

Western metaphysics and theology. This has allowed her, and those she has inspired, to explore the creative possibilities of postulating a feminine/maternal divine which has reinvigorated the theological speculations of many women in religious studies.

Of the five, it is Julia Kristeva whose important contributions to structural linguistics make her arguably the most well known of the five writers and whose work directly addresses specific religious texts and figures. As the various selections included in the book show, Kristeva's semiotic analysis of linguistic constructs has led her to reflect on the many fundamental Judeo-Christian concepts that continue to impact Western culture. As well, included in this collection are several examples of Kristeva's critical engagements with various biblical texts and her psychoanalytic studies of the tradition's major female religious figures (most notably the Virgin Mary). For Kristeva, due perhaps to her early experiences with religion's tenacity in Communist Bulgaria, the revisioning of religious meaning and symbolism is a powerful force for the possible overcoming of the repression and alienation of women and the feminine. While Kristeva and Irigaray's contributions to religious studies may be the more significant, all three of the other writers (Cixous, Clément and Wittig) have written critical reflections on Western religion that reveal the creative depth that is repressed when women's voices in religion remain unheard. While some examples of these are included in the book, it is the literary and autobiographical explorations of female spirituality in their novels and dramatic works which have arguably made Cixous, Clément and Wittig so influential within Anglo-feminist religious studies.

The impact of these five French thinkers on feminist-inspired religious studies scholars makes a selected anthology of their writings an important contribution to the field of religious studies as a whole. The critical importance of deconstructing the negative effects of sexual differentiation in religious doctrines and philosophies, coupled with the exciting possibilities suggested by a "radical revisioning" of the sacred which the French feminists explore, make such an anthology a necessity.

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*Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation.*  
 Edited by Michael F. Marra. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.  
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*Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation* gathers together the papers presented at a 1998 conference organized at UCLA by Michael Marra, sorting them into sections on Hermeneutics and Japan, which looks at how indigenous categories of interpretation can be discovered

or created in order to articulate Japanese difference, Japan's Aesthetic Hermeneutics, which treats the entanglements of Japanese and Western thought in the development of Japanese aesthetics, and Japan's Literary Hermeneutics, which takes up Marra's call to resist the treatment of classical texts as "facts" and consider instead the processes through which the classics come to be canonized (3).

In his introduction to the volume, Marra stresses the degree to which the conference challenged the fixed borders of specialization by bringing together aestheticians, philosophers, and historians of art, literature, and ideas, and while Marra notes that nonetheless "certain boundaries were respected" (1), in fact, the book troubles the boundaries of the very Japan it examines. This troubling seems to be, for Marra, not an academic game but an ethical imperative; following the lead of Gianni Vattimo, whose "Method, Hermeneutics, Truth" opens the book in good postmodern form by dealing not with Japan but with the way Japan functioned as a field of possibility for Heidegger, Marra suggests that developing the interpretive skills to engage the other without overcoming the other "might well become an art of survival" (5).

The anthology can be productively read then as a set of dialogues; the papers here speak with and against each other, sometimes in ways that are slightly jarring—J. Thomas Rimer's rousing discussion of the significance of Ernest Fenollosa's *Bijutsu Shinsetsu* is directly followed by Kambayashi Tsunemichi's assessment of Fenollosa's lecture as seeming "from today's perspective...a mere summary of classical European art theory" (110)—and sometimes in ways that are wonderfully felicitous. For example, Thomas Lamarre takes up Vattimo's work on Heidegger in order to critique the notion of language as House of Being, so that where Vattimo notes that truth discloses itself "more clearly and radically when we try to translate a text written in a foreign language (the more foreign the better)" (10), Lamarre insists that both Western and Japanese audiences resist conflating ancient and classical Japanese, that "it is essential to take seriously the notion that *Man'yō* poetics constitutes a foreign language" (205). This kind of disruption of the relation between *Man'yōshū* and the "native" Japanese tongue is just one of the ways the writers included here, singly and together, problematize the search for an originary Japan, so that while in the first section Sasaki Ken'ichi, Ohashi Ryosuke, and Graham Parkes will look to pre-modern art forms in the search for a "Japanese traditional aesthetics" (19), their work will be followed by Marra locating the beginnings of Japanese aesthetics in the later 1800s, consistent with his argument in *Modern Japanese Aesthetics* that it is non-sensical to speak of a pre-modern aesthetics. Nevertheless, it is these papers that will perhaps most appeal to readers with an interest in Japanese religions.

In "Poetics of Intransitivity" Sasaki discusses the difference between intransitive verbs of becoming and transitive verbs of making or doing, arguing that intransitivity in fact constitutes a distinctively Japanese worldview in which actions take "things or the world," rather than persons, "as their subject" (24); Sasaki identifies this intransitivity as the ground on which a doc-

trine of original enlightenment gets worked out in Tendai Buddhism. Ohashi considers the notion of *kire-tsuzuki*, cut-continuance or discontinuous continuity, as an expression of the relation between the art-world and the ordinary world (31); through a series of elegant connections, he reveals the relationship between the cut of *kire* and a Buddhist attitude of resignation or *akirame*, allowing in the process for a Buddhist reading of not only the usual suspects of Zen aesthetics—*nō*, tea, haiku, *bushidō*—but also Chikamatsu's puppet theatre and Kuki Shuzo's *iki*. Graham Parkes takes up the idea of cut-continuance in his "The Eloquent Stillness of Stone," as well as working with Kukai's teaching of *hosshin seppō*, the Dharmakaya expounds the dharma (57), and Dogen's *mujō seppō*, insentient beings expound the dharma (58), in developing a framework for reading the rock garden at Ryōan-ji as a sutra. Parkes's essay here is a version of the piece he wrote to accompany Francois Berthier's *Reading Zen in the Rocks*.

More valuable still than these lucid and engaging pieces however is the method presented by the volume as a whole of thinking about difference in a way that neither accedes to a mute acceptance of Japan and the West as radically unknowable to the other, nor denies any possibility of alterity by locating a Western original for every element of Japanese thought. Marra wonders in his introduction how a literary history can be written without the support of a history of meaning, of taste, and of interpretation (3); adding this volume to his *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader*, Marra has surely made a profoundly helpful contribution to at least two of these three vital histories.

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*Buddhism and Deconstruction: Towards a Comparative Semiotics.* By Youxuan Wang. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press 2001. ISBN: 0-7007-1386-7. Pp. xiii+242.

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When I first began reading this book, I was surprised that the content did not match my expectations. I had assumed that the 242-page volume entitled *Buddhism and Deconstruction: Towards a Comparative Semiotics* would have more than one chapter of twenty-nine pages and an afterword of six pages on the actual comparison of Buddhism and Deconstruction. Rather, what this book delivers is five chapters on Chinese Buddhism and one chapter on comparative philosophy. As such, this book should provide value for two groups. First, scholars interested in Chinese Buddhist understandings of language or semiotics will find the first five chapters a useful examination of some early Chinese Buddhist thinkers on the sign. Second, those interested in the comparative study of Buddhism and Deconstruction will find the last chapter of some interest.