

AMAZON, INC. *Language at the Boundaries*:

https://www.amazon.com/Language-Boundaries-Philosophy-Literature-Poetics/dp/1501363654/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=Language+at+the+Boundaries&qid=1632699201&sr=8-2

Top review from the United States *5.0 out of 5 stars*; April 8, 2021

POETRY AS THINKING AT ITS LIMITS

Peter Carravetta is a scholar, who was born in rural Calabria and grew up in the Bronx when he was a kid – a real tough customer –, who has risen to the highest ranks of the academic world to become a Professor of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, and most recently, a Professor of Philosophy at Stony Brook University, New York, who has written books in the fields of Hermeneutics, Humanism (i.e., Identity and Migration Studies), Method and Rhetoric of Critique, and Postmodernism, and who has now assembled a quintessential volume of essays: *Language at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Literature, and the Poetics of Culture*, just released by Bloomsbury Press. It is a book circulating around several ancient, classical, or simply long-standing dialectical struggles between poetry and philosophy as they transpired in the forms of the lyrical and narrative (or epic) traditions, respectively; and between the ontological and metaphysical modalities of language and aesthetics, with intervening allegorical and/or aphoristic valences. Subsets, extensions, or transformations of these struggles obtain as they relate to translation (as an ontic reality) and migration (as a transient / transitional / provisional, and, in my opinion, “groundless,” condition); language and the ‘border controls’ of theory and aesthetics at their limits (especially as these wiry magnets or ‘border control’ guards – today’s version of Plato’s philosopher-kings – function in literature in general and poetry in particular); and the implicit corporatization of the world and the residual survival of what is Human in our various and varied civilizations and visions as something more than a tautological selfie-taking Self.

Carravetta is an individual who knows how to bring the street life of the mind into the intellectual agora. Few philosophers know how to do this. It is a rare and difficult skill set. And I’m quite sure he accomplishes this to the annoyance of the specialists in their chosen fields who would rather he did not pursue, indeed, construct, such overarching (and overwhelming) bridges between these fields, normally cast by his nemeses as exclusionary paradigms. But he has a long history of pursuing this objective of finding or inventing “relational” bridges between the empirical and epistemological worlds (to put fancy words to it) – the worlds of actual experience and hard-won knowledge that animate his spirit, a veritable Zeitgeist-driven Over-Soul, which sometimes does indeed require that we indulge Yves Klein’s “leap into the void” or Walter Benjamin’s “tiger’s leap into the past,” into history as a volatile and living organism – the history of ideas, but also more currently, the expiring idea of History as such.

Speaking of which (i.e., the Emersonian idea of the Over-Soul): there are marvelous chapters on Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, F.T. Marinetti, Gertrude Stein and company, and

various transnational and postcolonial and Asian writers, always within the context of language visionaries, showcasing the role language-in-itself actually plays in literature. Carravetta is a writer and a thinker who ultimately brings the most sophisticated algorithms of the imagination to the rethinking of writing, thought, and history, and in this there is what can only be described as hopeful nihilism. And it is in this context he even toys with the possibilities of travel writing as a potential doorway to a new threshold of culture, excavating what I have called elsewhere and long ago, partially with my tongue tucked not so politely or ironically into my cheek, the “post-Postmodern,” whose asymptotic instances Carravetta persists in tracking down in his own way, having written no less than three books on the subject. Quite an accomplishment, as he continues to irritate and wind his work through the outermost boundaries of this anti-paradigmatic threshold of ‘radical groundlessness’ with all of its social implications in tow.

My only criticism is Carravetta’s prose can sometimes get a bit clogged with too many references and footnotes, and, at times, terminological onslaughts, not that these endless branches or limbs of his thinking are not always interesting, but which sometimes interrupt the normal fluidity of his elegant prose style, however complex. But mind you, this is a little bit like complaining about too much learning, which is more than ridiculous on my part, a part that admittedly cannot always keep up with this superlative and rare personification of the intelligentsia at work. Does anyone out there vaguely remember that class of individuals (the intelligentsia) who used to exist in this country? Carravetta is like a one-man Algonquin Round Table, but situated far from its White Anglo-Saxon orientation (despite its Jewish inflections), but who has taken up the causes of Native Americans, immigrants, the marginal, the dispossessed and disenfranchised, who I’m sure did not have a seat at that enviable Arthurian Round Table.

One last thing: I really appreciated the image of hieroglyphs (very Dubuffetish) from a cave in the Southwest reproduced on the cover, which prepares the reader, signals to her, the book’s primal and far-reaching scope. I also liked the imaginary meta-hieroglyphs devised and contributed by the artist, Angela Biancofiore, which abstract and lyrical graphemes, positioned at the beginning of each chapter, further hint at the potential beauty and power of ‘language’ when it is released from the cage of the conventional and the rational and allowed to roam unhampered, to follow its own feral pulsions across the vast unexplored thresholds of the human imagination.

In so many different and innumerable ways, Peter Carravetta’s *Language at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Literature, and the Poetics of Culture* is devoted to the excavation of human consciousness at the limits of human expression, or what he calls “Limitrophy.” I applaud the achievement and recommend the book to anyone who has a mind operating beyond the device in their hands.

by **Richard Milazzo**, New York City, April 8, 2021



Edgewise Press, Inc. / Richard Milazzo