

# NTQ Book Reviews

edited by Alison Jeffers

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S. E. Wilmer and Androne Zukauskaitė, ed.

## **Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 429 p. £84.  
ISBN: 978-0-19-955921-3.

This is a study of Antigone the character and *Antigone* the play. Lacan is surely right to point out that the potency of the Antigone myth has much to do with the chthonic nature of the heroine's character and the manner in which it rivals the Oedipal myth (with which, of course, it is incestuously bound up). The editors have assembled an impressive cast of contributors under four headings: 'Philosophy and Politics', 'Psychoanalysis and the Law', 'Gender and Kinship', and 'Adaptations and Performance'. High-profile names among the contributors are: Terry Eagleton, Tina Chanter, Luce Irigaray – though contributions by the less stellar are invariably better. References include Hegel, Lacan, Butler, Steiner, and Žižek.

Two difficulties confront this book. It is by no means clear that the Greeks had the same sense of self that we have; nor is it at all clear that the play's so-called political resonances – its 'meta-theatrical valences' (Liz Appel) – are not in danger of being over-extended. These valences range from Nigeria to Northern Ireland; hence the problems involved in viewing the Greeks too easily in terms of our own image. We are on much safer ground when we try to look at Antigone in context, as, for example, Martina Meyer and Mark Griffith try to do. Luce Irigaray – one of our stars – unblushingly lets us know that she shares Antigone's tragic fate.

Sokal-like caution is urged in the case of Ahuvia Kahane, unless one is a specialist in Set Theory; likewise Bracha Ettinger's contribution should be scanned for abstruseness. This need not inhibit contemporary productions of Sophocles' play once we avoid treating it exclusively as a 'potent trope in an Irish as well as a classical context' or 'at an almost allegorical level of connection between classical Greece and contemporary Northern Ireland' (Eugene O'Brien).

*Antigone* is best seen as representing the clash between family and state with Antigone herself in the role of a feminist icon marking the transition from matriarchy to a male-dominated society. Even-handedly introduced by Steve Wilmer and Androne Zukauskaitė, *Interrogating Antigone* has

the immense merit of probing on a number of different levels the reasons why Antigone the character and *Antigone* the play continue to haunt us down the ages. Analysis of the status of myth in Ancient Greece, following Jean-Pierre Vernant, might go some way to enhancing our understanding both of the character and of the play.

T. N. F. MURTAGH

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Laura Cull

## **Theatres of Immanence:**

### **Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 291 p.  
£55.00.

ISBN: 978-0-230-31952-3.

Given Deleuze's growing prominence in performance analysis, this rigorous study of his philosophical notion of immanence is timely and valuable to the discipline. Cull's study is undertaken via a detailed examination of how certain performance practices from the historical avant-garde to the current day have explored philosophical notions of immanence. In addition to Cull's, often revisionary, analyses of the theatre practices themselves, which are valuable contributions to avant-garde scholarship in their own right, this is also an account of how performance can sometimes 'think' philosophically for itself, as Cull describes it, in addition to its capacity to draw on and exemplify existing theories.

The opening chapter on immanent authorship examines the notions of collaboration and indeterminacy, focusing on the Living Theatre, John Cage, and Goat Island, to unsettle orthodox assumptions around collectives, improvisation, and authority. Chapter Two offers a new perspective on the work of Artaud, alongside Carmelo Bene, Robert Wilson, and Georges Lavaudant, in relation to their uses of what Cull terms the 'destratified (or disordered) voice'.

The third chapter focuses on human encounters with animals through an investigation of how the work of Hijikata Tatsumi and Marcus Coates, along with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming-animal', are mutually illuminating in their endeavours to find a 'zone of proximity' where the human and the animal can be truly co-present. The fourth chapter examines the art/life relationship in the work of Allan Kaprow and Lygia Clark, and Chapter Five returns to Goat