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**Book Review: Todd Cronan: *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism***

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scant justice to its range and diversity, and to the exhilarating wealth of critical insights it provides; it deserves a place as every Proust reader's *vade mecum*.

**Clive Scott**

*Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism.* By Todd Cronan. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. Pp. 324. \$30.00 (pbk).

'This is a book', Todd Cronan alerts us in his opening sentence, 'about modernism's dissatisfactions with representation'. It concludes with a chapter devoted to Valéry, arguably the exemplification of the study's ambitious concerns. In between, Cronan demonstrates his mastery not only of what he terms the 'New Bergsonism' (p. 16) but also the potentially dense philosophical abstractions layered across recent thinking, from Derrida to Deleuze, about mimesis. But what this book is really 'about' is Matisse, refreshingly set against a critical history prioritizing the viewer's perceptual response. It is enriched by illustrations including full-colour plates. And its analyses of individual pictures make this essential reading for Matisse specialists as well as for art-historians with wider interests, not least in the long section on 'The Influence of Others' (pp. 109–64). Here Cronan persuasively engages with the painter's 'skeptical modernism', finding expression as it does in his conscious remodelling of works by Manet, Monet, Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh and Cézanne. An unsurprising 'anxiety' (of influence) is partially overcome by his insistence on the very conditions of representation *not* foregrounded by precursors and contemporaries. By returning the beholder to the studio and the canvas, Matisse thematizes its limits as surely as in his recurrent framing techniques of windows, thresholds, architectural angles and pictures within pictures. Virtually dismissing *Olympia* as essentially traditional, for example, it is Manet's *The Dead Toreador* which he idiosyncratically saw (in Washington DC, in 1930) as his very 'finest' work, precisely because it was 'humanly unavailable' (p. 148) to forms of 'facingness' (the book as a whole is indebted to Michael Fried's criteria in this respect) made explicit elsewhere. Such a perspective is symptomatic of Matisse's necessarily unstable positioning, *between* detached observation and bodily affect generated by colour and structure. So too his costume pictures embody a complex citational pictorial discourse resisting assimilation by virtue of 'an infinitely regressive palimpsest of sources' (p. 153) and thereby asserting their autonomy. What is certain is that Matisse's experience of the painting of others is fraught, whether or not one subscribes to the view that Picasso's *Winter Landscape* configures the tensions and contradictions of all those relationships. A further long chapter on 'Matisse and Mimesis' is equally illuminating. It explores fantasies of expressive immediacy existing side by side with its negation. Such an opposition can be reconciled only by paradox, by arguing, as T. J. Clark has done, that detachment is itself an expressive gesture, Matisse's *Woman with a Hat* being an expression of Matisse's incapacity to express himself fully in a world increasingly beyond emotional understanding. Cronan's own way through is by recourse to a psychoanalytical set of terms whereby mimesis is the conflicted mode accommodating both possession and 'blissful annihilation' (p. 167) of the boundaries between self and other. Matisse's phenomenological approach is captured in an early work, *Woman Reading* (1895). More emphatically, his *Still Life with*

*Self-Portrait*, in the same year, reconfigures the objects in the former as tactile, material entities. Other pictures from this period also play with the dramatic contrast between phenomenological and realist modalities. A decade later, such issues assume a greater complexity, with works such as *The Geranium* (1906) increasingly frustrating categories of recognition. As Cronan shows, it is at this point in his career that Matisse initiates a troubled dialogue with the work of Cézanne, reinforcing where our gaze should rest: less on the painter's declarations and theories than on a series of investigative and contingent, but always creative, encounters. Thanks to Cronan's sensitive and subtle reading of the pictures themselves, Matisse's place in the history of modernism has been intellectually and aesthetically redefined.

**Robert Lethbridge**

*Le Maquis de Glières: mythe et réalité.* By Claude Barbier. Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2014. €24.50.

In 2007 Nicolas Sarkozy visited the Plateau de Glières in the Haute-Savoie and continued to do so each year until 2012 when he was defeated in the presidential election by François Hollande. Unlike François Mitterrand whose annual pilgrimage to Solutré in Burgundy was both a gesture of respect for those who had died during the Occupation and, whether or not convincingly, one to demonstrate a link with his nation's past, Sarkozy's attempted appropriation of Glières was unambiguously intended to benefit from its legendary status thereby enhancing his suitability as a presidential candidate. For nearly 70 years – indeed since broadcasts from London in April 1944 by Maurice Schumann – the Plateau of Glières was considered to be the site of the 'first battle of the Resistance', a heroic if tragic struggle between around 500 members of various resistance groups and overwhelming German forces. For more than half a century relevant documentation was either scarce or neglected, with the result that the legend, often with false claims or generously embellished, developed unchallenged, fast becoming a microcosmic symbol of national resistance so central to Gaullist propaganda and part of popular perceptions of the country's past. In fact what happened on 27 and 28 March 1944 was completely different and, as Barbier writes on page 315, 'incontestablement un échec'.

Exploiting archival material held not only in France but in Britain, Switzerland, Germany and the USA, Claude Barbier, not without controversy, has at last established the truth. In reality, after a brief exercise on 26 March 1944, the German forces moved late the following morning to discover during the next three days that the various areas occupied by resistance groups (*maquis*) had simply been abandoned. Contrary to the legend which subsequently developed, only a handful of resisters were killed (some accidentally) and no Germans (p. 256). This was far from the end, however. In their flight from the advancing Germans many died and others, as they either surrendered or were arrested, were soon victims of brutal reprisals, above all by the Germans but also by the French *milice* under the command of Joseph Darnand. False trials and executions, torture and deportation to Germany or to concentration camps accounted for hundreds who, according to the legend, had instead died fighting. Barbier also reminds us that by late 1944 – as indeed in other parts of France – counter reprisals carried out by those who had survived were not uncommon.