

is being said and the saying of it, is simply too unbearable; it demands summary burial and the intercalation of a less poetic disposition satisfied by the banalities of good reviews, the respect of one's colleagues, and a shift in one's relative standing in a particular field of humanistic inquiry with the publication of a new monograph. Until, that is, reality, which truly is as recalcitrant as our surly asceticism would have it, comes knocking and says otherwise. My moment of conversion occurred when over two decades ago I found a somewhat worse for wear envelope in my mail box in the Department of Religious Studies at Yale. The envelope did not have much to recommend it; even without the bedraggled appearance one could see that the paper quality was poor. In addition, all that was there by way of writing was the scribble of my name and Yale University. The question as to how it was possible for such a letter to reach its addressee was already boiling over even before I opened it. When I did, I discovered a short note of one and half pages, the first half written in pen, the second in pencil. The signee was Gillian Rose, whom I had never met and who at that time was for me no less but also no more than the author of the wonderful and influential book *Hegel Contra Sociology* (1981).

This letter was and still remains one of my most prized possessions. It lay around for years until recently when trying to give it a more permanent home I secreted it away. As often happens when impractical persons suddenly become practical, I put it in a "safe place." Currently, it is safe but lost, so I can only do it the injustice of paraphrase. In the first part of the note, written in pen, Rose wrote that she had been waiting for *The Heterodox Hegel* (1994) essentially all her entire intellectual life and that she received it precisely as the fruit of her desire. In the second part of the note, the part written in pencil and thus presumably later, since there seemed to be no fade out in the ink, Rose upbraided me for not having paid sufficient attention to her book on Hegel. I did not know then what I knew shortly thereafter having caught up with her major work and having read *Love's Work* (1995), her autobiography, that when she wrote this note she was dying. But even without the added pathos of knowing this, I have rarely been as moved in my life. Her note to me was like a message in a bottle; it should have been permanently lost on the high seas of nowhere and never arrived. But her words did arrive, probably via one of her many willing emissaries who happened to be passing through New Haven. In any event, her words transfigured my book into something like a sacrament: by her resounding it she had sounded it. The reviews of *The Heterodox Hegel* were shockingly good. There was a lavishness in their praise that was borderline embarrassing and they supplied a canopy of superlatives under which I could recline

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she said it was of an entirely different order: it translated me into the time of an impossible hope in writing of being seen and heard. It did not matter that I was upbraided. In fact, not only did being upbraided have no sting; it seemed to have the quality of the sacred. I thanked her with as much self-control as I could muster, but only after I caught up with her oeuvre, having been sensibly afraid to take the risk of being called out for not giving sufficient attention to another of her books.

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The above moment has become a polestar when it comes to reading and being read. Of course, one does not read every piece of writing one comes across with this expectation in view. The bar is usually expertise, competence, and the occasional insight. But one dares to admit that one comes across texts that speak because they say and show and thus speak, just as one dares to excavate the hope that one is read with an understanding that is resonant and thus capable of bringing out strands and inflections that really were latencies. With the group of writers assembled in this book, all of whom I have read with delight, I find myself recalling how I myself was moved to resonance. With this group of writers, I also find that their readings of my own work are resonances, thus appreciations that are at once fulsome and uniquely voiced. I view them as acts of gratitude that also subtly interrogate, or interrogations that themselves are acts of gratitude. I will in due course return to the distinction and relation between these two registers of interrogation, indeed, it functions to structure my entire response. The first half of my response unsurprisingly consists of saying thank you to readers who “illuminate” in the medieval sense not only by making plain some elements of my thought and offering judgments as to its value, but also of making it “splendid” by the shining of their own seeing that unveils as their own hearing resonates.