form of representation continued in the later eighteenth century (and, of course, also beyond), but the book's interest moves into more intellectual realms – the idea of landscape rather than the sense of place. It focuses especially on images with an apparently self-consciously Welsh historical subject matter (whether the allusive romanticism of Turner's *Dolbadarn Castle*, or the narrative of Whaite's *The Archdruid*). One effect of this focus is to restrict the field of vision: Snowdonia comes to dominate the representation of Wales, and becomes representative of Wales, while even the Wye Valley, important though it was in the development of the picturesque, receives little attention here, and south-west Wales, much of the borders and Angelsey all become invisible. In tracing leading themes in the development of visual culture, this emphasis is probably unavoidable. It may not adequately supply visual imagery for a nation, however. The most conspicuous absentee, industrial Wales, was dealt with in the first part of the trilogy, which appeared in 1998. This is a necessary organization of a vast body of material, but it also testifies to a profound cultural fissure, between north and south, industrial and rural.

The evidence suggests that there is no one tradition capable of representing the aspirations and identities of a geographically and socially diverse culture. A national

identity might emerge as much through the felicitous summing up of local identities and particular points of view, or through the prism of pan-national ideas, as from an explicitly national agenda. Ultimately, in the breadth of what is presented in this volume, diversity magnificently triumphs over a preoccupation with national identity as a unity of view. There are views and visions in these pages which defy such classification.

A CD-Rom complements the book. Its chief value will be in the intimacy of access it permits to an extended range of visual material. Its weaknesses are those of the book, arising from an insistently progressive narrative which structures the selection and organization of material. Readers hoping that Peter Lord will go on to address the continuing debates around Welsh visual culture since 1960 may be disappointed: his last volume will deal with the medieval period.

Judith Alfrey

Art lost to spectacle

Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture edited by *Max Hollein and Christoph Grunenberg*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, exhibition catalogue, Frankfurt: Schion Kunsthalle and Liverpool: Tate, 256 pp., €39.99

How to tackle such a vast topic as shopping in twentieth-century art? How to address concerns of consumer culture, commodity aesthetics, and of artists struggling to detach or attach their art from/to capitalism? To anyone pondering these questions, it will become obvious that there is no straightforward approach, that the act of buying entails an intractable variety of factors (historical, cultural, sociological, psychological, etc.) and that focusing on certain aspects is not only necessary but also critical to any serious undertaking in this realm. Coming to a closer understanding of what intrigued artists to address 'shopping' in their work is not unlike the act of shopping: one has to pick and make choices for or against certain products because it is impossible to buy it all.

According to philosopher Hans Blumenberg, the humanities today are faced with an existential dilemma: attention nowadays is raised mostly through proliferation, not refinement, of stimuli.[1] Without public attention the humanities are going to lose sponsors, but with too much attention they cannot achieve the isolation that their subjects need. This dilemma is not specific to the humanities, however. Advertising faces it, and so does art. How refined can advertising become without being boring and ineffective? How spectacular can art (or its presentation) be without being mere entertainment? In the past decade museums like the Guggenheim have tried the proliferation of stimuli – and have failed (cf. Guggenheim Las Vegas). Max Hollein (Schirn Kunsthalle) and Christoph Grunenberg (Tate Liverpool), the curators of the recent exhibition *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, are still convinced, however, that the proliferation of stimuli is the route to attention and to financial success. This view is signified evocatively in the catalogue's foreword where two paragraphs are devoted to the topic and purpose of the exhibition, while nine

acknowledge the many sponsors. The list of companies who contributed resources, services and money is truly impressive and an achievement in itself. Judging by this list, the exhibition had the best chances for becoming a financial success. Yet the number of visitors at the Frankfurt venue (around 56,000 in eight weeks) points to a deficit in public attention to the exhibition and must have been a disappointment by Hollein's and Grunenberg's standards.[2] Admittedly, the road to success is especially blurry in an undertaking that dares such a close and open juxtaposition of art and commerce. But it is because of this risk that this road is extremely fascinating.

In an introductory text Max Hollein claims that shopping has become the primary leisure-time activity of our consumer societies and that this act does more than just fulfil our daily needs: shopping is a social activity that determines and changes our identities. It is harder to argue these clichés than Hollein's claim that we are in the midst of a 'shopping hurricane'. Looking at the economies of the Western capitalist countries after 9/11, not only politicians and industrialists would wish for this statement to be true. Yet even before that fateful day the American economy was in decline and the 1990s will inevitably be as much like a 'shopping hurricane' as any decade ever will. It seems unlikely that the cases of extravagance in commercial architecture (inside and out), in advertising campaigns, and in the breadth of product lines of the past twenty years will ever be topped. Hollein has observed, quite rightly, that consumers have come to imitate, or 'appropriate', as he puts it, these commercial worlds in their own lives. He believes that 'this act of appropriation turns the consumer into the artist of popular culture'.[3] In 1895 a critic anticipated this view when he wrote, 'The buying impulse is born of the noblest of human faculties; it is the child of imagination.'[4] However, in the age of television, e-commerce and mega-malls, it might be argued that *eluding* this appropriation has become the true creative act, because it challenges our imagination to envision life beyond its commercial façade. And it is evident that many of the artists represented in the *Shopping* catalogue have tried to do just that.

Christoph Grunenberg's essay 'Wonderland' is a brief and cursory introduction to the fascinating history of the aesthetics and the representation of commodities. Grunenberg (like other authors in the catalogue) picks out the highlights from the evolution of commodity presentation, such as authors L. Frank Baum and Emile Zola, the Bon Marché, the efforts of the Deutsche Werkbund, or the department store A.T. Stewart. Important as all these are, it is essential to make distinctions, geographically as well as ideologically. Developments in Germany were different in character and temporal occurrence to those in France and the United States. Contrary to Grunenberg's simplified account, the 'Werkbund style' of commodity representation can neither be categorized as purely rational nor opposed to an allegedly rational *and* spectacular 'Bauhaus style'. This makes for a smooth and readable history, but it does not do justice to the actual developments, many of which remain yet to be investigated. The situation today is that apart from a few (if excellent) monographs on topics such as commodity aesthetics in the Werkbund (Frederic Schwartz), or on the Bon Marché (Michael B. Miller), the history of shopping has yet to be written and will (this is well proven by this catalogue) not be done in a single volume. The existing literature, wide-ranging though it may be, is only just beginning to document the extent to which consumption has affected art, and vice versa, since the nineteenth century. All the entries in the *Shopping* catalogue draw on this wealth of scholarship, quoting (almost) every publication from Marx to Baudrillard, yet hardly any contribute any new insights. Although it is always easier to point out omissions than to mend them, perhaps it takes both to induce future scholars to do this research.

Mark C. Taylor, in his essay 'Duty-Free-Shopping', points out some important moments of contact between art and commercial institutions in the twentieth century.

He lists author and inventor L. Frank Baum, the Bauhaus, Russian Constructivism, the Werkbund, De Stijl, John Dewey and the Metropolitan Museum's Richard Bach, the Gimbel Brothers and Salvador Dalí as pioneers in making contact between art and the world of commerce. And he discusses the work of two distinguished shop-window designers, Gene Moore and Simon Doonan, as well as the Guggenheim projects, in more detail. The reader may wonder if there would not have been more substance to a detailed discussion of just one of these movements or names, especially as, with one exception, this profusion allows Taylor only to draw on already published material (books by William Leach, Anne Friedberg, the autobiographies of Simon Doonan and Gene Moore, etc.). Only in the case of the Guggenheim museum and its current director, Thomas Krens, does Taylor develop his ideas. He embarks on what is meant to be a eulogy of the 'intellectual capacities and commercial cleverness' of Thomas Krens, citing his 'persistence and sensitivity that are a match to those of P.T. Barnum'.[5] It is not clear whether Taylor is aware of the course of Barnum's career, but he might be right about drawing this parallel.

What is surprising is Taylor's unequivocal and uncritical applause of Krens's approach in dealing with art. Krens's ambition, to bring art to the masses, is not a new concept and Taylor admits as much. Contrary to Taylor's view, this idea goes back not only to 'attempts of the avant-garde', but also at least back to the nineteenth century (cf. Gottfried Semper, Alfred Lichtwark *et al*) and was part of the founding programmes of both the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In those institutions as well as in the Brooklyn and in the Newark museums, monetary profit may have been one goal; but the other, which was just as important, was an idealistic educational ambition. Some of the directors and curators early in the twentieth century, such as Robert De Forest, Alfred H. Barr, Stewart Culin and John Cotton Dana, thought it imperative for museums to go to the people and to bring works of art to schools, department stores, or factories. Modernism in the United States had its first exhibitions in department stores.[6] The Art-Deco and Machine-Age aesthetics were first presented to the American public in shop windows. Cubism may have been introduced to America in New York's Armory Show (1913), but in other cities it was shown in department stores.[7] The idea of making the masses familiar with art is not a concept invented by any avant garde or by Krens. From an historic perspective, what Krens has done is radically to shift the balance, formerly favoured by museums, between commercial and educational ideals.

Not all the nineteen essays in the *Shopping* catalogue can be discussed here. It should be mentioned that there are texts focusing on specific artists, such as Hannes Meyer (K. Michael Hays), Frederick Kiesler (Eva Kraus), Marcel Duchamp (Thomas Girst), Claes Oldenburg (Michael Lüthy), Konrad Lueg and Gerhard Richter (Martin Hentschel) and Joseph Beuys (Rolf Quaghebeur). While the variety is laudable, the impression is that the authors frequently had too little space (or time) to develop their ideas or even list the basic literature. Marcel Duchamp, for instance, is mentioned in almost every text and Thomas Girst makes interesting and valid points about the relationship between Duchamp's major works, *The Large Glass* and *Etant Donnés*, and the shop windows he designed. Yet his article seems regrettably short, especially in light of the influence that Duchamp's thoughts and work on and about commerce would have on later artists. Equally, Katharina Sykora should have been allotted more space for exploring the Surrealists' fascination (and sometimes obsession) with the world of commerce. Her point that photographs of shop windows replicate the concept of threshold connected with shop windows is well taken.

Unfortunately, there are many editorial oversights and shortcomings in the translations.[8] The frequency of the word 'spectacle' and its variants is a bother. A

major fault of the catalogue and one that makes its perusal unnecessarily difficult is its failure systematically to link illustrations and text. There is no numeration. The plates are, as is customary with Hatje Cantz publications, of excellent quality as far as colour and resolution are concerned. Yet it is regrettable that sometimes illustrations of works discussed in the essays are not on the same page – sometimes they are not reproduced at all. In other places, the illustrations are thematically related to the text but not mentioned in it. Then again, there are plates that are neither related to texts nor mentioned in them. It is hard even to convey an idea of the encyclopedic range of works shown. To anyone new to the topic this must be simply overpowering and the somewhat chronological order may not be helpful or even evident.

The profusion of products available today is only an illusion of limitlessness and an image by Andreas Gursky chosen for the cover of the catalogue plays to this illusion. His *99 Cent II* (2002) is an apt choice in more than one way, for the range of products and of topics is equally overwhelming in both. There are only processed foods for sale, just as the essays, for the most part, repeat or summarize older research. Both in the supermarket and in the catalogue it is impossible not to lose sight of what you initially came for. But the cover image is also a monument to the missed chance on the part of the curators of concentrating exclusively on one fascinating aspect, on shopping in contemporary art, for example. Such a focused effort would have allowed for a more discriminating and closer look at the works themselves, and it has proven enlightening in the past: for example, in Peter Weibel's and Peter Pakesch's project of artists' shop windows (Graz, 1979), which looked at art works/performances of the 1960s and 1970s, or in Kirk Varnedoe's and Adam Gopnik's *High & Low* exhibition (New York, 1990), in which particular aspects such as graffiti, poster art and advertising imagery were singled out. Judging by the disoriented impression that reviewers of the *Shopping* exhibition conveyed, this exhibition would have profited from a more narrow focus, too.[9] Even though the selection of specific topics addressed by different authors obviously plays with the idea of 'splendid isolation' favoured by Fernand Léger for the adequate presentation of commodities, it seems that the curators had a too-encompassing, perhaps too-'spectacular' concept of isolation for their catalogue.[10]

Nina Schleif
Reiss-Engelhorn Museen, Mannheim

Notes

1 Cf. Hans Blumenberg, 'Zur Funktion der Aufmerksamkeit', in *Zu den Sachen und zurueck. Aus dem Nachlass*, ed. Manfred Sommer, Frankfurt, 2002.

2 Visitor numbers according to Max Hollein, press conference on 20 February 2003 (cf. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, RMZ, 21 February 2003, no. 44, p. 58).

3 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 February 2003, p. 14.

4 Tudor Jenks, 'Before Shop Windows', in *Outlook and Independent*, 27 April, 1895, vol. 51, pp. 689f.

5 Jenks, 'Before Shop Windows', pp. 48, 49.

6 Cf. *An International Exposition of Art in Industry. From May 14 to May 26, 1928 at Macy's*, New York, 1928; *An Exposition of Modern French Decorative Art*, Lord & Taylor, New York, 1928.

7 Cf. Aaron Sheon, '1913: Forgotten Cubist Exhibitions in America', in *The Arts*, vol. 57, no. 7, March 1983, pp. 93–107.

8 'Consumed to death' is translated into 'Sich zu Tode konsumieren': in German the pun is lost. This is almost worse in the title of Mark C. Taylor's essay, 'Duty-Free-Shopping', which is meant to relate to President Bush's imperative to shop. Shopping is seen here as a patriotic duty, but in German the association of duty-free is with tax-free airport shopping, not with '*Pflicht*'. More generally, no effort was made to translate 'shopping' into German.

9 Cf., for example, Edward M. Gomez, 'If Art Is A Commodity, Shopping Can Be An Art', in *New*

York Times, 8 December 2002, pp. 43, 45. Gomez politely listed some major works in the exhibition without commenting on either the concept or the selection of the show. In contrast, he commended the concept for the small exhibition that ran simultaneously at Frankfurt's Museum of Applied Arts (*I Think, Therefore I Shop*).

10 Fernand Léger, as quoted by Christoph Grunenberg, 'Wunderland – Inszeniertes Spektakel der Warenpräsentation von Bon Marché bis Prada', in *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, pp. 17–37, 31.

Pranksters in revolt: situationism in the Academy

Guy Debord and the Situationist International – Texts and Documents edited by *Tom McDonough,* Cambridge, Mass.: the MIT Press, 2002, 492 pp., 113 b. & w. illus., £29.95

The recent rise in the intellectual stock of situationism has allowed its effects and influences to become visible at multiple levels of postmodern Western culture, from Jean Baudrillard's postmodernist musings to post-punk subcultural revivals. People involved in or directly influenced by the Situationist International have made significant contributions to popular cultural history (Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid) or to the development of art theory (T.J. Clark). The influences of situationist thought can be found at a variety of levels of cultural expression – in Iain Sinclair's *dérive*-inspired cultural histories of London and its environs; in post-punk agit-pop stunts by shadowy groups like Crass in the 1980s and the K Foundation in the 1990s; in advertising's relentless re-*détourning* of revolutionary iconography into the raw material of commercialism. Situationist history and theory are taught (in so far as they can be taught) on undergraduate degree courses in contemporary arts and philosophy, and are avidly read and debated on numerous very active websites and internet discussion groups. Despite its seemingly resolutely 'underground' status, the SI, in the words of T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson-Smith in this anthology, 'will simply not go away.' (p. 468)

Whether understood in terms of the history of avant-garde movements in modernism (as writers like Greil Marcus[1] have argued it should be) or in terms of nascent post-structuralism and the emergent theorization of postmodernism, situationist thought presents significant and not yet fully assimilated challenges to more conventional academic responses to contemporary culture. In particular, the situationist critique of spectacular society and its effects seems, in retrospect, to allow potentially new forms of analysis of the operation of power in contemporary modes of consumer capitalism. Likewise, situationist theorizations of the city and of the structures of urban life, from Ivain Chtcheglov's 1953 lettrist essay 'Formulary for a New Urbanism' onwards, have increasing relevance in relation not only to contemporary urban development but to understanding the processes through which people interact with, and make sense of, the environments they construct.[2] But the organization and influences of the SI itself – the fundamental tenets of its political and aesthetic creeds, the disparate factions which constituted it, the degree of its actual involvement in events connected with it, and the critical status of the art and writing it produced – these remain somewhat uncertain, contested spaces in the history of postwar French avant gardes, spaces which currently centre on recent intellectual interest in the work of Guy Debord as the SI's central figure.

The writings in Tom McDonough's book offer a range of engagements with SI art, theory and practice which both surveys and analyses current understanding of the movement, the individuals (specifically Debord and Asger Jorn) and the organization itself. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International – Texts and Contexts* opens with McDonough's introductory discussion, which in turn opens with the word 'Dadaism', quoted from Guy Debord's first situationist piece, written in 1957. In so doing, the book firmly establishes its twin priorities: an assessment of situationism in relation to the work and thought of Debord himself, as founding member, sometime leader and key intellectual figure in situationism, and an examination of situationism in relation to the *October* project of scrutinizing twentieth-century modernist avant gardes through the lenses of art theory, poststructuralism and a newly politicized art history. McDonough goes on to 'define' situationism as a 'politico-aesthetic avant-garde (for lack of a better term)' (p. xvii), a definition that operates in relation to recent critical work on Debord himself and on situationism in general and the movement's own sense of its own 'critical historicization' (p. xviii), its own self-insertion into the specific histories of which it was a part – and which it influenced so deeply. In this sense, situationism is both radically different from and yet comparable to Dadaism; it shares Dadaist disgust at what Debord called (in an economic metaphor that reverberates throughout situationist writing) the 'bankruptcy' of bourgeois society, yet recognizes the impossibility of repetition of Dadaist strategies, insisting instead on a theorization of this bankruptcy as a necessary foundation to any avant-garde aesthetic response. Situationism's own historical specificity becomes its major card in the game of revitalizing an avant-garde critique of bourgeois society – its own focus is not on a world devastated by one war, but on a world constituted out of and constructed in the image of the ruinous effects of another. These effects – mass culture, consumer capitalism, the liberal-capitalist hegemony, nascent media domination and their social and aesthetic manifestations – become the objects of both the critique and the aesthetic, as the critique seeks ways of comprehending the emergent postwar social-cultural-political landscape and the aesthetic seeks ways of appropriating, undermining, and drawing attention to it.

While the primary focus here is on the aesthetic (McDonough's intention is clearly to examine the SI as primarily an artistic movement, motivated by a fundamentally avant-garde desire to shock representatives of conventional society), what quickly becomes apparent is that the aesthetic practices and products cannot be separated from aspects of the critique. In this sense, situationism is to be understood as an art movement motivated by a desire to effect political awareness, if not transformation. The rhetorical antagonism characteristic of situationist texts would seem to support this provisional reading, although no essay here explores fully the possible relationships between situationist literary and artistic styles, except in the analysis of the ways in which artistic practice makes concrete the surface intentions expressed in the writing.

The book offers a concerted effort to respond to these challenges, and opens up new spaces for the consideration of both the sources and dynamics of situationist thought, and its impact on the development of critical models of consumer capitalism. The pieces collected here are based on an issue of the journal *October* first published in the winter of 1997, comprising nearly sixty pages of newly translated texts from *Internationale situationniste*, along with five contemporary essays examining different aspects of situationism. In book form, the original texts have been augmented so that selections from situationist writings now extend to nearly a hundred and seventy pages, and additional essays from various sources by Greil Marcus, Libero Andreotti, Giorgio Agamben, Jonathon Crary and Thomas Y. Levin have been added, along with an exchange between Peter Wollen and T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson-Smith, published originally across two issues of *October*. The book is extremely well illustrated with

monochrome photographs and reproductions of situationist images and stills, many of which will be well known to readers of other anthologies, but some of which – such as the extensive illustration of Debord's films by stills in Levin's essay – offer less familiar material. These illustrations are important to an understanding of situationism as a philosophical position not bound by classroom theorizing but always bearing before it the objective of political action predicated in some way on its theorization of the intensely visual and spectacular historical circumstances in which it found itself. Frequently this action was chaotic or ineffectual in its execution, or merely satirical in its effects, but the intention to transform public consciousness through physical engagement was always present in situationist thought.

The book offers a combined survey and analysis of situationism, constructing its own various versions of the movement in order to focus and legitimize the critiques. McDonough's selection avoids some of the pitfalls of earlier introductions to situationism, which have sometimes been hampered by repetition and consequently a reduction of the object of analysis.[3] At the same time, it avoids the sense of intellectual alienation that tends to be generated by the standard anthologies of situationist work, edited respectively by Chris Gray and Ken Knabb.[4] While Knabb's is the more comprehensive and authoritive, it offers a visually distorted view of SI texts by omitting the illustrations which originally accompanied them; Gray's, on the other hand, has been frequently critiqued for the unreliability of its translations. McDonough offers the reader a representative selection of short, fairly accessible situationist texts, some of which are by writers often omitted from other anthologies (for example, Michèle Bernstein is notably present here, and her significant and often under-represented contribution to the movement is discussed further in Kristin Ross's interview with Henri Lefebvre; a discussion of the roles and significance of the female members of the SI is lacking, however). Likewise, the academic essays offer a range of engagements with their subjects. The strengths of these essays, in comparison with those in other collections seeking to describe and survey the topic, lie in their consistently critical and intellectually informed engagements. Key elements of situationist thought are not merely described but are subject to sometimes quite intense scrutiny, and are illustrated and exemplified by discussions which range across the broad and irregular field of situationist writing in order to exemplify and clarify their points. This doesn't necessarily lead to readerly accessibility (like much contemporary critical writing, situationist writing is notoriously obscure, perhaps deliberately so, and more than one commentator has noted that this obscurity works to pre-empt easy critical engagement with the arguments), and some of the essays here are demanding reads for a variety of reasons.

McDonough's own piece explores 'Situationist Space', offering a detailed discussion of Debord's well-known psychogeographical 'map' of Paris, *The Naked City*. McDonough argues that situationist maps function in diachronic terms, recognizing that subjects, in opposition to the synchronic totalization offered by conventional maps, experience space temporally. *The Naked City* is thus to be understood more in terms of a narrative than a topological representation of the city, a '"ludic-constructive" narrative of a new urban terrain' (p. 262), which offers a critique of the conventional map of Paris as representing 'abstract space riddled with contradictions; it not only conceals difference, but its acts of division and exclusion are themselves productive of difference.' (p. 249) In such a reading, situationist practices such as the *dérive* and its psychogeographical representation are combined with rhetorical analysis, proto-postmodernist theoretical tools like Kevin Lynch's notion of cognitive mapping (here ascribed to Fredric Jameson, but more appropriately sourced in Lynch's *The Image of the City*),[5] and a continued insistence on differentiating situationist practices from those of other pre-cursor avant gardes ('the situationist [...] mistrust of surrealist chance is

understandable' [p. 259]). The essay itself is structured like a *dérive*, offering loosely connected nodes of critical engagement to illustrate its intellectual drift.

Clare Gilman's contribution on 'Asger Jorn's Avant-Garde Archives' extends the project sketched out in McDonough's introduction through a rethinking of Jorn in relation to the self-conscious belatedness of lettrist and situationist artistic production, returning to Dadaism as a starting position from which to present the argument that situationism was 'postdada' (p. 189). Other readings of situationist artistic practice in relation to the ideological and representational frames of Dadaism fail to account fully for the departures from established avant-garde forms characterizing works by artists like Jorn, which are thus refigured as a set of responses to a perceived exhaustion on the part of viable avant-gardism:

> In plagiarizing images, themes and ideologies, the situationist work does not negate these forms but rather presents them as 'surplus', revealing prior avant-garde strategies to be 'indifferent stuff and substance,' undone by their own irrelevance within contemporary culture. Jorn's paintings reveal previous critical gestures to be mere crust on the canvas. (p. 201)

For Gilman, situationist attitudes to art are ultimately restricted by the barriers of their own theoretical limits. 'Jorn's painterly carcasses', she writes, 'cannot conceive of an art that would offer a provocative analysis of the way in which we come to meaning *within* discursive frameworks and *without* complete subjective control.' (p. 208) With this diagnosis, Gilman indirectly pinpoints the critical limits of the situationist project as a whole, which result in its ultimate failure, in both aesthetic and ideological terms, adequately to transcend the very structures it so persistently identifies as complicit with the operations of spectacular society. The very existence of this and other scholarly considerations of situationism is ultimately testimony to this failure.

The longest essay here, profusely adumbrated with illustrations, is Thomas Y. Levin's 'Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord'. This accompanies Giorgio Agamben's terse, pointed lecture on 'Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Films', which connects Debord's cinematic poetics to those explored by Jean-Luc Godard (himself the subject of vicious attacks in situationist writings), and theorizes 'the close tie between cinema and history' (p. 313) through the work of Walter Benjamin (whose work is cited in nearly every essay in McDonough's book). Benjamin's notion of 'Messianic history' is harnessed by Agamben to a loosely Deleuzian conception of repetition and its relations to memory. Debordian cinema is thus read in terms of the relations between memory, repetition and the situationist theory of the image 'as a zone of undecidability between the true and the false' (p. 319). Debord's films enact theoretical principles outlined in his *The Society of the Spectacle*, in seeking ways of foregrounding 'the image as image and thus to allow the appearance of "imagelessness"' (p. 319).

Levin's longer discussion emphasizes from the outset the hazards of the common critical conflation of 'spectacle' with 'visual', and insists that cinema itself is only one exemplar of the manifestation of spectacular society, which Debord clearly defines as 'a social relation among people, mediated by images' (p. 324). Levin explores SI writings on cinema, noting again that situationist interest in film needs to be understood 'in light of the significance in its genealogy of the artistic avant-garde' (p. 328). Cinema, as the dominant form of visual representation in the twentieth century, has been both contaminated by the ideology of the spectacle yet repeatedly seen as a medium through which some kind of aesthetic challenge to that ideology could be expressed. The dialectic of appropriation and resistance maps out the history of film as a medium of

representation, and marks out film itself as in urgent need of situationist *détourning*. Precisely because of its compromised aesthetic status, cinema offered the situationists the most powerful opportunities for an examination of their own methods of re-appropriation.

Debord's films offer, consequently, a group of works that exemplifies situationist theory in practice. It is unfortunate, then, that these works are largely inaccessible (due in part to Debord's own censorship of them), and, as Levin notes, 'have provoked almost no critical literature whatsoever beside a number of more or less incidental newspaper reviews.' (p. 334) Levin's discussion counters this inaccessibility by focusing where necessary on scripts and scenarios rather than the films themselves, and traces the development of Debord's cinematic aesthetic from its early lettrist expressions onwards. Levin rightly draws attention to Debord's emphasis on the soundtrack as a central constituent of the filmic experience (again suggesting that situationist thought ultimately relied heavily on spoken and written language as its dominant and most effective means of expression). He examines the effects and styles Debord utilizes in his early films ('narrative intransitivity, estrangement, foregrounding, multiple diegesis, aperture, unpleasure, reality' [p. 426], in Peter Wollen's terms) in constructing what Levin calls 'the *mimesis of incoherence*: the film is unsatisfying because the world is unsatisfying, the incoherence of the film reflects that of the reality; the poverty of the film's materials serves to emphasise the poverty of its subject.' (p. 360)

Levin's discussion is detailed and informative, offering a comprehensive survey of Debord's films and, in so doing, a quantity of historical trivia that helps to bring out the creative dynamics of the subject. So, for example, we learn that Godard's leading actress and wife Anna Karina had earlier appeared in one of Debord's *détourned* soap commercials. But the force of Levin's argument lies in his repositioning of Debord's cinema in relation to more familiar avant gardes like that of Godard, from which Debord emerges as influential precursor in the history of countercinema. This repositioning of situationist theory and practice in relation to more orthodox canons of artistic development sheds new light on the history of avant-garde relations and developments in the period, and reveals connections and influences which more mainstream approaches often miss, ignore or, at worst, suppress.

The essays in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* work in combination to initiate the long-term process of such a repositioning. Situationism is read here for the most part outside the internecine squabbling that frequently mars other attempts to engage critically with it (the dispute between Clark/Nicholson-Smith and Wollen notwithstanding), and what results is detailed and critically committed in its desires to understand, elucidate and account for the objects of analysis. There are omissions, which vary in conspicuousness according to one's position. While Debord's films are extensively discussed, the rest of the pieces here remain resolutely high culture in their reference points, and the relations between situationism and popular cultural forms – and the influences of situationism on subsequent popular cultural moments like punk – go largely unexplored, if one discounts Greil Marcus's abbreviated rehashing of his argument in *Lipstick Traces* and the dust cover's lurid pink pseudo-punk typography. Raoul Vaneigem, author of *The Revolution of Everyday Life*[6] and a theorist rather than artistic practitioner, receives significantly less attention than Debord or Jorn. There is also the sense of high seriousness characteristic of *October* writing in general, which allows little space for the humour which tempered many situationist satires and which can still be found in other surveys (in a footnote to his discussion of the movement published elsewhere, Bob Black writes of the notorious sandpaper covers of situationist books: 'As I do not own an emery board, I have found the cover useful in doing my nails. This is an example of the situationist aspiration to reintegrate art and everyday life'[7]).

Such omissions are, of course, inevitable in any reader that attempts to survey such a significant area with the intense scrutiny that this one does. Considered as an historically located political and aesthetic complex of ideas, products and actions, situationism emerges from this book with an enhanced intellectual credibility wholly in proportion with its burgeoning cultural significance.

John Sears
Manchester Metropolitan University

Notes

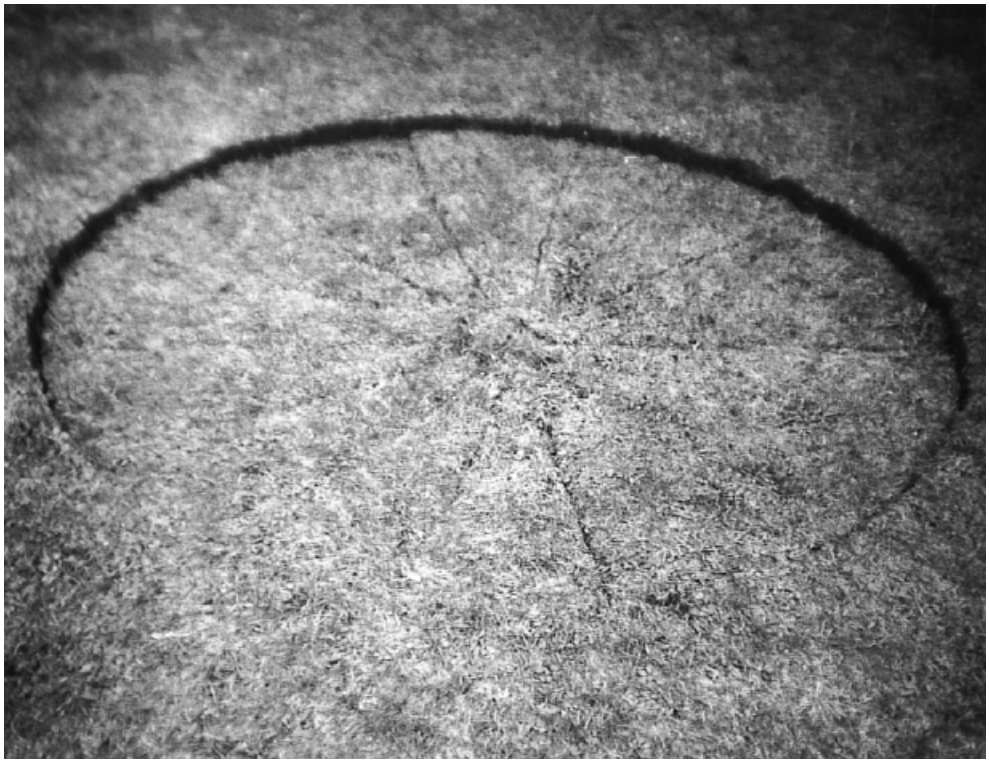
1 Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: The Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, Harvard, 1990.
2 For an analysis of situationist urban theory, see Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999.
3 See, for example, S. Home (ed.), *What is Situationism? A Reader*, Edinburgh, 1996. This is a useful introductory guide, but the essays tend to reiterate the same narrative of situationism's origins and development.
4 Ken Knabb (ed. and trans.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley, 1989; Chris Gray (ed. and trans.), *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, London, 1998.
5 Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, Mass, 1960.
6 Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, London, 1983.
7 Bob Black, 'The Realisation and Suppression of Situationism', in Home (ed.), *What is Situationism?*, p. 151.

Staring into holes in the ground

Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties by *Suzaan Boettger,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 316 pp., 14 col. plates, 97 b. & w. illus., £35.00

Rosalind Krauss's famous account of 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' begins by approaching and then staring into a pit in the earth towards the centre of a field. Suzaan Boettger's book 'begins by looking into a hole dug in New York City's Central Park'. Of course, Krauss assures us, what we are looking at is, in fact, a sculpture by Mary Miss (*Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys*, 1978), 'more precisely, an earthwork'.[1] The hole at the beginning of Boetgger's book, dug by Claes Oldenburg in New York's Central Park is, by the author's own assertion, neither made by a bona fide 'earthworker' nor a work that could strictly be called an earthwork. And yet it finds its place, and indeed a crucially important place, in Boettger's book on earthworks. Krauss's example, although identified as an earthwork, would fall outside the rather narrow focus of Boettger's book. This is because it was made outside the chronological span of her text – 1967 to 1973 – and not by one of the American participants in any of the inaugural exhibitions of the genre of earthworks[2] – all of whom, as Boettger points out, were men.

Krauss's meditations on a hole in the ground led to the mapping of an expanded field of art in which sculpture was but one possibility. Far from expanding the field of earthworks, Boettger's account closes in on her subject, limiting and refining the scope of



6.1. Richard Long, *Turf Circle, England 1966*. Dimensions unrecorded.

Krauss's study, finally trapping earthworks in the urban setting of New York in the late 1960s. For it is here, in the galleries, bars and sociable art scene of New York that 'Earthworks' develops in vivid detail in Boettger's account.

In her chapter on 'The West as Site and Spirit', Boettger concludes, 'It was in New York that the conceptualization, presentation, and critical writing about Earthworks occurred, but the [American] West provided significant stimulus to their imagining and realization.' (p. 127) Moving east marks the inauguration of Earthworks. As Boettger documents, many of the leading earthwork artists had moved from the West Coast or had lived there for some significant time. The art dealer Virginia Dwan, whose New York gallery staged the inaugural Earthworks exhibition and supported many of the artists associated with earthworks had, at the time, only recently [1965] moved her gallery from Los Angeles to New York. *Artforum*, the most influential art magazine of the period, had relocated from Los Angeles to New York, marking its west–east relocation with the publication of one of the most cited and influential of all its issues – the summer 1967 special on American sculpture (p. 126). Boettger herself, as the cover notes on her book attest, has made the move from the San Francisco Bay Area to New York City. (In a kind of return journey a west coast publisher publishes her book.) Hers is clearly a very personal and long-standing engagement with Earthworks. Not that this is immediately evident in the text itself, which reads as a very conventional 'account of the onset and development of Earthworks'. As befits a 'history of a genre' ('The Issue of Earthworkers' Priority', p. 236), her book places great importance on identifying and locating Earthworks' inaugural moments and delineating its major developments.

The scope of the book is narrower than many treatments of the subject, largely following the definition set out by John Beardsley in the first substantial book on the subject, *Earthworks and Beyond*, first published in 1984. Beardsley states: 'Only sculptures in earth and sod can properly be described as earthworks.'[3] Although not an exclusive focus, Boettger's study is centred on works delimited by media (works made of earth) and nationality (works made by Americans and predominantly in America). Eschewing the 'beyond' of earthworks that was the interest of Beardsley's survey, Boettger instead goes in search of Earthworks' inaugural moment(s) in 'the landscape of America in the 1960s'. Where Beardsley and others have been concerned with Earthworks' legacy, Boettger's account is, in her own words, a 'history both of the materiality of the genre "Earthworks" and of the thinking that made it possible' (p. 237).

She devotes a great deal of space to claiming 'firsts': 'the first contemporary sculpture made directly in the ground' (p. 8); 'the first mention of the term earth works' (p. 9). She identifies artistic precedents and discusses a whole range of works that 'could have' been included in the inaugural exhibition of Earthworks, but for some reason were not. Mainly, she argues, because their makers were not American. Earthwork artists were 'chauvinistically American', as the cited opinions of two of the leading protagonists of Earthworks are called in to demonstrate – Michael Heizer's goal being 'to make an American statement' while Robert Smithson claimed to have 'developed something that was intrinsically my own and rooted to my experience in America' out of 'the defunct [...] class culture of Europe'. This assertive pro-American rhetoric of Earthworks seems to compel some further investigation. Apart from identifying Smithson's desire to get out from under Europe's historical cultural influence and an assertion that to be chauvinistically American was 'a conventional attitude for the time' (p. 175), we really get no further. And so a potentially productive line of investigation is eschewed, as often seems the case in Boettger's text, in favour of reductive and simplistic identification of precedents and contexts. Thus we find Degas' s *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* (1879–81) identified as the originator of 'the process of incorporating a non-fine art material in sculpture' (p. 24). We learn that Marcel Duchamp's '1920 *Dust Breeding* on a glass plate could be considered a very early example of a formless work made of natural matter and suggesting the degraded or abject.' (p. 25) And we see how the 'jagged surfaces of [Heizer's] *Double Negative* have taken on the appearance of the tall craggy walls narrowly enclosing the "rocky den in the desert" in Giovanni Bellini's second painting of the penitent St Jerome (1472–74).' (p. 196) Not only spurious, such comparisons, devoid of the historical context Boettger insists is necessary to understanding Earthworks, are virtually meaningless. Really vital connections with Arte Povera, the cinematic, even rock music, are summarily discussed in ways that hardly disturb the surface, and yet are crying out for some deeper excavation.

Boettger's rather crude attempts at delving into Earthworks' unconscious – and particularly that of Smithson – result in such observations as the following (on *Spiral Jetty*'s location in a red-coloured Dead Sea):

> The configuration calls up the situation of his conception having been prompted by the death of a predecessor brother who died of the blood disease leukaemia. The imaginative complexity of his motif indicates the vividness of his awareness – not necessarily available to his own conscious recognition – that his own life's origins were immersed in blood. (p. 204)

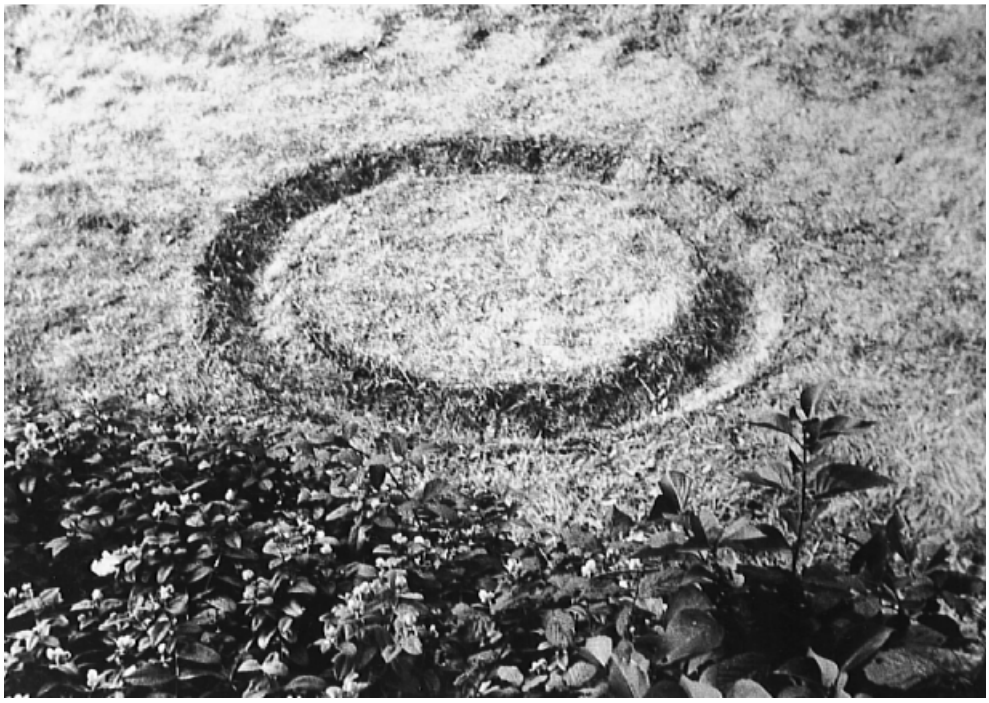
Boettger's explanation for why such interpretations were not forwarded in interviews conducted with Smithson at the time is that 'both they [the interviewers] and interviewee maintained the fashionably cool, and emotionally comfortable, restriction of the

discussion to impersonal art and art world issues.' As the evidence of his extensive writing attests, Smithson knew both how to encourage and frustrate these kind of psychoanalytic suggestions in the most cunning and humorous ways. I think of his description of *The Fountain Monument* in 'The Monuments of Passaic': 'It was as though the pipe was secretly sodomizing some hidden technological orifice, and causing a monstrous sexual organ (the fountain) to have an orgasm. A psychoanalyst might say that the landscape displayed "homosexual tendencies," but I will not draw such a crass anthropomorphic conclusion. I will merely say, "It was there."'[4] I think there is plenty of scope for psychoanalytic readings of Smithson's work, and of earthworks and land art in general. Boettger simply does not delve into such interpretation in sufficient depth or with suitable (theoretical) tools.

Rich with facts and historical detail, in general, interpretation seems something of an afterthought. By her own admission, Boettger acknowledges that 'in the process of structuring the research I learned of Fredric Jameson's astute interpretative lens, which I could adapt as an exploration of several paths towards "unmasking" earthworks as "socially symbolic acts" evoking the art's *Political Unconscious*, the title of Jameson's 1981 book.' (Acknowledgements, p. 306) This seems to have been seized upon by Boettger as a way of revealing the political dimension of works whose explicit engagement with politics tended towards profound ambivalence (for example, Smithson's statements that 'sooner or later the artist is implicated or devoured by politics without even trying'),[5] or that seemed increasingly politically incorrect (Heizer's cowboy and 'chauvinistically American' views; the non-inclusion of women). There is certainly a far more sophisticated formulation of the relations between art and society towards the end of the book, where Jameson is directly invoked (p. 225), than in earlier sections. Here 'The Sixties', 'The Economy', 'The New Demography', 'The Onset of Environmentalism' and 'The Impact of the Vietnam War' are all discussed under discrete headings and presented as 'the grounds of the 1960s from which Earthworks emerged' (p. 27).

The interpretive strategies of another writer Boettger invokes might actually be closer to her mode of argument. She cites 'the first page of his important early thematic analysis *Landscape into Art* (1949)', in which, 'the art historian Kenneth Clark declared that "landscape painting marks the stages in our conception of nature."' 'If', she contends, 'we extend this history to earthworks' manipulations of actual terrain, we see our vision of nature at the end of the 1960s.' (p. 221) Clark's account does actually accommodate her proposed extension (at least to the mid-twentieth century). Writing in 1949, he hoped and believed in the survival of the human spirit in the face of the 'terrible new universe' of 'science', 'bureaucracy', 'atom bombs and concentration camps' and in the human spirit's ability to 'give itself a visible shape'. 'Ultimately,' writes Clark 'our expanded concept of nature may even enrich our minds with new and beautiful images.'[6] Earthworks, as construed in Boettger's account, might well fit the bill.

Boettger's text – and its blurbs – purport to present us with Earthworks' degree zero: 'the first comprehensive history of the Earthworks movement in the United States'. Boettger's text may well be the 'first' history with so uniquely narrow a focus (the Earthworks movement in the United States from 1967 to 1973) but to make such an assertion implies that nothing of consequence has been written in the intervening years, Boettger's own writings included. According to the bibliography, Boettger's own first acknowledged published foray into writing about earthworks was a review of the first edition of the complete writings of Robert Smithson, edited by Nancy Holt and published in 1979. Boettger's review was entitled 'Earthworks and Earthwords' and was published in *Artweek*, vol. 11, no. 12 (29 March 1980) (Bibliography, p. 295). I have not read this early review, but it does interest me that of the two terms in its title, Boettger's



6.2. Richard Long, *Turf Circle, Ireland 1967*. Dimensions unrecorded.

focus in her current text is solely with the first – 'Earthworks' – to the almost total exclusion of the latter 'Earthwords'.

Boettger focuses on Smithson's large-scale earthworks rather than dwelling extensively on his writings. In some ways this offers a useful corrective to the over-concentration on this aspect of his oeuvre in much recent writing on Smithson. It does mean that Boettger omits from her book – and from her bibliography – some very influential writings on Smithson by Craig Owens. The first of these is a review of the self-same book Boettger herself reviewed, but titled simply 'Earthwords'. It was published in *October*, vol. 10, in Fall 1979 (inset pl. 6.2 as photocopy supported 130×93 and so before Boettger's own review, just to contribute a little to that author's own predilection for precedent). Owens went on to write two subsequent essays on 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', which also include discussion of Smithson. Given Boettger's stated interest in Jameson's interpretive framework, in which 'interpretation is [here] construed as an essentially allegorical act'[7] and her own mention of allegory's usefulness (pp. 135–6), it seems all the more surprising that Boettger does not deal with this most explicitly allegorical interpretation of Smithson's work. Near the beginning of the first part of 'The Allegorical Impulse' Owens identifies as the feature 'most proper' to allegory 'the capacity to rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear'.[8] Surely an apt aspiration for writing on works that were often ephemeral, or which even, as in the case of Oldenburg's hole in Central Park with which she began, disappeared within a few hours of their making.

In the years after Smithson's death his work was – depending on how you view it – acclaimed, appropriated or even annexed to various strains of what was then called 'postmodernism'. In 'Earthwords', Owens proposes 'that the eruption of language into the aesthetic field […] is coincident with, if not the definitive index of, the emergence of

postmodernism.'[9] It is worth noting the use of some interesting natural phenomena here – 'eruption' (volcanic perhaps) and 'field'. Boettger discusses several works using – or evoking – volcanic eruption and also discusses the use of another natural phenomenon – avalanche – for the title of an earthwork-inspired journal (pp. 159, 224). The formative language of postmodernism, especially as promulgated in *October*, is replete with such organic terminology: for instance, Krauss's 'expanded field' and numerous ruptures and rifts, chasms and other geological formations. Boettger does not venture into this postmodernist terrain. I do not think she uses the term once in her text. Certainly it does not appear in the index, where there are twelve references to the use of the term 'postminimalism'.

'Here then', states Boettger, 'is another context for Earthworks, the stylistic designation called Postminimalism.' (p. 178) As elsewhere in her text, Boettger uses such terms as if they are universally accepted and understood. Postminimalism – or at least its earlier hyphenated form 'post-Minimalism' – has a rather narrower and more sophistic origin than the term postmodernism. As Robert Pincus-Witten remembers,

> I was drawn instead to the artists who at the same time seemed to represent a counterformalism [rather than those championed by Greenberg's acolytes, Fried, Krauss, etc.] for which I coined the term 'post-Minimalism,' a bit of journalistic legerdemain that briefly passed for a catchphrase, upon which I sailed by the seat of my pants till 'post-Modern' left it in the dust.[10]

Boettger prefers to remain left in the dust with postminimalism. And yet postminimalism offers no firmer grounding for Earthworks than postmodernism's ruptured, shifting sands.

When Earthworks was new, Sidney Tillim reviewed the first *Earthworks* exhibition at the Dwan Gallery. His review, 'Earthworks and the New Picturesque', was published in *Artforum* in December 1968. For Tillim, Earthworks' connections to art's present – modernism – and its past – the picturesque – were inescapable: 'Earthworks […] arrive at a moment when Modernism is at the lowest ebb in its history, and is therefore implicated in, indeed signals, the weakness of Modernism as a whole.'[11] As for the picturesque, Tillim asserts 'What I think is involved in Earth Art […] is a twentieth-century version of the picturesque.' More than just a sentimental episode in the history of taste, the picturesque, for Tillim, represented 'a way of seeing nature' and of relating to it pictorially, physically and verbally.[12]

Boettger thinks that Tillim is 'unable to recognise the seriousness with which earthwork artists challenged modernist aesthetics' (p. 155), and is dismissive of the parallels he draws between contemporary earthworks and their picturesque precedents. Tillim's article, says Boettger, 'sounds like a bold assertion of historical parallels, but the connection had no more actual affinities than would have Oppenheim's superimposition of the form of the Cotopaxi volcano on a Kansas wheat field.' (pp. 155–6) This reads as deeply ironic given the nature of some of her own historical parallels. I think Boettger is profoundly wrong on both counts.

I think Tillim is absolutely right about the link to the picturesque (although his terms of engagement need some refining). Both Yves Alain Bois[13] and Rosalind Krauss[14] develop the picturesque parallels with contemporary art in vivid and convincing ways. Ann Bermingham (who is acknowledged by Boettger), in re-interpreting the historical picturesque, gives plenty of scope for a meaningful engagement with its more contemporary embodiment.[15] I also think that Tillim is absolutely right about Earthworks' links to modernism, but profoundly wrong about them signalling the demise of modernism. This is partly because Tillim's notion of modernism is very narrowly Greenbergian, and certainly Greenbergian modernism was under fierce attack, not least in the pages of *Artforum*, where Tillim's essay was published. He is wholly

accurate in identifying earthworks as an '[o]ver cultivation of the modernist idiom' and to assert that 'a thorough knowledge of modernist art is [...] a prerequisite for the refinement actually involved in the literalist picturesque.'[16] The example of Smithson's work is testament to his profound understanding of modernist art and modernism. For a quick reminder one need look no further than the evidence of Smithson's reply to Michael Fried's 'Art and Objecthood'.[17]

Smithson had thoroughly digested modernism. The appearance of Earthworks – as perhaps the most refined escalation of modernist art – occurs at the moment when 'the "modernity" which modernism prophesied has finally arrived.'[18] For T.J. Clark it is modernism's triumph – not its failure – which makes the modernist past seem ruinous from the purview of the present. And what could seem more ruinous than Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed* at Kent State University (illustrated on the cover of Boettger's book), or the monuments of industrial decay along the Passaic river ('Has Passaic replaced Rome as The Eternal City?', ponders Smithson)[19] or Boettger's own description of the current state of Heizer's vast *Double Negative*: 'Since at least the early 1990s the original crisp planes and clean angles of Heizer's architectonic earthwork have been in quite a deteriorated state, suggesting an aged architectural ruin ravaged by neglect over time.'(p. 196)

T.J. Clark's book *Farewell to an Idea* begins with a story of 'modernism unearthed by some future archaeologist, in the form of a handful of disconnected pieces left over from a holocaust that had completely wiped out the pieces' context'.[20] According to Boettger, 'Twice in letters from Nevada to this patron [...] Heizer boasted that the works would be able to withstand direct nuclear attack.' (p. 193) I have no doubt, then, that earthworks would be unearthed by Clark's imaginary archaeologist as part of modernism's ruins. But Clark goes on to recognize that his book's opening ploy in fact speaks to his 'book's deepest conviction: that already the modernist past is a ruin'.[21] These seemed apt thoughts as I sat recently watching Smithson's hilarious slide presentation of *Hotel Palenque* (1972) in the Aye Simon Reading Room of Frank Lloyd Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Listening to the artist's deadpan analysis of the semi-derelict hotel and the increasingly bemused and amused murmuring of his architectural student audience amidst the modernist splendour seemed strangely appropriate. You would get no sense of *Hotel Palenque*'s humour were you to rely on Boettger's solemn account of it (p. 198). In including Smithson's work in 'Moving Pictures', the modernist museum Smithson described as an 'inverse digestive tract' and a 'concrete stomach'[22] had thoroughly digested Earthworks.

Given that Boettger's book was published in 2002, its production was probably well advanced by 11 September 2001. Nevertheless, its publication does post-date the attack on the World Trade Center and the creation of Ground Zero. Given the author's predilection for precedents and connecting concurrent historical events, this could surely not have escaped her attention. In her text she mentions another earthwork made in New York which also demands revisiting in light of recent events. Bill Bollinger's work, included in the Whitney exhibition *Anti-Illusion: Procedures Materials* (19 May–6 July 1969), 'a two-ton rock excavated from the site of the future [and by the time of Boettger's book, past] World Trade Center' (p. 180).

And so, to paraphrase Krauss, we stare at the pit in the earth (and many more holes in the ground in grainy television pictures from Iraq) and think that we both do and do not know what earthworks are. Boettger's book still seems to think that we can go back, archaeologist-like, reconstruct the remains and uncover what they were. As modernist ruins I think, at best, we can only try to understand why that is what they are.

Alison Joy Sleeman
University College London

Notes

1 R.E. Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Mass., 1986, pp. 276–90.
2 There is a short section on 'Developments since 1973' on pp. 238–44.
3 J. Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond*, New York, (1984) and edn 1989, p. 7.
4 R. Smithson, 'A Tour of The Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey' (1967), in *Robert Smithson: the Collected Writings*, ed. J. Flam, Berkeley, 1996, p. 71.
5 R. Smithson, 'The Artist and Politics: A Symposium' (1970), in Flam, *Robert Smithson*, p. 134.
6 K. Clark, *Landscape into Art*, London, 1949, pp. 142–3.
7 F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, London, 1983 (first published by Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1981), p. x.
8 Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism' in *Beyond Recognition*, Berkeley, 1994, pp. 52–3.
9 C. Owens, 'Earthwords', in *Beyond Recognition*, p. 45.
10 R. Pincus-Witten, 'The Page was my Party', *Artforum*, September 1993, p. 195.
11 S. Tillim, 'Earthworks and the New Picturesque' (1968) reprinted in *Land and Environmental Art*, ed. J. Kastner, survey by B. Wallis, London, 1998, p. 222.
12 Tillim, 'Earthworks and the New Picturesque', p. 222.
13 Y.A. Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll around *Clara-Clara*', *October*, 29, summer 1984, pp. 32–62.
14 R. E. Krauss, 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde', in Krauss, The Originality of the Avant Garde, p. 163.
15 A. Bermingham, 'The Picturesque Decade', in *Landscape Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740–1860,* London, 1987.
16 Tillim, 'Earthworks and the New Picturesque', p. 222. Note Tillim's use of Fried's term, literalist, for minimalist here.
17 R. Smithson, 'Letter to the Editor' (1967), reprinted in Flam, *Robert Smithson*, pp. 66–7.
18 T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*, New Haven and London, 1999, p. 2.
19 R. Smithson, 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic', in Flam, *Robert Simthson*, p. 74.
20 Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, p. 1.
21 Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, p. 2.
22 R. Smithson, 'Quasi-infinities and the Waning of Space', in Flam, *Robert Smithson*, p. 35.

The introductory survey from a post-colonial perspective

Indian Art by *Partha Mitter,* London: Oxford University Press, 2001, 304 pp., 71 col. plates, 91 b. & w. illus., £11.99

It is not an easy job to construct an introductory survey of Indian art history today. There are the challenges inherent in any survey of South Asia: the problems of inclusion and exclusion, dating and verification, omission and error, and the difficulty of squeezing the enormous range and complexity of South Asian art into the limited format of a single book. On top of this we can add the conceptual challenges that have recently emerged from broader discussions in Indian historiography, challenges that have a number of implications for the construction of our art-historical narratives of the region. Partha Mitter has risen to these challenges in his latest book. Mitter is one of the leading figures in Indian art history today, well known for his previous books, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (1977) and *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850–1922: Occidental Orientations* (1994), which were influential in

defining new directions in visual studies of the South Asian subcontinent. The present volume – intended as an introductory textbook – differs from these earlier contributions by offering a summary and assessment of emergent approaches to Indian art while assuming a lack of familiarity with the region.

As Mitter explains in his preface, 'There is a need for a reassessment of the way in which we look at, and talk about, Indian art.' (p. 1) Firstly, 'Indian art' as a category has come to stand for an increasingly wide range of media, from architecture, sculpture and illustrated manuscripts, to miniature painting, textiles and rural production, and now to photography, mixed-media and installation work. The dense array of visual forms and traditions emerging from the South Asian subcontinent makes any purely stylistic analysis inadequate. Secondly, the adjective 'Indian' tends to eclipse the shared cultural heritage of the subcontinent which, in Mitter's terms, 'has a historical validity' that transcends the boundaries of its modern nation-states (p. 7). Significantly, Oxford University Press rejected the author's bid to re-name the volume *South Asian Art*, even though the adjective 'South Asian' describes more accurately the geo-cultural terrain concerned. This resistance on the part of the press is quite revealing because it dramatizes the fact that 'Indian art' is a firmly established object of scholarly analysis, one that has a particular coherence and currency in the marketplace of knowledge production, even as it is increasingly destabilized by a number of critical, theoretical and historical pressures.

Although the book follows a familiar periodization, beginning with Hindu and Buddhist art and architecture of the ancient period (300 BCE–1700 CE), followed by the period of Islamic ascendancy (712–1757 CE), then the period of British colonial rule (1757–1947), and finally the period of independence and the post-colonial nation-state (1947–present), Mitter also builds on the contributions of existing surveys, notably the canonical work by Roy Craven and the more recent text by Vidya Deheija, in a number of provocative ways. First, he seeks to 'redress the imbalance' that many generalist texts have created in privileging Hindu, Buddhist and Jain artistic achievements in the subcontinent over Islamic, colonial and modern ones. This imbalance is itself a colonial legacy, he suggests, increasingly put to the test in a post-Orientalist era of knowledge, that is, an era in which the authority of Western knowledge about the non-West has been widely questioned and contested. Second, he seeks to correct (or at least reposition) several assumptions of colonial art history, in particular those found in James Fergusson's pioneering work during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Fergusson famously viewed the fifth-century Gupta period as the 'golden age' of ancient Indian art and saw the rest of India's material culture as evidence of a continuous evolutionary fall from this earlier period of perfection. Mitter argues that Fergusson's classic and enduring framework fails to acknowledge, among other things, the great ornamentation of Hindu temples by the tenth century. More importantly, it represents an outdated chronology of ancient India's artistic achievements. 'We need to see the development of ancient Indian art not in terms of a "classical age" nor in terms of a linear development,' Mitter writes, 'but rather as a series of paradigm shifts bringing to prominence different aims and objectives in different periods and regions.' (p. 2) The result, he implies, is a 'different set of rules' in different areas at specific historical moments. In this way, Mitter attempts to move methodologically 'away from connoisseurship and stylistic analysis' and towards a more contextual approach – one that seeks to 'retrieve the aesthetic conditions that prevailed among Indian artists and patrons themselves' (pp. 2–3).

A third priority of Mitter's narrative is to show how the dominant canon of Indian art has long been shaped and reshaped by different regional, cultural and historical traditions, and then 'radically modified' by minority traditions (p. 71). To this end, Mitter's inclusion of an entire chapter on the non-canonical arts of tribal peoples, women and folk artisans is a welcome addition, one that helps to displace the authoritive

hierarchies of the existing cultural canon. 'There is a curious silence in Indian art history about these groups "hidden from history",' he writes (p. 157). More accurately, these 'arts of everyday use' – including such things as textiles, embroidery, patchwork quilts, shell ornaments, ceremonial masks, hair beads and bangles, body art and effigies – have long been relegated to the domain of anthropological ethnography. 'The view of the applied arts as being inferior to the fine arts has been an implicit assumption of Indian art history grounded in the Renaissance hierarchy of the arts,' Mitter acknowledges. 'However, such an evaluation is also prevalent in Indian society, which itself is a reflection of the social position of these groups.' (p. 157)

This assessment of the unique inflections of cultural meaning and power in Indian society expresses Mitter's broader concern with the syncretic nature of Indian art and architectural history. Elsewhere he emphasizes such examples as the fourteenth-century empire of Vijayanagara, where the early synthesis of Hindu and Muslim architecture expressed a unique cosmopolitanism, and the complex infusion of Persian and Hindu styles in the fifteenth-century illustrated manuscript, the *Ni'mat Nama (Book of Delicacies)*. These forms and contexts, Mitter repeatedly reminds, 'arose out of the intermix of cultures.' While to some this may seem obvious, the significance of this interpretation should not be underestimated. For claims to the purity of ancient Hindu culture have been at the centre of the cultural platform of the Hindu right-wing government in India during the past decade. Indeed, recent battles in South Asia over history textbooks in the school curriculum and the religious origins of architectural sites have demonstrated that the political implications of art history's narratives about the subcontinent are perhaps more urgent than ever before.

In the end Mitter's survey – self-conscious, syncretic, revisionist and inclusive – also respects the traditional structure of the introductory textbook and, in this sense, it is very accessible. Moreover, the final chapters covering art after Independence and the contemporary scene are a valuable addition to the overall picture, and they ground the story of Indian art within the present-day processes of modernity and globalization. In addition to a map, a timeline and over seventy colour plates, the book also includes a useful bibliography of contemporary museums and websites in India, which helps to update the relevant resources available to teachers and students. The great value of this text is that it provides a user-friendly introduction to Indian art without forsaking a self-reflexive account of the unique permutations to knowledge itself under colonial and post-colonial societal conditions.

Saloni Mathur
UCLA

The book of the show and the bookwork

Anya Gallaccio Beat by *Mary Horlock,* with contributions by *Simon Schama* and *Heidi Reitmaier*, London: Tate Publishing, 2002, 48pp., 41 col. plates, 6 b. & w. illus., £14.95

When an artist ensures that their visual practice is combined with the exhibition catalogue, the questions that arise are, 'How does this relate to the finished work?' and

'Is this an expansion or justification of the work?' When essays by other writers are included in the same publication, another question has to be considered: 'What is the relationship between the images and the written texts?' A number of contemporary artists have published their writings either in monographs or anthologies on particular themes: for instance, Damien Hirst's book on his circular paintings (1999) and Phaidon's C*ream* anthologies (1998 and 2000), which include essays and discussions by curators, artists and writers. Other monographs on a single subject, such as Jeremy Deller's *The Battle Orgeave* (2001), are a source of documentation that allows various participants to explain the creation of an artist's work. Artists who rely on their own words to justify their work are sometimes accused of self-defence or self-promotion, but it may be simply a strategy, when confronted by the indifference, or even antagonism, of art critics, the general public and art historians.

At first glance Anya Gallaccio's *Beat* looks like a conventional exhibition catalogue with several authors, rather than a collection of the artist's 'writings' and images. The catalogue accompanied Gallaccio's exhibition at Tate Britain (September 2002–January 2003). However, it is important to understand that there is another way of looking at this catalogue because it is related to recent debates about the use of text and imagery within the visual arts. Initially Gallaccio's images act as documents showing the development of the work. On certain pages there are interior drawings of the Tate Britain, some of which are more detailed and show the areas where the work was installed. There are pages with scientific diagrams showing the extraction of sugar. Surrounding as well as overlapping the maps and diagrams are photographs and postcards of oak trees, brown fabrics and wallpaper representing wood, lumps of sugar, cakes, sweets, liquidized and crystallized sugar. These images are juxtaposed with text, placed either beside or underneath them. Occasionally there is a full-length portrait of a fifteenth-century male; small images of the artist lying on the earth between living and felled oak trees. Images of an oak tree in a landscape and a list of words by the artist are annotated with sticky-backed paper that indicates a particular hierarchical structure. These pages are less cluttered and the images are sharply focused, giving the impression of a highly refined sketchbook.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Gallaccio's approach to the catalogue is to make it into an art work that explores the exchange of information. One of the recent debates about the relationship between image and text is to explore how information is offered simutaneously. Both have equal status while, in art history, text is given priority. The exchange occurs between individuals and organizations, located within specific contexts that presuppose the mobilization of particular means of transmission; in this case the organization is Tate Britain and its assumptions about the function of catalogue. Socially structured contexts, processes of production, transmission and reception are therefore the points of focus. Every item in the book, whether text or image, is treated equally. Nothing is randomly placed. Each item is carefully and meaningfully positioned. Some images are blurred or cropped so that they fit on to the page. This does not change the meaning of the work because larger versions of it can be found on other pages. Because images and texts are treated in the same way, what they convey constantly shifts. The texts and images assemble and reassemble widely dispersed sources and create a range of opportunities for new meaning. Gallaccio investigates the strengths and possibilities of the materials that she uses. Everything is chosen for a particular purpose and this sometimes creates unusual or idiosyncratic fragments in the work. This can be seen, for example, in the front and back covers of the catalogue: at the front is a textured image of a tree trunk, and on the back cover the surface of sugar crystals are delicately raised on the paper.

The essays in this catalogue document the exhibition that contextualizes the work within historical periods. Mary Horlock's essay 'The Story So Far' explains why Tate Britain decided to ask Anya Gallaccio to make a site-specific work in the Duveen Galleries. This is interspersed with commentaries on the controversial problems raised by Gallaccio's determination to use oak trees for the work: *As Long As There Were Any Roads To Amnesia And Anaesthesia Still To Be Explored*. Young oak trees were felled from the Englefield Forestry Estate in Berkshire, which is regulated by the Forestry Commission. Ecologists and even some of Tate Britain's staff objected to the use of these trees because they believed it would damage the forest. Horlock discusses Gallaccio's working processes and compares the collection of landscape paintings in Tate Britain with Gallaccio's use of oak trees. She does this by criss-crossing Gallaccio's work with the traditions of English landscape painting and ideas of Englishness. She then describes how Gallaccio looked at site-specific works made by Mona Hatoum, Richard Serra and Richard Long for the Duveen Galleries, to see how other artists worked with a difficult space. Horlock claims that after her investigation Gallaccio decided not to make a monumental work, but *As Long As There Were Any Roads To Amnesia And Anaesthesia Still To Be Explored* is certainly monumental; trunks, stripped of their branches and towering over the viewer, echo the neoclassical columns in the Duveen Galleries. Gallaccio also wanted the oak trees to symbolize a forest and the position of the trunks expresses this idea. It is this connection that allows Horlock to discuss the tradition of English landscape painting and Gallaccio's work in one breath. The fact that the title of the work refers equally to the loss of memory and bodily sensations is not mentioned in this or any of the other essays. Memory and identity will always be partners but the concept of memory does not have to be saturated with nationalistic undertones. Gallaccio's work depends on the subjectivity of the viewer: sight, sound, touch and smell remain the means of understanding it.

Simon Schama's essay 'Roots' explores the relationship between Gallaccio's work in the exhibition and Land Art in the 1960s. Occasionally he refers to other artists working in the natural environment in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Andy Goldworthy. He makes connections between *As Long As There Were Any Roads To Amnesia And Anaesthesia Still To Be Explored* and Englishness, but briefly argues that Gallaccio's work *Now The Day Is Over* must refer to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean as well as to the home-grown sugar cane in the Norfolk countryside. Gallaccio used liquidized Norfolk sugar mixed with a stabilizing ingredient to make *Now The Day Is Over* and Schama seems to expect a reference to slavery and the Tate plantations to be stated in this work. The last essay in this catalogue is by Heidi Reitmaier. It also dwells on Gallaccio's working processes, but mentions previous works made by the artist. Reitmaier, who was previously director of the Women Artists' Slide Library and editor of *Make,* then states that Gallaccio's work can be associated with the 'personal is political' feminist ideas of the 1970s. Gallaccio is meant to borrow from the ironical imagery used by feminist artists in the 1970s. There are some personal references in Gallaccio works but usually her work is not autobiographical.

This catalogue is useful for people who are new to Gallaccio's work because it provides some information that cannot be found in other books. This does not mean that the essays are not problematic, however. The level of repetition in the essays is unforgivable and more diverse ideas should have been explored. The images used in the catalogue, though, are interesting and the artist's involvement in its production is evident.

Pauline de Souza
University of East London