The Cinema Papers

Most of the thirty following essays dedicated to cinema are rather short; probably too short to carry a consistent argument throughout this volume. However, the adequate manner in which to read them might be using the films they describe as a referential landscape, and triggering unexpected dialogues and peculiar combinations. Spike Lee, Béla Tarr, Michelangelo Antonioni and the many other filmmakers named in this volume do not seem to have much in common at first sight; nevertheless, considered through the interpretation of a Spinozist materialist philosophy, their films might have something to say to one another. Take the mud of Red Desert (Antonioni), the volcanic slopes of The Bad Sleep Well (Kurosawa) and the soil of Pina Bausch’s Rite of Spring magnified in Pina (Wenders) for example. What these material manifestations have in common is that they are all in relation with bodies, themselves assemblages of moving matter. Similarly, consider Spike Lee’s dolly shot, Orson Welles’s labyrinth, Béla Tarr’s entropy, and Peter Watkins’s democratic improvisations: they all manifest the power of immanence and its inexorability. These films involve no deus ex machina; everything in them comes ‘from the ground’ in a continuous refusal of a celestial or other form of transcendence. Developing this kind of reading of these films allows us to avoid a traditional chronological reading of history of cinema in favor of another, one more dedicated to the philosophical vision of the world that cinema triggers.