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Eleanor Kaufman, *Deleuze, The Dark Precursor: Dialectics, Being, Structure*. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. 264 pp. \$60.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN-10: 142140589X.

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The theoretical and thematic templates for Eleanor Kaufman's book are Slavoj Žižek's *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* and Alain Badiou's *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*. Like these two books, Kaufman's book is a provocation and it will raise the same eyebrows in the Deleuze community that Žižek's and Badiou's interventions did. Whether Kaufman's book is a conceptual gauntlet thrown at the feet of the Deleuze community, however, should not be the real concern. What is more important is whether the book makes a convincing argument for a "darker" Deleuze; a Deleuze who tends to be covered up by the more canonical and by now probably more predictable readings of his work: against the "process philosophy" Deleuze with his becomings and lines of flight, Kaufman sets a reading of Deleuze as a thinker of being and stasis. Against the vitalist Deleuze, she sets a more deadly Deleuze.

I can say these things with some amount of assurance, because Kaufman herself says as much in the book. She acknowledges her precursors and she is well aware that her reading of Deleuze, like those of Žižek and Badiou, is "unfaithful." In fact, she postulates a comparable ethics of betrayal, in which Judas is the only true disciple. In a kind of pre-emptive strike, Kaufman, in fact, incorporates the critical reception of some of her more 'outrageous' claims in the Deleuze community into her text, mentioning moments when her readings created "some protest and heated discussion" (p. 11).

Like Žižek and Badiou, Kaufman focuses on Deleuze's single-authored work; in particular the works often considered the most truly Deleuzian ones: *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. Unlike Žižek and Badiou, however, she also forays out into later works, such as *Cinema 1*, *Cinema 2* and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*.^[1] Another difference is that Kaufman does not set a counter-theory against Deleuze, and that she does not write and think from within such a theory. In Žižek, this theory was Lacan and, probably even more importantly, Hegel. In Badiou, it was Badiou's own theory. Perhaps the quasi-autobiographical moments in Kaufman's book, to which I will return, take, in some way, the place of these theories.

In terms of its internal structure, the book is closer to Žižek than to Badiou. Like Žižek, Kaufman talks over long stretches about things other than Deleuze. There are long passages on Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Blanchot, semi-autobiographical sketches about a nameless girl in a Midwestern landscape and passages about another, (the same?) girl living in a cluttered house and imagining weird topologies. One reason for these digressions from the Deleuzian argument is that ten of the book's twelve chapters were separately published as essays between 1996 and 2011. Each of these essays, however, was already framed by and concerned with Deleuze when they were written. Most, in fact, have Deleuze in their title.

The book has three parts that are oriented around the terms mentioned in the title: "Dialectic," "Structure," and "Being." Taken together, these, in a Deleuzian context extremely unlikely terms, help

delineate “a secret underside of Deleuze’s oeuvre” (p. 8). The book’s three parts are separated into four, three and five chapters respectively. The introduction provides a helpful roadmap to the book’s argument and sets the tone by relating Deleuze to Scholasticism.

In the first chapter of the first part (entitled “Dialectic”), Kaufman argues that Jean-Paul Sartre, Pierre Klossowski and Deleuze “champion a similar structure, or logic of form” (p. 29), and thus all stress solidity versus fluidity. Kaufman’s argument centers on Sartre’s famous notion of “viscosity,” and it culminates in a conceptual gesture that turns the tables equally on readings of Deleuze as a champion of process philosophy and on the feminist celebration of fluidity as an antidote to the “male” stress on stasis and order. In analogy to her “defense” of a solid Deleuze, Kaufman argues that it is time for “a feminist defense of the solid” (p. 44). This both philosophical and feminist argument is carried over into the second chapter, in which Kaufman stresses that Deleuze posits a fundamental split between mind and body. Once more, she highlights the usually undervalued term. If Deleuzian becomings and feminist fluidities tend to highlight the corporeal, Kaufman stresses the register of the mind: “the potential or possibility for the mind to outlive or be radically separate from the body incites the mind to new levels of exuberance” (p. 53). The following, very densely argued chapter proposes, against Deleuze’s professed disdain for it, the term ‘analogy’ as a critical tool with which to read Deleuze’s work. Already at this point, one can feel the development of a conceptual spine. The book presents arguments for a radically split world, stressing stasis and order against the predominant stress on the fluid and the formless. It is not surprising, therefore, that the short chapter that ends the first part focuses on the background of Deleuze’s books on the cinema, not on more predictably Deleuzian elements such as the “moving camera” or the flow of images, but on the stasis of the *tableau vivant*.

In the fifth chapter, which opens up the second part (entitled “Structure”), Kaufman provides a favorable reading of Žižek’s *Organs without Bodies* and Badiou’s *Clamour of Being*.^[2] Both texts, Kaufman maintains, have succeeded in staying true to Deleuze precisely by being unfaithful. More than simply rehearsing Deleuze, they push Deleuze into new conceptual territories. Although this involves a certain violence, it is done in the spirit of Deleuze, who always championed a thought that pushes the limits of precursors. This chapter is the central chapter of Kaufman’s book. As she notes herself, the two texts “come closest to the argument of this book” (p. 95). In close readings, Kaufman uncovers a “latent dualism of Deleuze’s thought” (p. 89) that she stakes against more monist readings of Deleuze. Chapter six centers on Claude Levi-Strauss’s structural anthropology and Deleuze’s reading of the politics of structuralism in his text, “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” Chapter seven develops an “anethics” (p. 114) from Deleuze’s essays “Coldness and Cruelty” and “Michel Tournier and the World without Others.”^[3] A crucial concept in this context is Deleuze’s “third synthesis of time” that lies, according to Kaufman, at the heart of the Deleuzian world.^[4] In her description of it, one can sense how much it also lies at the heart of Kaufman’s own work. It is “an extreme state of negation, lack of oxygen, death, purity, sadism, intemporality, incorporeality, and an eschewal of the other and of communication and relation that traverses the work from the late 1960s and forms the hidden kernel of Deleuze’s philosophical project, which is on some level quite a dark one. It is Deleuze’s own dark precursor” (p. 121).

In the third part, entitled “Being,” Kaufman deals with both theoretical and literary texts that “develop the connections between mobility and immobility and between becoming and being” (p. 123). Important theoretical backgrounds in these chapters are Jean Baudrillard’s *America* and Bernard Cache’s *Earth Moves*.^[5] By now quite unsurprisingly, Kaufman reads against the grain. Against the predictable stress on America’s open ranges and the movement across them, which Deleuze celebrates in “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature”^[6] and which Baudrillard identified with images of the “true,” deeply un-intellectual America, Kaufman sets enclosed spaces of the mind and moments of rest and inertia: “I aim to reverse and reorient the omnipresent emphasis on movement and vast space as definitional of an American essence. I wish to examine the way in which American space is also—and sometimes simultaneously—bound up with enclosed spaces and immobility...Deleuze’s work both opens

up this perception and, like Moses at the edge of the promised land, does not take it far enough" (p. 125). The works Kaufman turns to are Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, and Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, with individual chapters on Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener," whose theoretical reverberations Kaufman follows into the work of Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière, and a long chapter that is for the most part a close reading of Maurice Blanchot, with only a little bit of Deleuze's *The Fold*--in particular Deleuze's image of the two stories of the Baroque house--folded in by way of introduction.

I am sure there will be debates about whether Kaufman's project is convincing. Let me take the title of the book as an example. In her introduction, Kaufman states that "[t]here is a fierce if not disturbing structural-ontological persistence that permeates the single-authored work, and my use of Deleuze's relatively underdeveloped term 'dark precursor' is meant to designate this" (p. 3). On this background, the dark precursor becomes the figure of a similarly dark Deleuzian "ontology" (p. 4). People who liked Žižek and Badiou will read this as a strong statement about a repressed side of Deleuze, which Kaufman at some point describes as "the earlier, hierarchical, structural, mineral Deleuze of *The Logic of Sense*" (p. 142). To this, the more literal-minded readers of Deleuze will answer that the term "dark precursor" is perhaps not as underdeveloped as Kaufman claims and that it is not so much a "dark" than an "obscure" precursor, in the sense that it is an agent that operates faster than both thought and philosophy. As Deleuze notes in *Desert Islands*, "since intensity is difference, differences of intensity must enter into communication. Something like a 'difference operator' is required, to relate difference to difference. This role is filled by what is called an *obscure precursor*. A lightning bolt flashes between different intensities, but it is preceded by an *obscure precursor*, invisible, imperceptible, which determines in advance the inverted path as in negative relief, because this path is first the agent of communication between series of differences" (italics in original).^[7]

Somewhat like the Lucretian *clinamen* that Deleuze deals with in "Lucretius and the Simulacrum," the dark precursor is an agent of change that operates on what Deleuze calls a 'pre-philosophical' plateau.^[8] As such an agent, it does not really capture the elements of stasis and darkness it is used to evoke in Kaufman's title. Something similar, in fact, pertains to the other leitmotif of Kaufman's text; the third synthesis of time. While there are indeed scholars who read this as a "dark" time that leads to an equally dark future, it is also a time that is directly linked, as Kaufman herself realizes, to the Freudian register of the super-ego, which is hardly something Deleuze tends, even without Félix Guattari, to look upon favorably.

There are a number of details in Kaufman's text that are debatable, such as Kaufman's reading of Aion and Chronos as "good" and "bad" times respectively, rather than as complementary times that are related to the larger complementarity of the registers of the virtual and the actual. The notion of "incorporeal states of affairs" (p. 24) will jar with many readings of Deleuze in which states of affairs (a.k.a. "matters of fact") form precisely the corporeal complements to the world of a-corporeal events. On another level, however, these two terms show that Deleuze does indeed operate, as Kaufman argues, with a fundamental split; most persistently, perhaps the one between the given and the "given as given."

Long story short: if every engagement with Deleuze is a difficult, very personal navigation between the Scylla of mere discipleship and the Charybdis of treason, Kaufman's course takes her nearer to the Charybdis. If taking Deleuze too literally is always in danger of becoming a boring, uncreative exercise in commentary, taking Deleuze not literally enough is always in danger of missing the Deleuzian point. In any case, the book will make the Deleuzian community think and respond.

Let me end on a somewhat speculative note. In a footnote, Kaufman flags the importance of the figure of Fredric Jameson for her work (p. 193, fn. 13). While I was reading the book, I often had hallucinatory glimpses--or should I say *tableaux vivants*--of Kaufman and of how the book emerged. One tableau was of a young student from the Midwest sitting, attentively, in one of Jameson's seminars. Another one was of

her at home reading Deleuze, and another one of her reading Blanchot, and finally, one where she writes about a little girl from the Midwest. This, after all, is how we write our books.

NOTES

[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969); Deleuze, *Cinema 1, Cinema 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986-1989); Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[2] Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004) and Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[3] Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" in *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953-1964* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2002), pp. 170-192; Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989); Deleuze, "Michel Tournier and the World without Others," in Constantin V. Boundas, ed., *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 341-358.

[4] See for instance: "In the third synthesis, however, the present is no more than an actor, an author, an agent destined to be effaced: while the past is no more than a condition operating by default. The synthesis of time here constitutes a future which affirms at once both the unconditioned character of the product in relation to the condition of its reproduction, and the independence of the work in relation to its author or actor" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton [New York: Continuum, 2004], p. 117). This concept is, however, well known in the field of Deleuze studies; see Daniela Voss, "Deleuze's Third Synthesis of Time," *Deleuze Studies* 7/2(2013), pp. 194-216.

[5] Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London, New York: Verso, 1988) and Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves: the Furnishing of Territories* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995).

[6] Deleuze, "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature," *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 36-76.

[7] Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 1953, 1974), p. 97.

[8] Deleuze, "Lucretius and the Simulacrum," in Constantin V. Boundas, ed., *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 266-279.

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