

ience and its articulation, can nevertheless be seen as experience which is still negotiated and voiced, if only through the hiatus created by the illusory synthesis of the individual and collective in the process of institutional displacement. The internal object world of the unconscious, although constituted in part by internalised and reified experience of capitalist modernity, can, according to Negt and Kluge, rearticulate the fragments of which it is made up and project the consequent fantasies onto the world. This collective projection, needless to say, carries echoes of the Benjaminian dreamworld. But, as with the discussion of postmodern irony, there is thus a return of the excluded residuum as an active participant in the constitution *and* creative subversion of modern capitalist forms.

A central part of Clements' argument is that if we think of creativity purely in terms of the ways in which the 'new' or the 'different' presents itself as radically distinctive then we simultaneously assimilate ourselves to a logic of institutional hierarchies of taste, and thus to the codification of creativity within received aesthetic categories. However, as, *inter alia*, Kant, Feuerbach and Adorno have variously argued, distinction, rupture, *Aufhebung* also require a recognition of the positivity of what is sublated, hierarchised. Arguably, it is the lack of this moment of synthesis in many theorists of 'difference' that undermines the intelligibility of their accounts of creativity: to distinguish oneself from any state of being also requires an act of recognition of, or moment of dialectical identification with, that state.

This pinpoints what is really the underlying organising principle of Clements' book: the to-ing and fro-ing of creative activity between appropriation and everyday retrieval. The cultural battles between the bourgeoisie, their agents – the cultural intermediaries – and alternative or oppositional cultural practitioners looks like a kind of cultural ping pong. However, the classifying, homogenising tendencies of formal institutional reception – de Certeau's 'scriptural economy' – in their fetishisation of difference or distinction, ignore the moment of synthesis of the object/product with its existing ground. In this case, the grounding synthesis would be constitutive of the aesthetic outcome. Such a synthesis would be non-

identical with the classification or 'name' of the object, and, as such, it forms an everyday residuum beyond the scriptural economy, a sedimented history of the artefact. In this manner, sedimentation produces an asymmetry beyond the ping pong of recuperative cycles and, for Clements, breaks its stasis in a rhizomatic, mutational manner. It is, in other words, the absent presence of context that gives us a way of thinking the moment in which creative synthesis occurs in the lived world of informal and heterogeneous practice.

Howard Feather

Unusual alliances?

Victoria Browne and Daniel Whistler, eds., *On the Feminist Philosophy of Gillian Howie: Materialism and Mortality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). 304pp., £85.00 hb., 978 1 47425 412 0

In conversations with students feeling overwhelmed by their studies, I sometimes use the phrase, 'remember that studying is part of life, not the other way around.' While this guidance about how to look after oneself is distinct from the specific experience of living with a life-limiting illness, which Gillian Howie so uniquely addressed in her later work, its intention links with Howie's insight that thinking, practicing and learning are constituents of life, rather than abstracted or disembodied pursuits of knowledge that estrange and disconnect the individual from their lived experience. This rich and vibrant book of writings by colleagues and friends of Howie is motivated by exactly these concerns. Philosophy, art, literature, poetry, film and performative practices are brought together as specific modes of engaging in living, affirmative, ideological, structural and poetic expressions, including the particularity of living with life-restricting or life-limiting illness. Howie's public lecture of 2012, 'How to Think about Death', is the central conceptual and structural text in the volume. A multi-valent and dialogic voice to chapters by Christine Battersby, Claire Colebrook, Joanna Hodge, Kimberly Hutchings, Morny Joy, Stella

Sandford, Alison Stone, and others, the lecture captures the value of her thinking for critical, materialist and feminist philosophies, disability activism, therapeutic and poetic practices, and pedagogy.

'Situated' knowledges have become a creative and critical form of pedagogic, philosophical and feminist practice and activism, drawing from philosophers and critical theorists including Arendt, Beauvoir, Butler, Braidotti, Haraway, Irigaray and Kristeva. Those involved in these methods in the arts, humanities and social sciences will recognise that postgraduate guidance involves stimulating and nurturing young researchers to acquire and deploy critical skills for thinking creatively within and across their respective disciplinary contexts: for example, how to learn from feminist historiographies of their discipline; how to define their specific contribution to it; how to understand its structures and blind-spots; and how to develop new methods that transform their respective sites of study into new insights. In short, researched and research-related teaching seeks to enable students to develop the ability to practice and embody their specific 'voice', informed by particular disciplinary historiographies and their own socio-economic and cultural contexts. What also connects these practices, as feminist, is the self-awareness that their respective knowledges and powers bring with them ethical responsibility to the self and others: qualities which are strikingly evident in Howie's direct enunciation of these values in her lecture, rigorously philosophical, yet also hopeful.

One of the most significant qualities in Howie's reflexive practice throughout her life as a philosopher-educator, -mentor and -activist was her significant expertise in, and time given to, challenging structural economic, classed and gendered constructions of academia and society; part of her general preference for a certain social science empiricism. Stella Sandford, Daniel Whistler and Victoria Browne note her sustained arguments against the shallow and disabling instrumentalisation of academic work that intensified in the UK after the 1990s: for example, Howie's writings on the REF and research audit cultures in which she defends the specific societal contribution of the academic against the short-term manipulation of academic labour by the managerial and commod-

ified market-place. Howie's doctoral research and her first monograph, *Deleuze and Spinoza: Aura of Expressionism* (2002), also undertook this work in its examination of mental and corporeal powers of self-determination. Distinct from the current feminist interest in affective political philosophy, Howie rejected Deleuze's anti-Hegelian speculative empiricism, arguing that it perpetuates the abstraction and mystification of historically-structured ideologies of women's lives and bodies. Rather, she retained Spinoza's critical and corporeal reasoning as a radical enlightenment preview of Horkheimer and Adorno's historical materialism.



In her last monograph, *Between Feminism and Materialism: A Question of Method* (2010), Howie returned to examine the feminist potential of critical materialist reasoning. The book intervenes, again originally, in the opposition between feminist materialist philosophies and micro-politics after Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari, on the one hand, and feminist critical theory and philosophies after Hegel, Marx and the Frankfurt School, on the other.

Sandford, Browne, Hutchings and Hodge provide a particularly good set of discussions about this nexus. Their chapters are insightful not least because they re-

consider the disagreements that have largely defined these recent ‘positions’ (but which are now sometimes unhelpfully entrenched). Their engagement with Howie’s singular materialist feminist reasoning is also valuable, more broadly, given the current denigration of rational critique in public and political life. Howie’s resolve in bringing together thinkers more often seen as irrevocably incompatible for feminist philosophy – e.g. Adorno’s negative dialectics with Irigaray’s phenomenology – still suggests unusual alliances, and, if we take the range of essays in this volume by colleagues with distinct, and sometimes strongly opposing, practices and positions as any indication, Howie’s work is indeed a creative driver for critical materialist practices inside and outside the contemporary university. Also engaging with current political contexts, Claire Colebrook’s discussion of Derrida’s ‘Learning to die, finally’ provides, for example, an environmental meditation on the irreversible ‘unnatural’ planetary and species death from human-made climate change that complements Howie’s critical writings about the impact of discriminating and damaging market-driven ideologies on political subjectivity.

Following Howie’s own logic, then, materialist feminist practices are both the scrupulously political demystification of, and resistance to, discrimination and subjectification, *and simultaneously* affirmative and poetic expressions of singular and collective agency. Critical thinking is not bracketed off from poetic and political imaginaries, or from collective expression. This is reflected in the collection’s intersections with essays by practitioners outside philosophy: Deryn Rees-Jones, Nedim Hassan, Amy Hardie, Janet Price and Ruth Gould each show how situated knowledge-powers are not just the exclusive property of the academy or philosophy, but also constitute the poetic and political agency of those who live with disability or long-term chronic ill-health, and within the care-giving practices of professional and cultural communities who support them.

Those who live with live-limiting illnesses, or alongside someone with such a diagnosis, will recognise how the person can be overwhelmed; mental and physical time and space can shut down in distressing,

fearful and isolating ways. However, if a person can live through (cope with) these intense states of alienation, there can also be times when *dis-ease* can lead to a decisive agency for engaging in one’s own, and others’, worlds – of self, work, family, community, friendship, politics and poetics. Time is lived differently: not having time means that powers of self-determination, for and to oneself, are intensified. For some, the trauma of a diagnosis can be put to work, and make work, both affirmatively and negatively, at the same time. In such phases, the individual (and those around them, if the person is able to share their knowledge) may find that this creates a living-space for a very special kind of reasoning, which is affirmative, critical, acutely incisive and hopeful. While Howie distanced herself from any affiliation with Foucault in her earlier writings, her later philosophical, teaching and mentoring practices can be interpreted as an exemplary feminist expression of the need to ‘care for the self’ against biopolitical management of subjectivity. This capacity to live with agency up to death are particularly central ideas in chapters by Battersby, Joy and Stone. Each author considers Howie’s work as a practice of hope, each is also responsive to Howie’s own insistent challenge to cultures, institutions and society that abstract or denigrate one’s powers of self-determination: for Battersby, this is located in Howie’s 2012 lecture, for Joy in the ‘vital pact’ of Howie’s work and Paul Ricoeur’s *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and Involuntary* (1966), and for Stone in the temporality of maternal relationships and natality. Stone also emphasises the intuitive and aesthetic importance of this self-identification, which accords with Howie’s affirmation of therapeutic practices, such as gardening, and in the final group of contributor essays that present photographic, filmic and musical forms of self-expression and relationality. Overall, Howie’s philosophy of living-with-dying is a potent interlocutor and guide for our times, in which time and space is given to the ethics of self-grief experienced in life-limiting illnesses, together with discussions of collective and transversal modes of feminist care of the self, society and the environment.

Peg Rawes