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Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *Time and History in Deleuze and Serres*. London/New Delhi/New York/Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012. xiv + 232 pp. Author index, subject index. \$120.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-4411-6386-8; \$44.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-4725-0506-4 (pb).

Review by Judith Wambacq, Ghent University (Belgium).

This book definitely fills a gap in the scholarly literature. There did not yet exist a book on the resonances between the philosophies of Michel Serres and Gilles Deleuze, resonances that clearly exist and that were also confirmed by Michel Serres himself in the 1995 interview with Hari Kunzru.[1] Filling this gap, this edited volume at the same time helps to relieve the lack of extended scholarly literature on the work of Michel Serres in particular. Besides a few articles, in WorldCat's catalog, one finds only a handful of books on Serres. Yet, Serres is not an obscure philosopher. Being a professor at Stanford, a Grand Officer in the French Legion of Honour and a Commander of the French National Order of Merit, his work has certainly received recognition. Moreover, he is a prolific writer and his extensive academic output—over fifty books so far!—is not of the kind that can be easily overlooked. According to Steven Connor, the limited amount of scholarly literature on Serres can be explained by the fact that there exist relatively few English translations of his work, and possibly also by his style of thinking: “his work is distinguished from that of many of his contemporaries by a disinclination to cabin or crib his thinking or its implications in any one form or idiom of thought...When he has written about philosophy, it is never simply as a philosopher; when about science, never simply as a historian of science; when about literature, never simply as a literary critic; when about painting, never simply as an art historian. Serres's writing is always part of the picture it is drawing.”[2] In sum, the attention this volume draws to the work of Serres is certainly adequate. But what about its specific intention? Can *Time and History in Deleuze and Serres* convince the reader of the resonances that exist between both philosophers' conceptions of time and history?

In the introduction, Bernd Herzogenrath sketches the framework of these resonances: both Deleuze and Serres agree with the poststructuralist idea that historiography cannot reveal a historical truth, that it has to drop its claims to objectivity and recognize the constructed nature of the reality it is trying to bring to the fore. More specifically, Deleuze and Serres think that historical reality is constructed in a complex and non-linear way, involving not only humans but also nonhumans. History is not only a matter of culture but also of materiality, and it is not only about intentions but also about self-organizing systems. Inspired by complexity theory, both authors consider history to be an event, meaning that it is multi-faceted and multi-temporal—it is a so-called multiplicity—characterized by instability and contingency.

Several authors in this book (chapters nine, ten and eleven) ponder the question as to what kind of historiography can be based on this conception of history or historical reality. This is an interesting but difficult subject, especially since Deleuze and Guattari themselves suggest that the event cannot be captured by the historical sciences but only by a geophilosophy or a topological philosophy: “What History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming...escapes History.”[3] According to Deleuze and Guattari, only disciplines that have the liberty to deal with this not-representable origin that escapes the laws of causality and chronology can think the event that conditions the historical facts. The question that arises then is whether the historiography Bennett and Connolly (chapter nine), for example, are describing—a historiography that focuses on and expresses the way in which every present is inhabited by

different temporalities—is still a historiography and not a philosophy. Chapter four might be said to deal indirectly with this difference between philosophy and historiography. According to the author of this chapter, Paul Patton, the difference between Foucault's and Deleuze's conceptions of history is that the former believes that knowledge of the past can only influence the experience of the present if it is preceded by an analysis of the historical specificity of forms of discourse or techniques of power and government, whereas the latter thinks that it is the philosophical concept that is supposed to act upon our experience of the present. However, since Patton admits that Foucault's analysis of the past is a philosophical and not a historical analysis, the exact difference between Deleuze and Foucault on this point is not clear. Hence, this chapter does not really help in figuring out what this nonchronological and nonphilosophical historiography alluded to by chapters nine, ten and eleven could consist of.

But let us return to the central philosophical enquiry of this edited volume. Does it teach us something about how Deleuze's and Serres's conceptions of time and history are linked? Only three essays take this comparison as their explicit subject—chapters two, six and nine—and only one, chapter nine, is really successful in its undertaking. Bennett and Connolly go right to the core of the resonances between Serres's and Deleuze's conceptions of time and history: their immanent and differential accounts of the process of individuation. Moreover, this essay stands out from a lot of the secondary literature on Deleuze because it substantiates these accounts of individuation by giving literary and cinematographic examples.

Chapter two commits the error to which every comparative study must be alert: it explains notions of one author by using concepts of the other. In this way, rather than being proven, the resonance between both philosophies is already built into the way the philosophies are presented. The same quasi-argumentation can also be found in the passages on the methodological differences between Deleuze and Serres. Clayton does not *prove* but *states* that there is a methodological difference between both, and pays little attention to Deleuze's methodology in developing this statement. Moreover, the difference in methodology Clayton mentions—the literary and poetic approach of Serres versus the technical approach of Deleuze—does not in itself imply, as the author suggests, that the philosophy of Serres is more dynamic, and thus more apt to its subject of becoming, than Deleuze's. One can develop a technic arsenal of concepts in order to express as precisely as possible the differences at work in the dynamic of forces, and in such a way succeed better in revealing this dynamic than vague concepts and relations between concepts do. On top of this, Clayton is sometimes sloppy, if not to say wrong, in his description of Deleuze's philosophy (see, for example, his description on p. 39 of Deleuze's notion of implication as a self-same relationship, a description that denies the differentiability proper to the virtual).

The last chapter that explicitly compares the philosophies of Deleuze and Serres is chapter six. This essay contains some interesting and provocative thoughts but would have benefitted from some serious editing. To begin with, Colebrook is excessively long in making her actual point: after thirteen pages of repeating over and again what post-humanism consists in—repetitions that do not add much clarity—and of indicating which contemporary philosopher deserves this label, she finally comes to the point of presenting Deleuze and Serres as exceptions to this academic trend. Furthermore, she does not succeed in showing how their inhumanist position differs exactly from the post-humanist one. Thinking living and nonliving systems in terms of parasites (Serres), for example, does not seem so different from thinking them in terms of networks connecting animals, machines, digital codes and humans: they both substitute an essentialism for a 'relationalism.' Finally, her suggestion that post-human systems are still self-maintaining whereas the inhuman ones are self-destroying, neglects the question of the extent to which one can still speak of a *self*-maintenance if these systems are no longer characterized by an essence. What is exciting, however, is that Deleuze and Serres lead Colebrook to analyze the topic of climate change in non-moral terms: she proposes to see climate change as the natural and irreversible outcome of our ontological, parasitic constitution.

The remaining chapters of this volume discuss either the work of Serres (chapters three and five) or that of Deleuze (chapters one, four, seven and eight). In the first group, chapter three complies best with the overall intention of the book. It explains in a very clear way what Serres's conception of

history consists of and what the general framework of this conception is. It is a pity that the author does not draw any links to Deleuze as they are there for the taking. In Deleuze, one can find, for example, a similar conception of time, of the simultaneity of form and content and of how the natural and the human sciences can be brought together. Chapter five gives an overview of Serres's oeuvre and an indication of its central concepts and their roots. Unfortunately, Assad never really explains how these concepts "answer" the particular philosophical problems Serres is dealing with and thus why Serres created them in the first place.

All the chapters in the second group are written by eminent scholars of Deleuze. In chapter one, Eugene Holland examines the philosophical origin and the political implications of Deleuze's conception of history (i.e., Deleuze's theory of time and the rebellion against capitalism). While he is very successful in the first part of this examination, the part dealing with the political implications is underdeveloped. It cannot answer the general criticism that Deleuze and Guattari developed a political theory that is too removed from political practice. Chapter seven continues the examination of Deleuze's theory of time in a very informative way, focusing on its Bergsonian and Nietzschean inspiration. Nathan Widder's central thesis is that "Deleuze's early reading of Bergson is more an attempt to introduce into Bergson's thought themes that only find a proper home in Nietzsche" (p. 128). Although one could opt for a less polemical and less evolutionary statement—Deleuze turns to Bergson to explain the immanence of being, and to Nietzsche to explain the difference that is the motor of this immanence—the analysis would remain the same. In chapter eight, Elizabeth Grosz compares the way in which cinema and science conceive time but she ends the comparison before really starting it. She touches upon interesting topics, such as the resonances between Kant's positioning of time and Shakespeare's Hamlet, but does not really develop them. By the end of the chapter, the reader who is not very familiar with Deleuze or Hamlet will probably still not know what a "time out of joint" means. On the contrary, Grosz's attempt to explain this notion by contemporary society's obsession with time (ceding to time pressures while at the same time developing industries that should help you resist them) puts the reader on the wrong track because the latter concerns an obsession with chronological time whereas a "time out of joint" refers to an a-chronological time.

Chapters ten and eleven form a sort of subunity within the book because they both approach Deleuze's and Serres's conceptions of time and history via the reading of the American historian/political theorist, Henry Adams. Presenting Deleuze's and Serres's philosophy from a different perspective can, by omitting Deleuzian and Serrean diction, thus be very clarifying, but in this case this strategy has overshot the mark. The resonances Herzogenrath (chapter ten) detects between Adams's writings and Deleuze/Serres/Kauffman remain very superficial. For example, one cannot consider a plea for democracy as an indication of multiplicity-thinking simply because democracy is based on the votes of multiple inhabitants and their conflicting orientations and opinions. Just as Deleuze said that it is not enough to travel abroad in order to explore the new—on the contrary, sometimes one explores more lines of flight when one is not physically displacing oneself—meeting the formal requirement of a democracy is not enough to achieve a real democracy. Adding, as Herzogenrath does, that, in order for a democracy to express the multiplicity of the people, it must protect itself against the interference of large companies only aiming at profit, is also not sufficient since this is not an additional condition but a crucial one.

Chapter eleven (by Hanjo Berressem) partly fills the gaps of the previous chapter in the sense that it does not stay at the surface but explores the ontologies underlying Deleuze's and Serres's conceptions of history. Unfortunately, however, the description of Deleuze's ontology, and more specifically of his notions of the actual and the virtual, contains some serious errors. For example: the author equates the actual with the non-human and the virtual with the human perceptual and cognitive operations (p. 215), whereas the virtual is actually that which escapes all representation and thus all cognition, and is the ground of all human and non-human actualities (and is thus non-human). Another example is that, although the author mentions Deleuze's immanentism, he asks the question: "How can actual history and virtual history be brought to converge 'as much as possible'" (p. 211). This question goes somewhat against Deleuze's basic idea that actual and virtual history are always already together.

This book makes one feel like exploring Serres's oeuvre more thoroughly and thus it certainly succeeds in calling to attention this somewhat neglected author. However, we cannot award full marks overall because the quality of the different chapters is too variable. This is quite remarkable in view of the individual records of the contributors, who are almost all either Deleuze or Serres scholars of great renown.

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#### NOTES

[1] Hari Kunzru's interview with Michel Serres (London, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1995) was commissioned by *Wired* but was never published. It can be consulted on <http://www.harikunzru.com/art-and-music/michel-serres-interview-1995> (last viewed on May 20, 2014)

[2] Steven Connor, "The Hard and the Soft," p. 3-4  
<http://www.stevenconnor.com/hardsoft/hardsoft.pdf> (last viewed on May 20, 2014)

[3] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy? Translated by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 110. Also cited in Herzogenrath, 2012, p. 5.

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