

tulé "je parle, donc..." elle reprend le parcours hyvrardien déjà suivi par Waelti-Walters mais elle analyse en détails et avec finesse la langue que crée Hyvrard dans le but de rétablir le féminin, et qui exprime sa pensée ronde. Verthuy-Williams relève avec précision les nuances poétiques du style d'Hyvrard et les procédés qui consistent à créer un langage de la totalité qui est véritablement parole sacrée: importance des images fusionnelles, rythme litannique, création de combinatoires de mots tels "le consentement. La consentation. La consenture. La consentance. La consentude," (p. 86) néologisme fusionnels (vidéosophie), jeu des conjugaisons et usage des phrases nominales. Elle note les techniques fondamentales de son écriture qui se retrouvent dans tous ses textes mais souligne aussi les nouveautés à l'intérieur de chaque oeuvre qui semble s'affiner avec le temps. "La langue employée dans *Canal de la Toussaint*—et qu'annonce dans une certaine mesure celle du *Corps défunt*—constitue, c'est évident, un prolongement de celle qu'Hyvrard a utilisée dans ses ouvrages précédents; elle constitue en même temps un saut qualitatif, comme si l'auteure avait franchi un pas important dans ses quêtes parallèles" (p. 92)

Un aspect original du texte de Verthuy-Williams est la distinction qu'elle remarque dans l'oeuvre de Jeanne Hyvrard en ce qui concerne le rôle de la Musique (musique savante) associée à la Grammaire et celui du chant plus primitif associé à la mémoire collective qui l'emporte chez notre auteure. Verthuy note l'intertextualité de chansons populaires ou comptines qui rattache l'oeuvre d'Hyvrard à une période antérieure, à un monde fusionnel qu'elle entrevoit et qui se place en dehors de l'oppression ou la musique folklorique rejoint l'univers des pulsions affectives: "Ton soleil dans mon ventre. Ton soleil toujours recommencé. Comme une longue chanson dont on invente peu à peu les couplets." (*Les prunes de Cythère* cité par Verthuy p. 104). Verthuy reconstitue une chaîne associative de textes hyvrardiens qui renvoient à certains films rétablissant un réseau entre passé et présent "où tous les temps et tous les espaces y sont confondus" (p. 107) dans la nouvelle langue hyvrardienne qui recherche le temps d'avant.

Verthuy-Williams termine son texte par un chapitre intitulé "De l'insuffisance de l'économie intellectuelle contemporaine." Elle ne qualifie l'oeuvre d'Hyvrard ni d'utopique car elle "ne s'est jamais contentée d'exprimer une vague insatisfaction avec le vieux monde" (p. 123) ni d'apocalyptique car Hyvrard "avant tout *pragmatique*" (p. 125) veut fournir des outils, transformer radicalement la société et non la faire disparaître. Elle annonce la naissance de la tierce culture "une culture pour le 21<sup>e</sup> siècle qui

transcenderait la culture occidentale et la culture du Tiers-Monde, transformant leurs déchirements en alliance et intégrant les changements économiques, techniques et sociaux en train de survenir" (discours d'Hyvrard prononcé à Ottawa en 1982 et cité par Verthuy p. 70).

Cette deuxième partie pourrait être développée davantage car elle est riche en allusions multiples, aux mythes, aux poètes grecs et latins, au rôle des Nazis, et bien d'autres encore. Après la lecture du dernier chapitre, on reste un peu sur sa faim mais ce seul livre sur Hyvrard est un outil précieux à la compréhension d'une pensée originale et pas toujours facile à saisir.

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**Formative Writings 1929-1941 Simone Weil.** Edited and translated by Dorothy Tuck McFarland and Wilhelmina Van Ness. *Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, Pp. 294.*

In *Formative Writings 1929-1941*, Dorothy McFarland and Wilhelmina Van Ness provide us with access to a representative and chronologically ordered sample of Simone Weil's writings. The book fills the gap created by the somewhat haphazard translations of Weil's works. The texts translated in this edition represent Weil's writing between 1921 and 1941, originally published in translations between 1947 and 1966. Work on Simone Weil has, to date, been complicated by the confusing maze of translations or partial translations of her work. This volume contributes to the clarification of this complexity and brings previously neglected work to light.

These texts provide an interesting overview of key events in Weil's life and development as a philosopher. For example, the chapter "Science and Perception in Descartes" reveals an early concern with science, freedom, and technology. Produced when she was a student at the Sorbonne, it reveals the framework for her analysis later evident in *Oppression and Liberty*<sup>1</sup>. The influence of her mentor, Alain, is also present in this youthful dissertation.

Two practical experiences influenced the development of Weil's philosophy. These were her travels to Germany and her work in a factory. After her German travels, Weil's hopes for an international proletarian revolution were altered and her faith in the ability of the Communist party to lead the revolution was lost. The chapter "The Situation in Germany" provides us with articles which Weil

wrote after she visited Germany. The experiences were crucial to her development as a political philosopher. Their author's later spirituality can only be understood with respect to her resulting rejection of immanent solutions such as the belief in a revolution. The preoccupation of some writers with Weil's spirituality divorced from her political thoughts gives a distorted and often hagiographic treatment, which also underrates the originality of her thought.

In the mid-1930s, Weil consciously stepped back from the theoretical work and chose to experience conditions as a factory worker. Her attempt between 1934 and 1935 to live as an unskilled worker led many to make comparisons between Weil and Dorothy Day, while others derided the brevity of her work experience and the superficiality of her attempts to adopt a working-class life. Although the experience in Germany was intellectually formative, the life in a factory was personally devastating; marking her for life, she claimed, as a slave. The experience confirmed that neither resistance nor revolution were viable options for change, since the oppressive conditions in the workplace deprived the individual of her humanity. The "Factory Journal" included in this volume speaks clearly of the suffering and annihilation Weil experienced. Yet, in the midst of this experience of suffering, her daily life as a worker offered a glimpse of the transcendent.

The final section of this book is a welcome addition to Weil's writings on war and peace. Weil's experiences in war have given rise to a caricature emphasizing her awkwardness at the Spanish Civil War or her stubborn promotion of a plan to parachute nurses to the front in World War II. This chapter reveals that her thought on these issues is more complex than these anecdotes might suggest. Weil's position as revolutionary, then pacifist, and again revolutionary, reveal the complexity of the issues rather than a vacillation. The oppression brought about by war and chauvinist nationalism were evident to Weil. Yet, even the suffering which accompanied war could offer a vision of the transcendent. These essays clarify the program for rebuilding a nation which Weil described in *The Need for Roots*<sup>2</sup>. This book brings us a step closer to understanding the "dazzling realities" (p. 278) of Simone Weil's life and thought.

Weil is generally not claimed as a feminist writer. Yet, her own achievements and activities speak for a full involvement of women in politics, philosophy, and labour. It is interesting to note that the editors of this text suggest parallels between Weil's analysis of society and modern feminist thought. The analysis is tentative yet tantalizing

and one hopes that the appearance of this edition will facilitate further research in this vein.

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#### NOTES

1. Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, translated by Arthur Wills and John Petrie (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1973).
2. Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*, translated by Arthur Wills (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

**Merlin's Daughters: Contemporary Women Writers of Fantasy.** Charlotte Spivack. *New York: Greenwood Press, 1987, Pp. 185.*

In writing *Merlin's Daughters*, Charlotte Spivack claims to have two purposes. "The first is to simply demonstrate the literary quality of ten representative female fantasists." This is accomplished primarily through synopses of the fantasy works of ten women: Andre Norton, Susan Cooper, Ursula K. LeGuin, Evangeline Walton, Katherine Kurtz, Mary Stewart, Patricia McKillip, Vera Chapman, Gillian Bradshaw and Marion Zimmer Bradley. Spivack calls her choice of authors "personal, conditioned in part by my preference for certain features such as the Arthurian mythos." Beyond this, only "critical neglect"—experienced by all the writers but Ursula LeGuin—is offered as an explanation for Spivack's inclusions and exclusions. Critical neglect, of course, is not hard to find in the case of women writers, especially writers of marginalized genres like fantasy and science fiction. There is, then, no explanation for the omission of Gothic fantasy, sword and sorcery, lost-world fantasy, and "science-fiction/fantasy hybrids." While it is true that any work must define—often arbitrarily—its boundaries, Spivack fails to explain just how it is that these women are representative. All come from the United States or England, most—probably all—are white, most are university educated. Perhaps this is, indeed, representative of women fantasy writers published and distributed in the United States where Spivack lives. Spivack, however, makes no comment on this. In fact, for a book subtitled *Women Writers of Fantasy*, there is decidedly little information about the writers themselves, and certainly no reflection on their relative privilege or where it might lead them.

Spivack's extensive synopses of the works of the ten writers she features are fascinating reading. For the reader in search of a particular kind of story or other works by a favorite author, Spivack's work is invaluable. In accord-