

to it in 1975. That funeral processions were one of the few occasions when public expression of opposition was tolerated is also well known. This volume examines both the culture and the politicisation of death, contrasting the role of the Catholic Church in reconstructing a sacred image of the Bourbon Monarchy, with the emphasis after 1830 on civic and national themes. Fureix concludes with the return of Napoleon's remains in 1840, which Louis-Philippe manipulated to stress his own patriotism. Curiously this terminal date excludes the death which probably did most to weaken the regime, that of the duc d'Orléans in 1842.

Viewing the dead became increasingly popular, both unclaimed bodies in the Morgue and the famous. Eight hundred thousand visited Les Invalides in 1840. The cost of the funeral denoted social position; by 1832 there were 10 grades, the most expensive costing 4,000 francs. Enthusiasm for phrenology gave the body scientific status and new respect. Mass graves were only used for the very poor and those on the losing side of political conflicts. However, pressure on space in Paris meant even the rich had to share their graves after a few years. The choice of cemetery was political; opponents of both regimes preferred Père Lachaise. The funeral could become theatrical, with graveside orations, the text handed to the municipality in advance. Cemetery architecture and inscriptions became more ornate, and also political. At Père Lachaise only 17% included a cross. A Sunday cemetery stroll became part of social life for Parisians. The use of funerals to air liberal criticism of both regimes was stifled when the funeral of

the Imperial general Lamarque in 1832 led to two days of rioting. Subsequently funerals were closely policed and became politically neutral.

This volume, justly awarded the Prix Chateaubriand, gives specialists on the period a wealth of precious new insights into the political culture of these years, revealing that, at least as far as funeral customs were concerned, Louis XVIII seemed to be more tolerant of criticism than Louis-Philippe, but to be fair, the willingness of the latter to walk around Paris unguarded apart from his umbrella was shaken by several nasty assassination attempts.

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**Poetic Becomings: Studies in Contemporary French Literature**

JÉRÔME GAME

Oxford, Peter Lang, 2011

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Investigating the present-day features and concerns of French poetry—especially in works that break away from the theoretical prism and stylistic constraints of referential poetic traditions such as lyricism—is no easy feat. It is a far more difficult and ambitious task to conjointly explore the potentialities of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy in a response to these works. This is precisely the dual challenge that Jérôme Game tackles adroitly in his well-researched and cogently argued *Poetic Becomings* by drawing on the Deleuzian critical

apparatus to answer the relevant and timely question of ‘what does contemporary poetry do to the subject?’ (1)

In the introduction the author offers insightful reflections upon issues and debates surrounding post-WWII poetry; he astutely delimitates his corpus around four contemporary writers who were to one degree or another influenced by May 1968 and its aftermaths: Christian Prigent, Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Hubert Lucot. Through in-depth historical and theoretical explanations, Game highlights the critical groundwork he retrieves from Deleuze’s key notions related to literature and (de-)subjectivation to engage with the selected texts. Four chapters follow, with a brilliantly developed and sequenced analytical argument underscoring the continued resonances of Deleuzian thought within the content and style of the writers studied. While Game persuasively contests historiographical approaches and resists defining his corpus in relation to a particular linguistic tradition or generic determinations, he judiciously elects to study a set of ‘polymorphous works’ (15) commonly concerned with ‘a deconstruction of the Cartesian subject’ (24). These are discussed in their chronological order of appearance on the literary scene ‘after *la fin des avant-gardes*’ (14), from Prigent’s texts to Lucot’s. This artful combination blends seamlessly the synchronic and the diachronic to elucidate the evolution of each author’s writing through meticulous contextualisation of close readings. Chapter 1 considers the interweaving of the body and language in Prigent’s books. It shows that their respective ‘dis-organization’ (73), by means of piercing,

animalisation and desecration, dismantles classical representations of the subject and disrupts the edified verticality of the verse, only to assert their virtual becomings through new poetic inventiveness. Chapter 2 forges fruitful connections between Deleuze’s notion of rhizome and the ‘qualité dérivante’ (115) of Fourcade’s writing after 1984. Game remarks how the poet’s fluid ‘sentence-verse dynamic’ (227), by way of incessant ‘de/re-territorialization’ (119) of the subject, language and meaning, drifts away from semantic and syntactic prescriptions, thus performing an ‘exit from the Christian world’ (113) and its paradigms. The subsequent chapter unravels the rapport between the ‘fate of subjectivity’ and that of language in Cadiot’s works ‘via the Deleuzian concept of *differentiating repetition* taken in the figures of stuttering and “ritournelle”’ (153). Game’s final analysis addresses the slow unfolding of time and History within ontological experiences and sensations in Lucot’s non-chronological ‘textual kaleidoscope’ (190).

Through a wealth of scholarly materials, original interviews and acute close readings, this study offers a thorough appraisal of the creative and critical endeavour of four remarkable yet lesser-known contemporary French writers. Engagingly written and tightly argued, this book will undoubtedly appeal to scholars with an advanced understanding of contemporary literature and philosophy, but may remain challenging, or even opaque, for non-specialists. It is least accessible to those without a mastery of French, as all quotations appear in the original. *Poetic*

*Becomings* makes nonetheless a welcome and indispensable contribution to non-canonical contemporary French writing that should vigorously stimulate critical interest and further academic exploration.

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**S'abrégé les jours: Le suicide en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle**

DOMINIQUE GODINEAU

Paris, Armand Colin, 2012

336 pages, 24.00 €, ISBN 978 2200249694 (pbk)

This study of suicide in eighteenth-century France aims to examine not the theoretical writings of Enlightenment philosophers on suicide, but as a cultural history to scrutinise 'les pratiques du suicide... sans faire disparaître les acteurs et leurs gestes derrière le regard porté sur eux' (10). Far from being a statistical study in the Durkheim school, Godineau's book attempts to grasp the social meaning of the act. Nor does it pretend to offer a psychological examination of the actors, a project impossible to verify, but rather to observe how suicide was understood. In the course of her study, Godineau examines the acceptance of the neologism, 'se suicider' during the eighteenth century, the legal procedures in place to deal with suicides and the gradual decriminalisation of suicide in practice, though not by statute, in advance of 1789, before detailing numerous case studies.

*S'abrégé les jours* begins with what became the notorious double suicide of two young dragoons, Humain and Bourdeaux, on Christmas Day 1773. There appeared no clear motive for their deaths except an alleged philosophical rejection of life in their final suicide note. Their gesture as well as their ritual punishment (hung by the feet in effigy in a public place) formed part of Enlightenment debates about the injustice and barbarity of laws concerning suicide. 'Self-murder' (le meurtre de soi-même) was not only an offense against the Church but also the State. As Montesquieu had noted (*Lettres persanes*, 1721, lettre LXXVI), the 'punishment' of suicides was or attempted to be simultaneously physical, symbolic and financial. The dead body was to be dragged through the streets on a hurdle and hung by the feet before being thrown on a dunghill and the suicide's goods confiscated. One of Godineau's major themes is the evidence that such punishment was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. In effect, the gradual decriminalisation of suicide in eighteenth-century France reflected a growing public distaste for the punishment as well, perhaps, as a feeling that individuals, not the Church or the State, had rights over the disposition of their lives even to their deaths.

Godineau bases much of her book on the sources as well as the thesis put forward by Jeffrey Merrick (1989). Both rely heavily on the journals of Siméon-Prosper Hardy written between 1764 and 1789, 'Mes Loisirs, ou Journal d'événemens, tels qu'ils parviennent à ma connoissance', which dealt among other themes of daily life with a number of

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