many tyrants" (p. 77)? Similarly, he argues that Socrates' statement that the few rather than the many are experts in training horses is his oblique way of suggesting, "Democracy is rule of the incompetent" (p. 118). But, as scholars like Peter Euben, Arlene Saxonhouse, Sara Monoson, and Jill Frank have shown, these negative characterizations of democracy were in fact criticisms that the Athenian democrats often lodged against *themselves,* and Leibowitz's book would have benefited from more engagement with this literature. According to these scholars, democratic orators were worried that, especially during the Peloponnesian War, Athenian assembly debates had degenerated into flattery and mere conciliation of one another's unreflective prejudices and desires, rather than a deliberation on and critique of them. This suggests that Socrates and Plato may also have been immanent critics of a corrupt, imperial Athenian democracy, and were not necessarily antidemocratic thinkers.

Strauss's teaching about exoteric writing, which communicates different messages to the promising and unpromising members of one's audience, can seem antidemocratic, but this is only if democracy is understood as rule by the incompetent, as Leibowitz ultimately wants to suggest. However, Strauss's teaching is less antidemocratic if we understand democracy both in Athens and today as allowing for differences in competency, and as defined by its ability for self-critique, in which the best ideas triumph through deliberation and critical reflection on one another's unreflective prejudices and desires. In other words, Socrates', Plato's, and Strauss's ultimate teaching might be that their distinctions between unpromising and promising audiences is a distinction between the pre-reflective and post-reflective understanding of virtue and politics that democratic citizens bring to and then carry away from their deliberations. And if this unpromising reviewer has understood anything of this ultimate teaching, then there is hope for us all.

The Time of the City: Politics, Philosophy, and Genre. By Michael J. Shapiro. New York: Routledge, 2010. 232p. $145.00 cloth, $36.95 paper.

— Michael J. Thompson, *William Paterson University*

As an object of study for political theorists, the city is a latecomer. With their clustering of themes of time, space, culture, power, pluralism, inequality, exploitation, and alternative subcultures, cities have attracted other branches of the social sciences since the early nineteenth century. Michael J. Shapiro's book is less in the tradition of more classical thinkers, such as Georg Simmel, Friedrich Engels, or Ferdinand Tönnies, and derived much more from "cultural studies," attempting what he refers to as a "poetics of the city." Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Rancière no less than Gilles Deleuze and Henri Lefebvre are drawn upon

to construct a theoretical frame to rethink the "political" through the lens of cinema.

The basic contention of the book is that through an analysis of cinematic portrayals of urban life, we can glimpse the various ways in which politics affects the everyday lives of individuals. Shapiro sees the mainstream literature in urban politics, from Robert Dahl's (1961) *Who Governs?* and Floyd Hunter's (1953) *Community Power Structure,* as concentrating on issues of community, a "narrow (often de Tocqueville-inspired) participatory model of politics," as ignoring "[t]he struggles of marginalized people to manage their life worlds and the rhythms of moving bodies" (p. 4). Rather than seeing the city and the politics of urban space as a node for community and civic life, Shapiro's reading emphasizes the divisions, the power relations, and the fault lines of fragmentation as crystallized in the actions and practices of everyday life.

For Shapiro, cinema is a means for analyzing the effects of urban space and power relations on marginalized groups; we come to glimpse this micropolitics through the representations of the genre of film. From Rancière, he takes the argument that the arts have the capacity to reframe experience, rendering "thinkable aspects of politics that have often been ignored" (p. 4). The politics of institutions, of the large-scale strata of social life, are juxtaposed against the "micropolitics of everyday life," a means to "generate ways to think 'the political'" (p. 4). Marginalized groups need to work within the constraints of power that are articulated by the institutional structures of urban space and the logics of their reproduction. The central aim here is to establish a link between knowledge and art, the ability to derive knowledge about politics from different forms of experience we see playing out before us. The critical edge of this project, as Shapiro sees it, is to achieve a "poetics of the city, a series of interventions that figure the city by composing encounters between artistic texts and conceptual frames (effectively art-knowledge encounters)" (p. 24). The concept of "poiesis" is therefore central: It denotes the creation of alternative ways of experiencing and knowing. Film thus becomes a way to "illuminate aspects of the actual encounters that constitute the micropolitics of urban life worlds" (p. 24).

Cinematic portrayals of the modern city can be seen to depict the experience of the fragmentation between social groups and their life worlds brought about by the spatial articulation of power. In his reading of Walter Mosley's film *Devil in a Blue Dress,* Shapiro shows how the representation of the body of the main character, Easy—an African American in Los Angeles—changes his movement and body language as he moves through different urban spaces. The spaces of difference reflect themselves in the body movement and language of the character. When dealing with the plant foreman, Mr. Giacomo, "Easy stands stiffly at attention, literally with hat in hand, as he tries unsuccessfully to convince Mr. Giacomo to give him back

his job." But the body language changes once again when "back in black space . . . Easy moves in a loose-limbed, comfortable way" (p. 12). The implication of this read exemplifies the central task of the book: to "offer a visual dynamic that captures an aspect of the city that is central to the urban micropolitics with which I am concerned by animating the city 'as a kind of force field of passions that associate and pulse bodies in particular ways'" (p. 11).

Similar readings are performed on numerous other films, from Wim Wenders's *The End of Violence* to Joel Schumacher's *Falling Down,* among others. In the latter, we see a similar kind of content analysis. A character confronts a series of different conflicts as he roams through different Los Angeles neighborhoods and urban spaces. Each neighborhood is composed of different groups with different cultures and practices, which we are to see as traces of the effects of urban power. The main character's departure from his familiar spaces to those that are unfamiliar is supposed to show us that "a social and occupational apartheid has made LA's inner city a *terra incognita* for one white middle class Angelino" (p. 60).

I was unable to find any real insight about politics or the "political" in these analyses. The real problem with this book lies in the kind of theoretical assumptions it makes about the nature of politics and knowledge itself. True, it is important to see that civic-minded strain in urban politics, like Dahl's emphasis on pluralism in *Who Governs?* as ignoring the pathologies of urban spaces fragmented by racial and class-based structures of power and difference. But in many ways, this is a straw-man approach to the issue. The insights of later urban theorists like Richard Sennett, Douglas Massey, William Julius Wilson, and John Mollenkopf, among many others, are not dealt with in any way in this text (I was unable to find references to them in the index and notes). The problems of social power and inequality within urban space are real. But it seems to me that this requires an analysis of the mechanisms of power for any theory to be counted as political, in any genuine sense of the word. The reliance on post-modern and poststructuralist theory does not take us far in this regard—indeed, it takes us backward. What is needed is not an exploration of the phenomenological or experiential aspects of social power but an understanding of the ways that power and space are able to affect consciousness, disrupt forms of social solidarity and organization, and pervert institutions away from democratic ends.

Yet it is necessary to take up seriously Shapiro's contention that the arts can provide us with some kind of genuine insight into the political. After all, the author is not interested in these "macro" or institutional analyses of urban politics. A crucial element in his argument is to counterpose Deleuze to a deeply problematic (and basically incorrect) reading of Hegel. Whereas Hegel represents for Shapiro the tendency to see rational thought progressing toward a "conciliation" with the world, Deleuze provides "an alternative model of contingency" (p. 29). The cynical indictment of reason, characteristic of poststructural and postmodern thought, repeats itself here without any originality, and it is a style of thinking that does the opposite of what its adherents claim: Rather than place us in opposition to forms of social power, it provides us with nothing positive to say politically. It is true that art can indeed illuminate dimensions of social power of which we are normally unaware, but not through an emphasis on subjectivity, the life world of individuals, or the contingency of their perspectivist views. This provides us with an abstraction from, not a genuine knowledge of, the power dynamics that cause social pathologies. What is required is an insight into the causes of power relations, not the contingent knowledge of those that it affects.

In short, it seems that the means of contesting power relations are not to be found in the cultural anthropology of their depiction, but from a correct understanding of their causes and logics. In the end, this becomes the genuine limitation of the style of theory exemplified in *The Time of the City*: an undertheorization of the processes of social power that leaves us with a politics that is, in the end, objectively ineffectual.

AMERICAN POLITICS

Remaking the Presidency: Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, 1901–1916. By Peri E. Arnold. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009. 328p. $34.95.

— Jeffrey Crouch, *American University*

In *Remaking the Presidency: Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, 1901–1916,* Brownlow Award winner Peri E. Arnold addresses a perplexing question about the Progressive Era presidents: At a time when Congress dominated politics, presidents were passive, and an active federal government was not in vogue, "Why and how did [Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson] construct activist leadership in a context that was apparently inhospitable to such activism" (p. ix)? And, of course, the inevitable follow-up question: what should be made of William Howard Taft, whose much less regarded presidency was bookended by these two giants (p. ix)?

Biographers and historians have examined Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson many times before, but Arnold argues that a more comprehensive look will require analysis of the context in which they served and changes in the institutional presidency, as well as each man individually (p. x). Arnold begins by identifying the key contextual factors