

to the *Beliebigkeit* and disconnect from truth that robs the *Geisteswissenschaften* of their *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, and ultimately their social esteem today.

The third and final section of the book concludes with a short historical overview of hermeneutics. Much of the material concerning more recent developments in hermeneutics found here can also be found in earlier sections of the book, but the final section serves as a concise narrative of these developments, and Hösle imbues it with greater historical depth by incorporating hermeneutics in Antiquity and the Middle Ages into his analysis. Here, the breadth and depth of Hösle's knowledge is at its most impressive and humbling, as one would have to master German, Latin, ancient Greek, French, and English to make the most of this section. The section on biblical hermeneutics offers some very interesting insights into the brilliance not only of the ancient Greeks, but also of someone like Augustine in his acuity for analyzing the pragmatics of speech (428). Summarily, Hösle draws our attention to the advance of hermeneutics to reincorporate considerations of truth, most forcefully put forth by Gadamer and Davidson.

All too briefly, Hösle then lists eight points that are necessary for the humanities to continue toward regaining their *Wissenschaftlichkeit* and due respect. Let me highlight the final one, as it brings us back to his conceptualization of the book as a "normative reconstruction." In the eighth and final point, Hösle claims that, for all its merits, *Geisteswissenschaft* ultimately still concerns understanding, not evaluation. As for the former, it requires a stronger grounding in philosophy. This normative dimension comes across as a bit of a surprise this late, as it did not figure prominently in everything that led up to this point. However, it is rather consistent and quite to the deeper point of the book, namely, that there are better and worse degrees of understanding. This is precisely the point lost on deconstructivist hermeneutics, and while the book focuses all of its attention on the minutiae of understanding, it is in hopes of providing a framework to ultimately evaluate degrees of understanding.

On the whole, then, *Kritik der verstehenden Vernunft* is an impressive book, as it sets itself a sweeping task and accomplishes it without getting drawn into the many tangential questions closely related to it. It will serve experts in hermeneutics as an overview and critique that can be challenged or embraced; it can also be of use as an introduction to hermeneutics from which novices can branch out to examine its history more closely. The guiding challenge to postmodern hermeneutics is timely and of more than fleeting relevance, and it will be of the utmost interest to keep an eye on responses to the book, however they unfold.

University of New Hampshire

—Alex Holzniekemper

### **Klang im Zeitalter technischer Medien. Eine Einführung.**

Von Rolf J. Goebel. Wien: Passagen, 2017. 138 Seiten. €16,30.

A clear and candid exposition of a book's key arguments is an intellectual virtue that, other than in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, can no longer be taken for granted. After some initial thoughts on the (post)modern omnipresence of the volatile and elusive sphere of the acoustic and a comprehensive introduction into basic paradigms of Murray Schaffer's *Soundscapes* and Jonathan Sterne's *Audible Past*, Goebel jumps into the heart of the matter and lists the impressive array of issues that he seeks to address:

sound and its relation to visual experience and verbal language, its philosophical foundations and (re)presentation in selected literary texts, the consequences of its technological reproduction and—last but not least—the position of acoustic sensations within the increasing discontinuity of literature and philosophy on the one hand and globalization, digitization, and consumer capitalism on the other. This appears to be an exhaustive and (perhaps too) ambitious agenda for a mere 138 pages: on Goebel’s methodologically and ideologically still un-enclosed meadows of literary sound and media studies, Walter Benjamin and Franz Kafka graze peacefully in the shadow of Heidegger’s shattered ontology of listening, which also serves as a (subsequently added) blueprint to the acoustic experiences of Rilke’s Malte Laurids Brigge. Hans Castorp’s obsession with the gramophone in Mann’s *Zauberberg* is read as an ambiguous echo of Berglinger’s acoustic contemplation in Wackenroder’s *Herzenergießungen*, and in the vein of this intriguing relationship Goebel repeatedly establishes convincing connections among the different sources and sections of his book. A chapter on the double function of mediatized music as a potential source of inspiration and “Störfaktor” (source of irritation) in the poetry of Durs Grünbein, the only living author treated at any length, finally turns out to be a valuable addition to more general observations on global sound technologies, authenticity, and postmodern sound scenarios. Here Goebel draws a historical line from Kafka’s playful vision of voice transmission in his letters to Felice Bauer to the auditory cocoon of the modern smart- and headphone user, who experiences his surroundings (at best) as a kind of silent movie.

The rapidly aging writings from Friedrich Kittler’s middle period, (dis)affectionately termed by some Anglo-American critics “German Media Theory,” are a (perhaps all too) obvious theoretical supplement to Goebel’s German canon. Much to its advantage, however, the book is void of zealotry or allegiance to any particular school of thought. Its theoretical references are scrutinized dispassionately and exaggerations or shortcomings are uncompromisingly brought to the fore. What is clearly missing however, particularly in the light of the author’s global and post-colonial claims, are references to more recent explorations of the interconnectedness of sound technology, modernity, imperialism, and the economy of “global noise” such as Emily Thompson’s *Soundscape of Modernity* (2004), Sam Halidays *Sonic Modernity* (2013), or Radano and Olaniyans *Audible Empire* (2016). In the light of such omissions, Goebel’s ventures onto postcolonial turf—with three pages on a Haiku by Matsuo Bashō as little more than a historically isolated fig leaf—prove to be the weak spot of his otherwise convincing *Einführung*. In the chapter on Benjamin—rather than on the “Reproducibility” essay, it centers on *Einbahnstraße* and the *Arcades Project*—Goebel adamantly disagrees with my own observation that Benjamin himself makes little effort to stress the (post)colonial implications of his text collection. And yet he concedes, only a couple of lines later, that “Produkte der eigenen Kultur” are treated in the *Passagenwerk* in much the same vein as “exotic” ones. Be that as it may: as a musicologist I am pleasantly surprised to find a considerable number of references to classical recordings (an inevitable, yet only tacitly acknowledged side-effect of Goebel’s selection of authors) from Bellini’s *Norma* to Schubert’s *Winterreise*; higher probably than to be expected in a publication devoted to “sound studies,” whose notorious indifference to musical complexity routinely results in an uncritical embrace of “popular culture” or Gumbrechtian “presence effects.” Those, on the contrary, appear to be somewhat underrepresented in Goebel’s book.

Rounding out a review by deploring missing or neglected authors and sources is a well-known habit. Considering Goebel's odd combination of global and general claims with a highly selective corpus of texts, I am however unable to refrain from it. Among Goebel's most obvious 'foreign' casualties is Marcel Proust, but there are striking omissions even within or close to the heart of the German canon at the core of his book. One might think of Gottfried Benn, or, among more recent and living authors, Marcel Beyer's celebrated novel *Flughunde* (1995), which draws heavily on Kittler, while with respect to theory Tia de Nora's landmark study *Music in everyday life* (2000) or Kittler's *bête noire*, Theodor W. Adorno, spring to mind. In the 1970s Benjamin's theoretical credibility began to rival and then surpass that of the music philosopher and elitist 'expert listener' Adorno, but in the light of the latter's essay "Nadelkurven" (1928) or the posthumously published fragment *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction* (2001; Cambridge 2006) one might, at least from the perspective of sound studies, want to reconsider this ranking. The sounds of pre-electrical gramophone recordings are—with considerably deeper engagement compared to the views of vinyl devotees quoted at the outset of the *Zauberberg* chapter—identified by Adorno as "shadows" (an intriguing visual metaphor), that "do not create the illusion of original" and thus eschew the "untruth" of the "magnified", bloated and therefore unclear sound" (134–135).

In particular for readers with a background in German literature and cultural theory, Goebel's book is an affordable and easy-to-read "Einführung." Without losing much of its commendable compact comprehensiveness, it would nevertheless have benefitted from perhaps thirty more pages of concise theoretical input.

Humboldt Universität Berlin /  
Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen

—Tobias Robert Klein

### The Eye of History: When Images Take Positions.

By Georges Didi-Huberman. Trans. Shane B. Lillis. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018. xxix + 257 pages + 46 illustrations. \$34.95.

While scholarship on Bertolt Brecht has treated radio, music, and film with some frequency, scholarship has more recently trended towards critical examinations of Brecht's work in the area of the visual arts. Research on this area has been sporadic during the last several decades, ranging from book-length studies to specific articles by scholars such as Jost Hermand, Roswitha Müller, Reinhold Grimm, and Dieter Wöhrle. A closer (and sustained) look at his media theories and his work with images is long overdue, as there is a wealth of material in Brecht's prodigious *œuvre* yet to cover. The paucity of attention is starting to reverse itself: "Bild und Bildlichkeit" was the focus of the *Brecht-Tage* in 2010 at the Brecht-Haus in Berlin, and a number of scholars have begun to carve out a niche, including Grischa Meyer, Tom Kuhn, Philippe Invernel, Welf Kienast, J. J. Long, Andreas Zinn, and Jan Gerstner (with a dissertation currently in the works under the direction of Nikolaus Müller-Schöll at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt).

The volume under review here, Georges Didi-Huberman's *The Eye of History*, appeared in French in 2009 (*Quand les images prennent position. L'Œil de l'histoire*, Les Editions de Minuit) with a subsequent 2011 German-language translation in