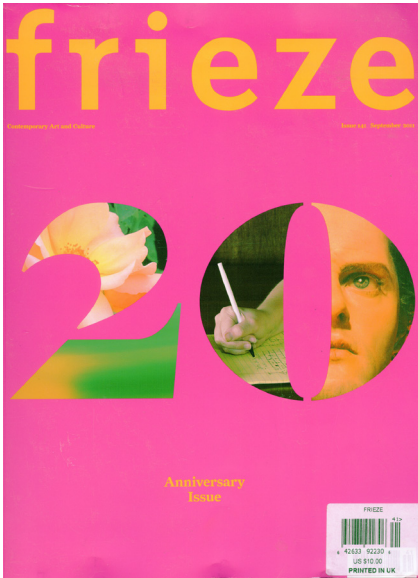




REVIEWS

Theoretically Speaking: The 1990s. Simon Critchley on Nick Land and *Fanged Noumena*
Frieze 141 (Sept 2011)



Up the road at Warwick University, something decidedly non-Derridean was taking shape that flowed from a strong cocktail of Georges Bataille, Philip K. Dick, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and various chemical substances. The key figure here was Nick Land, with whom I'd been a graduate student at Essex, when he was writing a PhD thesis on Martin Heidegger (did I mention that everyone was a Heideggerian back then, even - and especially - the anti-Heideggerians?).

Nick had the most meteoric and savagely satirical mind. His collected writings have recently appeared as *Fanged Noumena* (2011), which I see as a kind of righteous revenge. Nick was dismissed by professional philosophers because they simply didn't want to think and preferred their turgid academic complacency. I always admired him for his unwavering desire to take

By 2000, there was an impatience with deconstruction, a frustration with the platitudes of post-Structuralism and the desire for a return to Marx.

thought to its absolute limit and then see how much harder one could push. Others were pushing too, and I think of the important work that Keith Ansell-Pearson was doing in a series of books in the late 1990s, including *Viroid Life* (1997) and *Germinal Life* (1999).

Things ended badly, of course. The philosophy department at Warwick basically pushed Nick out in the late 1990s in the name of rigour, which is an academic disease that precedes rigor mortis by a year or so. Nick's weakness was his strength: seduction. This meant that he produced disciples. It was amazing. You'd go and give a talk at Warwick and be denounced by people with the same saliva-dribbling verbal tics as Nick and wearing

similar jumpers. So, one axis that came to dominate the 1990s was a stand-off between a Deleuzian immanentism and Derridean quasi-transcendentalism, and this is a convenient way of summarizing some of what happened in the next decade.