

**Agnes Czajka and Bora Isyar, ed.** *Europe after Derrida: Crisis and Potentiality*. Edinburgh University Press 2014. 192 pp. \$120.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780748683369); \$29.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781474410762).

*If the question Europe is raised today in Europe it is because it is a question that poses itself now and is therefore of some urgency.*

What is the Europe that comes "after Derrida"? What will become of Europe? Derrida frequently commented on the need to read and reread the classics, in order to dismantle concepts and to reduce them to a manageable compass, to reflect back on the texts and contents of tradition, to be always starting again with them. It seems that Agnes Czajka and Bora Isyar, the coeditors of and contributors to this collection, in addressing various themes in Derrida's last work on Europe, have followed his teaching with timely updating on European current events.

In the Introduction of the book, by focusing their scholarly efforts on the pamphlet *The Other Heading: Reflection on today's Europe*, and coming alongside the spirit of Derridean deconstruction, more than to reduce the current crisis of Europe to the economic or financial aspects, they assert that it is necessary once more to reflect on the crucial topic of European identity. At the beginning of his pamphlet, more than twenty years ago, Derrida writes that 'Europe and its others do not exist as separate objects interacting with one another. Instead, Europe exists only through the non-identity to itself, or if you prefer, only in the difference with itself' (Derrida, 1992, 9) (3). And later in the text: 'Europe exists through its identification with a culture of itself as a culture of the other, 'a culture of the double genitive' and of difference to itself (Derrida, 1992, 10). (Ibid). 'Derrida's Europe,' then, 'forms a precarious singularity based not on identity as homogeneity, but on a singular and yet differential unity.' (Ibid) Here Derrida identifies a profound and critical deconstruction of the traditional concept of identity, a concept that common people have largely thought in sense of homogeneity, and of self-identification.

In the first article *Mind the Cap* Samuel Weber chooses to comment on the text *The Other Heading (L'Autre cap)* in its context—the Nineties—relating it to the ongoing crisis of Europe in a variety of forces and factors, relations and tangents. In order to better explain his work, as an abstract of the entire article, Weber writes: 'One of the major arguments this essay seeks to explore is just what the intricate interplay of heterogeneities, producing something like a coherent although constantly evolving identity, might consist of, with respect to that entity called 'Europe,' if it is an entity at all. (But if not, what is it?)' (11).

In the essay *Derrida's Europe: Greek, Christian and Beyond*, Simon Glendinning begins with the concept of hybridism—writing '... everything European is hybrid, and all historical heritage of Europe is based upon the two points of influence of Hebraism and Hellenism.' In agreement with Gasché (see '*Europe, or the infinite task—A Study of a Philosophical Concept*'), Glendinning observes nevertheless that hybridism and/or bi-polarism does not exclude any other, and highlights the multiplicity of the sources, and identities of European heritage. For Derrida, as far as the issue of Europe is concerned within the context of the history of ideas and heritage, it smacks of rhetoric; of [faulty]? essentialism and traditionalism. In any case, Europe does not have a fixed identity.

Bora Isyar, with *A Roman Europe of Hope: Reading Derrida with Brague*, comes back to the well known Derridean question in the opening of *The Other Heading* asking 'to what concept, to

what real individual, to what singular entity should this name [Europe] be assigned today?' It seems, Isyar observes, that 'the question that Derrida asked two decades ago presents itself to us today, once again in times of great uncertainty, and once again we do not yet know what is to become of Europe—perhaps, put in a different way, what we will make of Europe.' (50) While the crisis of Europe seems new but also old, Isyar states 'What is novel about this latest crisis are the unprecedented and unbri-dled growth of financial markets and the dominance of a very particularly defined economic technology of governance, which attempts to make social, political, and cultural domains entirely dependent on itself' (Ibid). Around the same time as the publication of Derrida's pamphlet, Remy Brague asked himself if Europe could be called *Romanity*. In truth, 'the Roman contribution to European civilization has not been original and has been nothing other than the transmittance of that which is foreign to itself. But, for Brague, not only is this "mere transmittance" of the foreign not a flaw, it is actually the characteristic that European culture should acclaim as its own-' (56). In that case, we would speak of Greek, Jewish, Christian, Roman and beyond, obviously without contesting the origins of the philosophical tradition in Greece. Brague added that Derrida's idea of European identity, begotten by the *eruption* of the other, involves the capacity of appropriation of that which is perceived as foreign.

Stuart MacLean, in his essay *Other Shores: Insularity, Materiality and the Making (and Un-making) of Europe*, gives us a rapid description of current Europe noting: 'Today is ... 2012. The aftermath of another global economic collapse. Debt crisis. Threats of secession from the Eurozone. A resurgent far right. Bank bailouts. Public spending cuts. Anti-austerity protests on the streets of Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, London, Brussels, Berlin, Rome, Athens ...' (61-62). Then, he raises a query 'Are we at the beginning of the end for the EU, a construction that started 50 years ago on the basis of an age-old utopia, but now proves unable to fulfil its promises?'

Matthias Fritsch *Europe's Constitution for the Unborn* introduces his paper with the important reflection 'because the present moment is constitutively related to the past and the future, the meaning of a constitutional formulation can become legible only from the future. Hence, the present generation, whose unity is never given, cannot but draw an advance credit on the future, whose cooperation is anticipates. As a result, the political promise of Europe depends on its relation to its geographical, but also to its temporal, others' (80). In short, the foundation of a tradition acquires its pledged significance when countersigned by future generations.

With reference to European Constitution, allow me to insert some historical reflections. It is well-known that the Treaty of the European Constitution, signed in 2004, failed after one year. Yet, the moment seemed fortuitous. On May 31, 2003 seven European newspapers published articles by well-known intellectuals addressing the question, 'What is Europe?' Umberto Eco wrote in *La Repubblica* (Italy), Gianni Vattimo in *La Stampa* (Italy), Adolf Muschg in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland), Richard Rorty in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany) and Fernando Savater in *El Pais* (Spain). The article, that turned out to be most momentous and widely discussed, was written by Jürgen Habermas—who had initiated the entire project—and co-signed by Jacques Derrida. The Habermas/Derrida article calling for 'the rebirth of Europe' with '*new responsibilities* (my emphasis) beyond all Eurocentrism' was an example of substantive contemporary history, a kind of intervention, a performance, that cried out for that which the text both was and conjured forth: a European discussion about Europe, a European public space, an article signed by Habermas and Derrida in which the two philosophers wished for a Europe with certain state-like properties, such as common policy in external affairs, security, and defense.

As regard to the relation between the present and the future for an eventual constitution, in line with *The Other Heading*, Fritsch offers a suggestion, in company with Derrida. The ‘other heading’ means that it is necessary to change destinations, directions, goals: ‘But beyond our heading, it is necessary to recall ourselves not only to the *other heading*, and especially to the *heading of the other*, but also perhaps to the *other of the heading*, that is to say, to a relation of identity with the other that no longer obeys the form, the sign, or the logic of the heading, nor even of the *anti-heading*—of beheading, of decapitation’ (*OH*, 15). In other words, no society can make a perpetual constitution—constitutions live and die.

In the final six chapters of the collection, the book offers the contribution of Tracey Skillington, who with her analysis reveals two conflicting logics that haunt today’s Europe: that of openness, of solidarity and universal rights, and that of closure. Engin Isin detects a lack of openness in Europe’s comportment towards the non-European other. The question of the *oriental other* also is addressed by Sherene Seicaly and Max Ajl. The last two chapters engage with the *Muslim other*. Zeynep Direk calls for the deconstruction of European secularism and a critical engagement with Europe’s theological politics.

The book confirms that the historical position of Derrida as a thinker of Europe makes him a likely and recurring target for re-readings. In present-days of crisis and confusion, in times in which identity is affirmed and denied, this book represents an interesting, stimulating and new analysis of various questions on Europe, in the light of the topical and problematic concept of identity.

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