

PIERRE MACHEREY*(February 17, 1938 -)*Richard L. W. Clarke
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Lire Le Capital, 2 volumes, by Macherey, Louis Althusser, Etienne Balibar, Roger Establet, Jacques Rancière (Paris: Maspero, 1965; revised edition, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France / Quadrige, 1996);

Pour une théorie de la production littéraire (Paris: Maspero, 1966); translated by Geoffrey Wall as *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978);

Hegel ou Spinoza (Paris: Maspero, 1979);

Hegel et la Société, by Macherey and Jean-Pierre Lefèbvre (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984);

Comte: la philosophie et les sciences (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989);

A quoi pense la littérature? Exercices de philosophie littéraire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990); translated by David Macey as *The Object of Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995);

Avec Spinoza: études sur la doctrine et l'histoire du spinozisme (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992);

Introduction à l'Éthique de Spinoza, 5 volumes (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994-1998);

In a Materialist Way: Selected Essays by Pierre Macherey, translated by Ted Stolze, edited by Warren Montag (London: Verso, 1998)--comprises "Soutenance (25 May 1991)," "Philosophy as Operation," "For a Theory of Literary Reproduction," "The Hegelian Lure: Lacan as Reader of Hegel," "At the Sources of *Histoire de la folie*: a Rectification and its Limits," "Foucault: Ethics and Subjectivity," "From Canguilhem to Canguilhem by Way of Foucault," "Deleuze in Spinoza," "Spinoza's Philosophical Actuality (Heidegger, Adorno, Foucault)," "Spinoza, the End of History, and the Ruse of Reason," and "Georges Canguilhem's Philosophy of Science: Epistemology and

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Renée Balibar, Geneviève Merlin, and Gilles Tret, *Les Français fictifs: le rapport des styles littéraires au Français national*, présentation by Macherey and Etienne Balibar (Paris: Hachette, 1974), 7-49;

Renée Balibar and Dominique Laporte, *Le Français national: Politique et pratiques de la langue nationale sous la Révolution Française*, présentation by Macherey and Etienne Balibar (Paris: Hachette, 1974), 9-30;

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“Sur la littérature comme forme idéologique: quelques hypothèses marxistes,” by Macherey and Etienne Balibar, *Littérature*, 13.4 (1974): 29-48; translated by Ian McLeod, John Whitehead, and Ann Wordsworth as “On Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions,” in *Oxford Literary Review* 3 (1978): 4-12; translated by James H. Kavanagh as “Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions,” in *Praxis: a Journal of Cultural Criticism*, 5 (1981): 43-58; translated by Ian McLeod, John Whitehead, and Ann Wordsworth as “On Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions,” in *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young (London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 79-99; reprinted in *Contemporary Marxist Literary Criticism*, edited by Francis Mulhern (London: Longman, 1992);

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- "De la médiation à la constitution: description d'un parcours spéculatif," *Cahiers Spinoza*, 4 (1983): 9-37;
- "Entre Pascal et Spinoza: le vide," in *Spinoza nel 350 anniversario della nascita: atti del congresso internazionale (Urbino 4-8 Ottobre 1982)*, edited by Emilia Giancotti (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1985), 71-87;
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- "Déterminisme," by Macherey and Etienne Balibar, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 7 (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1989-90), 283-288;
- "Dialectique," by Macherey and Etienne Balibar, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 7 (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1989-90), 359-363;
- "Engels (Friedrich)," by Macherey and Etienne Balibar, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 8 (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1989-90), 372-374;
- "Formalisme et formalisation," by Macherey and Etienne Balibar, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 9 (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1989-90), 707-710;
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- "La philosophie à la française," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 74.1 (1990);
- "Spinoza, la fin de l'histoire et la ruse de la raison," in *Spinoza: Issues and Directions: the Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference (1986)*, edited by Edwin Curley and Pierre-François Moreau, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 327-346;

- "From Action to Production of Effects: Observations on the Ethical Significance of *Ethics I*," in *God and Nature: Spinoza's Metaphysics*, edited by Yirmiyahu Yovel, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 161-180;
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- "L'actualité philosophique de Spinoza," in *Nature, Croissance, Raison: Mélanges offerts à Sylvain Zac*, (Fontenay-aux-Roses: Cahiers de Fontenay, 1992), 119-133;
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- "Spinoza, une philosophie à plusieurs voix," *Philosophique*, 1 (1998): 5-22.

Pierre Macherey is Professor Emeritus in the Unité de Formation et de Recherche (UFR) de Philosophie (the Faculty of Philosophy) at the Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille III where he specializes in Aesthetics and the history of philosophy. In "Soutenance," the defence of the entire corpus of his scholarship which he presented in 1991 to a jury of his peers, Macherey offers this overview of his

career: "Three series of questions have . . . preoccupied me. . . . These questions are those of Spinozism, of the relations of literature and philosophy, and of the history of philosophy in France." If Hans-Robert Jauss is right that the history of literature (and, by extension, of philosophy and criticism) might be profitably rethought from the point of view of its impact (rather than the customary emphasis on its production), Macherey's more recent philosophical explorations, not least his extensive engagement with the philosopher Baruch Spinoza and with the history of philosophy in France, would be all but ignored in the Anglophone world. It can be safely said that for most English-speaking persons, Macherey's philosophical outlook is reducible to the Structuralist variant of Marxism synonymous with his mentor Louis Althusser and his major contributions limited to the field of critical theory, rather than philosophy per se. He is best known in this regard for two seminal theoretical works: *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* (1966; translated as *A Theory of Literary Production*, 1978) and "Sur la littérature comme forme idéologique: quelques hypothèses marxistes" (1974; translated as "On Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions," 1978) which was cowritten with his colleague Etienne Balibar.

Macherey was born in Belfort, France on September 17, 1938. He attended Lycée Louis le Grand in Paris before pursuing studies in philosophy at the celebrated Ecole Normale Supérieure, rue d'Ulm, from 1958 to 1963. There he was awarded the Licence de philosophie in 1960, the Maîtrise de philosophie in 1961, and the Agrégé de philosophie in 1962. The philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem supervised Macherey's thesis for the Maîtrise, "Philosophie et politique chez Spinoza," the subject of which indicated his keen interest even at this early stage in a philosopher to whom he would return in the later phase of his career. Althusser supervised Macherey's preparation for the Aggrégation, a competitive examination for admission to posts on the teaching staff of lycées (colleges) and universities. In 1962-1963 Althusser held his celebrated seminar on Structuralism in which Macherey and other colleagues such as Michel Pêcheux, Etienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière participated. Focussing on philosophers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Canguilhem, they paid attention both to what they saw as the beneficial anti-humanism of the Structuralist enterprise (above all its contribution to the decentering of the autonomous, transcendental

subject) and to its principal blind-spots, not least the recuperation of the subject in another form: the very concept of structure itself. Out of this seminar came Macherey's first publication, "La philosophie de science de Georges Canguilhem: épistémologie et histoire des sciences" (1964; translated as "Georges Canguilhem's Philosophy of Science: Epistemology and History of Science," 1998), which appeared in *La Pensée* (Thought), the theoretical organ of the French Communist Party.

Macherey taught at the Prytanée Militaire de la Flèche from 1963 to 1965 and Lycée Descartes in Tours from 1965 to 1966. He participated in Althusser's even better-known seminar in 1963-1964 on Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) and contributed, together with Althusser, Balibar, Rancière, and Roger Establet, to the original edition of the seminal *Lire Le Capital* (1965; translated in abridged form as *Reading Capital*, 1970) which resulted therefrom. Althusser and company sought here to critique both traditional Marxism and the Hegelian Marxism synonymous with Georg Lukács by formulating a rapprochement of sorts between Structuralism and Marxism. They sought in particular to rewrite both the traditional base/superstructure model and the Hegelian Marxist notion of the expressive totality by arguing that the social formation consists of several "levels" or "practices," the economic, the political, and the ideological, differentiated from or semi-autonomous of each other in a manner analogous to the signs comprising the sign-system. From this point of view, there is no longer any question of the existence of a political and ideological superstructure reflective (in a relationship of effect to cause) of an economic and social infrastructure. By the same token, the various elements comprising the social formation are no longer to be thought of as ultimately expressive (in a relationship of form to content) of the economic totality of which they are part. Rather, the elements comprising the social formation are determined by what Althusser termed a "structural effectivity," that is, purely by their relation to each other and the whole formed thereby. Putative processes of reflection or expression are henceforth replaced by an emphasis on the specificity or "relative autonomy" of each practice derived, like signs in the sign-system, from their simultaneous difference from and relatedness to each other.

In 1966, in the wake of the success of *Lire Le Capital*, Macherey obtained a post in the UFR de philosophie at the Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne) where he taught until the early 1990s. That same year Macherey published his first book-length study, *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, the

focus of which is evidently on critical theory rather than philosophy per se. While it brought Macherey acclaim in his own right, it also brought him (like Althusser) denunciation on the part of die-hards and traditionalists within the Marxist camp viscerally opposed to Althusser's rereading of Marx. Its reception in the English-speaking world was certainly facilitated by the indebtedness to it of Terry Eagleton's *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), the publication of which preceded an English translation of Macherey's study by some two years. However, Eagleton himself in "Macherey and Marxist Literary Theory" criticised what he considered to be the work's major defect: the "intrinsicism and formalism" derived from the ahistorical tendencies of Structuralism and which undermine the potential inherent in many of its insights into critical practice.

Given the immense influence of *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, a detailed exposition of Macherey's argument here is almost mandatory if one is to grasp the significance of his contribution to critical theory. Drawing upon the notion of structural effectivity explored in *Lire Le Capital* as well as the post-Saussurean critique of traditional referential and expressive models of signification, it offers an important rethinking of both the mimeticism and the expressivism typical of Marxist criticism current to that point. Macherey's project here may be reduced to the following question: if literary texts, part of the ideological level of the social formation, neither *reflect* the economic and social infrastructure nor *express* the economic totality, what then is the precise nature of the text's relationship with the other levels of the social formation in which it is produced?

Macherey begins by identifying three major fallacies where criticism is concerned, each predicated on an inductive model of knowledge. The first is the "empiricist" fallacy, which treats the literary work as a mirror held up to reality (that is, as the effect of an absent cause) and views criticism as a secondary mirror (effect²) held up to the text itself (cause²). The second fallacy is the "normative" which informs critical approaches such as Structuralist narratology, then in its heyday, and which prescriptively measures the literary work's conformity to an a priori "ideal norm" (from this point of view, the work is the effect of an absent *literary* cause, as it were). The third fallacy is the "interpretive" which views the form of the literary work as the material manifestation of the author's intention (which is the content of the work, as it were) and criticism as a process of interpretation.

In their place, Macherey advocates a “rationalist” approach to criticism, predicated on a deductive model of knowledge, arguing that an objective criticism ought to be founded, like a science, on a certain distance between the literary object per se and critical knowledge about that object. Macherey’s view is that, given the nature of signification theorised by Saussure, the meaning of a literary text is derived neither from mirroring reality in some simplistic way, nor from emulating ideal literary forms, nor from expressing authorial intention. Given the views on the nature of the social formation advanced in *Lire Le Capital*, moreover, Macherey argues that a Marxist criticism ought to focus neither on the economic base of which the work is allegedly the ideological effect, nor on the economic totality supposedly expressed or mediated by the form of the work nor, of course, on literary form to the exclusion of all else. A scientific criticism ought to search, rather, for the “laws” that determine the text. To be precise, the focus must be on the “real and fundamental complexity” of the work itself (which is to be distinguished from the “linear simplicity” of the unfolding of narrative structure which absorbs the attention of narratologists) and in which one must recognise the “signs of a necessity” or, to borrow Althusser’s phrase, the determination of a structural effectivity that both complicates simplistic notions of the relationship between text and reality and obviates purely formalistic conceptions of literature.

Macherey argues that the relation of literature to ideology is that of signifier to signified (these are comparable, given Saussure’s famous example, to two sides of a sheet of paper) rather than that of expressive form to expressed content. As merely one form taken by ideology, the ideological specificity of the literary text is determined by both its similarity to and difference from other ideological forms. Through its at least partial departure from dominant ways of conceptualising reality, therefore, the literary text resists being entirely incorporated into the flow of ideology, functioning in an almost parodic manner to set into relief, and thus provide something close to a scientific knowledge of, the various forms taken by the dominant ideology. As merely one practice within the social formation, the specificity of the ideological is determined in turn by its partial difference from the other practices comprising the social formation. The literary text qua ideological form is therefore both related to and different from the political and the economic practices which it sets into relief, rather than simply reflects or expresses. It is for this reason that literature cannot in any way be said to merely mirror reality: it produces, rather, an

“effect of reality.”

From this point of view, the “laws” which criticism should seek to explicate are those which inform the literary text’s difference both from other ideological forms and the other practices comprising the social formation and which result in the absence of positive presence in the text, its radical otherness, and its consequent decentredness. Criticism, in other words, ought to be a form of explication designed to describe the silent necessity (langue) determining in this way a given literary text (parole). Rather than serve as an interpretation designed merely to ventriloquise what it does say, criticism ought to seek to explain the mute laws responsible for the text’s very existence and thus to describe what the text cannot openly say. There is, thus, an “un-said” which coexists with the “said” of the text which accordingly cannot speak of the complex of differences which structure it (its “over-determination”). It is in this way, and not through simplistic processes of overt reflection or expression, that history (irreducible to merely literary history) is latently present in the text.

Eagleton argues that "Sur la littérature comme forme idéologique: quelques hypothèses marxistes" (1974; translated as "On Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions," 1978), cowritten some eight years later with Balibar, represents an attempt to correct the formalist deficiencies which mar *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*. However, it was arguably motivated by the need to further refine certain aspects of the argument advanced in the earlier study in line with unavoidable developments in post-Saussurean linguistic theory and the Althusserian model of the social formation. It should be noted that if *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* was influenced by *Reading Capital*, "Sur la littérature comme forme idéologique" was particularly influenced by Althusser's equally famous essay "On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," not least his view that the cause of ideology (the view, for example, that ideology is a superstructural reflex of the economic infrastructure) may be far less important than its effect: by offering images with which to identify, ideology assigns specific subject-positions or roles to individuals and thereby ensures the reproduction of the extant asymmetrical social relations of production. (Althusser gives the name of 'interpellation' to this process of subject-formation.)

Balibar and Macherey begin by pointing out that the Marxist model of literature, in all its various

incarnations, revolves around the view that literature, as a form of ideology, is to a greater or lesser degree a reflection of objective reality. This concept of reflection does not do justice, however, to the “relative autonomy” of both the various practices comprising the social formation and the elements of which these practices are in turn composed. At stake, therefore, is the indispensability of theorising both the specificity of ideology in relation to other social practices and that of literature in relation to the other forms, moral, political and so on, assumed by ideology. Balibar and Macherey posit that just as ideology is both related to and different from the other practices, so too is literature both related to and different from other ideological forms. The Marxist critic is, hence, no longer confronted with the false dilemma of choosing between intrinsicism and extrinsicism, that is, whether to “analyse literature on its own ground . . . or from an external standpoint” because to analyse the “ideological specificity” of literature is not to reduce it either to “something other than itself or to itself.” Their thesis here is that the specificity of literature is defined less by what it represents (its cause) than by its ideological impact on the reader (effect).

Balibar and Macherey accordingly propose that while literature is not independent of its socio-historical context, it is to some degree autonomous. Modern French literature, for example, cannot be totally severed from the class struggles that historically accompanied its development and which are encoded in the very language which comprises it. However, it is to some degree autonomous of such conflicts which cannot be found there in their original, pre-literary form. Balibar and Macherey suggest that such conflicts appear, rather, in a specific literary form designed to provide their solution (or to do away with them altogether) by “substituting imaginary contradictions soluble within the ideological practices of religion, politics, morality, aesthetics and psychology.” The biggest shortcoming of *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* was, they believe, its failure to specify the “specific mechanism of the literary compromise” by which this resolution is accomplished.

Balibar and Macherey argue that the key instrument to this end is characterisation which plays a crucial role in the interpellation of the individual reader. They post that the subjectification of the reader is accomplished via an “identification effect” similar to that experienced between the individual and the mirror-image theorised by Lacan: the “ideological effects of literature . . . materialise via an identification

process" that occurs between the audience and the "hero or anti-hero," leading to the "simultaneous mutual constitution of the fictive 'consciousness' of the character with the ideological consciousness of the reader." In this way literature "unceasingly 'produces' subjects, on display for everyone," thereby transforming "(concrete) individuals into subjects" and endowing them "with a quasi-real hallucinatory individuality." It is in this way that readers are encouraged to take up an "attitude towards imaginary struggles as they would toward real ones." By virtue of inculcating certain attitudes and forms of behaviour in the reader, literature is the "privileged agent of ideological subjection" and, thus, one of the most important means by which the dominant ideology is regurgitated and the reproduction of Bourgeois society assured.

If for much of his early career Macherey engaged intensively with questions of critical theory, this was ultimately only because he saw a profound link between theoretical and philosophical issues, particularly their "common relation to the truth that governs their respective approaches," as he puts it in "Soutenance." He stresses here too that his interest in the relationship between philosophy and literature was part and parcel of his wider interest in the historical development of philosophy as practised in France, what he terms *philosophie à la française*, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By contrast to those located in the Anglo-American Analytic tradition of philosophy, Macherey is keenly interested in questions concerning the history of philosophy which he necessarily views, Marxist that he is, as a socially inscribed practice. Philosophy qua ideological form is not, in Macherey's view, an "independent speculative activity" divorced from real historical conditions. This is why Macherey argues that there is intrinsically no such thing as French philosophy per se, at least not

in the sense of a natural datum completely determined by belonging to the land and by the filiation of the people or the race. There is rather what I have proposed to call 'philosophy à la française,' resulting from an institution that has had to be socially elaborated in relation to the transformations of society considered in the totality of its economic, political and ideological structures.

The development of modern philosophy in France is, thus, inextricably linked to the emergence of the French nation-state since the Revolution of 1789 as a result of which, he argues, the seemingly most

“distant and disparate systems of thought” that comprise it in fact “reflect the structures and evolutions of the same social formation that give its content to their speculations.”

Macherey also emphasises in “Soutenance” the indispensable contribution made to his own thinking by one philosopher in particular located in the continental rationalist tradition, Spinoza, who has remained, notwithstanding the occasional interest in other important philosophers or matters of critical theory, Macherey’s main interest since the late seventies. He explains: “I had to set out from the study of Spinoza, because this study gives a support, a basis, and also meaning to the totality of my other enquiries.” In 1979, a year after he began to attract attention for his critical theory in the English-speaking world, Macherey returned to his Spinozist roots with the publication of *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Hegel or Spinoza), the very title of which is designed to emphasise the elements of both convergence and divergence that defined Spinoza’s philosophy in relation to Hegel’s. In 1987 he contributed to *Hegel et la Société* (Hegel and Society), cowritten by Jean-Pierre Lefèbvre. In 1989 he published *Comte: la philosophie et les sciences* (Comte: Philosophy and Science).

Some twenty-four years after the publication of his seminal *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, Macherey returned to the issue of literary representation with the publication of his *A quoi pense la littérature? Exercices de philosophie littéraire* (1990; translated as *The Object of Literature*, 1995). Here, Macherey analyses a series of classic works by French authors from the late eighteenth century to the 1970s, including Mme. de Staël, Georges Sand, Gustave Flaubert, and Victor Hugo. His argument is that literary texts, albeit under varied forms, proffer a particular conception of the relation of the sign to the ‘Real’ and thus are the source of what he calls *une philosophie littéraire*, that is, a characteristically literary manner of philosophising. From this perspective, literature does not regurgitate key philosophical topoi in some simplistic, unmediated manner. Macherey explains in “Soutenance” that in so arguing it was not his goal to reduce all philosophy to literature, but to widen the traditionally accepted definition of philosophy by stressing that “philosophical ideas do not exist only through the efforts of systematisation offered to them by professional philosophers.”

In the early 1990s Macherey accepted the post of Professor in the UFR de Philosophie at the Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille III where he taught until his retirement in 2003. During this time, he

pursued the comparative, dialogic spirit of enquiry evident in *Hegel ou Spinoza* in several subsequent studies of Spinoza, including *Avec Spinoza: études sur la doctrine et l'histoire du spinozisme* (In Dialogue With Spinoza: Studies in the Doctrine and History of Spinozism, 1992) and *Introduction à l'éthique de Spinoza* (Introduction to Spinoza's Ethics, published in five volumes 1994-1998), the latter being the culmination of many published papers and presentations on Spinoza at a variety of colloquia between 1981 and 1991. These works are devoted, he insists in "Soutenance," to clarifying and situating key aspects of Spinoza's thought, especially in relation to its reception, that is, "successive readings, which have in some sense reproduced it by adapting it to theoretical and ideological configurations sometimes very far removed from the conditions in which it was initially produced." Macherey's ultimate goal in so doing was to explore how far Spinoza's philosophy maintains its own identity while being reflected through alternative interpretive prisms. Macherey's argument is that a philosopher's doctrine is not independent of the "history of its interpretations" and that what at first glance might appear to be falsifications of the true Spinoza are "no less authentic in their own way." Macherey claims that interpretations guilty, paradoxically, of such "true errors" in fact reveal meanings that no one can claim to be "radically foreign" to Spinoza's work and which accordingly testify to its "intrinsic fruitfulness."

Macherey's attempt to situate Spinoza's discourse in a "space of constantly evolving variations" was part of a larger project: to gain insight into the dynamics of its reproduction and, by extension, the process of philosophical history in general. One of Macherey's most important contributions to the study of the history of philosophy may lie in his attempt to formulate a model of intellectual history, one indebted at least in part to his interest in literary history / intertextuality and informed by the Lacanian notion of the 'mirror stage.' "Soutenance" again provides invaluable insights into Macherey's thinking in this regard. For Macherey, philosophy, like literature, is made up of ideas that, far from simply reflecting reality, function to "transform, make, unmake and remake reality." These ideas are not static but have a discernible history: "by following and by making known the shifts, breaches and conflicts of these ideas, this history also reveals their productivity, their fruitfulness." The texts that comprise the history of philosophy are, as such, not immune to the process of intertextuality constitutive of literary history and which he is at pains to describe in "For a Theory of Literary Reproduction" (1998), an obvious coda to *A*

Theory of Literary Production. Here, he argues that one never writes on a “completely blank page: the execution of a text necessarily relies on the reproduction of prior texts, to which it implicitly or explicitly refers. Every book contains in itself the labyrinth of a library.” From this point of view, one “writes on the written” as a result of which the ‘palimpsest’ may be said to define the very essence of the literary as much as the philosophical.

Macherey suggests here that this mirror-like relation between texts ought to be conceptualised in terms of the Lacanian notion of the ‘mirror stage’:

works are no longer reflected except by being dispersed, and by evoking their internal distance through this dispersion, through effects of mirroring which seem to have not beginning nor end. The notion of an original work succumbs to this splitting. . . . Every style could be explained by the implementation of such a mimeticism.

Hence, the necessity of setting the views of philosophers such as Hegel and Spinoza in something of a specular relation to each other. When Hegel reads Spinoza, Macherey argues in “Soutenance,” the former is incapable, because of a difference in “philosophical problematic,” of “seeing . . . what Spinoza had actually been able to say.” As a result, Hegel is obliged to formulate an “imaginary form of thought,” the product at least in part of his own doctrine, as a result of which Spinoza’s philosophy, “projected outside its own theoretical frontiers, thus plays the role of . . . a mirror, on whose surface conceptions which are apparently the most foreign to his own . . . trace their contours.”

This specular relationship, simultaneously one of indebtedness and difference, is not limited to the relation of Hegel and Spinoza alone but is arguably applicable to the dialectical process of intellectual history as a whole. The “strange, and perhaps disturbing, familiarity” characteristic of such “reflections” is arguably true, “beyond their manifest differences,” of all the figures who comprise the “tortuous, broken . . . discourse of philosophy.” Such a view may shed light, for example, on the anxiety of influence, to borrow Harold Bloom’s concept, which arguably characterises the relationship between Macherey and successors such as Eagleton and on the strenuous efforts of all ‘latecomers’ to critique and thus differentiate their own work from that of their precursors.

Although to large degree overshadowed by his mentor Althusser, Macherey is certainly a very

important figure on the French intellectual landscape, especially within philosophical circles, famous not least for his crucial role in the development of what has come to be called Structural Marxism and its application to the study of literature. However, the importance of Macherey's work on the history of philosophy in general and Spinoza in particular has not up to now received the recognition which it deserves in an English-speaking philosophical world still dominated by the Anglo-American Analytic approach and a certain degree of hostility towards the Continental tradition. Moreover, while the groundbreaking nature of his application of Post-Structuralist Marxist philosophy to critical theory is difficult to underestimate, his name has tended to be overshadowed (at least in the Anglophone world) by those of English-speaking successors whose own contributions would have been impossible without the foundation provided by Macherey. Such a situation might be reversed, of course, if new editions of long out of print classics such as *A Theory of Literary Production* and translations of his more recent research on philosophers like Spinoza were to see the light of day.

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