

temporal dispensation based in continual crisis and emergence, critical theory is, according to Kompridis, something like modernity's self-awareness, and it is the vocation of the critical theorist, as the "philosopher of the future" (a coinage of Nietzsche), to perform openness to the novelty of said future through an active reception of the past.

The crisis of critical theory today, as Kompridis diagnoses it, then is its increasing helplessness in the face of this challenge. Indeed, Habermas' own proceduralism can be read as an attenuation of hopeful, or perhaps utopian, attachments to the future in recent decades, as his deployment of communicative reason "has identified itself almost exclusively with a procedural conception of law and democracy," becoming "principally [...] a theory of the normative order of democratic societies" (278). In this affirmative and conservative stance, Kompridis implies, critical theory has not so much overcome what Habermas saw as the dead end of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as it has itself come to resemble the instrumental reason that Horkheimer and Adorno attacked. It is against this "contracting space of possibility" (198) that Kompridis evokes the Heideggerian notion of world disclosure, which he defines in terms of receptivity to the aspects of the lifeworld that Habermas tends to neglect. Thus, the notion of disclosure based on a reading of positive solicitude, which Kompridis brilliantly wrestles out of Heidegger's oeuvre, offers Kompridis a model for attentiveness to the past, tradition, and particularity. Rather than writing off the plurality of everyday practices and of local lifeworlds as so many "provincialisms" to be overcome, Kompridis' intimate critique sees the particular as the necessary resource of reason if it is not to collapse itself.

The urgency of Kompridis' argument seems to hinge on his identification of critical theory with Habermas. Yet, Habermas represents only one of many directions taken by thinkers indebted to the tradition (never so well defined itself) of the Frankfurt School. It would have been interesting, given Kompridis' concern with the futures of utopian desire, to see him address the work of others who have taken up this theme in different ways, for example, Susan Buck-Morss, Russell Jacoby, or Fredric Jameson. Furthermore, Kompridis' book is at times somewhat abstract. The few "real-life examples" Kompridis provides are strangely undeveloped and under-theorized. While Kompridis does a worthy service in casting two important figures (especially Heidegger, who Kompridis valiantly saves from himself) in a new light, the reader is left wondering what exactly the critical intimacy Kompridis advocates might actually achieve.

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Patrick Greaney. *Untimely Beggar: Poverty and Power from Baudelaire to Benjamin*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Pp. xxiii, 227. Paper \$25.

As Patrick Greaney makes perfectly clear from the start, his *Untimely Beggar* does not offer a straightforward survey of socioeconomic poverty as manifested in literature

and philosophy from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century. Greaney, rather, takes on the more ambitious task of exploring how the poor act as a diffuse force that stimulates modernist discourse and transforms modes of writing. The modern encounter with the indigent (paupers, street musicians, beggars, vagabonds, etc.) elicits such wide-ranging philosophical and literary concerns as power, production, destruction, asceticism, community, and urbanism. Examining texts that span the crucial decades of modernity, from Baudelaire's poetic cycles *Les fleurs du mal* and *Le spleen de Paris* to writings by Benjamin and Brecht from the 1920s, Greaney argues that language itself cannot but respond to and reflect on the condition of its own impoverishment in the face of that which it seeks to represent: the multitudes of nameless poor that haunt the streets of Paris and Berlin.

Greaney foregrounds his argument in perceptive discussions of Marx, Heidegger, and Foucault. Here he effectively elaborates the basic theoretical model that informs the rest of his study. In Marx's critique of capitalism, Heidegger's elucidations of *dunamis* in Aristotle, and Foucault's notions of discipline and biopower, an inherent dialectic between potential and impotence emerges. Given their dire predicament, the poor obviously embody powerlessness; but they also participate in the dynamic of power, which is always relational and fraught with the possibility of nonenactment. The urban poor, in other words, not only furnish the necessary *Menschenmaterial* for dominance by others, but as Marx, Benjamin, and Brecht realized all too well, this disenfranchised class also holds the potential to overturn capitalist production and actualize what it has hitherto possessed only privatively: power.

Following these philosophical deliberations on the reciprocal relation of poverty and power, Greaney plunges into discerning analyses of poems by Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Here he is less interested in *what* these French poets have to say about the poor than in *how* they articulate the fundamental experience of insolvency. How do the murmurings of the destitute find expression in literature? How does literary and philosophical discourse adjust to the social misery that prevails in the metropolis? The remainder of Greaney's study focuses on the Germanic tradition. Although he insists that Nietzsche forms a critical link from Baudelaire and Mallarmé to twentieth-century German-speaking authors, his treatment of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* seems out of place in the greater arc of his otherwise fluid narrative. The section on Nietzsche certainly pales in comparison to the subsequent chapters on Rilke, Benjamin, and Brecht. Rilke's *Das Buch von der Armut und vom Tode* and *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* receive careful and subtle scrutiny. The concluding chapter pairing Benjamin and Brecht succeeds in presenting poverty's "new face" and renewed potential in the twentieth century. Here Greaney nicely ties together various themes and motifs that he has spun through much of his text.

Greaney's readings are for the most part attentive, sensitive, and even creative. He brings his interpretive acumen to the table, offering detailed analyses of the prosodic elements and finer nuances of poetry. His book ultimately makes for a pleasurable read: its prose is lucid and engaging while its argument advances steadily and convincingly. Overall, the most admirable quality of *Untimely Beggar* is its

consistent combination of traditional scholarship and newer critical approaches. Greaney mindfully attends to his predecessors, but simultaneously forges ahead in his own productive encounter with a host of diverse texts that exemplify his concept of impoverished writing.

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Michael Braun, ed. *Tabu und Tabubruch in Literatur und Film*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007. Pp. 203. Paper €28.

In einem der zwölf Beiträge, die von Michael Braun unter dem Titel *Tabu und Tabubruch in Literatur und Film* zusammengetragen sind, wird Martin Walser mit dem folgenden Satz zitiert: „Was weh tut, muss Sprache werden“ (94). In diesem Gedanken verdichtet sich dasjenige, was sich als *Tabu* dem Erkanntwerden verweigern, und dennoch gewusst werden will: Tabu als jenes Geheimnisvolle, das durch Sprache nicht zu benennen ist, und dennoch das Denken konstitutiv untergreift, oder—wie Michael Braun im Vorwort seines Bandes sagt—„Tabus markieren Grenzen und Verbote [...] im Raum sozialer, moralischer und religiöser“ Vorstellungen (7); sie „sind Meidungsgebote“ (7), die—als „offene Geheimnisse“ (Heinrich Detering: *Das offene Geheimnis. Zur literarischen Produktivität eines Tabus von Winckelmann bis zu Thomas Mann* [1994])—dasjenige, das verhüllt bleiben soll, dennoch entfalten und zur Sprache bringen.

Die zwölf Arbeiten, die Michael Braun hier versammelt hat, zeigen in der Tat, dass es mit einem schweigenden Anschauen des Tabus nicht sein Bewenden haben kann, sondern dass—im Gegenteil—Tabu (als gesellschaftliches Ordnungsprinzip) nach Benennung und Begründung sucht, zumal in Literatur (seit alters) und im Film (seit dessen Anfängen). Der relativ geringe Umfang, den sich Braun für seinen Band zugestanden hat, bedingt es, dass die Breite der behandelten Tabuthemen eingeschränkt bleiben muss—und so werden, neben Sexualität und Gewalt als *den* sprichwörtlichen Themen, nur Euthanasie und Anthropophagie in literarischer, bzw. filmischer Ausformung behandelt, und daneben Fragen des Holocaust und religiöser Provenienz („Jesusfilm“). Ferner finden sich Arbeiten, wie die von Detering, die sich mit „Politischem Tabu und politischer Camouflage“ befassen, oder die sich—wie der Beitrag von Oliver Ruf—dem „Tabu im Tagebuch“ widmen. Die beiden letzteren Beispiele zeigen in aller Deutlichkeit, dass das scheinbar Private des Tagebuchs von Anfang an das beschworene „Meidungsgebot“ unterläuft (in dem dieses Private eben nicht als nur Privates niedergeschrieben ist); und dass das Berühren eines Tabus gerade auch im politisch-restriktiven Feld einer diktatorisch-tyrannischen Staatsform verfeinerter Methoden bedarf, das Gemeinte zu verschweigen und dennoch zu benennen.

Der vorliegende Band ist ein gelungenes Beispiel dafür, wie allem Anschein nach disparate Beiträge mit jedem weiteren Lesen mehr und mehr zueinander sprechen und dem Leser nicht nur (und zugleich ausführliche) Information über