the previous more experimental sections. The fundamental claim of the essay sums up perfectly the overall attitude of this collection: Adorno's was not a naïve elitism, establishing sharp and insurmountable differences between highbrow and middlebrow forms of art; quite the contrary, the only distinction that mattered to him was that between standardized and non-standardized music. Therefore, he valued that kind of musical forms of expression and experience that broke free from, or were irreducible to, the "malign circularity between supply and demand, between production and need" (124). Simply put, he did not see in popular music the capacity of triggering new modalities of socialization beyond the capitalist frame of mass consumption and alienated labor. And this is why, as Maurizi argues, he never articulated a "philosophy of mass music," but only sociological assessments of it (127). However, Maurizi contends what the previous essays have tried to show, namely that on the eve of Adorno's death something happened that questioned his own assumptions concerning the overwhelming grip of cultural industry: in their "barbarism", The Doors, The Beatles and Pink Floyd, just to name Maurizi's favourite examples, turned the song form upside-down, "looking for the new, the fresh, the unheard, driven by precisely the kind of need that Adorno thought was impossible in contemporary society" (134). This is not to say that the further development of rock music simply contradicted Adorno's statements. Far from it, for Maurizi it "contradicted *and* confirmed" his analysis, for contemporary popular music is precisely traversed by the historical dialectical dynamic that pertains to every form of culture: it allows for critical messages and experiences to be produced, but at the same time tends, as if by nature, to normalize them into the circle of mass consumption. Of course, one may claim, as Maurizi does apropos of the somehow unique case of Frank Zappa, that "The fact that the cultural industry can host its own radical self-denial is not due to its democratic transformation, but to the fact that it now completely dominates the horizon" (145). Sure. But Zappa also proves that one can celebrate "the definitive neutralization of avant-garde music, while, at the same time, allowing its most powerful and corrosive instincts to have a second life" (ibid.).

This resumes the entire perspective opened up by this short but remarkably insightful collection of essays: popular music of the last fifty or sixty years is probably something more nuanced and surprising than what the late Adorno could believe. Nonetheless, if we are able to understand its truth content and its underlying socio-philosophical undertones, we owe it to Adorno himself and his critical approach to all cultural phenomena.

PIETRO TERZI
Université Paris Nanterre, France

PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY: CONTINENTAL PERSPECTIVES. By Ranjan Ghosh (Ed.). New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. 336 p.

This remarkable anthology commences with a philosophical survey of the so-called conflict between poetry and philosophy; Ghosh identifies this rift from the times of Xenophanes, painstaking charting its proceedings primarily through Plato and Aristotle

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in the first section. In the second, he brings forth formidable arguments on the subject through Immanuel Kant's conception of the genius, Schopenhauer's representation of the 'Will' and Hegel's Lectures on Fine Art. Finally, in the third section, the author argues through Nietzsche, Heidegger and other major 20th century philosophers why the question has been emphasized and re-phrased time and again, thus setting the tone for the upcoming essays in the volume. His conception of the poet (p)residing "an experience" in contrast with the philosopher who "decides" is an early echo of another author who issues (and I paraphrase) in one of the published pieces that the poet enjoys without knowing, while the philosopher knows without enjoying (pp. 317). Nevertheless, the notion that the Poet, throughout history, has experienced the limits of the super-sensible world while the philosopher redacts the excesses is set forth powerfully as the theme of Ghosh's essay.

Lutz Koepnick in 'Benjamin's Baudelaire' glosses over Walter Benjamin's essay on the French poet, elucidating how language is not absolutely meant for the creeds and tenets of human interpretations, that language reverts back and concentrates primarily on itself even in the most disinterested hour of conversation with readers. Baudelaire further brings to the fore what he considers to be the genuine role of photography – that of an artist's amanuensis – "their very humble handmaid" (45). This is because photography forbids imagination, which is the staple of all artistic achievements. The concreteness represented by a picture limits the domain of artistic being to an unproductive negation of imagination. Benjamin continued to call for a "historicization of human perception" (48). Thus, Benjamin invokes Baudelaire as the messiah in the face of modernist degradations, reverting to intense forms of inner experience as an antidote to ambiguous moral existence.

In 'Georges Bataille and the Hatred of Poetry', Roland Végso traces the rejection of poetry by Bataille in the paucity of "clear consciousness" evident in all forms of poetry, whereas philosophy occupies the upper strata, since it is "clear consciousness at the limits of the possible" (60). Poetry falters since it evokes the impossible without stimulating the tools of experience. As a result, poetry is, at its highest point of ascendance, nothing more than a "detour", implying that poetry escapes by disengaging with reason. The circumvention of reason through evocation of the impossible, which is defined as Poetry, is unconvincing to Bataille. Végso posits however that Bataille rallied against bad poetry, standing in fact for "the true essence of Poetry" coupled with "self-transcendence" (which is speculative) and the elevation of the "poetic principle" (62, 63).

Cecelia Sjöholm, in 'The Voice Within' section, negotiates with Hannah Arendt through Rilke, showing the transition of poetry from speaking to sounding. Essentially, it shows how poetry inter alia is configured to generate the supersensible sound in order to convey an Utterance, elevating theory to the heights of solid poetic principles. The possibility of this happening is linked with thought and engagements with the world at all times, thus creating a "two-in-one" phenomena in our thought process (72). Herman Melville's Billy Budd, for Arendt, proves "that absolute goodness also is the result of a lack of a world" (74), implying that the absolute-in-theory is nothing more than a spectral shape when absolved from theory. Thus, both literature and poetry are nothing more than "thought-events", and totalitarian states always target the plurality of such "thought-events". Arendt's Kantianism figures forth even more prominently when she illustrates how Heidegger, Hegel and Marx were mistaken in abrogating the plurality of speech and thought (76). As for the relationship between Philosophy and Poetry, "a mode of engaging with the world emerges that has more to do with imagination than reason, the mode of

"as-if" emerging through the intonation of the voice" (77). Voice is understood as "engaging in the in between" – a very postcolonial manner of referencing (78).

Jean-Michael Rabaté cites at the beginning how Lacan disliked and therefore wrote very few poems himself; he co-authored "Inspired Writings" with Lévy-Valensi and Migault in an attempt to decode the psychotic rantings of an asylumatic person and exhibit its relationship with versification. Although Lacan's claims to science were gainsaid by other critics, he is said to have followed "the dialectical movement of concealment and unconcealment" which is essentially Heideggerian (107). Lacan successfully gave the entire impetus of meaning to language by exploiting its mythical dimension too. The essay ends with a passage from Freud's *The Psychology of Love* where poets are seen once again in a better light than Lacan might have intended.

Thomas H. Ford, in 'Adorno: Poetry after Poetry' argues how Horkheimer and Adorno, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, do not represent a meaningful Elite high culture and a meaningless ambience for the low existing as watertight compartments. Nor is art a subjective phenomena entirely, but remains "keyed to the exteriority of nature to human structures of meaning" (117). In the process, meaning and meaninglessness had become at once indispensable and indistinguishable. At this juncture, the plausible existence of "nonconceptual knowledge" had rather pass the litmus test. Through Adorno, Ford defines mimesis as "the constructive presentation of an affinity between word and thing, rather than a semiotic relation of signification" (121). The denial that art creates from reality is aesthetic, implying the distance between the ideal and the real, broadly speaking. Philosophy does the same by imposing "historical difference" between a concept (bearing a concrete objective referent) and intuition (the possibility of pure aconceptual knowledge).[1]

Francois Noudelmann charts Sartre's apparent discomfiture around poetry, but he also portrays the subtle aspects of his prose, and how it slowly incorporated "implicit significations, hidden connotations and eloquent silences" (117), which is characteristic of all pure poetry. However, Sartre criticized the narcissism that seems to be inherent amongst poets who transmit it among readers through their poetry. He continued to glean his faith around the idea that literature takes for granted political commitments expressed in elevated language. Towards the end of the essay, the author faithfully shows how Sartre was infuriated for not having been evolved enough to become a true poet despite "exhibiting hidden and repressed tendencies like melancholy, passivity, dreaming, as well as the love for the resonance of words" (140). This is, in my opinion, a high watermark in Modernist philosophy, an age where æpoetry won the race or failed poets took to high prose.

Daniel Nutters and Daniel T. O'Hara evaluate Maurice Blanchot's The Infinite Conversation, citing instances from Henry James's The Middle Years and justifying how Blanchot believed that the author eliminated himself in the course of writing literature while emphasizing passively the presence of an authorial stamp. Similarly, reading "is the act of coming into contact with the work's origin, its creative generative moment, which thus transforms the reader into a maker himself" (163). The act of reading implies a participation in the creative suffering of the work from its beginning to its end. Even so for the writer himself; he self-annihilates in its making. The authors briefly discuss the "scientistic use of language" (168), showing next how Deconstruction was in a manner endowed with the fine observations of Blanchot.

In 'Deleuze and Poetry', Claire Colebrook demonstrates Derrida's claims that literature, so long as it keeps authorial intention to a minimum while maintaining its inscriptive

power, reserves the autonomy to explain everything. Deleuze and Guattari came to believe in a "philosophy of immanence – with the world itself comprising signs, inscriptions, and perceptions at a prehuman level" (198). In the same fashion, "literature is consistently oriented to asking how texts work and what they do, rather than what they mean or any message they might import" (201). This is in tone with Adorno's dialectical dissimilarities between meaning and meaninglessness. In her assessment of 'The Windhover', the author points out that Hopkins's visual force destroys syntax, but here I am inclined to disagree. Hopkins subsumes or sometimes digresses from the syntax, but for a man who was nothing less than a Martinet all his life, it seems far-fetched. The poem captures "a percept" which concludes not with deciphering the meaning of the text, but reading for how much "sense" it makes till the end.

Leslie Hill's chapter on Derrida centers around a primary argument: "If there was… something distinctive about literature… it derived not from some prior or posterior essence, grounded in form, function, perception, or theme, but from the remarkable diligence with which a literary work, radicalizing a feature inherent in all inscription as such, could always point to itself…as a so-called literary text" (236). Poems are subjected to ex-appropriation, a phenomenon where the failure of authorial intention is more often than not the key behind the success of a text. Some texts – rather some textual achievements are too overwhelming to fit within traditional binary compartments as iterability makes such distinctions at once ambivalent and existential. Poetry for Derrida is "learned ignorance" (240), which, in its essence, reminds one of Plato's Ion.

In the last chapter under my purview by Justin Clemens, Agamben is exhibited as discussing several relationships between "history and action, law and life, nihilism and renewal". Poetry is understood as "an indissociable act of intervention-and-revelation, interruption-and-transmission, negation-and-transformation" (315). The role of enjambment in poetry is understood to be a separation between the metrical limit of each line from its syntactical (rather, semantic since meaning is left suspended until the next line) limit. For Agamben, poetry is political in its very make-up and arises from the "paradoxical torsion" within politics.

The essays that I have chosen to review from this remarkable book shall continue to remain formidable in the ever-changing being of literary criticism for at least a decade from its publication. What one finds in this book is a perfect representation of this poetry-philosophy complex through thought-events as opposed to an "emotive-event" (Romantic Poetry would be a nice example) or "spiritual-events" (as with Tagore and Sri Aurobindo). I had critiqued this "thought-event" in Modernist poetry by calling it Æpoetry in one of my early essays which was a product of my impetuous prodigality. The core philosophy of the poetry of the 20th century has been wonderfully summed up by the Yale critic Geoffrey Hartman in "The Fulness and Nothingness of Literature", and I find it fitting as I complete my review:

> Poetry is that which restricts itself to the recovery of "privileged moments," and since this attempt [is] caused by a nostalgia for an irretrievable immediacy, [it] is both retrovert and destined to failure.[2]

Notes

[1] The notion of art as intuition goes back as far as Croce in Western philosophy. In The Essence of the Aesthetic (p. 1921), Croce points this out at the very beginning: "The question as to what is

art, - I will say at once, in the simplest manner, that art is vision or intuition" (8, tr. Douglas Ainslie). Also see pages 11, 16, 22 and 24 in the introduction itself. (Reprint by Hard Press Publishing).

[2] Geoffrey Hartman, "The Fulness and Nothingness of Literature" Yale French Studies 16 (1955): 66.

SHOUVIK NARAYAN HORE
Vidyasagar University, India

PLANTS IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY: ECOCRITICISM AND THE BOTANICAL IMAGINATION. By John Charles Ryan. New York and London: Routledge, 2018. 256 p.

One could consider 2018 as a fecund year for research that combines ecocriticism, affect, emotions, and embodiment. Among many publications in this area which appeared in 2018, three of them are worth mentioning here. These include Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino's co-edited volume *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment* (2018), Nicole Seymour's *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (2018), and John Charles Ryan's *Plants in Contemporary Poetry: Ecocriticism and the Botanical Imagination* (2018). While Seymour's, Bladow and Ladino's works engage with a wide gamut of literary and media genres in their discussion of emotional connections between material beings and our responses to alarming environmental crises, Ryan's monograph singles out itself by focusing exclusively on plants – what he terms "botanical beings" – in the poetic genre.

Divided into nine chapters, and using eight contemporary poets of great repute in the Anglophone world viz. Les Murray, Mary Oliver, Elizabeth Bletsoe, Alice Oswald, Louise Glück, Judith Wright, John Kinsella, and Joy Harjo, *Plants in Contemporary Poetry* sets out to, among many objectives, "disclose the power of verse to anticipate and parallel scientific thought through a freedom of imagination…" (4). In respect of this objective, the author meticulously demonstrates an impeccable mastery of both scientific (neuro-scientific) knowledge about plants and breathtaking environmental literary criticism. Within a larger framework of the botanical imagination, Ryan proposes *phytocriticism* as a concept for unpacking plant relations and modes of being in poetry. "A phytocritical outlook," he writes, "emphasizes the agencies of botanical beings in poetic texts and considers how plants are rendered, evoked, mediated, or brought to life in and through language" (14). This mode of analysis is situated within the overarching concept of the botanical imagination which, as Ryan puts it, "repeatedly evokes, builds on, and expands previous considerations of the imagination in some of the earliest and most formative scholarship in ecocriticism" (7).

In order to dismantle "the relegation of the plant to the zero-point of behavior, experience, and intelligence against which the capabilities of the animal are turned to in sharp relief" (16), the author highlights what he terms the "sacred ecologies of plants" while establishing that plants have souls, as expressed in Les Murray's poetry. He defines sacred ecology "as a state of plant-animal-human souls in dynamic exchange with the material landscape" (29). Therefore, poetry enacts and evokes vegetal souls through the dynamic interconnectedness of all other beings which share life with plants. Overall, Ryan argues that Murray's sacred ecology of plants deconstructs the idea that plants lack

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