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Kamini Vellodi, *Tintoretto's Difference: Deleuze, Diagrammatics, and Art History*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. xx + 220 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. £90.00 U.K. (hb). ISBN 9781350083073; £28.99 U.K. (pb). ISBN 9781350170469; £26.00 U.K. (eb). ISBN 9781350083066.

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The concept of the diagram is instrumental to Gilles Deleuze's philosophical system. Somewhat elusive, it comes in and out of focus throughout the span of his corpus, starting with the article "Écrivain non: un nouveau cartographe" (1975) in which Deleuze explains Michel Foucault's diagram as recorded in *Surveiller et punir*. Then, with Guattari, in *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (1980), the diagram takes on cartographic and semiotic traits. A year later, it is assessed aesthetically in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981). Finally, the 1975 essay is revised and included in *Foucault* (1986), where the diagram is a conduit for abstract forces. [1]

Kamini Vellodi's *Tintoretto's Difference: Deleuze, Diagrammatics and Art History* thoroughly examines the concept of the diagram in Deleuze's writings and deftly uses it as a tool of analysis on Tintoretto's visual corpus. Vellodi's is a dual book, on Tintoretto's art and Deleuze's philosophy. The concept of the diagram is the meeting place between an iconoclastic painter and an idiosyncratic philosopher. This book is not only a detailed analysis of specific visual elements that make up Tintoretto's paintings translated through philosophical concepts, but also a primer on Deleuze's diagrammatic aesthetics. Vellodi produces a bibliographical account of the concept as it appears in Deleuze's works, while making novel and interesting interpretations of the diagram by juxtaposing it to other Deleuzian concepts, such as, for example, composition, difference, and sensation.

The diagram's opaque essence gains definition through Immanuel Kant's schema, which gives both a historical and epistemological grounding to the philosophical analysis displayed in *Tintoretto's Difference*. Vellodi explains how Kant's schema retains the notion of forming and planning whereas, in contradistinction, Deleuze's diagram "modulates overlapping heterogeneous elements" (p. 71). If the schema enables the conceptual passage from sensibility to intuition, the diagram is inherent to the real. The schema belongs to cognition and is involved in the construction of possibility. The diagram, on the other hand, operates outside the territory of representation. It does not offer mere possibilities that can be imagined, but "constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (p. 71). By comparing it to the schema, Vellodi establishes the diagram within a philosophical history, while at the same time problematizing its relationship to visual representation.

Can we have an image of the diagram? We can approximate one through art. Avoiding the frustrating pitfall of discussing aesthetics without examples to illustrate theoretical concepts, Vellodi focuses on a case study—Tintoretto becomes the vector of Deleuzian thought. Vellodi's evocative descriptions of paintings seem to prime Tintoretto for diagrammatic analysis. Space, lines, cosmic connections, materiality, and speed: these Deleuzian aesthetic parameters infuse Vellodi's language, illuminating Tintoretto's art. She writes that "this is a world of ambitious spatial constructions expressing a logic of diagonals, arcs and curves, impossibly recessional spaces, and extreme proportions which often lose all sense of ground. In the late works," she continues, "the religious element approaches a supra-sensible and cosmic register unprecedented in Venetian painting....All this is matched by a delight in the material, and a fast and free hand—Tintoretto's works present some of the most astonishing and unrivalled examples of abbreviated painting in the history of art" (p. 23). Tintoretto's works read as diagrammatic, allowing for a reciprocal connectivity between concept and art, the way that an orchid attracts a wasp.[2] The wasp responds to the orchid's codes: Tintoretto here is coded to engage with the diagram.

The Deleuze/Tintoretto duality allows Vellodi to parse out the differences between art history and theory. Art history, she writes, upholds a representational mode of thought resting on the twin pillars of context and tradition. Art history, as a mode of inquiry, is subject to conceptual redundancies that shape it into a "recognized territory" thus limiting its analytical scope. All that is "most obscure, deviant, and idiosyncratic" is levelled "by a mechanism of representation" (p. 5). Through Deleuze, Vellodi sets out to investigate how art history might think beyond representation.

Vellodi considers how art history perceives theory. Even if art history "has always been philosophical, and always involved aesthetics" (p. 7), she acknowledges that art historians can be suspicious of philosophical aesthetics despite the fact that philosophy and aesthetics are an integral part of the discipline.

For Vellodi, Deleuze and Guattari offer the perfect blend of theory and practice, or praxis, through which to investigate aesthetic theory. For Deleuze and Guattari, theory is always local and cross-coded, which allows praxis to be understood in terms of networks. Yet Deleuze and Guattari's theory is not a methodology imposed onto thought, but rather, the passage between theory and practice "unhinges both and prevents either from settling into any 'form of interiority'" (p. 10). Theory is not a top-down process but rather a constant negotiation: "Theory does not work to clarify, render intelligible, ground or impart new sense to a practice. Instead, its operations must be understood as reciprocal to the actions of practice upon it, and through this reciprocity grasped as rupture, displacement, critique, and affirmation" (p. 10). Vellodi admits that Deleuze's theory, as a tool of criticism, is a hard sell for the task of analyzing Tintoretto. Rather, she advocates approaching Tintoretto philosophically through philosophy as practice. "One of these practices is art," she points out, which is itself a "practice of thought" (p. 10). At the heart of the duality of Deleuze/Tintoretto is a problematic practice—Deleuze's scarcely mentions the artist in his writings, and when he does, his analysis fragmentary. Therefore, the philosopher/painter pairing is constructed from a series of aborted landings: Tintoretto touches down in Deleuze's texts only to take off again, never fully grounded. The reader (in this case, Vellodi) sifts through the passages in which Tintoretto is briefly referenced in Deleuze's writings to elaborate an aesthetic theory.

One section of the book—focusing on *The Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, the suite of sixty-four paintings grandiosely spanning two floors and three rooms of the building—functions as an outstanding test case. Vellodi examines an array of Tintoretto’s paintings through some of Deleuze’s key notions, such as constructivism (reality is a construction, not a given), the diagram as map (visual manifestation of pure function), ghostly figures (spectral figures in Tintoretto’s painting compared here to Deleuze’s manifestations at the origins of art), and the conceptual image of the house (philosophical metaphor of the layers and frames that go into the production of art). Vellodi matches the epic scale of the suite with her own captivating writing.

The first of Deleuze’s concepts that Vellodi applies to the *Scuola* suite is that of constructivism, linking a multitude of paintings into a network connected to its encompassing architectural structure. The interweaving between architecture and painting creates a diagrammatic relationship between art forms: “Here, constructivism is shown to be a feature not confined to a painting or even to painting as such, but an operation that concerns an aesthetic set of relations implicating an environment, an assemblage within which individual paintings are just vectors. We might say that the entire San Rocco cycle is one vast diagram” (p. 122). The interaction between architecture and painting speaks to this constructivist impulse.

Vellodi shows how Tintoretto’s paintings display the logic of diagrams of sensations by visually mapping out sensation. By showing how a map can trace more than what is representational, she creates a strange space indeed: “At once a map of sensation, a map of difference, and a map of relations, it reminds us of the nature of aesthetics as transformational, a dimension by which things become other than they are” (p. 102). Vellodi borrows abstract concepts from aesthetic philosophy and applies them to figurative paintings, thus energizing a discipline that is traditionally based on rigid visual facts (historical interpretation of painted figures) with experimental philosophical notions.

Still in the *Scuola* suite, Vellodi brings our attention to ghostly crowds in the backgrounds of Tintoretto’s paintings. These are sketchy, translucent, monochromatic and, as Vellodi explains, “conveyors of invisible forces” (p. 83). These scintillating groups resemble the “people phosphorescent fait de grains dansants et de poussière lumineuse” that stand at the origin of aesthetics in Deleuze’s corpus.<sup>[3]</sup> They are scintillating, embodying a passage between the earth and cosmos, which echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s own connections between earth and cosmos as detailed in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*<sup>[4]</sup>

Lastly, Vellodi connects Tintoretto’s house method to Deleuze and Guattari’s “sensation-house-cosmos” (p. 105)—one of the more fascinating aspects of their aesthetics. For Deleuze and Guattari, the house captures sensation through its framework, an exposure to the outside. Vellodi builds on this concept to suggest that the house becomes synonymous with construction of the work of art. She points out that architectural elements weave throughout Tintoretto’s paintings, in the *Scuola* suite and beyond: in *Christ Among the Doctors*, “the framework emerges immanently, as a plastic architectonic” (p.105). And with echoes of Deleuze’s concept of the baroque house from *Le pli*,<sup>[5]</sup> Tintoretto seals his room shut: “There are no openings, no signs of a house with cut-out windows” (p. 105). *Miracle of the Slave* displays a “more rational” house, which is “open to a vista” and “indicates a cosmic reality beyond the painted scene” (p. 105). Finally, *The Massacre of the Innocents* has “neither doors nor windows”: it has a “cut-out, irrational little ‘window’” which “de-territorializes the scene” while “forces of a spectral world” level the boundaries and “elevate the composition to a cosmic plane” (p. 105). Vellodi’s analysis of this seemingly straightforward

concept is exemplary, especially when matched to fitting visual models. Be it constructivism, mapping, ghostly figures, or houses, Vellodi richly illustrates these abstract concepts through Tintoretto's complex works.

Vellodi announces at the beginning of her book that she is avoiding representational analysis and that her use of the diagram will allow her to reframe "Deleuze's philosophy to attend to problems posed by Tintoretto's practice" (p. 17). She takes her cues from Deleuze's own "ethos of philosophy as creative rather than re-productive, reflective, or communicative," and reconstructs the concept beyond Deleuze parameters, especially by buttressing the diagram through various other Deleuzian concepts as an aesthetic tool (p. 17). Here, in particular, by fitting it into Tintoretto's trans-pictorial works, she illustrates the self-reflexive knot of both illuminating Deleuze's concept through Tintoretto's works while at the same time using the diagram to analyze Tintoretto: "the diagram is both a characteristic of what Tintoretto does (our object), and what we do in our experience of Tintoretto's work (our instrument), offering one way in which the thinker of art and the work of art might be brought into a productive proximity" (p. 18). Ultimately a successful study of a dynamic, multidimensional painter through a complex concept, *Tintoretto's Difference* is an exemplar of intersectionality of art and philosophy.

#### NOTES

[1] Gilles Deleuze, "Ecrivain non: Un Nouveau Cartographe," *Critique* 31 no. 343 (December 1975): 1207–27; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980); Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1981); Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986).

[2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), p. 17.

[3] Vanessa Brito, "L'île déserte et le peuple qui manque," in François Dosse and Jean-Michel Frodon, eds., *Gilles Deleuze et les images* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 2008), p. 72.

[4] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), p. 170.

[5] Gilles Deleuze, *Le pli: Leibniz et le baroque* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1988), p. 38.

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