

COMPTES RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

***Contr'hommage pour Gilles Deleuze*, sous la direction de Dalie Giroux, René Lemieux et Pierre-Luc Chénier**

Illustrations de Martin tom Dieck

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L'introduction de cet ouvrage semble opposer un Deleuze soixante-huitard et subversif (le « mauvais philosophe » ou le « mauvais maître ») au « bon » Deleuze, « philosophe des concepts et des systèmes ». Fort heureusement, les multiples facettes de l'œuvre et de la réception de Deleuze qu'il propose échappent à cette opposition réductrice et réunissent des lectures de théoriciens francophones nord-américains qui proviennent d'horizons disciplinaires très différents : philosophie, science politique, études cinématographiques et littéraires, arts visuels et création littéraire. L'hétérogénéité des contributions aboutit à un ensemble assez éloigné des commentaires axés sur l'événement, l'ontologie et l'image qui se sont multipliés jusqu'à la nausée dans les dernières années.

Refusant l'exercice trop répandu de l'hommage au philosophe et à son œuvre, les auteurs choisissent d'emblée de se placer plutôt sous le signe du *contr'hommage*, de l'« offrande à un ami inconnu ». (xiv) L'ouvrage se structure ainsi selon trois axes principaux : lectures, écritures, lecture. Les « lectures » sont des interprétations systématiques de la pensée du philosophe, des commentaires qui s'inscrivent dans la mouvance des études deleuziennes. Les « écritures » suivent les lectures, mais aspirent à en sortir, à les déterritorialiser pour tracer des lignes de fuite et ouvrir sur de nouvelles possibilités de pensée, quitte à risquer le conflit ou la collision avec le texte deleuzien. Les auteurs dont les textes ont été réunis dans la section intitulé « lecture » (cette fois-ci au singulier) essaient plutôt d'interroger le sens du *contr'hommage* et les possibilités ouvertes par la rencontre et la réception de l'œuvre deleuzienne pour une nouvelle génération de chercheurs. Tous les textes sont accompagnés par des illustrations de Martin tom Dieck, qui a travaillé à deux albums dédiés à Gilles Deleuze : cet hommage au philosophe suit le *contr'hommage* des universitaires par une dynamique de répétition et

d'effacement progressif du dessin, dans un exercice graphique de la sobriété et du devenir-imperceptible chers au philosophe.

La première section s'ouvre sur une remarquable étude d'Alain Beaulieu, qui propose une nouvelle interprétation du rapport qu'entretient la pensée de Gilles Deleuze avec l'histoire en général et avec l'histoire de la philosophie en particulier, axée sur la « perspective microscopique » de Deleuze et la micro-physique du pouvoir. Elle se poursuit avec une analyse de la notion de maniérisme chez Deleuze, signée par Sjoerd Van Tuinen, et par une étude de la référence chinoise dans *Mille plateaux* d'Erik Bourdeau. Andreas Krebs propose pour finir une lecture du *Corps sans Organes* comme outil conceptuel pour la recherche en sciences sociales.

Significativement, la section la plus faible de l'ouvrage est la deuxième, celle consacrée à des « écritures » destinées à prolonger dans des lignes de fuite inédites la pensée deleuzienne. Ni la fiction de Claudine Vachon, ni la « topologie du peuple manquant » de Pierre-Luc Chénier, ni l'étude consacrée aux images de Serge Cardinal n'arrivent à convaincre. C'est comme si les tentatives de s'éloigner du texte pour produire des pensées originales étaient (pour l'instant, au moins) destinées à échouer. On doit signaler, par contre, l'originalité de la contribution de Maurice G. Dantec (« De la machine de 3^e espèce aux humains de 4^e type »). Mis à part les délires de néo-converti au catholicisme de l'écrivain (dénudés de tout intérêt), le texte de Dantec propose un authentique *contr'hommage* au philosophe, à travers le récit autobiographique de sa rencontre avec l'œuvre philosophique de Deleuze, qui a eu lieu par l'intermédiaire d'une œuvre musicale, celle de Richard Pinhas, à son tour nourrie en profondeur par les cours et la pensée du philosophe. Au-delà de tout commentaire savant, Deleuze n'est plus vécu comme une « influence philosophique », mais comme « une rencontre frontale avec le réel » (148), un événement authentique, une collision improbable et féconde entre la philosophie de Deleuze, l'écriture de Dantec et la musique de Pinhas.

La troisième et dernière section, celle consacrée à la « lecture », est certainement la plus singulière et la plus intéressante de l'ouvrage, ouverte par l'excellente contribution de René Lemieux, témoignage de la première génération de philosophes qui n'ont connu Deleuze qu'à travers ses textes. L'auteur interroge une éthique de la lecture et, en même temps, une lecture de l'éthique, inséparables du « corps à corps » entre le

livre et ses lecteurs, inséparables également de la lecture deleuzienne de Spinoza. Le texte de Lemieux propose ainsi une interprétation de l'œuvre de Deleuze comme le lieu de rencontre entre de multiples textes et de multiples lecteurs (corps des mots, corps des interprètes) qui nous invite encore et toujours à lire, mais surtout à *cesser de lire* pour affirmer de nouvelles dimensions d'un *devenir-impersonnel* propre à l'écriture. Pour conclure, Dalie Giroux propose une interprétation politique de la lecture deleuzo-guattarienne de Kafka, et Sylvano Santini critique âprement les excès du *Deleuzism* américain, mimétisme et maniérisme qui ne fait que répéter la pensée deleuzienne. L'auteur va jusqu'à proposer de jeter au feu, purement et simplement, cette masse informe de commentaires superflus qui risquent d'étouffer à jamais la voix de Deleuze. D'où l'utilité, voire la nécessité, d'un *contr'hommage* qui puisse s'opposer aux répétitions stériles de Deleuze et nous permettre de « mélire délibérément son œuvre » (210) pour qu'elle puisse conserver sa valeur.

Si ce recueil a le mérite d'exprimer l'urgence et la nécessité de nouvelles lectures et écritures qui puissent enfin « *mettre à l'œuvre* Deleuze, *mettre à l'œuvre* l'œuvre » (xiv), on a encore du mal, en le lisant, à comprendre en quoi ce *contr'hommage* diffère réellement d'un hommage traditionnel. Surtout, on ne peut s'empêcher de questionner l'absence totale de Félix Guattari dans toutes les contributions. Peut-on encore continuer à proposer des lectures « de Deleuze », de *L'Anti-Œdipe* et de *Mille plateaux* en feignant d'ignorer que ces textes ont été écrits à quatre mains (ou à deux cerveaux)? Le premier « *contr'hommage* pour Gilles Deleuze » consisterait, peut-être, à lire le rhizome inextricable que sa pensée et son écriture forment avec celles du personnage inclassable qui leur a permis de cartographier de nouveaux territoires.

Les textes réunis dans ce *contr'hommage* nous invitent, malgré tout, à demeurer optimistes puisque, comme l'écrit Alain Beaulieu dans son étude, « des concepts continueront d'être créés bien qu'il y ait aussi des périodes plus désertiques ». (11)

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***Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry*, by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe
Translated by Jeff Fort
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007; xviii + 111 pages. ISBN:
978-0252031533**

Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry, a collection of five lectures presented by Lacoue-Labarthe between the years 1987 and 1998, revised and edited by the author himself (and published in French in 2002), typifies what has become a prominent theme within French scholarship on Heidegger: the relationship between Heidegger's political involvements and the overall arch of his thinking. Summarised coarsely, it is Lacoue-Labarthe's contention that Heidegger's engagement with German *poetry* (most notably that of Hölderlin) conceals an essentially scandalous and *fascist* tendency, one which overshadows his philosophical work as a whole.

The book, capably translated and helpfully annotated by Jeff Fort, begins with a citation from *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in which Heidegger explicitly names *mythology* as the way of thinking most appropriate to knowing a "primal history." (3) Using this passage as his clue, Lacoue-Labarthe strives to show that Heidegger's favouring of myth as a means of knowledge, most manifest in his readings of Hölderlin, echoes an "aesthetico-political" tone inherited from the philosophical/literary era of German Romanticism. The Romantics, which represent for Lacoue-Labarthe "the dream of an entire 'German Ideology,'" sought to *invent* a new mythology with the express intent of bringing the German *Volk* into its "true historical dimension" or, in the Heideggerian idiom, of originally grounding historical *Dasein*. (4) Heidegger's privileging of myth is yet another configuration of this Romantic drive to create a *polis* as a great work of art, a drive which found its most *philosophical* expression through Nietzsche, and its most *horrific* expression through the political activities of National Socialism. It is Heidegger's unique privilege to be able to represent the braid of these two strands.

Lacoue-Labarthe is careful—as indeed one needs to be—to refer to Heidegger's own efforts to distinguish himself from such a Romantic project and the philosophical and political forms that it assumes (see, for example, the *Nietzsche* lectures or the lectures on *Der Ister*). And yet,

though “it is obviously impossible simply to confuse Heidegger’s positions with those of Nazism,” Lacoue-Labarthe nonetheless sees an *essential* affinity between them. (5) Although they do so differently, both Heidegger and National Socialism inherit the Romantic project of establishing a new mythology. In short, Heidegger’s use of myth, as was the Nazi’s, was fundamentally political and essentially fascist.

Whereas many have maintained that Heidegger’s treatment of poetry owes its nationalistic flavour to Heidegger’s political activities of the 1930s, Lacoue-Labarthe argues that Heidegger’s own privileging of the mythological arises out of an unreflectively inherited ideology. (34) According to his argument, Heidegger’s enthusiasm for myth does not result from his political participation with the National Socialists, but from an overdetermination of the Romantic exaltation of the political and religious power of myth. (14) Mythological thinking *first*, and only *then* political misadventure.

Lacoue-Labarthe extends this criticism by turning to Alain Badiou’s concern for the “suturing” of philosophy to poetry in his *Manifesto for Philosophy*, summarising the latter’s project as an effort “to make philosophy possible once again by taking a step beyond the declaration of its end.” (18) For Badiou, this would take place as a repetition of Plato’s exclusion (in Book III and X of the *Republic*) of poetry from philosophy proper, as an “unsuturing” of philosophy (by philosophy) from its preoccupation with poetry. Needless to say, such an “unsuturing” would work against Heidegger’s own thoughts concerning the “end of philosophy” and the role that poets play therein.

Although deferring a full “incrimination” of Badiou’s thesis, Lacoue-Labarthe marks a misunderstanding belonging to his overall project. Summarised briefly, Badiou overlooks the important fact that philosophy’s polemic with poetry, which constitutes the very origin of philosophy (25), is owed not to poetry itself, but to its ancient provenance—*myth*. (21) In other words, whereas Badiou believes philosophy to have sutured itself to the *Poem* (at least during “the age of poets”), Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that it is to the *Mytheme* that philosophy has historically sutured itself, and that such a suturing has brought about ineluctable consequences for poetry, philosophy, and politics alike. (23)

Philosophy’s refusal of the Mytheme, first undertaken by Plato, was repeated in the 18th century through the work of Immanuel Kant.

Through his critique of metaphysics, Kant brought about “the first anamnesis of philosophy and, therefore, the first repercussion after the fact...of the Platonic decision” to expunge myth from the region (or, we might say, *polis*) of philosophy. (27) It is this anamnesis that prepared the reactionary ground for the Romantic project as seen, for example, in the anonymous call (likely offered by Schelling) for a new “mythology of reason.” (28) As Lacoue-Labarthe sees it, this Romantic pursuit of a new mythological religion led inevitably to the National Socialist politics of the 1930s, as well as to the poetic thinking of Heidegger.

However, the Kantian critique also paved the way for a different route, one that circumvents the final destination of Romanticism. This is the route prepared by Hölderlin, which, through meditating on the difference between the Romantic enthusiasm for Greece and the sober, *prosaic* clarity of presentation proper to the West, “ultimately forbids...every mythologization that would lead to the project of an immanent fashioning of a community.” (30) Phrased otherwise, Hölderlin offers a path that completely reconfigures the relationship between poetry, politics and philosophy and, therefore, adopts a different (and critical) orientation with respect to myth, an orientation that refuses the *typographical* role that Heidegger assigned to it. (10) In a word, Hölderlin sought a “de-mythologizing” of poetry. (76)

Lacoue-Labarthe then turns to a reading of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, who both offer interpretations of Hölderlin that work against Heidegger’s mythological project. Both Adorno and Benjamin locate a prosaic tendency within Hölderlin, a sobriety of style that Heidegger, “in bad faith,” ignores. (42) This sobriety works against the oblique epistemological function that Heidegger attributes to myth and plays out as a *failure* on the part of poetry to offer a mythological figure or type by means of which a historical people would recreate themselves. Hölderlin’s poetry is decidedly prosaic (that is, literal) in a manner that Heidegger refuses (58) and, thus, works against the enthusiasm for myth that Heidegger reads into it.

The final chapters offer a further analysis of Benjamin and of his bearing upon Heidegger. By comparing their readings of Hölderlin’s talk of the *courage* of poetry, Lacoue-Labarthe shows that whereas Heidegger reads Hölderlin as calling upon the Germans to enter heroically into a new mythology, Benjamin reads him as calling for the courage to *leave behind* the mythological. The courage of which Hölderlin speaks—and

this is the culmination of his poetic route *around* German Romanticism and, thus, *against* Heidegger—is the courage to be sober and reserved in the face of the Romantic enthusiasm for a new mythology. Heidegger’s reading, the argument goes, is an *archi-fascist* one whose final destination is now so infamously known. Benjamin, on the contrary, in seeking a “literalization of the mythologeme,” saves both philosophy and poetry from the epistemological and political threat of the Mytheme. What Hölderlin allows us to see is that both philosophy and poetry ultimately refuse the Mytheme and, thus, both seek a relationship with the Matheme. And it is for this reason that Lacoue-Labarthe claims at the outset that this book is “of a mathematical order.” (1)

This sometimes frenetic—or, to use his own description, *schizophrenic* (1)—book offers both an engaging interpretation of Heidegger’s poetic thinking and a compelling alternative to it, as well as a fairly damning picture of Heidegger’s thought as a whole. It is because of this later purpose—to present Heidegger’s thought as essentially fascist—that Lacoue-Labarthe’s book is tenuous. Due to the severity of the charge, this small book cannot but fail to offer large evidence to support it; and whereas some progress is made toward clarifying the relationship between Heidegger’s thought and the (un)thought of National Socialism, this book certainly does not prove that Heidegger was “*the* thinker of National Socialism,” as it sets out to. (83) Although Lacoue-Labarthe’s theses are engaging and suggestive, they require much more care and elaboration than they are given, as the author himself repeatedly insists.

At its worst moments, this text is a deferral: a series of bold statements adorned with brief (albeit interesting) evidence whose full elaboration is postponed to some future inquiry. (Nearly every section begins with a proviso that says as much. (12, 20, 27, 39, 85) In this sense, the book is a kind of path-marker, but by no means the path itself, and the strength of the book consists in its ability to call attention to these markers, setting its own limits as it does. In the end, this book is exactly what it promises to be: a series of reflections that are in no way exhaustive and that remain to be pursued carefully and rigorously. The gift of the text is that it leaves the task of undertaking such elaborations to us.

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***Gilles Deleuze's ABCs: The Folds of Friendships*, by Charles J. Stivale
Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008; 180 pages. ISBN:
978-0801887239**

Avec des affirmations telles que « Je n'ai rien à foutre avec les gens, rien du tout! » (Abécédaire, C comme culture), on pourrait être porté à croire que la pensée de Deleuze n'est pas une pensée *de et produite par* l'amitié. Et pourtant, au cœur de sa conception (et de celle de Guattari) de ce qu'est la philosophie, l'ami est toujours présent : la création de concept se produit dans l'entre deux, dans la distance qui à la fois relie et sépare les amis. L'amitié est ainsi la condition même de la pensée, qui a besoin d'intercesseurs pour se déployer. Comme pour Deleuze nous ne faisons de rencontres qu'avec un style, un charme, avec l'émission de signes, l'ami chez lui est l'image même de la singularité quelconque décrite par Giorgio Agamben (1990) : ce qui importe est sa *manière*, son surgissement, ses devenirs, non ses caractéristiques ou son essence. Quelles sont les multiplicités qui traversent les amis, ouvrant à de nouvelles rencontres et permettant à la création de concepts de se déployer dans toute sa force? Quelles trajectoires suivent ces nouvelles connections? Que fait l'amitié?

Dans *Deleuze's ABCs : The Folds of Friendship*, Charles Stivale offre un voyage au sein des nombreuses rencontres et amitiés de Deleuze, donnant l'occasion à la fois d'introduire à la pensée du philosophe français et de témoigner pour sa grande créativité conceptuelle. Pour ce faire, il utilise comme document de base *L'abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, une entrevue télévisée de plus de huit heures accordée par Deleuze à son amie Claire Parnet, effectuée en 1988 et diffusée après sa mort. Trame de fond du parcours qu'il propose, Stivale connecte ce riche document audiovisuel à de nombreux autres écrits de Deleuze—produits seul ou avec d'autres—ainsi qu'à des concepts provenant d'autres points de la philosophie auxquels il fait écho. Deleuze soulignait lui-même que l'ami est un intercesseur, permettant d'entrer en mouvement, de devenir, en facilitant la création de nouvelles connections entre des idées. La stratégie privilégiée par Stivale semble faire en quelque sorte écho à cette conception en utilisant certains passages de *L'abécédaire* comme mots de passe permettant de déployer

une constellation de résonnances et de rencontres. Par exemple, utilisant des citations parfois peu ou pas marquées comme telles par Deleuze lui-même, Stivale délie le fil des rencontres ayant nourrie la pensée du philosophe français, ou desquelles d'autres amitiés sont nées. Par le biais d'un processus hybride croisant analyse (inter)textuelle et travail pédagogique, il offre une visite de la pensée deleuzienne en suivant des routes moins fréquentées et, du coup, donne un point de vue rafraîchissant sur les relations et concepts marquants du philosophe français.

Stivale divise son livre en deux parties, mettant respectivement l'emphase sur les conceptions transversales de l'amitié nourries par *L'abécédaire* et sur des relations d'amitié particulières de Deleuze. La première partie débute par la conclusion de l'entretien qu'ont Deleuze et Parnet : le zigzag. Pour Deleuze, celui-ci met en contact des amas de singularités et permet du coup à l'étincelle créative de se produire. De cette façon, Stivale montre comment la créativité, ou la philosophie pour Deleuze, ne peut se produire que dans l'entre-deux, dans la rencontre. Il présente le zigzag comme le coup de fouet faisant émerger du chaos une idée, en science, en art et en philosophie—tous préoccupés par une forme ou une autre de création. Dans le parcours sinueux du zigzag se constitue ce que Stivale appelle le pli de l'amitié : l'amitié en tant qu'individuation « ...at once singular and collective, that can reveal the actualization of the fold precisely in movements of becomings ». (15) Le zigzag ouvre un espace de créativité dans les connexions qu'il produit : « The zigzag, then, constitutes the fundamental encounter of the 'in-between' of the fold that is the juxtaposition of thought and unthought, art and life, affect and the brain, and the friendship conjoined to creativity ». (32) Stivale utilise les indices de la relation professeur/étudiante entre Deleuze et Parnet qui parsèment *L'abécédaire*, ainsi que les commentaires du premier portant sur son rôle de professeur, pour développer la relation entre l'amitié et la pédagogie du concept. Pour Deleuze, la pédagogie du concept n'implique pas de tracer un calque à reproduire, mais de *faire avec* les étudiants. Comme le souligne Stivale, alors la pédagogie ne vise pas la reproduction du même, mais l'entre-deux ouvrant lui-même sur la création. Plutôt que d'entraîner les étudiants au cœur d'une « école » de pensée—ce que Deleuze reproche à la philosophie pragmatique de Wittgenstein – la pédagogie du concept implique que dans la rencontre, professeur et étudiant deviennent créateurs en chargeant les concepts de

nouvelles questions, en les inscrivant dans de nouveaux mouvements et réseaux de relations. Stivale présente contre « l'école » de pensée, l'enseignement comme une forme d'amitié en soulignant que le rôle du professeur est plus de l'ordre de l'intercesseur que du Maître : « The pedagogy of concept, then, is not one that need force us into too stratified regimes, or schools of thought, but rather toward fluid movements, supple engagements and encounters, experimentations and openness to becoming passage ». (45) En connectant cette conception de la relation professeur/étudiant avec l'importance du charme pour Deleuze, Stivale souligne que cette rencontre ne se fait pas avec une personne, mais avec une émission de signes et surtout un style. Pour Deleuze, ce ne sont pas des personnes que nous rencontrons, mais le style qui les anime et qui en émane. Mais ce style est en lui-même un devenir, le devenir-langage d'une Idée littéraire—ou d'autres champs d'expérience. Situé au cœur de la rencontre amicale, le style participe à la création de concept. Les trajectoires qui se rencontrent ne sont pas que « contenus », elles sont également courbes et élégance, charme et style, qui participent de la connexion créative. D'une certaine façon, le style est ce qui fait l'idée—et la personne qu'elle exprime, ce qui la traverse et l'individualise.

La deuxième partie de *Gilles Deleuze's ABCs* met de l'avant un intéressant jeu entre le personnel et l'impersonnel. Il y dessine une constellation de relations à la configuration changeante : s'intéressant à certaines relations d'amitié spécifiques impliquant Deleuze, Stivale met en lumière la façon dont le personnel peut donner place au commun, au non-individuel, au quelconque. Stivale amorce cette partie en traçant le parcours sinueux des rencontres entre Derrida, Foucault et Deleuze et de leurs rapports (conceptuels) parfois délicats. En décrivant Maurice Blanchot et ses écrits sur l'amitié comme un intercesseur, il met en lumière les points de convergence et de divergence entre ces trois figures importantes de la philosophie continentale. Proposant une approche transversale, Stivale montre le rapport qui s'établit entre eux par paires—Deleuze/Foucault, Derrida/Foucault et Derrida/Deleuze—en utilisant leur rapport à la pensée de Blanchot comme ce qui rend opératoire leur rencontre et, du coup, leur amitié. À ce jeu de relations à trois (ou quatre), Stivale ajoute la relation entre Deleuze et Parnet, telle qu'elle se déploie dans *Dialogues* et dans *L'abécédaire*. Elle devient l'occasion de présenter des stratégies pour devenir-imperceptible en mettant de l'avant la multiplicité et ce que Stivale qualifie de « post-identity » dans le style

d'écriture. Ne pas écrire « ensemble », mais écrire entre les deux, d'une écriture qui n'appartient en propre ni à l'un ni à l'autre. Mais ce devenir est capté par les positions arrêtées professeur/étudiant et la relation qu'elles induisent : « ...despite the apparent search for authorial multiplicity and imperceptibility, *Dialogues* and *L'abécédaire* are at once a series of pedagogical exercises and extensive manifestations of friendship relying more on the individual, teacher-student, or interpersonal relationship than on a free-floating agency and inarticulate mode of dialogic rapport ». (95) Tout de même, la rencontre Deleuze (et Guattari)/Parnet donne lieu à une expérience d'écriture produisant non pas l'expression de cet auteur, mais la tension vers *un* auteur quelconque, impersonnel. Avec la relation Deleuze/Foucault, Stivale présente une rencontre dont les traces peuvent être filées dans un dessin—« Le diagramme de Foucault »—se trouvant à la fin du livre que consacre Deleuze à son contemporain. En utilisant ce dessin comme ancrage, Stivale réussit à présenter une amitié qui n'est pas (uniquement) affaire biographique, mais affaire d'idées. Il utilise le dehors—en passant par le diagramme, notamment—et la résistance—à l'aide des transformations dans les rééditions des textes du philosophe à propos de son ami—comme deux points pour créer une rencontre entre les travaux de Deleuze et de Foucault. Comme toute amitié, celle-ci implique des notes en harmonies et d'autres un peu plus discordantes, produisant de nouvelles possibilités pour la pensée.

Dans *L'abécédaire*, Deleuze souligne l'importance de l'article indéfini pour décrire la place de l'enfance dans le geste d'écriture. Décritant l'utilisation par certains auteurs de leur enfance personnelle, « leur petite affaire à eux », dans leur écriture, Deleuze affirme la nécessité de comprendre l'enfance comme multiplicités « ...l'article indéfini, c'est une richesse extrême » (E comme Enfance). Ce rôle de l'article indéfini et de l'impersonnel résonne de façon particulière dans le dernier chapitre de *Gilles Deleuze's ABCs*. En passant les thèmes de la plainte et du rire, tels qu'ils se manifestent et sont abordés dans *L'abécédaire*, Stivale présente l'amitié comme ce qui ouvre la possibilité de tendre vers *une* vie, non pas sa vie personnelle, mais une vie quelconque : non marquée, non subjectivée, non hiérarchisée, non caractérisée, etc. Transformer le personnel en impersonnel demande beaucoup de travail : il faut penser en termes d'événements, s'éloigner de la molarité, déployer des efforts considérables pour devenir-imperceptible. C'est dans l'entre-deux de la ren-

contre que Stivale situe cette possibilité, celle qui pave la voie à la résistance et à la ligne de fuite.

Stivale a réussi à faire de *Deleuze's ABCs* un livre qui est à la fois accessible pour les non initiés, en présentant certaines des notions-clés de la pensée deleuzienne de façon originale, et excitante pour les autres, en produisant des connections nouvelles et créatrices. Il ne s'agit pas d'une lecture de *L'abécédaire*, mais d'une production utilisant ce document audiovisuel comme point de départ pour saisir certains concepts et les transformer quelque peu, sous la bannière de l'amitié. Faisant sienne la stratégie du zigzag, Stivale connecte différents écrits de Deleuze et d'autres penseurs qui lui sont associés par le biais de la question « What can friendship do? » (xiii), tout en la mettant en pratique : créer des rencontres, ouvrir des possibilités pour la pensée, s'attarder aux multiples singularités qui se regroupent sous l'appellation « Deleuze ».

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***Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed*, by Gerald A. Press
London & New York: Continuum, 2007; viii + 240 pages. ISBN: 978-0826491763**

Plato's dialogues have not only provided the necessary dosage of sunlight required to help cultivate the various subfields of the discipline but they have also given neophytes their first opportunity to study philosophy. Typically, upon commencing their post-secondary career in the academy, the average student will likely not have been exposed to any philosophical ideas, doctrines or concepts, let alone the primary works contained in the *Corpus Platonicum*. However, after reading a Platonic dialogue for the first time, the archetypal student seems to be struck by its suspicious simplicity. Gerald Press reports that it is within this perceived approachability that novice readers experience the most confusion: "An overall cause of reader perplexity about Plato is the contrast between what appears on the surface and what seems to exist, but obscurely, beneath the surface." (1) It is from this observation that Press begins his discussion on the causes of confusion in the Platonic dialogues.

Press has divided his work into four distinct parts, each consisting of a series of chapters, which together provide an exceptional scholarly and philosophically nuanced guide for reading the Platonic dialogues. In the first part, Press supplies a written account of Plato's long life with meticulous references to the political, social and intellectual conditions that permeated his time. In addition to the biographical details that must preface any work on a philosopher, Press also provides a requisite explanation on the function of Plato's works. According to Press, Plato's works were not meant to be read by the general public due to their esoteric and obscure nature. Due to this inscrutability, it is likely that Plato's writings were "philosophic protreptics" (17) which sought to attract potential students toward both the Academy and the philosophical sciences in general. However, Press recognises that there are other possibilities, such as the prospect that Plato's dialogues originally served as "exercise books" (17) for his students and/or as "advertisements" (18) for the Academy and the specialised knowledge one would acquire in such an intellectually charged environment. Initially, the prospect of advertising his works seems perplexing; however, one must remember that during Plato's lifetime the Greek world was somewhat unexposed to written philosophy, as it still embraced an oral culture that placed more value upon ornate speeches about politics rather than philosophical writings. (17–18, 25)

The collection of chapters in the second part focusses on the role change plays in producing perplexity among Plato's readers. Press begins this large part with a survey of the evolution of Platonic thought through the ages from its founder to the New Academy to Middle Platonism to Neo-Platonism to Renaissance Platonism to the Early and Contemporary Modernists. (39–52) Press also provides a brief account of the Anti-Platonists who attack(ed) Plato both philosophically and personally throughout the ages. Press populates this group with thinkers such as Epicurus, Lucian, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Popper. (52) However, throughout this entire chronology of Plato's philosophical thought, Press emphasises that despite the myriad of Platonic schools and approaches to the dialogues that produced many tensions and heated debates, the mere proliferation of meaning seems to be a mark of excellence in writing. (39) The presence of various interpretations coupled with Plato's unorthodox way of presenting his philosophical ideas—through dialogue versus the

standard treatise—presents, however, serious points of confusion for the reader who attempts to tackle Plato's works for the first time.

Press contends that "the dialogue form itself is the most important cause of perplexity to those readers who are looking for Plato's doctrines." (55) Unlike the traditional philosophical treatise, the dialogue, along with its close relatives the poem and the meditation, tend to contain more esoteric ideas and, thus, "communicate more implicitly and indirectly." (55) In other words, the dialogue inhibits those who seek to capture the kernel of Plato's message. Unfortunately, the dialogues are an unchangeable reality that must be properly handled by the aspiring student of philosophy. Therefore, according to Press, it is necessary to better understand the underlying subtleties of the dialogic structure by recognising the "linguistic characteristics, literary structures and the thoroughgoing interpretation of the dramatic and the philosophic." (55) This uneasy relationship brings about a host of obstacles that the reader must overcome should he/she wish to successfully grasp the nuances of Platonic thought. With the dialogic approach come questions of argumentation and doctrine, stories and mythology, irony and humour, and play (immorality) and seriousness (morality). These features should be viewed under lenses that can account for the presence of paradox, which seems to be both a recurring theme and a binding force that unites the aforementioned questions. (130–31) Press cautions the reader to be aware of such paradoxical "inversions of reader expectation" (131) in their quest to uncover some sort of underlying themes that run throughout Plato's works.

The third part of the book is centred on the ideas of permanence and stability in Plato's dialogues. In contrast to the topics of change presented in the second part, the third part explores Plato's overarching and repeated themes that often appear in the collective corpus of his works. Press contends that Plato's dialogues depart from the traditional discursive "propositional knowledge," whereby "knowledge is linked to a doctrinal conception of philosophy" and "embodied in statements telling us that something is true." (159) In its place, Plato makes use of a vague panoramic and systematic "intellectual vision," which is composed of "many elements grasped in their mutual relationships." (160) This "pictorial quality" (160) spills into Plato's "vision of reality," which is comprised of "two asymmetrical levels." (162) The first or "lower level" is home to the impermanent and sensational material world that is a mere

“shadow of reality” that is cast by the “higher level” of permanence and intellectual thought. (162)

Press, however, instructs the reader to view these two levels as inseparable planes of existence that are not mutually exclusive, but rather conjoined. (163) Press argues that in order to realise and accept this “two level model of reality” (174), it is necessary to travel upon the “path or way to wisdom” (173), which culminates in the realisation of the two levels. Press describes this path as one that is provocative as it encourages travellers to become “more thoughtful, critical, rational, and moral.” (173) However, Press remarks that this path is also “social” in the sense that it requires “dialogical interactions with others.” (173) In addition to these social interactions, there is also an element of empathy, where travellers are required “to aid others in finding the path.” (173) In order to assist the readership in better understanding this concept, Press remarks that the path of wisdom is, in fact, a “dramatic story” that is “intrinsically exciting, involves striking, emotionally charged problems, confrontations, changes, successes and failures of the kind that characterise drama.” (175) Also, like the dramatic arc, there are a series of “general stages” (179) that one must pass through in order to achieve a higher level of thought, including pre-philosophic ignorance to dialectical cross-examination to spiritual ascent. This ascent can only be reached after one has undergone a “spiritual crisis or *aporia*” (178) that is evoked after “a series of recurring dialectical encounters” (179) with various interlocutors, who force the traveller to question his/her core beliefs and notions.

The fourth and final part of Press’s work acts as a springboard that effectively prepares the reader for the subsequent task of actually reading a Platonic dialogue. Press recommends that the aspiring student undertake three different types of reading in order to appreciate fully and understand the dialogues: the logical, dramatic and integrative readings. (186–92) During the “logical reading,” one should seek to identify the “main lines of argument” (186) discussed by Plato through his characters. In the second reading, the “dramatic reading” (188), one should approach the dialogue just as one would approach a play by Shakespeare, a poem by Milton or a novel by Hemingway, in the sense that they should seek out literary information, such as plot, setting, character, development, allusions, irony and the employment of paradox. (189–91) In the “integrative reading” (191), it is necessary to juxtapose the information

gathered in the previous two forms of reading in order to achieve a deep or thick understanding of the dialogue under review. At the end of the work, Press provides brief summaries of nineteen Platonic dialogues from the common to the obscure, including the *Parmenides*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, *Ion*, *Timaeus* and others. (209–20)

In composing any academic work, one has two audiences in mind: the student and the expert. It is often difficult to accommodate both audiences, who often seek dissimilar forms of information and specified approaches to the work under scrutiny. The student requires a transparent and structured account that discusses the author's background, the political and social climate of ancient Athens, the purpose and function of the dialogue, and standard methods of interpretation. Conversely, the expert requires immense philosophical erudition and scholarly rigour that not only demonstrates an intimate understanding of the ancient, medieval and contemporary debates on the subject but also presents unique interpretations and original approaches to the dialogues. In my opinion, Press not only has impressively accommodated his two diverse audiences but, more importantly, has successfully contributed to their individual philosophical development.

John Cappucci, Carleton University

Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–26, Volume I: Introduction and Oriental Philosophy, Together with Introductions from the Other Series of These Lectures, by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
Translated by R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; xiv + 323 pages. ISBN: 978-019956893

The present volume is a slightly abridged translation of Jaeschke's critical edition of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie: Teil I*. It includes a complete translation of transcripts of Hegel's lectures on the introduction to the history of philosophy of 1819, 1825–26 and 1829–30, the manuscript fragment of 1823–24, and the transcript of Hegel's 1825–26 account of the literature and Oriental philosophy. It also includes substantial selections from the 1820–21, 1823–24, 1827–28

and 1831 transcripts, and approximately the first two-thirds of Hegel's 1820 manuscript.

This volume adheres to the same high standards as the rest of the works in the Hegel Lecture Series. As we have come to expect, the present text includes a lengthy editorial introduction, valuable footnotes, a translation glossary and critical index. Furthermore, the editors have compiled an extensive bibliography of Hegel's source material for these lectures. As to the translation itself, it conforms closely to the standard translation of Hegel's terms employed by earlier editions in the series and is as fluid and precise as one may reasonably hope.

Unlike other works in this series, the editorial introduction to the present volume has little to say about the actual content of these lectures. Instead, it focusses primarily on the various shortcomings of previous editions and translations of Hegel's introductions to the history of philosophy, the manuscript sources of Jaeschke's recent critical edition that serve as the basis for the present volume and the basis of various editorial decisions on the part of both the German and English editors, including the different organisation of the various lecture series. Those interested in such matters should certainly consult this quite lengthy introduction. For others less concerned with such philological details, it should be sufficient to state that the present volume renders all previous English editions of Hegel's introduction to history of philosophy obsolete. For the first time we have in our hands an accurate account of Hegel's presentation of this material separated by year of presentation, rather than a text that has been reordered and reworded according to the whims of the editors. The same cannot be said of either the old translation of Haldane and Simson, or even the newer translations of Lauer, Miller and Knox, based respectively on the highly problematic Mitchelet and Hoffmeister editions of these lectures.

Undoubtedly, some will be disappointed to hear that Brown and Stewart chose to provide only selections from some of the lectures that appear unexpurgated in the German edition of this text. This disadvantage, however, is somewhat offset by the fact that the English edition includes not only the complete 1825–26 lectures, but also the full text of both the earliest and latest extant lectures (excluding the 1831 lectures, which were cut short after only the first lecture due to Hegel's death). Furthermore, the material from the remaining lectures and manuscripts are substantially represented, with the translators focussing

particularly on passages where Hegel deviates from his earlier presentation or expands on points only touched upon in the other lectures. Indeed, Brown and Stewart have, if anything, erred on the side of caution by excerpting and translating more than half of the material present in the German edition. Furthermore, any omissions have been scrupulously documented and the omitted material is both clearly indicated and summarised by the translators, who often point to other translated lectures where Hegel makes the same or similar arguments. Moreover, in the abridged lectures, the translators have inserted the German pagination directly into the text, rather than placing it in the margins, and the page numbers of the German passages omitted in the English edition are clearly indicated in the translators' summaries. While perhaps not ideal, the text is certainly still usable for serious research in English, while those deeply interested in the most subtle of changes in Hegel's presentation would at any rate presumably consult the German text directly.

A word now on the content of this volume. Part of the value of having Hegel's lectures given according to their year of presentation is that this enables us to trace the development of Hegel's treatment of a subject. This was quite clearly one of the reasons for the enormous interest in and outpouring of secondary literature following the publication of The Hegel Lecture Series' edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Yet, while Hegel only began to lecture on the philosophy of religion late in his career with his arrival in Berlin, he lectured on the history of philosophy both in Jena from 1805–06 and twice in Heidelberg, from 1816–17 and 1817–18. Unfortunately, transcripts and manuscripts from these earlier lectures have been lost. According to the editorial introduction, by the time that Hegel delivered the lectures in Berlin, the only ones we have access to today, Hegel's treatment of the history of philosophy had already solidified so that "[t]he conceptual basis remained unchanged in all the Berlin introductions." (9) Regardless of whether scholars will ultimately agree with this assessment, it is certainly true that while there was clearly a developmental story to be told with respect to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, it is difficult to construct any such developmental narrative for Hegel's treatment of the history of philosophy. Granted, Hegel's introductions to the history of philosophy were far more varied than were his actual accounts of that history itself,

which is why both the German and English editors of *Greek Religion and Medieval and Modern Philosophy* judged the 1825–26 lectures on this material to be “capable of standing as a mature representation of the whole” (4) but decided to provide multiple versions of Hegel’s introductions. Despite greater variation in presentation, however, this seems to be more a matter of changes in emphasis rather than of changes and developments in Hegel’s outlook or conception of the subject.

To point to the elephant in the room, there is no developmental story to be told that will explain away Hegel’s troublesome claim that the history of philosophy *in some sense* parallels his *Logic*, for Hegel quite clearly makes this claim both in 1820–21 and again in 1829–30. This is not to say that the variations between Hegel’s lectures are unenlightening, for even if there is no developmental story to be told, the clarity of this text and Hegel’s various treatments of the themes will prove useful. With Hegel, after all, nothing is less repetitious than repetition. Those already familiar with the previous editions of these introductions, however, will find little here that is absolutely new or unexpected. What they will find is a reliable translation that serves as a firm basis on which to consider such perplexing pronouncements. Perhaps this is actually an advantage, for such riddles that remain cannot be neutralised through a genetic historicising account. Hegel, in fact, held such historicising in contempt insofar as it degraded the history of philosophy to the level of a trivial and external concern with dead people and their dead opinions. (62–63) His lectures on the history of philosophy, by contrast, were revolutionary precisely because they took the history of philosophy itself as a live and genuine object of philosophical research and investigation, and indeed the very crown of his system. Regardless of one’s own stance on Hegel’s system and his evolutionary account of the history of philosophy, it is, as the translators of the present volume remark, “a tribute to the power of Hegel’s innovative perspective on this history that we (non-Hegelians included) have come to take so many of its elements for granted.” (2)—hence, the enduring philosophical import of these lectures and the immense value of the present translation.

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***The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the “Confessing Animal,”* by Chloë Taylor**
New York: Routledge, 2009; 298 pages. ISBN: 978-0415963718

Chloë Taylor’s *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the “Confessing Animal”* is an engaging work of Foucaultian scholarship that does not content itself with a simple reconstruction of Foucault’s thought, but instead develops and challenges it. Taylor’s book offers a genealogical analysis of the cultural mechanisms and rituals by which the subject seeks to articulate the truth about itself, a practice that was central to the genealogy of sexuality Foucault was conducting from the mid-1970s until the end of his life. In part, Taylor’s work serves to fill out the critique of confessional subjectivity announced most forcefully in Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, and she follows some of his lesser-known writings and lectures to outline the series of accidents through which we in the West have come to believe it imperative to work out the innermost truth of our being verbally in the presence of another. The practice is, however, given expanded meaning by Taylor’s erudite analyses of psychoanalysis, literature and film, with the work situated nicely at the intersections of philosophy, literary theory and debates within contemporary feminism. The reader will quickly be convinced of the importance of this research which seeks to empower those who have been marginalised upon the basis of an identity—confessed or not.

As Foucault explained, the purpose of any genealogy is not to confirm what is known, but to open cracks within a configuration of the present so that life might be lived differently. In this sense, Taylor takes exception with writers who view confession as the expression of an innate human desire. Indeed, one of the virtues of her genealogy’s opening pages is that it shows how the practice, initially quite marginal in ancient philosophical schools and the Christian faith, becomes an obligation only amidst a certain amount of struggle and resistance. The early events in Taylor’s story will be familiar to Foucault’s readers who have been working out the implications of his thought for theology and church history for a number of years, so I will not recount them here. It is worth mentioning, however, that Taylor’s presentation is quite economical, offering a straightforward account of what is, in Foucault’s corpus, fragmentary. On this note, however, I find unsubstantiated

Taylor's claim that the manuscript for the fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality, Les Aveux de la chair*, was destroyed upon his death. Since its contents and destiny are subject to so much speculation, it would be helpful to have more evidence for this.

Taylor's work raises several interesting questions beyond the purview of the traditional Foucaultian lens. In the first instance, she brings together Foucault's genealogies of the various relationships between the subject and truth with the discourses on confession generated by practitioners of deconstruction. Through Paul de Man's reading of Rousseau, and Derrida's readings of de Man, she problematises our notion of truth to ask about the status of false confessions. These discussions bring epistemological complexity to a Foucault who is very skilled at performing readings of institutions, historical arrangements and practices, but perhaps not attentive enough to actual confessions. With readings of Freud, Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, and novelist Annie Ernaux, Taylor challenges Foucault's assessment that the act of confessing might, for some, be pleasurable. Confession, she argues, appears to offer cathartic release, but quickly becomes an insatiable and ultimately pernicious habit. Ernaux is an important figure in contemporary France, and Taylor renders anglophone readers an important service by commenting on her writings in a philosophical context. More importantly, the discussions of Ernaux's autobiographical presentations of sex, love, pain and abortion well illustrate the need for attention to sexual difference when analysing the power dynamics of confession. In general, Taylor thinks these dynamics in ever more subtle terms, focussing attention—somewhat against the grain of Foucault's thought—on both sides of the confessor-confessed relationship. This analysis of the intersubjective dimensions of confession can be viewed as an expansion of Foucaultian ethics, and an argument “against the tendency to elicit the confessions of others and to confess for others.” (190)

It will be interesting to see Taylor respond to the picture that is emerging with the publication of Foucault's lecture courses. As is well known, Foucault's thought is often parsed according to three axes: power, knowledge and subjectivity. Taylor tells largely the story of the development of the latter two, and as such usually describes imperatives to confession and the confessional relationship in terms of surveillance and discipline. One wonders, however, if this story is separable from

Foucault's analysis of different forms of power, with governance, pastoral power, psychiatric power, discipline and biopower corresponding to different eras, forms and uses of confession. Would it be possible to show that different forms of power are operative in the same confessional space? Modern confessions of a sexual nature, for example, rely on a hermeneutics of the self developed in ancient schools of philosophy and the monastery, instill forms of self-relation approximating discipline, and belong to biopolitical networks in which the individual is considered a member of a population with its law of averages. Clarifying the sources and strategies of power will enable us to target more effectively the discourses, practices and institutions that facilitate their transmission, and may help us to decide upon forms of resistance.

A large portion of Taylor's thinking is devoted to seeking out alternatives to confession's form of subjection. One chapter contains a dialectical reading of Foucault's critique of psychoanalysis and the various forms of post-Freudian analysis—schizoanalysis, feminist versions of psychotherapy, and efforts to decolonise the mind *à la* Fanon—that may avoid a normalising infrastructure. Taylor's discussion of Bertha Pappenheim (Freud's Anna O.) demonstrates the risks inherent in the analyst-analysand relationship, and, more importantly, the need for psychic healing to be connected with social and political agency. Taylor's analysis of works by Artemisia Gentileschi attest to the unique powers of art to communicate protest without necessarily confessing, while beginning to address the absence of women from discussions of self-fashioning. Her call to interpret Foucault's works as *huponmnēmata*, or exercises in writing and rewriting the self, will not meet with much protest, for it is conventional wisdom that his genealogies should be judged in terms of their efficacy. More problematic, however, is the attempt to read the memoirs of Herculine Barbin and Pierre Rivière as alternatives, successful or not, to confession. While at the level of the text both authors might resist putting the truth of their desires into words, both endured countless humiliations and ended as suicides. I have always seen Foucault's publication of both documents as his attempt to illustrate the consequences for individual existences of new forms of power/knowledge.

Perhaps *parrhēsia* (frank speech), as it is explored in Foucault's last three courses, will be a resource for thinking about the shifting relationships between power and resistance within the truth-subject dyad.

This modality of truth-speaking first presented itself to Foucault in his analysis of relationships of guidance, in Hellenistic philosophy, and practices of confession, in early Christianity. In the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, he explains how *parrhēsia* moved from being a desirable quality in a philosophical master, i.e., the ability to give unpleasant advice to someone in need, to an obligatory state of openness whereby the subject of the enunciation also becomes the referent of the discourse. Foucault thought that this transition occurred within Epicurean communities, where the correction of faults was part of philosophical practice. As Foucault put it: “It seems to me that it is the first time that we find this obligation that we will meet again in Christianity, namely: I must respond...to the words of truth that teach me the truth and consequently help me in my salvation, with a discourse of truth by which I open the truth of my own soul...to others.” (391) Given *parrhēsia*'s long political history, however, where it at times functions as a mode of criticism, it seems as though its rehabilitation will allow us to alleviate and reverse the burden of speaking about ourselves and instead engage in acts of social-political criticism.

One can only hope that Taylor will continue with this vitally important research, to increase both our understanding of Foucault as well as our resources for changing the practices built into our history. It would be interesting to see her analyse more popular manifestations of the confessional mechanism, for her references to contemporary literature, television talk shows, the self-help genre and legal cases are rich. To what degree do new media technologies such as MySpace and Twitter create, fulfil and/or frustrate our desires to broadcast secrets? Are those scenes on MTV's “Real World,” where participants deliver soliloquies in a darkened space, the contemporary equivalent of the confessional box?

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***Trouble with Strangers: A Study of Ethics*, by Terry Eagleton
Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009; vii + 347 pages. ISBN: 978-1405185721**

A radical theology of “resurrection” lies at the heart of this cogent, funny and stimulating book: the resurrection of socialist ethics and politics within cultural studies, which have dissolved the only true foundation for such ethics, that is, biological nature, the mortal human body, into the new essentialism of “culture.” Readers familiar with *After Theory* (2003) will recognise that Eagleton is thus embarking on the project he laid out there, that of challenging cultural theory to “break out of a rather stifling orthodoxy and explore new topics, not least those of which it has been unreasonably shy,” and above all that of *morality*. (*After Theory*, 222) *Trouble with Strangers* sweeps through the central 18th-century moralists of “the ethical imaginary” (Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, Burke, with nods to Shaftesbury and Rousseau); through Kant and Spinoza (philosophers of “the ethical symbolic”); through Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (philosophers of “the Real”); and finally, through the latter’s post-modern successors, Levinas, Derrida, Badiou and Lacan. Aristotelian virtue ethics also commands a grudgingly admiring explication and critique. Punctuating this journey are illuminating digressions on Shakespeare, Sterne, D. H. Lawrence, Woolf, Kleist, Conrad, Richardson, Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Beckett.

Indebted as some of these readings are to Eagleton’s earlier work, especially *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, the originality here lies in his creation of a typology of ethical theories based on Lacan’s categories of the imaginary, the symbolic and the Real. Lacanian psychoanalysis as interpreted by Slavoj Žižek, together with Judeo-Christian ethics as interpreted by Eagleton in a thoroughly “materialist” fashion, constitute the “crux” of his self-styled radical theology. Why this particular conjunction of psychoanalysis and theology? And how compelling a program for cultural (including literary) studies, essential to a civic education directed toward the political resurrection Eagleton has in mind, does it suggest?

For Eagleton, the Lacanian typology lends itself to an almost perfect mapping onto the Christian myth of the fall. He repeatedly refers to the primal unity of the pre-reflective, pre-social “mirror stage” of the Lacanian imaginary as “Edenic” or as “pre-lapsarian innocence.” He

speaks of the “fall” in the category of the symbolic, a *felix culpa*, which, while constituting the self as a differentiated, self-conscious subject newly aware of its place within a system of dependencies, nonetheless results from the psychoanalytical gash or wound of “original sin.” This original sin is a repressed, subconscious awareness of “the Real”—or in Eagleton’s language, of death—with which the subject must come to terms in the third, highest stage *of* the Real. This higher innocence, which embraces instead of represses one’s new consciousness of death, constitutes the resurrected body and the healed psychoanalytic subject, which are the foundation of Eagleton’s own ethics and politics.

The British moralists are proponents of the spontaneous, instinctual, bodily, affective ethics of “sympathy,” associated with “the imaginary.” Yet, Eagleton objects that if morality is just a matter of spontaneous sympathy, it is not morality at all: Where is the virtue in feeling/doing what one cannot help? It is too easy. Furthermore, because sympathy is lacking in reason, as it is grounded in mere bodily affections, it is feeble, extending in weakening concentric circles of feeling from those closest to us—family, friends, neighbours, immediate community—to perhaps one’s nation (Burke’s politics of sympathy), but rarely beyond. Such is the trouble with strangers: they are too far away.

The kinship bonds, customs, habits, manners, traditions, local pieties and affections of the British moralists give way to the bloodless abstractions of the Kantian “symbolic,” the realm of duties, obligations and moral law pitted against inclination and desire. This is the realm of structuralist semiotics and difference, the play of signs, the mediations of discourse, contracts, reason and abstract universal rights, in short, the realm of politics. Here, strangers are admittedly protected by law from the weak, unstable sympathies and prejudices of the imaginary. But at what cost? If “[a]ll neighbours are strangers,” pitiless “equality of law” replaces sympathetic “equality of flesh and blood.” (88)

It is these two extremes, then, that have to be shattered by the violently disruptive incursion of “the Real,” a violence which nonetheless should instantiate a higher imaginary, its unmediated embrace. And through his critique of modern and post-modern philosophers of the Real, Eagleton makes the case for his psychoanalytic Judeo-Christian position. His ethic is based not on “the plastic, remouldable, socially constructed body,” that “wildly popular topic in U.S. cultural studies,” but “the piece of matter that sickens and dies.” (*After Theory*, 186) The

foundation for Eagleton's ethics is the crucifixion understood as a wholly material event, one which, in fact, marks the *end* of theology: "The age of religion is superseded on Calvary.... Christ is the last high priest.... The only burnt offering that counts in the new dispensation is a broken human body. It is around this monstrous truth that a new kind of solidarity must be constructed." (299)

If this "new kind of solidarity" or ethics is not founded on post-modernism's culturally constructed body, neither is it founded on the post-modern ethics of the real as "Desire," whose history from Schopenhauer to Lacan, Eagleton chronicles in Part III of his book. This empty, insatiable, ceaseless, metaphysical Desire or sense of "lack" originating in the fall from primal unity is a desire without an object that post-modernism exhorts us to embrace with "*jouissance*." Yet, it is profoundly hostile to both neighbours and strangers, spurning the "banal" realities of the commonplace, the everyday, the web of (ethical) human relations—together with the (political) institutions that sustain or hinder them—within which we necessarily live.

Rejecting both the clubbish "affect" of the British imaginary and the post-modern metaphysics of objectless "desire," Eagleton celebrates Judeo-Christian "love." For him, "the paradigm of love is not the love of friends—what could be less demanding?—but the love of strangers. If love is not just to be an imaginary affair, a mutual mirroring of egos, it has to attend to that in the other which is deeply strange, in the sense of being fearful and recalcitrant. It is a matter of loving that 'inhuman' thing in the other which lies also at the core of ourselves." (*After Theory*, 168) One has to recognise "at the core of one's being" "an implacable demand that is ultimately inscrutable, which is *the true ground beyond the mirror*, on which human subjects can effect an encounter." (60, my emphasis) This "sublime strangeness" of the Real, death, is at once individual and universal, love and law, love and "justice," the latter understood as a kind of mutual recognition, "giving them [others] their due so they can flourish. (307)

Yet, all this talk of love and death as grounding the ethics and politics of the everyday raises many questions. Eagleton admits that socialism and Christianity can seem too "otherworldly" in their hope of a humanity "transformed" by a personal-impersonal kind of love (293), but insists nonetheless that everyday acts of kindness can do this. Yet, like the British empiricists he critiques, he assumes that recognition of our

shared mortality will inevitably prompt spontaneous love, in an equally somatic and materialist ethics and politics. Conversely, like the post-modernists he critiques, he adopts a curiously metaphysical vocabulary of “the Real,” of a sublime strangeness, of a negative “theology” empty, in fact, of theological content, i.e., soul or spirit.

Eagleton opts for this “radical theology” over an Aristotelian virtue ethics he repeatedly praises because “it re-embeds moral discourse in the whole business of culture, childhood, upbringing, kinship, politics, and education.” (302) Yet, he astonishingly faults Aristotle for so “surprisingly” naming “politics” as the “science that studies the supreme good of man” (304), when man as a political animal is, for Aristotle, the essence of the human. He claims there is no connection between Aristotle’s *Ethics* and his *Poetics* (304), when the mainspring of tragedy, comedy *and* the attainment of moral excellence is “hitting or missing the mark”; he makes no mention of the profound connection between the *Poetics* and the *Politics*, the latter containing Aristotle’s most extended treatment of catharsis. Aristotle could never understand, he claims—as Christianity and psychoanalysis do—that loss, desire, love, the tragic sense of life are “intimately allied” with “human flourishing” (304); this is why Aristotle fails as a philosopher of the Real. Yet, tragic catharsis receives such extended treatment in the *Politics* precisely because of its centrality to the seamlessly intertwined ethics, aesthetics and politics of civic education which is Aristotle’s—no less than Eagleton’s—ideal.

Reason and revelation have never been easy to reconcile; Eagleton has, in the end, opted for a challenging, even exhilarating, but ultimately disappointingly post-modern version, at once too material and too metaphysical, of the latter. We are—naturally—neither beasts nor gods.

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***An Ontology of Trash: The Disposable and its Problematic Nature*, by
Greg Kennedy
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As a sort of preliminary remark, Greg Kennedy begins his book by describing it as “something of an odd fish.” (ix) Kennedy intimates that one need not look any further than the title, *An Ontology of Trash*, in order to be perplexed by the text that follows. The book, however, is by no means an oddity in the sense that it will remain strange if one actually reads it. In fact, it actually delves into a lot of material that is, at least in a rudimentary sense, quite popular at the moment. This is not to say that Kennedy’s book is another run-of-the mill offering whose central thesis could be acquired from a few minutes in front of the television screen. Rather, it is an intelligently argued work that ventures in a quite refreshing way into the complex intersectional space(s) of philosophy, the natural environment and the contemporary society of consumption.

Chiefly relying upon Martin Heidegger’s fundamental ontology throughout to make his case—albeit more as a point of departure than of a dogmatic regurgitation—Kennedy lays out an intriguing argument for the inherent link between being and trash. For Kennedy, the act of peering into a refuse bin (any refuse bin will do) at the discarded contents lingering inside is the equivalent of gazing into a mirror. That is to say, what can be seen in the trash can is a reflection of one’s very being. It is, to put it in Kennedy’s terms, a form of “self-exploration.” (x) In particular, Kennedy claims that analysing trash reveals the technological mode of being in contemporary society. As the author puts it, “The ontology of trash, therefore, is the study of our modern technological mode of being—a kind of philosophical biography of our life as consumers.” (xvii)

Although a work of ontology, the central focus of Kennedy’s book is the widespread proliferation of disposable things in today’s prevailing consumer society. Kennedy highlights how it seems as though throughout one’s everyday life in this society of consumption there are countless objects that surface for a brief moment only to disappear forever without a second thought from its consumer. This is not surprising, considering these disposable items are designed with their ultimate de-

mise in mind. It is this predetermined and inevitable fate of so many commodities that disturbs Kennedy.

To articulate his project, Kennedy offers what he deems to be a crucial distinction between a metaphysical view of trash and his ontological view (but he also describes this as existential and phenomenological). According to Kennedy, only with the latter perspective can one appropriately distinguish between waste and trash. (9) A metaphysical view conflates the two, whereas Kennedy argues that his position (which he views as the counterpoint to the metaphysical view, although he also acknowledges his study to be somewhat metaphysical) illuminates the difference, which is best summarised in a passage near the end of the book as follows: waste “is obvious and offensive. Trash, on the other hand, has an intrinsic tendency to conceal itself and deceive.” (162)

To situate trash as a problem in the proper historical context, Kennedy argues that, out of necessity, before the Industrial Revolution, people were simply not afforded the opportunity to throw things away. During that time, things would eventually wear out and become useless because their constitutive properties would deteriorate. It is only when their use-value had substantially depleted that they would be disposed of. The contemporary situation is much different in that there are countless things whose constitutive properties change relatively little, if at all, and are nevertheless thrown away. For Kennedy, the scientific and technological advances that fuelled the Industrial Revolution also mark a shift from the conservation of materials to the advent of disposables.

As mentioned above, this book arrives on the scene at a time in history when ecological topics, for better or worse, are perpetually becoming part of mainstream discourse. Though Kennedy claims that he is not condemning the modern world, his text is certainly not a celebration of it either. Clearly, there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with the current order of things, so much so that a veritable clarion call is offered in the final two chapters. Or, if this is too strong, it is, at best, a cautionary tale of technological reason gone awry, and, at worst, a declaration that technological reason *is* awry.

Each chapter of the book takes up a one- or two-word theme (waste, body, food, city, trash, human extinction), which are delved into with varying degrees of depth. For example, on the one hand, the food chapter is particularly thought-provoking, especially where Kennedy notes how “food most directly implicates our finitude.” (55) The city

chapter, on the other hand, does not delve deeply enough into questioning the city, but instead probes into the nature of technology and trash. This is a missed opportunity in one respect, while at the same time a serendipitous treat for the reader. At the expense of a clarification of the city as a specific problematic comes a carefully detailed and well-crafted argument on the importance of technology in the production and/or consumption of trash.

All in all, Kennedy offers a timely intervention that will be of interest to many. In particular, it seems as though philosophers, ecologists, environmentalists and individuals or groups of similar ilk would get the most traction from this material. Unfortunately, the technical terminology used in sporadic flourishes throughout the book will most likely leave the casual reader unsure how or unwilling to connect the dots. This is unfortunate since Kennedy's book offers the opportunity to think about trash in a serious manner that would be beneficial for more than just scholars, especially considering that virtually everyone is familiar with trash, or has some kind of vague and general conception of it. However, as Kennedy argues, most do not actually know what it is; nor do they care to. Unfortunately, his book may not be the appropriate catalyst for these individuals to begin to care.

By Kennedy's standards, "the success of an ontology of trash is to be gauged not so much in what it proves as in what it exhibits and elicits." (184) Judged solely by these modest standards, this book can certainly be deemed a success. Kennedy exhibits both the seriousness and complexity of an ontology of trash, and he elicits many thoughts and questions in what is ultimately a rich and provocative account of consumption in contemporary society that will keep most readers engaged. For those who are willing to open Kennedy's book and look past any so-called oddities that arise at first glance, there is much to appreciate in this text. It should be added that, along with Kennedy's standards of success, if this book is truly to be deemed a success, its readers will look up from the pages of the book and look over at the contents of the nearest trash can.

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