

There are continuities between Adorno's insistence on the need for critical reflection on what art cannot directly say and the technique of Baudelaire's prose poems. What is determined by the concept in aesthetic experience is not in itself conceptual, a theme that was elaborated throughout *Negative Dialectics* (1966). The immaterial, yet visceral, notion of the 'shudder' in Adorno could have been formulated with Baudelaire specifically in mind. It refers back to the fear that an unintelligible natural world once inspired, which was progressively transmuted into the aesthetic effect of the way nature is treated in art. Subsisting in modern artworks is the fear that fear might dissipate, that the truth that primal fear once registered is relentlessly vanquished by the instrumental rationality of Enlightenment thinking, to which art raises an inarticulate protest. In the appearances of artworks, the immediate impressions they make, lies the contradictory unity, the sublation, of what vanishes and what is preserved. Or, as it is expressed in *Negative Dialectics*, 'we despair of what is, and our despair spreads to the transcendental ideas that used to call a halt to despair'. If the world is not redeemable by a force we cannot presently imagine, there is no chance of feeling truly alive in it, but the apparently permanent elusiveness of redemption is what imbued so much modernist art with the theme of hopeless waiting, from Baudelaire to Beckett, and its modal preference for sardonic, mirthless humour. In 'Perte d'Auréole', the poet's halo drops off and rolls into the mud of the city street. His friend urges him to pick it up, but no. Let some other fool purloin it and try it on for size. That would at least be good for a laugh.

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WITHOUT MODEL: PARVA AESTHETICA. By Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Wieland Hoban. Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2023. 177 pp.

To add to the English language library of Adorno's writings on aesthetics, Seagull Books of India have brought out a translation of a slim miscellany under the title *Without Model*. This was originally published in 1968 as *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica*, and is something of a grab-bag of heterogeneous pieces, ranging from high theory to personal reflection and reminiscence. It appeared in the same year as Adorno's rather loosely organised monograph on Alban Berg, and seems to have represented something of a stopgap while the *Aesthetic Theory* was germinating. Many of the items in *Ohne Leitbild* have appeared in one-off English renderings in other anthologies over the years, but they arrive now in their original format, unified by a mostly efficient translation by the seasoned Adorno translator, Wieland Hoban.

The essays 'On Tradition', 'Theses on the Sociology of Art' and 'The Misused Baroque' are Adorno at his most dialectically agile, reflecting on the relation between past and present, and the social effect that the commodification of art has in the administered world. In the first of these pieces, he suggests that relics of past art that are celebrated as components of a monumental heritage are worshipped for their timeless significance, precisely so that nothing will change in the present, 'except through increasing confinement and ossification'. An address to a convocation of architects, 'Functionalism Today', represented a new disciplinary departure, while the previously translated 'The Culture Industry: A Resumé' returns to the now notorious chapter in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), in which Adorno and Max Horkheimer convicted the popular entertainment business of colluding in mass deception and stultification. Its findings and categories are robustly defended: '[i]f the masses are unjustly disdained from above as mere masses, it is not least the culture industry that turns them into the masses it then despises'. It is hard to believe that, were he living at this hour,

anything about the present-day culture industry would inspire Adorno to soften the crushing verdict of the 1940s.

Elsewhere, we meet Charlie Chaplin at a party in Malibu during the war, essaying a pitch-perfect gestural impersonation of Adorno; the man himself perusing the impressionist paintings in the Jeu de Paume; reflecting on the Italian temperament on vacation in Lucca; lamenting the loss of atmosphere at the Prater fairground in Vienna, before going to see Irmgard Seefried sing Marie in *The Bartered Bride* at the Staatsoper; ruminating in his beloved Amorbach, the Bavarian scene of idyllic childhood holidays; and engaging in a little intellectual detective work in Sils Maria, where a guest-book at the Hotel Privata still bears Nietzsche's signature from the nineteenth century. In a grocery shop there, Adorno and Herbert Marcuse were once regaled by the owner, one Herr Zuan, with an anecdote to treasure. A band of mischievous children, of whom Zuan had been one, filled Nietzsche's furled umbrella with little stones, so that when he went out, rain or shine, for his constitutional, plotting an eternal return and saying 'Yes' to the whole of existence, his head was pelted on opening it. Hearing the peals of youthful laughter, he tried chasing the children, but could not catch them. The pang of sympathy Adorno registers at the tale dissolves to a supposition that Nietzsche probably, on reflection, acknowledged the children's merriment as the very life-force that he celebrated as standing in defiance of the arid motions of the spirit.

Without Model, which might have been better rendered as *No Bigger Picture* to denote the miscellaneous nature of the collection, permits a glimpse of a thinker still at the peak of his intellectual powers, but happy to relax a little in public. What Adorno calls 'the language of the self's free expression' in Romantic music after Beethoven is on abundant display here too.

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THE SOCIAL AESTHETICS OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTS: CRITICAL THEMES. By Arnold Berleant. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 204 pp.

There often arises a conceptual conflict when two distinct ideas shape a new rationale. Is the human environment constructed of only immediate surroundings? Or, is it also the construction of considered decisions to meet immediate needs? Most crucially, can aesthetic be an effective tool of social critique? To these inquiries, Arnold Berleant's *The Social Aesthetics of Human Environments: Critical Themes* critically opens up with the discussion on the formative presence of 'social,' in 'aesthetics,' in the present discourse of environmental aesthetics. The book takes the readers through some thought-provoking original as well as well-known conceptions within the environmental and aesthetical discourse from the East and the West to felicitate the readers with a holistic understanding of aesthetics as a tool of social critique.

Berleant purposefully traces the root of the term 'aesthetic' only to ensure that the basic idea of aesthetics is grounded in sense perception; and, perceptual experience is never pure sensation but coated with associations, history, meaning and somatic memories. The book exemplifies the scope of aesthetics for a critical assessment of social practices realising the fact that it is our excessive consumer behaviour that devalizes the very ground of our sustainability. Hence, it promulgates to safeguard aesthetic, qualitatively perceptual values, to promise a global civilization that is both ecologically sound and morally humane. Being focused on the evolution of different art movements, the author portrays how the aesthetics of an object has changed to the aesthetics of experience/sensibility. Modern art became the narrative of transformation, witnessing the audience no more as spectators but rather as participants and co-creators, and responding intellectually and emotionally