

selective hiring practices. People of certain body types might be able to work in the back, but those facing the customers must fit a particular look. To fulfill people's aesthetic needs, whole industries of laborers use their skills and emotions to advance people's commitments to their aesthetic desires.

The final section of this book addresses beauty and the lifecourse. At both ends of life, especially for women, younger and older people face different sets of difficulties. Young girls in beauty pageants are made to look much older than their actual ages, and older women are particularly disadvantaged in the workplace, healthcare, and other interactions. People cannot simply be their age, they are always nudged to present themselves at different stages of life, if they want recognition.

Hopefully this all too brief overview highlights the breadth this volume offers. In fact, the only real criticism of the book as a whole is that it might explore too many topics at the expense of depth for some of them. But the chapter bibliographies indicate where you can go to gain more depth on any of the topics. This book is an essential resource for anyone interested in how beauty and political contexts influence each other. Most companions to aesthetics written by philosophers focus more on ideas, and there is nothing in itself wrong with that. But this volume, while not without theory, tends to situate ideas into the specific contexts that those ideas impact. So this book complements those philosophical anthologies exemplifying the way that theory and practice ought to complement each other.

MICHAEL R. SPICHER

*Boston Architectural College  
Massachusetts College of Art and Design, USA*

THREE ENCOUNTERS: HEIDEGGER, ARENDT, DERRIDA. By David Farrell Krell. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2023. 360 pp.

It is commonplace for students of literature to be chastised for their curiosity about the authors they are expected to study. Any biographical reference is supposed to interfere with the objective, unbiased appreciation of the text. The tragedy is that with years and years of training in close reading and practical criticism – which is perhaps necessary for beginners to understand as stepping stones to explorations of methods of literary criticism – young scholars come to internalise the idea that attempting to know the person behind the text is forbidden: indeed, the author is even dead!

Thankfully, ever since literary critique has come to be more and more open to influences from philosophy, the process of getting to know the author has acquired a different nuance. In *Three Encounters: Heidegger, Arendt, Derrida*, philosopher and translator David Farrell Krell demonstrates that philosophers are people and their personal lives provide insights into their work as well. Krell's book is a memoir that is also a reflection on philosophy in general as well as on the three philosophers mentioned in the title. In documenting his personal interactions with three of the great philosophers of the twentieth century (with Derrida overflowing into the twenty-first one too), Krell shows that his good fortune of having worked with these philosophers in different capacities – as translator, peer, interlocutor – is an extension of his philosophizing. The anecdotes, letters exchanged, and diary entries, along with other marginalia put together, speak of the three figures in terms of tenderness.

One episode Krell narrates relates to Derrida's last note that his son read out at Derrida's funeral: "Smile on me as I will have smiled on you up to the end. Always prefer life and do not cease to affirm survival. . . . I love you and I smile on you from wherever I am" (319). In narrating many such experiences, Krell reminds scholars and enthusiasts of philosophy that philosophy is nothing if it is not about emotion, especially love. Elsewhere, Krell observes, "Sometimes I believe that the only honest biography or autobiography would consist solely of accounts of the subject's dream life and love life, letting all the rest go. Whether one loves, how one loves, whom one loves, and about what

one dreams when aching for love—what could be more significant for a life than that?” (300). It is this purpose or gaze of love that Krell’s recollections of time spent with Heidegger, Arendt, and Derrida – meeting or reading – make them come alive as human beings and not as people who thought in sad or boring or profound sounding concepts.

While the book is likely to be relished more by those who are deeply familiar with the work of the three philosophers, it might also serve as a good introduction to those struggling with access to their works, for with Krell, one gets to know them in relation to one another. For instance, Heidegger emerges as someone who is deeply concerned with thinking, does not say much about Eros, or loving, and Arendt is aware of his limitation, while Derrida is the one who lets thinking and loving shape each other. Another instance of the relationship-making that readers can look forward to in the book is Krell’s observation that while Derrida found Heidegger’s thought as “epoch-making” and “epoch-ending”, he (Derrida) also challenged “the very sense of ‘epochality’” as evident in Heidegger (325).

Through his narration of and commentary on such moments, Krell humanises his subjects to an extent that the reader is left with a richer understanding of philosophy as not something abstract and stuck in convoluted, jargonised phrasing, something that is a puzzle to solve. On the contrary, one is left with the idea that philosophy is nothing if it is not about being a good human being. In one of the most moving excerpts of the book, a rare one in which Krell’s own personality speaks explicitly about what all the recollecting and a life spent on dwelling in philosophy has taught him, and while speaking of generosity as a pre-requisite for writing, he says:

My “indefensible idea” is that an inconsiderate person *cannot* write a book that is worth reading. Indefensible! many will cry, because think of all the famous writers who, according to all reports, were entirely unpleasant characters, extremely difficult persons, obstreperous, bitter, and caustic curmudgeons. I accept the reproof. But I have decided that I will drive a taxi or plant potatoes or do any number of things if being a scholar means that I must give the books of the ungenerous a chance. There is doubtless some seedy, sentimental humanism at the bottom of my refusal, the idea that at least in the “humanities” there has to be a modicum of the humane. If that idea does turn out to be indefensible, I will renew my chauffeur’s license, I will fetch my pick and shovel. (326)

Krell makes such assertions about the relationship between the human and his/her written word so easily because enjoys the privilege of being privy to the processes of the translation of these philosophers. For instance, he mentions that when translating Derrida’s work *Carte postale*, translator Alan Bass found it tough to translate the question “Est-ce taire un nom?”. It could be “Is silence a name?” or “Is ‘to be silent’ a name?” The problem is further complicated by the fact that “Est-ce taire” is homophonic with the name Esther, the Biblical character, or a “religious” name that cannot be easily revealed and is therefore evocative of the silence in question.

Derrida’s idea of heterothanatology, the genre or mode of thought that interweaves biography and autobiography – which Krell adapts to autoheterobiothanatology – is the genre that Krell’s *Three Encounters* should be located in. The personal lives discussed exemplify the fact that Krell has cared for the lives of the philosophers, rather than mere ideas. Because this interest in people is so relatable, it has its simple moments that might be mistaken for being pulled out of any “popular” self help or philosophy book. The wisdom, for instance, in Krell’s suggestion that “[o]ld age yields to the foolishness that forgives the foolishness of youth” (323) might be a banal observation about how age changes oneself but it is also a reminder of the fact that such wisdom is the core of all philosophy. Krell’s fondness for the philosophy heroes does not shy away from touching upon controversial, even scandalous, aspects of their lives; it enhances the meaning of these aspects, and broadens one’s way of looking at life and ideas. It also teaches one that if one brings so much care for every subject one writes about, it transforms memoir into philosophy for philosophy is everywhere, if one has the eye for it.