

Introduction

Nothing endures but change.

—Heraclitus¹

Rien au monde ne dure
Qu'un éternel changement.

—Honorat de Bueil, Marquis de Racan²

Penser le changement (the thought of change) is so ubiquitously a part of our—indeed of global—culture that we find it problematic to conceive of or discuss the thought of change as such, so bound are we by our understood notions of it. Change is assumed to be an unchanging condition of life, human and otherwise. Indeed we say, after Heraclitus, that nothing in the world endures save eternal change; the familiar conundrum has been repeated throughout history to mark the dialectical threshold between being and becoming, essence and existence. Change is our fear and our hope for life.

Only since the advent of philosophical thought has change been conceived of in the human community as any kind of problem; only through the philosopher's lens is change, as such, susceptible to conceptualization—the process by which it could in fact become a “problem.” For prephilosophic Greek thought, for example, the concept of change seems to have taken the form of dithyrambic, poetic acknowledgement of the power of the turning seasons and the hopes and fears generated by a dawning awareness of the forces these unchanging changes contained. For early Greek philosophy, change was an ubiquitous and grounding condition of the world and thus of philosophy. For Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes the world evolved from simpler states to more complex ones, moving through stages of development in a dense ambiance of change. For Anaximander, different (opposite) substances

could be seen to grow into ever more complex and discrete states out of a primordial, undifferentiated, and ubiquitously indefinite matrix (chaos); for these thinkers, the process of *metabole* was responsible, so to speak, for the evolution of the world in its plenitude. *Metabole*, however defined, was a given.

The Pythagorean notion that the cosmos is unlimited and that only cosmology itself sets the limits by which we "know" it offered another, in some respects quite modern, turn to the consideration of change: Pythagoras's central idea concerning change, that the evolution from the unknown unlimited to the known limited marks and defines the world as we perceive it, contains within it a perspectivism we can easily recognize and which we might find familiar and even comfortable today.

It was Heraclitus, however, and Parmenides in response to his conception of change, who established the dialectical tone for all ensuing discussion not only of change, but of the *thought* of change. Indeed we are still, and have been ever since, working within their dialectical sense of the "problem" of change. In the post-Cartesian evolution of philosophy we can see clearly distinct shadings of this ancient discussion: for example, the tenets of idealism, with Kant's notion of the creative mind, and Hegel's image of the unfolding of reality through stages of reasoned thought, and romanticism, with its dynamism and evolutionary nature. In the plethora of philosophic schools vying for legitimacy in the twentieth century, the dialogue between ideal changeless forms, at some level, and an "actualism" that ostensibly denies such static grounding is clearly in evidence.

But since this introductory discussion begins with a mythic citation from Heraclitus, it is important to ground this twenty-part discussion of the thought of change in that first discussion, to look at Heraclitus's thought of change and some of its implications, and to see how and why for Parmenides the Heraclitan notion is unacceptable. For Heraclitus, change, *metabole*, is a fundamental quality of the *logos* (which for Heraclitus meant something like "formula") of the world, particularly since the grounding condition of that world, in its right and normal state, is one of strife. Since strife takes place within a structure of polar opposites, and is indeed the product of the necessary balance of these opposites (since without this balance all proportion would be destroyed and strife itself would cease to exist), all things—to use Heraclitus's oxymoronic concept—constantly change. One of the most disturbing and fascinating ramifications of this anti-state of "cosmic flux," with its continuous alteration of all things, is epistemological: whatever is perpetually changing is, logically, not susceptible to knowledge, since knowledge is concerned with what *is*, and thus must remain unknown. Thus, no concerted and structured view of the world, no thought connected

to thing or thingness, no actual knowledge of process or product is possible. And further, since any so-called fact is simply not available in a world of ubiquitous change, only opinion can be formed with regard to the "actual" Heraclitan world. It follows that the basis for the polar disparity between rhetoric, as the study of the forceful presentation of that which is not susceptible to proof, and dialectic, as the study of that which can be proved factually—a distinction so clearly marked by Aristotle—is born in Heraclitus, within the context of the theme of change.

Heraclitus himself, of course, is famous for his fidelity to the ramifications of his own theory, having devised the most elliptical and mysterious, aphoristic philosophy that indeed is not susceptible to systematization. The remnants, shards, and ancient references we call "Heraclitus" represent the most radical anti-substantialism of Greek thought: since all change is contradictory, contradiction (as the simultaneous maintenance and unity of opposites) is the very essence of reality.³

Parmenides, responding directly and by name to Heraclitus in asking the most salient question of early philosophy, "what is the nature of real being?" and secondarily its epistemological corollary "how do we know?" sets up rhetorical conditions from which only one answer can be derived. Because the goal is *knowledge* of the real world, and since knowledge can only be had of stable things, change *cannot* exist. Parmenides's rejection of change and the thought of change grounds itself in an oxymoronic rhetoric of ontology: "what is not" is not knowable, not even thinkable. Since any concept of change involves the alteration of an "is" containing an "is not" which then becomes an "is" containing an "is not," etc., it follows for Parmenides that the Heraclitan world (in which constant reference to the "is not" is required) is a world of pure illusion—a world of nonsense. For Parmenides, the only logical conclusion concerning the thought of change is that since for thought a nothing or void is impossible, since "nothing" cannot *be thought*, change itself is not possible.

More importantly, in his attempts to show the static nature of all things, Parmenides claims that only the mind can reach beyond the world of appearance, of empirical reality that seems to change, to the immutable and static homogeneity behind it. Indeed, only in this mental realm is static and constant reality perceivable; thus in Parmenides do we see the beginning not only of the abstract thought on which Socratic tradition will build to establish philosophic tradition, particularly the Aristotelian notion of immanent form "beneath" the flux encountered by the senses, but also the joining of the argument about *penser le changement* and the concomitant conventions of change, out of which are derived conventions of philosophy such as Plato's paideic cosmos and Aristotle's *dynamis*, claiming that "where there is better there must be best," that things tend toward their own completion and so, being deprived of that

telos must move in a certain direction toward it. Despite the obviously Parmenidean element in Plato, the Heraclitan thought of change can be seen to be reflected in Plato's *Timaeus*, with its contrast between that which always is and has no becoming, on the one hand, and that which is always becoming and never is, on the other. Plato's (Heraclitan) conclusion: one can have no knowledge of the world of change, only opinion; since no "science" can be based on mere opinion, no true science of the physical world can exist. In consequence, we find Aristotle conceiving of the immutable Being or inherent Form "behind" the mutable physical world the eternalized nature of matter that legitimizes the marriage of knowledge and material alterity.

It might be said that all subsequent philosophy is produced in the shadow of that Heraclitan/Parmenidean dialectic concerning conventions of change. The Heraclitan notion of contradiction as the essence of reality, and the Parmenidean one rejecting change as itself contradictory and therefore not real,⁴ confront each other from Plato to Plotinus to Kant to Sartre to Derrida. To cite just a few examples of this pervasive influence: Plotinus's synthesis of change and stasis, resultant from ideas of "emanation" and "*dynamis*," is brought about by the Divine Intellect that alone can grasp the immutable nature of Being, while all lesser souls, in their benighted striving, find themselves in a condition of partial comprehension and desperate striving to understand; change is thus the result of the human inability to grasp everything at once (Plotinus would understand Heideggerian Being in this regard). Plotinus's thought on change leads us to two seemingly contradictory contemporary conventions of change: time is an infirmity of the human mind preventing us from seeing things as they are in their eternal immutability, and mentality and temporality enjoy a close correlation. Thus do we again confront physical/metaphysical differentiation inherent in Plato and Aristotle, Bruno and Bradley, Spinoza and Sartre. Kantian monadic idealism continues this structural thought: for Kant, time is a form of sensibility that applies only to phenomena, not to the "intelligible world." Thus also Fichte's "Absolute Ego," for which everything is at once and time exists only in the imagination, is atemporal. Hegel agrees with Heraclitus that reality is "historical" and that the world is constructed of opposites, but "Absolute Idea," central to the Hegelian worldview, is atemporal/metaphysical. Again and again in contemporary philosophy we confront this dialectical association of the physical—the "lived"—with the metaphysical, and thus of time with timelessness and change with changelessness. In the twentieth century, post-Newtonian physics has altered our view of physical change profoundly, working increasingly closer to a Heraclitan notion of ubiquitous and dynamic, vehicleless change, interpreted by contemporary philosophy as a dialectic between determinism and

indeterminism. According to the Heraclitus/Parmenides dialogue, which has seemingly just begun, the former has had the upper hand in the last century or so, the latter more power in the longer-term. Current philosophy is concerned with the psychology (existentialism, essentialism, etc.) and politics (Marxism, feminism, etc.) of human existence, within the context of the conventions of both philosophy and change.

Change, then, is a function of time, space, and the conventions of traditional self-reflection, a phenomenological marker or figure for temporality and therefore, as conception and figure, is perpetually caught in the discourse of reality and illusion. The fall into time is the fall into change, since to know one is to know the other. Since all knowledge is built on difference, since differentiation is thus required to establish *nomos*, and because language (i.e., differentiation) is required for knowledge, knowledge requires change. The very idea of change is impossible—as both Heraclitus and Parmenides discovered—without a sense of identity, of stasis, and of the relative play of dialectical opposition and difference. This is inherent in the very words we use for the phenomenon (or non-phenomenon) of change. *Metabole*, to throw or glance across, contains within it the clear sense both of action and substance. *Change*, from the Latin *cambiare* (to exchange or barter), out of the Celtic base *kamb* (to bend or crook), indicates both the economic root of the idea of change, in the sense of its being based on exchange of something for something, and the swerving or willful (out of Epicurus and then Lucretius) sense of deviation from a normative or rigid direction. Change, in its very linguistic roots, has to do with a strategic deviation from an identifiable convention or position; change and the thought of change, even while aculturally normative, are always a potential disruption or disturbance of equilibrium and of convention.

In our own current cultural atmosphere, *penser le changement* consists of and entails normative and transgressive thinking, temporally oriented within an evolving cultural milieu of premodern, modern, and post-modern signs. Since Nietzsche, we have had to realize that the thought of change requires us to collate philosophy with psychology, and to make adjustments in the abstractions, absolutes, and conventions on which philosophic thought works to accommodate human (i.e., self-interested) *telos* and its psychological constraints. I mention Nietzsche here because the crux of the normative/transgressive issue in philosophy, certainly with regard to change, can be traced to Nietzsche's reconsideration of the Heraclitus/Parmenides dialogue. After *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's motto became *Los Vom Mythos*, "away from myth!" And once away from myth (as if he ever was), Nietzsche fabricated the "tragic philosophy" of Becoming and the Will to Power, grounded in self-overcoming through

development of the apocryphal *Übermensch* and thus to the Zarathustra phenomenon, that most ironic and parodic of transgressive estrangements.⁵ According to Nietzsche, the philosopher of tragic *Erkenntnis*

restrains the uncontrolled drive toward knowledge, but not through a new metaphysics. He does not set up a new faith. He feels the vanishing of the metaphysical ground as a tragic event and cannot find a satisfying compensation for it in the motley spiralling of the sciences. (X 118)

Ironically for Nietzsche, this embracing of tragic insight leads directly to his deep interest in change, and thus in the philosophy of Heraclitus:

I set apart with high reverence the name of Heraclitus. When the rest of the philosopher crowd rejected the evidence of the senses because these showed plurality and change, he rejected their evidence because they showed things as if they possessed duration and unity. . . . Insofar as the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie. (Nietzsche, F, *Twilight of the Twilight*, "Reason" in Philosophy, 2)

Later in the same section of *Twilight of the Idols*, the interrogation of "reason" reaches its apex in the declaration that

Change, mutation, becoming in general were formerly taken as proof of appearance, as a sign of the presence of something which led us astray. Today [1889], on the contrary, we see ourselves as it were entangled in error, necessitated to error, to precisely the extent that our prejudice in favor of reason compels us to posit unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, materiality, being; however sure we may be, on the basis of a strict reckoning, that error is to be found here. (5)

The error, according to Nietzsche, is to place language and its effects, "reason" and "being," at the core of creation; since being, so-called, is a creation of ego, it is always a function of both philosophy and psychology, which for Nietzsche creates a loop in which concepts—signs—labor to convince us of their substance and authority, always with our complicity. Not spiralling into the sciences but still anticipating Heisenberg, Nietzsche declares that "at any precise moment of a force, the absolute conditionality of a new distribution of all its forces is given: it cannot stand still. 'Change' belongs to the essence, and therefore also to temporality: with this, however, the necessity of change has only been posited once more conceptually" (*The Will to Power* 1064). The constitutive and creative notion of change, and by extension becoming, stands as the sign of a reading of the world free of the insidious errors of both progress and stasis.

It is within this pivotal Nietzschean context that this volume is conceived, and like a constellation of unlike stars arranged by their various

forces around an empty center that the essays in the volume have been gathered together and juxtaposed. The essays in this volume approach the theme of change, and *penser le changement*, from widely various standpoints. No attempt has been made to lessen their rhetorical or thematic differences; indeed, their divergences and the eclecticism of their overall effect are themselves signs of change, in the sense that such signs always must mark difference, must form a dialectical relationship based on difference. The theme of change is thus approached in the volume precisely, and not always directly, by its signs. "Signs of change" are not change, any more than becoming is being. But signs of change mark the boundaries of evolution of the culture in which we live, and those markers guide us toward worldviews of disturbing and provocative complexity. In a postmodern age (and surely no sign or marker has received more diverse treatment than this "postmodern" age), the mapping of a tendentious route to the postmodern is one of the chief pastimes, avocations, and vocations of critic, theorist, philosopher, and pundit. This activity, itself a cultural normative, like the IAPL gathering at which it was a central consideration, requires for its carrying out the establishing of a grounding concept, a convention from which to operate. "Convention," the word and its denotative mark, is a sign for the static, for a fixed mode or structure of operation; what is conventional is (for the present) unchanged and eternal. Conventions are the laws by which regulation and regularization are (trans)fixed. Thus, conventions are always subject to the law and may not, as Derrida has shown, produce insights beyond the law. This is itself, of course, a postmodern insight, and is thus "outside the frame" from the point of view of the premodern. The volume's subtitle, with its evolutionary structure, exhibits the postmodern irony of suggesting that the so-called premodern, no more nor less than the time of the establishment of conventions and normatives, "causes" or "paves the way for" the modernist revolt that itself contains and yet "causes" the postmodern. All of these familiar strategic worldviews consist of self-identifying conventions, and all are signs—something "representing something for someone," as Lacan says⁶—and thus the indices of differences and divisions. This volume is a reminder of those divisions and the condition of change within which they are manifest.

Indeed, this volume concerns itself not only with conventions of change, but with a convention on change: the sixteenth annual convention of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, held in Montréal in May, 1991, explored this complex and provocative issue from remarkably diverse points of view. Because of the IAPL's unique nature, the conventions of philosophy, literature, and literary theory discourse with one another in intense and fruitful debate. While the

volume does not attempt to represent, nor to be a sign for, that convention nor for the conventional, it emerges from both so as to engage the thought of change in such a way as to attempt an interrogation (which is of course itself a sign) and a provocation. If, since Derrida—since Nietzsche?—since Erasmus?—the provocative has been an increasingly strained meta-strategy for inquiry and the questioning of culture, its value and centrality is not lessened but rather heightened in the postmodern, which is quite literally a strategy of provocation. Perhaps this volume will have been at the cusp of that postmodern interrogation of cultural convention, its provocation a catalyst for a turn of the epistemological wheel.

As has become conventional in IAPL volumes, this one is subdivided into areas of thematic coagulation. No attempt is made to be comprehensive in these divisions, to (re)present a thorough investigation of the theme of change/signs of change, nor to track some inevitable course from the Premodern to the postmodern in each section or overall. Some of the essays in the volume draw broad theoretical strokes; some are quite specific in their application of theory to a particular thinker or artist, body of work, or text. The desired effect of a close reading of the volume in its entirety is both a cacophonous and an orchestrated one. The volume's six subdivisions do, however, trace an abbreviated path through some considerations of the theme of change. It would be possible to construct a logical sequence out of the constituent parts, beginning with the semiotic, semantic, and hermeneutic conditions on which any system of signs must be predicated (Part 1); then introducing the spatial dimension of change and the cognition of change through a consideration of the topographical and the broader topological, focusing here on the concrete evidence by which change is gauged and measured (Part 2); then, in the central section of the volume, taking up the temporal core of change in a double sequence of essays exploring the historical and the historiographic, followed by a discussion of the nature of (dis)closure as a function of history (Parts 3 and 4); then, within this spatial and temporal context, to a consideration of the politics of change (Part 5); and finally, to a concluding and re-framing discourse in which the more directly strategic aspects of the theme of change are considered (Part 6). It would also be possible to consider the volume, as I did often during its construction, from numerous other points of view, and in light of numerous other arrangements and disarrangements. Ideally, in some respects, the volume, like some of those in Borges's apocryphal library, would continuously permute through a series of differing orders, never settling on any "right" one. Since in the linear, codex form of the book (and the same will still be true of the CD-ROM form of the book, and every other form

that requires linear reading as we know it now) some structural organization is necessary, here is one. As with Nietzsche's strings and clusters of aphorisms in his more allusive later writings, significant thematic connections may be felt more strongly and clearly laterally, between (parts of) uncontiguous essays in disparate sections of the volume, than between those grouped together under the sign of an organizing and organizing rubric. Further, in some of the volume's twenty essays, the theme of change is addressed directly, as a theoretical or cultural marker, and in some it is merely alluded to as a component of the work or works being assessed. Yet change and the thought of change are centrally the driving themes behind each of the collected essays assembled here.

By a similar token, the volume plays with notions of the "modern" and its more formal critical construction, the "Modern" (along with that most evanescent and intractable of constructs, the "Postmodern"), without attempting definition, explanation, or juxtaposition. The volume is content to be at work and play in the general environment of these conceptualizations without being defined nor controlled by them.

If the following pieces as a whole, or any them as separate or constituent elements, engender thought on the part of the reader concerning the power and complexity inherent in the nature of change in its myriad aspects, then the volume will have accomplished its goals.

The first part of the paper discusses the historical context of the study, tracing the roots of the research back to the early 20th century. It highlights the contributions of several key figures in the field, whose work laid the foundation for the current study. The second part of the paper presents the methodology used in the research, detailing the data collection process and the analytical techniques employed. The results of the study are then presented, showing a clear trend in the data that supports the hypothesis. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings and suggests areas for future research.

The data shows a significant correlation between the variables studied, which is consistent with the theoretical framework. This finding has important implications for the field, as it provides new insights into the underlying mechanisms. The study also identifies several limitations and suggests ways to address them in future work. Overall, the research contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon and offers a new perspective on the issue.

Part One

*Semantics/Semiotics/
Hermeneutics*

Semiotics attempts to make explicit the implicit knowledge which enables signs to have meaning, so it needs the reader not as a person but as a function: the repository of the codes which account for the intelligibility of the text.

—Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs* 38

Language has turned on us.

—Gary Shapiro, *After the Future* xviii

Within the context of both the directly textual and the indirectly textual world of events, we have seen how the mechanisms of memory, time, space, and identity—not to mention language itself—have served historically as signs of change. Though Culler's distinction between "implicit" and "explicit" knowledge has a distinctly modern, if not indeed a downright premodern, ring, his attention to the syntactic connection between these kinds of knowledge is a useful reminder of the theatricality of the semiotic enterprise. Culler's declaration can be taken in several ways: mechanistically, he declares the automatic cause-response relationship between sent and received information, as though that simple distinction could still be made; semiotically, the Aristotelian, reader-response implication of the dynamic in Culler's statement implies a pact between reader (as functionary) and read (as textual, whether written or not), a relationship that can blossom into the densest thicket of cross-meanings and covert agendas with only the slightest attention.

And, of course, this dialectical dynamic itself, in its very form, entails change: it can be seen in the development of a hermeneutic system, as part of a culture or sub-culture at a given time; in the establishment of semiotic "languages" within cultures as diachronic structures. In fact, it is not empty semantics to declare that change is itself a semiotic marker. As a number of essays in ensuing sections will indicate, history and signs, politics and signs, space and signs are fundamentally enmeshed. Thus the volume might be seen to begin with semantics, semiotics, hermeneutics: activities of structuration and interpretation, and of the inscription of meaning.

To begin at the end, as Gary Shapiro so tersely points out in his introduction to *After the Future*, language (in the postmodern) has turned on us. But if it has done so, it had, as such, always done so, and its turns are the most fundamental signs of change we can know.

The terms gathered together for some kind of mutual consideration here show forth this complex relationship to change: *semantics*, as the investigation of contextual meaning; *semiotics*, as the structuration of

code and sign systems and their implementation; *hermeneutics*, as the discovery of meaning through exegesis—the triangulation of these terms is itself a semiotic and conceptual orchestration. The notion of signs for things can be traced back at least to the cave walls at Lascaux, and separately to the origins of writing itself in the recording of bills of lading for goods exchanged and accounted for by systems of marks, and though these notions are closely linked to the systematization of the hermeneutic enterprise in its links to the earliest religions, and the philosophic activity of semiotics to the roots of the philosophic enterprise—certainly in the metaphorical pre-Socratic philosophy of a Heraclitus or a Parmenides. Idealist philosophy is necessarily and indigenously marked by semiotics (Plato's cave, for example, is a dense semiotic network or images and concepts, and conceived as such, within the context of a language that is always turning on us), and the more pragmatic philosophy of Aristotle is pervaded by an awareness of the dangers and powers of semiosis (the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* come instantly to mind). That semiotics as a self-reflexive activity is a phenomenon of the twentieth century, emerging indirectly through the work of Russell, Freud (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), Cassirer, Heidegger, and others, and more directly through the work of Peirce and Saussure, and coming to fuller fruition after the middle of the century through the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, shows how pervasive has been our century's obsession with relationality and affinity, difference and estrangement. Semiotics, like psychoanalysis, is a function of the twentieth century. And yet unlike psychoanalysis, semiotics is "nomadic," always subject to the ambiguities not only of interpretation but of language and enculturation as well. Where semiotics is concerned, there are no facts, only interpretations.

Though semiotics is the middle term in designation of Part One, its investigation forms the core of the first and fourth essays in the section. In an abjectly secular age, hermeneutics and semiotics become virtually identical. All four of the section's essays investigate the tension between the metaphysics of hermeneutic applications to texts and non-texts, and all four address the structural poetics of semantics. Nonetheless, a look at premodern, modern, and postmodern semiotics is finally the essays' chief nourishment.

Ib Johansen works with the chronological evolution of the treatment of laughter in his essay. Starting from the premise that laughter is the chief sign of culture (and thus of change itself), that it is always a semiotic marker that in its vicissitudes marks the evolution of cultural attitudes and moods, Johansen evokes Bakhtin's notion of laughter as the synchronic, parodic underminer of authority that has undergone a "degradation" in the postmodern world, but that is still a "totalizing semiosis" covering all aspects of the "carnival" of society—laughter is from this

point of view cultural, not psychological. Johansen tracks the history of laughter from the medieval to the postmodern, showing for example how its denigration in medieval thought results in its reinscription and reintellectualization in the Renaissance turn to reasoned laughter. Whereas for John Donne laughter presents an epistemological critique of wisdom and folly, for Baudelaire and the early modernists Donne is reversed—now the wise man is afraid of laughter. Whereas for Foucault laughter is “aporetic,” for Cixous feminine laughter, linked to the body but still a social and political force, heralds the breakdown of patriarchal hegemony. Johansen’s tracking of the hermeneutic evolution of this single semiotic marker opens many potentially fruitful interpretive possibilities.

Erdmann Waniek takes a close and thoughtful look at another singular marker—silence, in the more limited context of selected twentieth-century German poetry. He explores the relationship between silence and language, always remembering the essential ambiguity of silence as such, declaring that the initiatory power of silence is immense: “it is as if for us, the language animal, the world opens only upon the loss of language.” Treating more than half a dozen poets from Hofmannsthal to Christa Wolf, Waniek focuses on Brecht’s acknowledgement that silence is a “*trockenlegung des weiten Prasensumpfes*,” particularly in light of the enormity of twentieth-century German social and political dynamics. Brecht, it is clear, meant *linguistic* silence (Kattrin in *Mother Courage* loses her life as a result of being herself mute but certainly and fatally not silent), asking whether silence makes one an accomplice in a time of political injustice. Brecht’s double desire is to be free of such questions, but not to avoid them where necessary. The poet, according to Brecht, can only become a witness to injustice by writing/speaking of it; to witness without speaking is not to witness (this theme resonates provocatively with recent work by Derrida on the nature of the witness, who must speak to be legitimate but who cannot, in speaking, witness for those who did not witness). Waniek explores various responses to Brecht’s question, specifically related to the Holocaust: Brecht knew that “easy silence” had to be lifted, Célan (whose suicide stands as a final silence in the face of the immensity of witness) knew that language veils the truth. Waniek’s treatment of the symbol-systems of silence and speaking/writing alight on fascinating imagery, such as Brecht’s use of the tree about which the poet would like to speak purely aesthetically but cannot, since doing so would entail denying larger issues demanding attention.

Waniek’s plotting of the curve of poets’ attitudes toward silence reveals a fascinating relationship between ideas of the poet as advocate and as aesthete. The evolution from Brecht to Célan to Enzensberger to Fritz and then to Christa Wolf can be seen, Waniek shows, as one from

"an aesthetics of resistance to an aesthetics of silence to a renewed but muted aesthetics of resistance, with less hope and certainty," the question of silence bringing up the ancillary one of the place of beauty in the social *locus*. Finally, for Wolf, silence acts as a healing agent, a pastoral escape from city noises, but this silence leads to the final question: is beauty "silent about and detached from the real world"? As he takes us through a series of powerful and poignant examples of the poetic use of silence, Waniek explores the changes in an attitude toward the sign of silence and its relation to its signifieds, and asks how silence is implicated in poetic and social change.

Echoing this social theme, Elinor Fuchs addresses postmodern nostalgia within a Debordian context, as the erasure of the past by democratic mass society, employing the "before theatre/after theatre" model of cultural change. Fuchs uses the sign of the theatrical to show how the postmodern establishes itself as a great "leveller of differences" and then, as the repository of resistance, as the agent of change. She invokes the connections between the aesthetic postmodern and the architectural to show how Western culture is "constructed around the protean image of the theatrical." Fuchs then traces the idea of theatre through the work of a series of (male) postmodern theorists from Debord to Derrida to Foucault to Deleuze/Guattari to Baudrillard, linking history and semiosis. Particularly interesting in this developmental analysis is her treatment of Derrida's notion of a non-imitative writing not preceded by speech, an imitation of nothing, in which "we enter the de-ontologized world of simulacra through the . . . *hymen* of theatre"—the theatre is the post-metaphysical world. Baudrillard, according to Fuchs, presents the furthest extension of antiontological simulation of the theatricality.

But Fuchs's is a dialectical strategy: after her treatment of postmodern theory in Baudrillard, she turns her attention to a feminist theatre semiotics, showing how theatre can be seen as the "patriarchal Other," the "ubiquitous theatre of male representation" (Françoise Collin) feminists must evade. Fuchs then presents several strategies for accomplishing this, for example in Cixous and Irigaray. In Irigaray, Fuchs finds the most systematic demonstration of the "feminine-as-performance" confronting patriarchal theatre. For Fuchs, the postmodern is "that moment in culture when the last ontological defenses crumble into theatre"; thus, theatre-as-marker is a vital sign of change.

John Johnston summarizes contemporary semiotic notions of change by chronicling and exploring the historical structuralism of Baudrillard and Deleuze-Guattari and their systems of simulacra. Since no referent is a "given," but is always produced by a sign system and a "reader," Johnston shows how these theorists critique respective "regimes of signs," never forgetting that framing historical references in semiotic

terms means that of course critical theory is itself situated within a regime of signs subject to the same critique. Johnston shows how in Baudrillard even "history" is now simulated existence engendered to justify certain discourses, and that for Deleuze-Guattari history is a "universalization" made possible by capitalism's abstracting, deterritorializing process. Even (or perhaps particularly) in the postmodern, the role of the critic, theorist, or intellectual is still that of interpreter.