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*Painting Borges: Philosophy Interpreting Art Interpreting
Literature* by Jorge J. E. Gracia (review)

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Ramey, articulates the essential, active thrust of Deleuzian thought as a mode of existence and experimental practice.

Ramey's conception of the spiritual is very broad, and one looks in vain for a concise definition of the term. Those materialists with an allergy to the word may be put off by his rhetoric, but Ramey's intention is not to revive a transcendent religiosity. Rather, his purpose is to stress the immanent non-rationality of Deleuze's vitalism of "anorganic life" as a key element of Deleuze's philosophy and his vision of the cosmos. Ramey values the persistent interest of many Western philosophers in the "theurgical, thaumaturgical, mystical, alchemical, kabalistic, or theosophical," but primarily as symptoms of a mode of thought that, when made explicit, positions its practitioners "as bastard and nomadic outliers of philosophy, heretical outcasts of theology, or as reactionaries interfering with the full realization of reason, enlightenment, and progressive politics" (7). The spirituality Ramey recommends is not merely heterodox and heretical, but also thoroughly embodied in the material cosmos. The hermetic tradition, he insists, "does not express the desire for ravishing by unaccountable spirits," but instead "undertakes to comprehend what spirits may become of us, in a cosmos taken as a machine for the production of gods, leading to something like an itinerant, nomadic theandry" (217). Only in this sense does he recommend that we "read Deleuze's philosophy as something like a practical contemporary guide to experimental spirituality" (216).

There are points at which Ramey and I differ in our readings of Deleuze. I cannot concur in his conflation of nomadic, smooth space and the ambulatory, holey space of itinerants. (To my mind, Deleuze and Guattari clearly differentiate the two categories in *A Thousand Plateaus* when they say that "There are no nomadic or sedentary smiths. Smiths are ambulant, itinerant" [413].) Ramey also stresses the passive dimension of artistic creation much more than I would. But these are mere quibbles. If read with an open and generous spirit, *The Hermetic Deleuze* should yield rich rewards to anyone interested in the fundamental social, political, artistic and ecological issues Ramey explores so eloquently and passionately in this exceptional book.

Ronald Bogue, *University of Georgia*

Jorge J. E. Gracia. *Painting Borges: Philosophy Interpreting Art Interpreting Literature.* New York: SUNY Press, 2012. 303 pp.

Jorge J. E. Gracia's *Painting Borges: Philosophy Interpreting Art Interpreting Literature* makes compelling inquiry into the relative values and practices of literary artists, painters and philosophers. Gracia employs the work of Borges as a pretext for broadening our view of the realm of aesthetic engagement. Gracia takes this to be pre-eminently a hermeneutic project. He divides

the book into two parts. The first, "Painted Stories," consists of twelve essays on a careful selection of Borges stories, illustrated by visual artists from the author's native Argentina. The second part, "Identity and Interpretation," moves more speculatively to query the epistemic and affective differences that play between *versions* of Borges' texts: philosophical frames of meaning generated by Borges's work, literary critical interpretations that seek to unravel linguistic puzzles and the gestures of style they embody, and visualizations of the stories that body forth even more capacious framings of the experience of reading Borges's fiction.

The enterprise of the book is provocative and perhaps unique. Gracia is not proposing that one disciplinary *métier* is translatable into another. Rather he is focused on clarifying how one expressive register, so to speak, reciprocates with another. The impetus of the investigation derives from the author's impatience with our lack of an adequate critical vocabulary for doing interdisciplinary work in the arts. He wants to face up to the interpretive challenges posed by our desire to merge visual, linguistic and conceptual perspectives in the appreciation of the work of art. In other words Gracia's ambition is to bring the various protocols for hermeneutic inquiry available in philosophy, literary criticism and art history to bear on a more precise and more versatile usage of the salient terms of aesthetic discourse: style, judgment, sensation, knowledge. In pursuing this end Gracia furthermore aspires to stipulating what kind of experience is made available to philosophers, literary readers and visual audience that is sharable across the distinctive *métiers* of human experience.

While Gracia's "readings" of philosophical perspectives, Borges's narratives and the visual field of the picture plane are always perspicuous and vibrantly responsive, they too often devolve to atomistic claims. In other words, the ambition of this project to tease out something like a unified field theory of reading across disciplinary boundaries, often falls afoul of overly conventional protocols for assigning value. So, for example, the readings of the Borges stories are too distinctively literary, while the conceptual extrapolations from the literary thematic are too abstractly philosophical. Likewise, Gracia's attunement with the pigments and forms of the picture plane, are too exclusively sensational. Gracia is to be commended for his fluency in the various media he approaches and engages. But the orthodoxy of his interpretations with respect to conventional views of how each medium serves the warrant for expressiveness, leads too often to proliferating familiar kinds of questions rather than discerning a new horizon of answerability. For example, in the concluding chapters of this work the "classifying" of interpretations leads to a sampling of theories that simply grant the unbridgeable differences between media. The author's overarching view, which he calls "the Conditional-Limits View," states that "all interpretations have conditions, but their conditions may differ. Some conditions are *general* and apply to all interpretations; some conditions are *specific* and apply to different kinds of interpretations; and some conditions are *particular* and have to do with the

aims of the interpretation in question and determine the way in which they should be considered successful or not." It is true that an audience-based interpretation is different from an author-based interpretation and should not be judged by identical criteria. But, I would argue, that is just to acknowledge the way we already do interpretation, in philosophy, in literature and in the visual arts. Different approaches to the same story, e.g. a Borges story, will definitely produce contradictory results, as Gracia argues. But what those contradictions mean in relation to the various *métiers* of expression that give rise to them, is a question that goes begging in the final pages of *Painting Borges*. In this regard, the title of Gracia's book promises more than it delivers. It does open a speculative field within which much significant work remains to be done. The prospect of that productivity is nonetheless a significant fruit of Gracia's enterprise. He makes a convincing case for understanding interdisciplinary aesthetics to be a necessary presupposition of any serious attempt to theorize aesthetic value in general.

Alan Singer, *Temple University*

Carol Gilligan. *Joining the Resistance*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011. ix + 192 pp.

Carol Gilligan, world-renown psychologist and pioneer of gender studies, begins this book by reflecting on some of the distance she has traveled since her ground-breaking book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982). That book gave rise to a philosophy conference at Stony Brook, New York three years later, which issued in the book, *Women and Moral Theory*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (1987), on which I wrote a long review essay for the philosophy journal *Ethics* (1988, 125-35). My main criticism was that book's, and Gilligan's, "relative silence on the underside of women's ethics." I meant by that a relative silence about the shaping of women and our voices by oppressive institutions and practices. In her 2011 book, Gilligan seems well aware of that underside, those shapings and distortions, as what results when resistance to patriarchy fails. But her focus is on the resistance and on the special position of girls who have not yet been thoroughly socialized into patriarchy.

Gilligan's 1982 book attempted to describe and defend the "different" voice of women in identifying and resolving moral issues. That work gave rise to a veritable industry of care ethics in US academic philosophy departments. After years of listening to women and men talk about moral problems, Gilligan identified patterns, or orientations, in a women's "voice of care" and a men's "voice of justice" that were distinguished by different conceptions of the self, of human relationships, and of the nature of moral conflict, different methods of conflict resolution, and different perceptions of