weight. It would also have been worth pointing out that despite their intimate connections, energy and information are also essentially different insofar as energy can be nothing other than itself, while information as a signifier is always something other than its energetic self.

In the current intellectual atmosphere one can be almost suffocated by the excess of theory devoted to digitality, information, virtuality and cyberization. Any wide-ranging and imaginative consideration given to the cultural economy of energy, by contrast, is extremely rare (and in this respect the book is worth getting for the references alone). Those of us who have been taken to task for deploying the concept of energy outside the domain of science or engineering will strongly welcome this thoroughly re-searched and, by and large, clearly written anthology. I suspect that it is as an early and vivid contribution to the emerging field of cultural thermodynamics that From Energy to Information will leave its trace.

THE DELEUZE CONNECTIONS


Reviewed by Fred Andersson, Department of Art History and Musicology, Lund University, Box 117, 221 00 Lund, Sweden. E-mail: <konstfred@hotmail.com>.

This book was published 2 years ago, and this review is late indeed. There is no risk, however, that the book or its subject will lose its urgency very soon. It presents the work of Gilles Deleuze, a prolific and ambitious philosopher who is generally considered to be very difficult to read and understand. But maybe the difficulties are to a great extent related to some people’s inability to grasp more than a few levels or trails of thought at the same time. Deleuze’s thinking is, as Rajchman writes, “unlikely to work for those minds that are already settled, already classified.” What it is all about is, essentially, an openness that permits connections to be made between fields of experience that are, on the whole, held apart in academic quarters. Deleuze always searched for connections between discursive and pre-discursive levels, between sensation and cognition. Thinking was, for him, to experience life in its sensual multitude and to connect it to the history of abstract thought.

Some of his and his friend Felix Guattari’s fantastic metaphors, such as “bodies without organs,” “rhizomatic activity” and “desiring machines,” have commonly and easily been turned into popular and simplistic slogans of technological determinism. Therefore it is often necessary to point out that a body without organs is not necessarily a robot, that a rhizome is not necessarily an electronic network and that the notion of an “abstract machine” does not have to imply the presence of a machine in the literal, material sense. In Deleuze’s thinking, there is indeed very little support for the notion of the brain as some kind of computer. And that is only one of the many reasons why Rajchman’s book fulfills an urgent need for clarification and explanation.

Rajchman has chosen to divide the book into six chapters, each reflecting a central aspect of Deleuze’s thought. In the first chapter, called “Connections,” Rajchman briefly summarizes Deleuze’s re-reading of the history of Western thought. He puts forward the notion of connective, experimental thought as being the essential trait of this re-reading. The arguments are further elaborated in the following chapters, called “Experimentation” and “Thought.” In the chapter “Multiplicity,” he successfully clarifies Deleuze’s inquiry into levels of complexity in nature and in thought, i.e. into things that are not reducible to schemes or binary oppositions. The significance of this thinking in relation to the social and aesthetic spheres is exemplified in the concluding chapters, “Life” and “Sensation.”

As an easily accessible introduction to a big and labyrinthine body of work, Rajchman’s book is most useful. It is less rewarding if one looks for a more critical evaluation of Deleuze’s work in epistemological, political and semiotic terms. Such evaluations would, however, be the task of a great number of large-scale, specialized studies.

PARABLES FOR THE VIRTUAL: MOVEMENT, AFFECT, SENSATION


Reviewed by Angela Ndalianis. E-mail: <angelan@unimelb.edu.au>.

Drifting through (and I recommend drifting rather than focusing intently— it makes for a more productive read) Brian Massumi’s Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation, I became excited by finding a new voice that has great potential for cinema studies (my own area of research) and theoretical discourses in the humanities in general. This is not an easy read, but it is a challenging one that forces the reader to think actively about the usefulness of interpretive language. Massumi presents the reader with a flexible, malleable approach that invites a multifarious and creative method of interpretation. Shunning the “paradigm” approach that has haunted cinema and cultural studies, he instead outlines more inventive possibilities that do not fix the critical thinker/writer in her interpretation of the cinema and its audience—or culture and its cultural products.

The aim of the book, states Massumi, is to consider the body and its capacity for movement and sensation in writings of cultural theory. Additionally, he states that affect is a crucial one. “There seems to be a growing feeling within media, literary, and art theory that affect is central to an understanding of our information—and image-based late capitalist culture.” Affect is integral to postmodernism, yet the problem, as Massumi so rightly explains, is that “there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect” (p. 27). Influenced by the work of Gilles Deleuze, he sets himself the task of exploring the possibility that movement, affect and sensation “might be culturally-theoretically thinkable” (p. 4). Rather than seeking to be oppositional to traditions of post-structuralism and cultural studies, he intends, instead, to build on this body of work by also traveling theoretical and critical journeys in new directions that, above all, consider affect and the corporeal in their analysis.

Massumi’s concern reflects the frustration of many academics in the humanities. We have inherited theoretical models that are stubborn, single-minded and monolithic in their attitude, often tending to homogenize the object of their study. Owing a great deal to the model of semiotics emerging in the 1960s and 1970s (via interpretations of Ferdinand Saussure’s writings), the theoretical paradigms that followed—whether structuralist, psychoanalytic, feminist, ideological and so on—highlighted the mechanism of “mediation.” These were ideological apparatuses that structured the dumb material interactions of things and
rendered them legible according to a dominant signifying scheme into which human subjects in the making were “interpellated” (pp. 1–2). In their search for the discovery of the Holy Grail of theoretical paradigms, cultural theorists sought to reduce the cultural process and the body that occupies and moves, breathes and lives within that cultural process to models that attempted to function like mathematical equations. As Massumi points out, however, society and humanity are far more complex creatures. They cannot be reduced to a sequence of diagrams or a mathematical configuration that states \[ A + B = C. \] In following this line of discourse, theorists led the coming generation of humanities students on a grand parade—one that ended up at a dead-end street.

Given its emphasis on interpellation, cultural theory has allowed little scope for “modest acts of resistance or subversion” (p. 2) within the everyday. The door to rupture or revolt—states that many theorists craved—became firmly closed as a result of their own doing. In seeking to bring matter and the body, sensation and affect back to interpretation, Massumi attempts to find such ruptures—no matter how minuscule. New, fresh approaches are in order because “critical thinking disavows its own inventiveness as much as possible” (p. 12), and inventiveness is the only way out of what have become stagnant and unproductive models. But, rather than debunking and critiquing these traditions, instead, Massumi seeks alternate affirmative paths that are more productive—models that can build on the work of the past and inject new life to the achievements already attained.

Inventiveness is the key: “why not hang up the academic hat of critical self-seriousness, set aside the intemperate arrogance of debunking—and enjoy?” . . . If you don’t enjoy concepts and writing and don’t feel that when you write you are adding something to the world, if only the enjoyment itself, and that by adding that ounce of positive experience to the world you are affirming and celebrating its potentials, tending its growth, in however small a way, however really abstractly—well just hang it up” (pp. 12–13).

Beginning with Deleuze’s writings on movement and becoming, and traveling the path of Henri Bergson’s analysis of Zeno’s paradoxes of movement, Massumi emphasizes that the continuity of movement is one that is not measurable or easily defined. The movement that unravels throughout an individual’s life is not a fixed or static one that can be clearly mapped into a theoretical paradigm. For example, while Althusserian critique may speak of the subject that is interpellated by “ideological state apparatuses” (the aim of the theorist being to decode the nature of that interpretation), an understanding of this same subject through the lens of Bergson or Deleuze would teach us that, at any point in a life, there are multiple possible endpoints. Viewed retrospectively, movement signifies that the subject undergoes a series of qualitative changes that are effected by a “passing event”; “positionality is an emergent quality of movement” (pp. 7–8). Within this, issues of gender, race, sexuality and ethnicity, for example, occupy facets of the traveled path. As such, critical theory and the body of the spectator need not be limited to pursuing one, fixed interpretative path. Movement is dynamic, and its emergent potential is ever present. The process of change is cumulative and, no matter how minor a change or rupture, its effect, in the big scheme of things, can be dramatic.

Drawing on the sciences, Massumi states that “each individual and collective human level has its own peculiar ‘quantum’ mode” (p. 37). The emergence of existence is such that, by its very nature, it resists homogenization, creating its own being with regard to identity, sexuality, politics, etc. This also has significance for the cultural thinker, who, Massumi explains, should not be limited to a closed system or theoretical paradigm. In fact, Massumi challenges cultural theorists to take an active stance in initiating movement in new directions. With an intensity of sensation that would make Deleuze and Spinoza proud, Massumi states that to adopt a productive approach, “the techniques of critical thinking prized by the humanities are of limited value”; they therefore have to be abandoned (p. 12).

In a few passages that I became especially fond of, he asserts that “invention requires experimentation. . . . The first rule of thumb if you want to invent or reinvent concepts is simple: don’t apply them” (p. 3)—even if, in the process, you affirm “your own stupidity” (p. 18).

The idea is to aim for an “open system” that does not draw solely on diverse aspects of the humanities—philosophy, psychology, literary theory, politics, anthropology. “Shameless poaching from science I advocate and endeavor to practice,” and in moving beyond the system of humanities it might be possible to “force a change in the humanities” (p. 20). By placing the critical body in movement, it is perceivable that critical theory will move beyond the stagnant swamps that enclose it, finding new, exciting avenues that offer innovative approaches to address the affective charge of the individual and cultural body. And what is the reader left with? “A very special gift; a headache” that prompts its own infectious virus, one that spreads a “creative contagion” (p. 19).

**ICONOCLASH: BEYOND THE IMAGE WARS IN SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND ART**


Reviewed by Wilfred Niels Arnold. E-mail: <warnold@kume.edu>.

“A raging mob of workmen, sailors, and peasants, together with prostitutes, beggars, and thieves, perhaps three hundred in all, armed with clubs, axes, hammers, ladders and ropes, only a few of them with firearms and daggers, threw themselves, inspired by fanatical fury, into the villages and hamlets of St. Omer. . . . overturned altars, shattered the images of the saints and trampled them underfoot. . . . They went towards Ypres where they could count upon a large number of Calvinist adherents . . . broke into the main church [and] scaled the walls with their ladders to mutilate the paintings.”

That’s iconoclasm in August 1566 as portrayed by J. Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in his thesis (1788) on the Reformation in the Low Countries. It got him a professorship in Jena.

Perhaps because I was distracted by the subtitle of the present volume I had innocently expected something along the same lines, plus the promised extension into science. But it was not iconoclasm but iconoclash, which is defined by the editors as happening “when one does not know, one hesitates, one is troubled by an action, for which there is no way to know without further inquiry whether it is destructive or constructive. This exhibition [catalog] is about iconoclash, not iconoclasm.”

The exemplar, nicely placed in the prologue, is a still shot from a video.