

remains too abstract to be set in a photo. The author's main argument is that capital is basically an unobservable order of production that manifests itself in all aspects

, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

Especially interesting is the last essay by Brian Holmes, *Art after Capitalism*. The author claims that the post-capitalist form of art has already begun. According to Holmes, this new form of art should have a therapeutic and educational role in the contemporary capitalist world. He stands for critics of the modern capitalist system, but with a certain objectivity. Holmes implies that art, as any other social branch of activity, should be involved in a global economic and political system, and not distanced from it, for its moral role could have a great influence. A similar point could be read from *Art from the Exhibition: It's the Political Economy, Stupid* by Thom Donovan, who advocates the educational function of art.

In the context of mutuality of art and economy, the book offers an original, interesting and insightful approach on how the interdependent modern world actually works. The overall point the book makes is that it is impossible to ignore the influences of the global economic crisis on all spheres of society, with a specific emphasis on art.

Vladimir Hunjak Štula
Diplomatic Academy
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Russian Federation

Review

Zoran Kurelić (ed.)

Politička misao, Zagreb, 2015, 214 pp.

Violence, Art, and Politics edited by Zoran Kurelić is an effort to bring together various perspectives on three different, but interrelated concepts important for the fields of “film studies and gender studies, political science, media studies, history of art and philosophy” (7). The divergent contributors' vocations (twelve of them) as well as the combination of modernist and postmodernist (methodological and epistemological) influences blend together through the loosely connected structure of the book. While politics and violence conceptually direct the discussion, it is the concept of art that is put forward as a platform, or a register, of ideological and political relations which finds its way of expression through various mediums. In the manner of Fredric Jameson, Louis Althusser, or Slavoj Žižek, it is seen as an appropriate “object” of political studies which, more or less, dialectically or in the last instance, consciously or unconsciously, reflects the dominant or marginalized, prevalent or silenced structures of power in a specific historical moment. Even if one is not a post/neo-Marxist, art can still be seen as the articulation of its own material/cultural/ideological conditions, through which one is able to grasp the constitutive elements of political “reality” – of

brought to

course, the price is a de-”idealization” of art itself.

Although there is no central theoretical position, the first half of the book is organized around the perspective of Hannah Arendt and the questions that form from her work about works of art. Arendt’s work serves as a methodological framework, used here to interpret other texts or to invoke discussions about the political implications of her concepts. In the first paper “Understanding the difference between violence and power” Vlasta Jalušić follows Arendt in arguing for an “associative” understanding of power as opposed to violence, and thinks that the conceptual conflation of the two results in methodological shortcomings in which both terms are deprived of their usefulness for researchers. Violence, Jalušić argues, is set against “plurality and the plural political condition” introducing “the domination of the ‘one’ and unity” while politics “emerges when people act ‘in concert’ creating a web of relations among equals” (20). For Waltraud Meints-Stender in the text “On the concept of power. Some remarks on the dialectic between lively and materialized power”, the Arendtian perspective on politics represents the rejection both of Hobbes’ “authoritarian perception of sovereignty” and Rousseau’s “democratic conception of sovereignty” (35), hence the link between plurality and political judgment is seen as a structuring principle of any kind of emancipatory project. The concept of a plurality of perspectives, on the other hand, entails the elaboration on the relation between memory, narrative, and factual truth (this is seen in the paper by Cristina Sánchez Muñoz “Memories in conflict in post-totalitarian societies: re-

flections from an Arendtian perspective”), or between knowledge and understanding (seen in the paper by Wolfgang Heuer “Horror and laughter. At the limits of political science”) as the way to avoid both the trap of positivism and idealism, that is, the under-theorization of one’s own categories of comprehension and the belief in some extra-discursive possibility of cognition.

In the essay by Nebojša Blanuša the genre of (Croatian) war film is seen as ideologically reflecting dominant narratives and interpretations in a manner of “collective cognitive mappings” intrinsic to the functioning of a political regime, but also as having a “therapeutic potential” for spectators, while Krešimir Petković uses Foucault’s theory of sovereignty and disciplinary power to discuss the “political economy of violence” found in the two novels by John M. Coetzee *Waiting for Barbarians* and *Disgrace*. Both Petković and Blanuša introduce a different kind of vocabulary into the book, in which power and politics are no longer comprehended through categories of cooperation and deliberation, but through their antagonistic and conflictual dimensions, that is, as the instance of *dissociation* rather than *association* (as Oliver Marchart would say). Whether it is about violent hierarchies imposed by relations between power and knowledge or a psychoanalytic (mostly Lacanian in Blanuša’s case) emphasis on lack, trauma, and affect, the political cannot be reduced to any kind of feature which would constitute its “essence” in a way of transcending its own “violent” means of realization and predetermining a certain outcome. For Petković it means that subjectivity is always already caught in the circle of power and violence whose ability of

resistance cannot be thought as being outside of it, while Blanuša looks at the process of formation of collective identities as organized around a certain incomprehensibility which Lacan terms the Real and whose unbearable entails a mediation in the form of ideological and affective narratives and fantasies. National identity is for Blanuša one of such “forms” in which “the image of collective body, the body politic or national being” (157) produces and organizes a specific kind of “enjoyable”, sublime objects that are like “phantoms” transmitted through generations.

Finally, there is a third kind of perspective on the relation between politics and violence whose central aspect is the problem of revolution. The essays by Sean Homer (“On the ‘Critique of violence’ and revolutionary suicide”) and Zoran Kurelić (“A little red bird catches a bug and a megaworm”) try to tackle the question of political action which claims to represent an “authentic act” or “politics of pure means”. Unlike Foucault’s position – which for Petković “is not an incitation or an analysis that leads to unified revolutionary action. It does not offer any kind of clear recipe for political action at all” (111) and even if we “may need a revolution, we first need a revolutionary analysis” (115) – the position of Slavoj Žižek is for Sean Homer the new kind of Jacobinism erected through a misreading of Benjamin’s concept of divine violence and referring to a necessity of “emancipatory terror”. To be a little bit more precise here, Žižek builds his understanding of the Revolution on Lacan’s notion of the Act: Lacan assumes that only through a purely negative gesture, through a subjective destitution which presupposes the act of travers-

ing the fundamental fantasy, can a subject reach the successful ending of a psychoanalytic treatment. By elevating these categories on a level of socio-political analysis, Žižek is arguing that the revolution as such is a “pure negativity” of the Act that crushes the very foundations of possible-impossible opposition on which the “positive” symbolic/ontological edifice is built, that is, it reveals the constitutive inconsistency and undecidability of such “reality”. But, for a revolution to prove successful, Žižek is claiming in his book *The Ticklish Subject*, it must find a way to retain this “pure negativity” during the inevitable process of “positivization” that follows after the dissolution of the Master-signifier. Homer thinks that Benjamin’s concept of divine violence “is not as easily reconcilable with acts of revolutionary violence as Žižek takes it” (118) because in the case of the latter there is an inclination to disregard the problem of the legitimation of the regime which violence tries to undermine: “the use of violence does not necessarily challenge the state so much as legitimate its further use of violence” (125).

Kurelić offers us a different path by interpreting David Lynch’s movies *Dune* and *Blue Velvet* through a framework of Isaiah Berlin’s opposition between positive and negative liberty. He argues that these “two completely different films” can be compared not by insisting on Lynch’s conservatism, as Fredric Jameson or Jeff Johnson claim, but through discerning the revolutionary impact of the main characters: Paul Atreides from *Dune* is seen as a figure of divine leader, a Messiah whose awakening is an embodiment of a common will and a result of “witchcraft biopolitics” (210), while Jeffrey from *Blue Velvet* incarnates

the idea of positive liberty in being a medium of Manichaean struggle between “light” and “darkness” and such Holy War, Kurelić argues, has nothing conservative in itself, but is “potentially dangerous and revolution friendly” (207). However, if staying in the conceptual boundaries of the opposition between positive and negative liberty entails the suspicion towards any kind of revolutionary action, the question is, and Kurelić partly recognizes this in the conclusion of his paper, how to think about the possibility of change and emancipation: “Lynch’s characters believe that they can see the fragmented future and that those fragments are enough to search for the switch which will turn on the light in the hellhole (...) Revolution is the switch. Do we have anything better?” (213). The question remains open and unanswered.

Although I have not presented all the papers from the book (Goran Gretić’s interpretation of Jonathan Littell’s novel *The Kindly Ones* [*Les Bienveillantes*], Marijana Grbeša’s essay about pop-politics, Jennifer Vilchez’s discussion about family and violence in the horror movie *The Badadook...*), I would like to conclude by saying that *Violence, Art, and Politics* offers a plurality of interpretative perspectives which are methodologically useful in transcending the application of some well-known political concepts. Also, the contradictions between various papers on the same concepts (especially power) allow us to grasp the essentially contestable nature of the political concept itself and to discern the inherent “violence” in any attempt to reduce the concept to its “essential” features.

Vedran Jerbić
Faculty of Political Sciences,
University of Zagreb