

**Clayton Crockett. *Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity, and Event*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780231162692**

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Clayton Crockett's *Deleuze Beyond Badiou* is the most recent critical intervention into the debate sparked by and surrounding Alain Badiou's critique of Gilles Deleuze in *The Clamour of Being* (2000), which was given book-length treatment in Jon Roffe's *Badiou's Deleuze* (2012).<sup>1</sup> Crockett's is therefore a timely book, all the more so given the recent English translation of a number of Badiou's essays from 1967 through to 2007 in *The Adventure of French Philosophy* (2012). The premise of Crockett's defence is a familiar one: *contra* Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Peter Hallward<sup>2</sup>—to cite the most widely read—Deleuze, by himself, is neither an aristocratic aesthete nor, with Félix Guattari, an apologist for capitalism. Crockett's book, then, will be a "counterreading of Deleuze over against and beyond Badiou's powerful critique" which, for Crockett, is selective, distortive, and wilfully ignores the philosophical nuances and political dimensions of Deleuze's work (6). While Crockett does not exactly deliver on his promise to offer a counter-reading, he does provide an overview of both Badiou and Deleuze in the seven chapters that make up the first three parts of the book. These parts will be useful for both postgraduates and academics interested in Badiou and Deleuze, but less so for those seeking a robust treatment of the

links between them, for which Roffe's monograph remains unsurpassed. I question how successful Crockett is at pushing Deleuze "beyond" Badiou in his more original chapters that make up the fourth part of his book.

In the two chapters that comprise part one, "Setting up the Encounter," Crockett rightly states that Badiou and Deleuze are the "two major French philosophers in the second half of the twentieth century" (3) who were, by turns, professional and personal friends and rivals, accounts of which can also be found in François Dosse's *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (2010).<sup>3</sup> With speed and clarity, Crockett locates both philosophers in and apart from theoretical movements, including the linguistic turn, structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism, differentiates the two along the lines of their oppositions to and rehabilitations of Platonism, before arriving at the more thorny point, namely Badiou's mathematical formalism and Deleuze's opposition of becoming to being, which will animate most of the discussion to follow. For Crockett, the novelty of his reading lies in his repoliticisation of Deleuze's works on aesthetics. The following statement sums up his position in this regard: "against the charge that Deleuze detached himself from politics and political concerns at the end of his life and retreated into aesthetics," Crockett writes, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985) in particular is a "directly political and revolutionary" work (9). This is the first of many claims about *Cinema 2* throughout the book, although we shall have to wait quite a long time before they are elaborated.

The second chapter takes us through Deleuze's fiercest critics, starting with Badiou before moving on to Hallward and Žižek, both of whom are indebted to Badiou in one way or another. For Crockett, Badiou offers a "fixed, frozen representation" of Deleuze, one that mishandles the supple concepts of the virtual, the actual, and the multiplicity. Above all, Badiou's Platonism forces him to "render Deleuze's thought in terms of representation and identity" (16). These pages usefully distinguish Badiou and Deleuze, before rehearsing a Deleuzian critique of Žižek's *Organs without Bodies*. As is well known, Žižek's Lacanian intervention into Deleuze was heavy on Lacan and Hegel and, ultimately, light on Deleuze. Others rightly expose Žižek's philosophical inaccuracies,<sup>4</sup> but none sufficiently discredits his powerful insight that while most Deleuzian cultural studies "masquerad[es] as radical chic, [it] effectively transform[s] Deleuze into an ideologist of today's 'digital capitalism.'"<sup>5</sup> Crockett's criticism, by contrast, is that Žižek depends on *The Clamour of Being*, yet rejects Badiou's point of departure, which is mathematics (23). Against Žižek's charge that Guattari distracted an otherwise elitist and apolitical (and formerly Lacanian) philosopher, Crockett proposes to draw out the structural continuities between Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1968), *Logic of Sense* (1969) and the *Capitalism*

and *Schizophrenia* volumes written with Guattari, and contends that *Cinema 2* is the proper vantage point from which to read these works.

He begins to do this in part two, the first of two parts that present Deleuze and Badiou. However, what is presented as an “encounter” between the two, as the title of the second chapter suggests (“Badiou vs. Deleuze”), amounts to largely independent analyses of each thinker. Nonetheless, this is where I found the book to be most useful.

Chapter three is largely dedicated to Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*. For Crockett, it is “hard to imagine that many readers have fully grasped what Deleuze has accomplished” in what is “one of the most incredible works of thought ever produced” (41). Giving an extensive reconstruction of the book’s central theses and argumentation, Crockett provides useful links to Plato, Kant and Heidegger, which will benefit readers looking to see how Deleuze fits into a broader philosophical context. Chapter four establishes continuities between Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), the first book Deleuze wrote with Guattari. Between two works vastly different in inspiration and style, Crockett unearths some profitable consistencies in method and thought, and this should prove illuminating for readers who have struggled to bridge the gap between Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari. The real novelty of the chapter, though, is the inclusion of Catherine Malabou, who has elsewhere been critical of Deleuze. The discussion is intended to “illuminate” (70) Crockett’s presentation of Deleuze, which it does successfully despite its short length, placing the anti-Hegelian Deleuze in the context of a renewed Hegelianism, of which Malabou forms a major part.

Chapter five’s discussion of “the event” continues to elaborate the continuities between *Difference and Repetition*, *Logic of Sense* and the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, adding Deleuze’s *The Fold* (1988) and *Cinema 1* (1983) and 2 to the discussion. Readers alienated by Deleuze’s vast shifts in terminology between these works will benefit from Crockett’s tracing of conceptual consistencies across a large body of work: he outlines how the desiring machines of *Anti-Oedipus*, the machinic assemblages of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the pleats of matter in *The Fold*, and the taxonomy of images in the *Cinema* books all relate back to his earlier notion of the event.

Part three is dedicated to Badiou and, like the previous part on Deleuze, presents detailed summaries and examinations of Badiou’s thought, this time to show in “detail how it is mostly incompatible with [Crockett’s] understanding of Deleuze” (104). Crockett demonstrates this by guiding us through *Being and Event* (1988), *Theory of the Subject* (1982) and *Logics of Worlds* (2006), showing that they are, indeed, incompatible

with Deleuze. Thanks to the rigour of Crockett's presentation, by the end of these two chapters, the reader will acquire a working knowledge of Badiou's philosophical system. But despite the nuanced account of the differences between Badiou and Deleuze, the incompatibility between the two seems quite straightforward: Badiou is a Marxist and a Maoist, while Deleuze had no truck with the latter and his claim of belonging to the former category remains contested.<sup>6</sup> It becomes quite apparent by chapter seven that the two are irreconcilable both philosophically and politically: Badiou is, at bottom, a Lacanian. Moreover, for Crockett, his subject is the proletariat and his politics are molar, as opposed to Deleuze's pre-individual, molecular micropolitics. Crockett concludes that Badiou's mathematical ontology is "too large and cumbersome and loses the tension with political praxis" (131). However, it is unclear how Crockett's renovation of Deleuze's syntheses of time from *Difference and Repetition* affords any superior tools, especially given the labour involved in explaining them.

In part four, Crockett proposes to take "Deleuze Beyond Badiou." I found this part quite unclear and ultimately unconvincing. Chapter eight is a foray into Deleuze and physics. Manuel De Landa has made significant inroads into the intersection of Deleuze and science,<sup>7</sup> as has Patricia Pisters,<sup>8</sup> who draws on Deleuze's *Cinema* books, and both are more accessible and convincing for this reader than Crockett's essay here. Despite the additional suggestion that *Difference and Repetition* anticipates numerous scientific developments (156), the argument presented here does not provide enough evidence for why they should. This is disappointing, because Crockett then points to some concrete problems. He notes, quite correctly, that our accumulation and management of natural resources is unsustainable. However, this is a problem that could be tackled without *Difference and Repetition* and *Cinema 2*, even if they are, as he suggests, "incredible and underappreciated resource[s] for this theoretical revolution" (160).

Chapter nine is a close examination of Deleuze and politics, which will set the scene for the moment at which *Cinema 2* will prove that Deleuze is a truly political philosopher. Here we get a brief discussion of how May 1968 served as a transitional point to a new form of capitalism, which is better described in Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2007) and Jim McGuigan's *Cool Capitalism* (2009).<sup>9</sup> Crockett largely avoids the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari's anti-hierarchical, rhizomatic philosophy both ideologically and structurally complemented this transition. This is odd, because it is central to Badiou's critique of Deleuze, and it remains a problem for eminent neo-Deleuzians Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Instead, Crockett takes a detour via Paul Virilio's remarks on

the diminishing conditions for class antagonism, and reaffirms the need for an “understanding of ecology based on energy thermodynamics” (197). We are then provided with a litany of social, political and economic problems: globalisation; the development of the Third World and the rise of neoliberalism in general; the bursting of the tech bubble; the “War on Terror”; the 2008 global financial crisis; climate change; and the impoverishment of natural resources. The answer to these problems, for Crockett, is to “create an event of thinking” (169). After another tour of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* factory, we find that after the failed experiment with Guattari, Deleuze’s retreat into art was “a deep and searching attempt to renew not only philosophy but politics, and . . . also a relaunching of urgent political thinking, which culminated in the explosive effects of the time-image, which has not been appreciated nearly well enough” (173). In order to create an “event of thinking,” Crockett says, “[w]e need to be more thoughtful, more desperate, and more creative” (177), and the time-image will allow us to do this.

The final chapter proposes to demonstrate this and, by now, the reader will be rather curious as to whether *Cinema 2* can bear the burden of Crockett’s revolutionary claims. So I was quite disappointed when the slim chapter proposed to engage “in a limited way with Haiti and with Vodou as a sort of test case of a consideration of democracy,” with Vodou “as a kind of time-image” (185). We start with human beings originating in Africa, a brief history of European colonialism, American slavery, the rise of the United States on the world stage, the contemporary subordination of people to markets, and the evils of neoliberalism. And then comes the cunning reversal: a shift from Reagan’s “Voodoo” economics—i.e. racist neoliberalism—to “Vodou” economics, which acknowledges “the contested nature of reality and resource scarcity and the profoundly democratic aspirations of people” (188). This part of the book, I think, bears the impress of Crockett’s other scholarly interest, which is religious studies. He links Vodou rituals to a Haitian insurrection in 1791, and explores its cultural heterogeneity, dynamism, cosmic balance, spiritual richness, function as a social-belief system, and genial relationship with Roman Catholicism, before finally linking it to the more recent uprising in 1991. Vodou, like a time-image, “concentrates virtual potentiality and actual power in a precarious and unstable form” (193). This is followed by some commentary on the way in which democracy is “danced and sung” by the Haitian people marginalised at annual parades, which expresses “complex social and political commentary, often in crude sexual terms” (193)—a sort of Bakhtinian carnival that, ultimately, seems to have very little to do with Deleuze or the time-image, and could function well enough without them.

Crockett's mastery of these two major thinkers commands both attention and respect. Having established such a strong platform from which to proceed, it is unfortunate that the more original chapters in the final part—precisely where Deleuze is to be taken beyond Badiou—lack the proficiency of their forerunners. The “beyond” to which the book takes us is one in which Deleuze himself is more or less absent or unnecessary.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Jon Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).
- <sup>2</sup> See Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (London: Routledge, 2003); Peter Hallward, *Out of this World. Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London; New York: Verso, 2006).
- <sup>3</sup> François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York : Columbia University Press, 2010).
- <sup>4</sup> See D. W. Smith, “The Inverse Side of the Structure: Žižek on Deleuze and Lacan,” *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 635–50; Ian Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2008); the special issue of *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 3 (2009), Supplement, *Deleuze and Marx*, ed. Dhruv Jain.
- <sup>5</sup> Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, xxi–xxii.
- <sup>6</sup> See Frederic Jameson, *Deleuze and Dualism: Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 181–200; Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> See De Landa, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London; New York: Continuum, 2002).
- <sup>8</sup> See Pisters, *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).
- <sup>9</sup> See Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London; New York: Verso, 2007); Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London; New York: Pluto Press, 2009).