

REVIEW ARTICLE

Joanne Faulkner, *Dead Letters to Nietzsche, Or the Necromantic Art of Reading Philosophy*, Ohio University Press, 2010

Matthew Sharpe

1

We live in a time when our professional work in Continental European Philosophy consists largely, perhaps exclusively, of reading texts. But rarely do we ask: So what then is it we are doing, when we read a work of philosophy? What is it we hope to achieve by doing so? Who, or which part of ourselves, are engaged in the process? And with which interpretive or other forms of desire? Differently, whose voice is it that we hear when we read some celebrated authority or other? What other experiences of authority, positive or base, might shape who we are able to hear, and how we can understand what they have to say?

To be sure, these questions have seemingly banal answers. It is “Heidegger,” “Freud,” or “Sartre” who speaks. And we are here to learn. Perhaps we have one or other political or ethical ambition, which we discuss often enough, and which shapes what we read. Perhaps we read to know we are not alone, as C.S. Lewis came to say. But then, the nature of writing means the issues are not so simple. The author, and his or her voice, are of course absent. He or she cannot be there, with us, to answer our questions and check our misreadings.

To be sure, as readers, we can and do feel that, when we love an author, we know their voice, just as we know what they meant to say. We imagine this voice’s timbre or its tone as we read to ourselves. We have a sense, perhaps, of knowing the author personally. Through the written medium alone, authors can play transformative roles in our lives, form the bases for our careers or our break-through books, or perhaps restore us to peace and direction in difficult times.

But it remains that the author’s voice we hear in our heads, as we read, is always our construction. Few theorists of interpretation will deny that there is some interaction between what hermeneuticians call the forestructures of the reader, and the text as it presents itself. This is so, even for those who want strongly to deny that this means we need give up the ghost of more or less true, accurate, thorough, or rich readings. But then, where do these forestructures we bring to a text come from? Why for instance can one text mean so much more to us at one time than another, either intellectually or existentially? And why is it that some authors seem so much more

to “speak to us” than others, and attract different, stronger species of identification?

It will be suggested that these questions can be answered sufficiently by recourse to a traditional answer: we are rationally attracted to some authors over others, because we find these authors say more that is true and revealing about the world than others. It is not they, but their *logoi* that compels us, as Socrates used to say. Yet why is it that, on the strength only of the reading of old books, we turn proper names into adjectives, and dub entire traditions of thinking, and we ourselves as “Heideggerians,” “Lacanian,” “Foucaultians,” etc.? Posing the question of truth reflexively, isn’t it rational and philosophical, to wonder whether there must be more about us which is engaged in reading old books than some Platonic pure mind?

It is these general questions that frame Joanne Faulkner’s fascinating study *Dead Letters to Nietzsche*, and give it its intriguing subtitle: *On the Necromantic Art of Reading Philosophy*. For Faulkner, the nature of the written text, which circulates beyond the supervision of its author, renders reading akin to a work of mourning someone lost or absent, and perhaps near and dear. More than this, there is sorcery afoot: “the act of reading involves the necromantic art of resurrecting the author.” To read is to interpret, with “the particular reading constructing a presence in lieu of [the author] actually being there.”⁽⁴⁾ To read is to conjure up this authoritative, authorial presence, from somewhere, often after the actual author is centuries dead. It is not only to hear again their voice, or their voice as we imaginatively conjure it. It is also, often, to come to invoke their name and legacy, to speak in their name, or as if he or she might speak through us. In many contexts in our culture of the book, such an invocation can stand as sufficient to reshape an argument: “is it not written ...? does X not say that ...?”

2

Faulkner’s particular study in *Dead Letters* is German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and his diverse “brood” of legatees, as she sometimes calls them. How much more difficult do the questions we raised above come, when we consider Nietzsche? As Faulkner opens by observing, Nietzsche commands a following “which would be the envy of any philosopher and renown that crosses disciplinary boundaries, extending even beyond the academy.”⁽²⁾ This following cuts across nearly every conceivable doctrinal divide: feminist and fascist, authoritarian and libertarian, left-wing and right-wing, reactionary and postmodernist, poet and philosopher, gentile and Jew. “Many of these thinkers have dedicated a great deal of their lives not only to reading and interpreting Nietzsche’s texts,” Faulkner moreover observes, “but also attempting to actualise the ‘event’ his writings only envisage: the revaluation of values wherein philosophers forge their truths from strength, rather than in the spirit of life-negation.”⁽¹⁾

All of these “Nietzscheans” differently claim Nietzsche’s name and authority, and their very legion gives some credibility to Nietzsche’s oft-repeated claims that surely his time was yet to come, since some are born only posthumously. The diversity of Nietzsche’s following, it can be observed, is matched only by the marvellous, prolific rhetorical diversity of Nietzsche’s *oeuvre*, or what could be called his different voices. For in addition to argumentative forms more acceptable in polite philosophical circles, as we know Nietzsche’s texts are fabrics artfully stitched out of intimations, invocations, wagers, taunts, polemics, bathetic swaggers, dialogues, aphorisms, masks, myths, enigmas, paradoxes, genealogies, anecdotes, fictions, rhetorical questions, poetry, and even songs.

Faulkner’s analysis is informed by her own long, personal, and professional wrestling with Nietzsche and her impressive erudition. What can be involved in reading Nietzsche, and claiming to speak in his name, she argues, is trebly complicated by what might be called the writerly reflexivity of Nietzsche’s texts. It is not simply that these texts seem to contradict each other, and contain elements which, alongside all that obviously recommends itself, we can find repulsive today, including seemingly anti-semitic, misogynist, anti-democratic, anti-modern, and anti-religious sentiments, topped with dalliances in eugenics, social engineering, and narcissistic Platonic fantasies of philosopher kings.

Faulkner throughout *Dead Letters* highlights how Nietzsche was highly self-conscious about the way that he would be read. Nietzsche taunts us repeatedly, she notes, with the prospect that there will be good and bad readers of his texts, and warns us each, lest we fall into the latter category. Nietzsche's texts indeed actively posit certain positive and negative types into which his readership might fall: the philosopher-legislators or philosopher-artists, overmen or philosophers of the future, master-types or free spirits; as opposed to the herd man, the mediocre, the decadent, the motley crowd, the last men, the slaves and reactive spirits. At certain points, Nietzsche even suggests that he not only will, but must and should be misread, and that this misreading and misappropriation will form part of the revaluation of all values his work pronounces, too early. Then there is the infamous esoteric-exoteric distinction Nietzsche waves before our eyes, as an allegedly sure mark of any higher culture.²

If all these reflexive complications were not enough, Faulkner notes also the famous, final paradoxical trap awaiting the would-be Nietzschean. This is Zarathustra's famous warning that—although as worthy readers we must surely also read with delicate eyes and fingers (64)—we must also beware that we do not become his disciples, let alone mere scholars or philosophical labourers.

So the paradox *Dead Letters to Nietzsche* sets out to resolve is that Nietzsche, less despite than somehow *because* of these writerly features of his books, has attracted the most diverse, impassioned, and often the most intimate, following of the modern philosophers. One exegetical task of Faulkner's book is to document, and to try to explain the passionate nature of the attachments leading interpreters of his work have formed with "Nietzsche"—the work, or the name. For Stanley Rosen and Lawrence Lampert, Nietzsche's philosophical rhetoric and esotericism serves to interpellate a happy few, the present writers apparently included, into the ranks of Platonic philosopher-legislators (63-4; 77-84); Bataille talks of the need to become "vulnerable to trials and tribulations" (108) of the solitary wander-philosopher; David Farrell Krell surely protests too much that his novel *Nietzsche* which reconstructs the ten, final years of Nietzsche's madness often in the first person), does not indulge a "mania for biography" and a deeply personal investment (114); Klossowski discerns in Nietzsche and Sade the leaders of a conspiracy of philosopher-villains devoted to overturning present culture.(168-176) All these are, indeed, extraordinary responses to a series of dead letters from an author, like Nietzsche, long dead.

3

To navigate this hermeneutic maze, Faulkner brings the Ariadne's thread of an extensive knowledge of psychoanalytic theory: Freud and Lacan first, but principally Melanie Klein and the object-relations school. Her argument turns on the notion that if Nietzsche was not a necromancer, then at the very least he was a terrible enchanter, sorcerer, or sophist, as Plato's Diotima famously described Eros.³ Nietzsche's texts, Faulkner argues, are shaped to persuade and convince. But they also do more. They are ingenious devices "to incite the reader's attachment," or to form, rather than to inform them.(5) The object of her concern, Faulkner then reflects, is:

The manner in which Nietzsche's texts affect readers in their subjectivity, producing in them a sense of belonging to his philosophical project, and thus investing them with a duty to it. / ... the purpose of his texts was ... in part to recruit the reader to his program of the revaluation of values.(6/7)

This is how *Dead Letters* situates Nietzsche's employment of the complex rhetorical and highly reflexive textual strategies introduced above. The principal amongst these, mentioned above, is to have anticipated and "written into" his philosophy, in advance, the possible subject-positions of those who would read him:

In effect, the text interpellates the reader in relation to various "figures of excess": identifications that are either impossibly ideal or abject, such as "the philosophers of the future," "the blond beast," "we wise ones," or else the slavish "last man." To the extent, readers are initiated into Nietzsche's philosophy by its own ideological apparatus, which they internalise through reading his books.(7)

Faulkner's analysis of how this interpellation operates leans on her recourse to Freud's account of incorporation; the Lacanian theory of interpellation and its structuring excess, the Real; and Klein's and Bion's work on early childhood psychology. Her contention is that Nietzsche's texts incite the same types of deep, deeply ambivalent attachment in his followers that characterise children's relations with the earliest authority figures. For Faulkner's Nietzsche, manipulating these constitutive psychic dynamics was moreover quite a conscious thing. As Faulkner shows at length (Chapter One), Nietzsche's account of the formation of stable language-using subjectivity significantly anticipates psychoanalytic accounts—as it almost certainly influenced Freud. The civilised, rational "I" emerges from out of the multiplicity of bodily drives. Its structured formation, and the controlling force it exerts upon the world, partially expresses these somatic drives. But it also represses their decentred, chaotic multiplicity and immediacy. This primordial corporeal "depth" can henceforth then only appear to the subject, and to wider culture, as an excess. It is at once a fascinating reminder and a promise of the enjoyments which for the subject are prohibited; as it is a threatening abyssal, abject remainder. Nietzsche's contradictory appeal to his readers to "be yourself" then involves, for Faulkner—who here as elsewhere draws most from Klossowski:

an attempt to awaken a sense of the excess—that there is another, vaster self that the regularity of everyday existence obscures. "The self" to which Nietzsche's writing appeals is then supposed to be drawn from the limitless reservoir to which language bars access, ironically, by the *language* employed by Nietzsche.(21)

Fascinatingly, there is a further twist in Faulkner's account. While Nietzsche posits this bodily corporeal depth as ontologically primary, it is epistemologically secondary: first in itself but not for us, as Aristotle would have said. The primordial innocence of the body's chaotic becoming looks very like a retroactive construction or fantasy, and certainly it is nothing which we *qua* organised "I's" have directly experienced, and lived to tell the tale. Just so, Faulkner provocatively contests the surface narrative of Nietzsche's genealogy of morals, in which the slave revolt in morals overturns the active, life-affirming cast of the masters. This surface narrative conceals a competing intimation. This is that the master figure is also a projection of slave-psychology, the subject of the slave's (and as modern legatees of the slave revolt, also *our*) own deepest, repressed wishes:

The reader might tell herself that a negative response to the noble is merely a hangover from her slave upbringing—that she can work through this discomfort by devoting herself to Nietzsche's works. Or, she might deny the unbridled malevolence that Nietzsche had in mind when he wrote of the noble as a "beast of prey." Yet either way, the noble is the ambiguous object of the reader's aspiration and fear: a figure of excess through which he or she casts subjectivity.(24)

4

Faulkner's Nietzsche then is the master of a discourse which interpellates its reader on not one level, but at least two different levels. To clarify immediately: hers is not a rehash of the types of esoteric-Nietzsche interpretations we find in the students of Leo Strauss, including Stanley Rosen and Lawrence Lampert, which Faulkner critiques. For Faulkner against the Straussians, it is decisive that there are not simply different ranks of readers of Nietzsche: the few and the many, the bad and the good. Drawing differently on object relations a Lacan, Faulkner fascinatingly argues that the appeal of Nietzsche's texts divide *each* reader. On the one hand, we find in his texts figures of our direct or conscious, idealising identifications: figures such as the artist, the free spirit, the happy few, the overman, etc. On the other hand, however—and more provocatively—there are at least three different points of excess in Nietzsche's texts, "commerce with which" (to borrow one of Faulkner's phrases) undergird the reader's more official interpellation.

First: the very ambiguity that Nietzsche's multi-levelled, masked, playful, ambiguous texts has a role in engendering what Slavoj Žižek has called "precipitate identification."⁴ (As we will see, Nietzsche the man's abject, physically ill, socially-rejected, then mad state also has this role). The very fact that Nietzsche does not tell us the final words, that his *Grunde* secret remains unsaid, as Rosen puts it (90), means that the reader

is drawn themselves to actively provide this final word. The fascinated reader, responding to their own inability to make full sense of the whole, makes Nietzsche's words their own, in order to make them whole, in a much more powerful way than if we were told fully or directly the "Nietzschean" position. In this way, Nietzsche the author becomes a kind of confidant, or perhaps a co-conspirator, with his interpellated readers. Nietzsche skilfully augments this conspiratorial effect, for Faulkner, by proclaiming himself born too early or as necessarily betrayed and misunderstood by his contemporaries: all before intimating that his appeal goes out only to a happy few, philosophers of the future, without whose assistance his own work cannot be completed.

The second species of excess which Faulkner sees as significant to the way Nietzsche captures his readers, are those moments in his texts which should be deeply discomfiting to modern readers: Nietzsche's invocation of the culture-conquering blond beasts in the *Genealogy of Morals*, his anti-semitic statements, Nietzsche's eugenic moments, the misogynistic moments ("go to woman with a whip"), his diatribes against discussion, reflexivity, and democracy. Sarah Kofman's dismissal of such moments is typical:

Without a doubt, certain texts, taken out of context, isolated from the whole of the *corpus* and from all reference, mounted on a pin, and what's more, that are falsified, when they fall in the hands of men of a certain type ... could have been able to contribute to a misinterpretation and to a dangerous, scandalous reappropriation. (Kofman quoted 143)

Yet for Faulkner, trained in psychoanalytic modes of reading, the gesture of Nietzscheans to peremptorily dismiss these moments as of no account in understanding Nietzsche is deeply question-worthy. Her claim is rather that, in such moments, Nietzsche presents us with the bodily, corporeal excess his account of the subject promises. It is as if he were saying: *so, you agree to my view of the "I" as formed out of vital forces which can only thenceforth appear transgressive or excessive to the rational, pacified, modern self—well then, here they are!* To try to deny or suppress such moments, to try in this way to "save" Nietzsche from them, is for Faulkner an ambiguous gesture, and a misrecognition of the textual features that make his work so uniquely enticing for many readers.

Third, Faulkner contends that Nietzsche's evocations of those "others supposed not to know", the bad readers—the weak, the reactive, the motley crowd, the scholars, philosophical labourers, etc.—is more important than we might take it to be. Again, as with the excessive, politically incorrect elements in Nietzsche, the first tendency of the "Nietzschean"—here in line with the rationalist—is to dismiss Nietzsche's evocation of these figures as incidental to the main game of his ideas. The bad readers, Faulkner by contrast claims, play an essential role in Nietzscheans' attempt to render consistent the apparently decentred Nietzschean *oeuvre*—and exactly to *save* Nietzsche or his name from those excessive moments in the texts that threaten to discolour the whole. In particular, Faulkner's claim is that the bad other/reader is typically invoked by Nietzscheans as the figure responsible for falsely highlighting the most excessive, troubling moments in Nietzsche's texts. They are the others who have misquoted Nietzsche or quoted those passages artificially, out of context and out of malice. In this way, it is they whose hermeneutic misconduct allows us to preserve, pure or uncontaminated, our Nietzschean identity—even though we may also be liberals, democrats, socialists, feminists, and so exactly the types of modern citizens Nietzsche seems often to have reviled.

So it is in attempting to explain this contention that Faulkner's psychoanalytic thesis fully hits home. These others supposed not to know are for Faulkner a necessary double to the good identity we form when we become Nietzscheans, taking ourselves as those who understand him, Nietzsche's intimates, his legatees, the happy few. These misunderstanding others are the objects onto whom, in Kleinian terms we can each project our own attraction to the excessive moments in Nietzsche's texts. Thereby, these others can become the projective containers for the excessive repressed drives in ourselves Nietzsche has known how to invoke to shake us up and entice us—forbidden egalitarian, sexist, racist, and parochial sentiments.

Nietzsche's texts meanwhile, under Faulkner's pen, become something they may never have been before: wri-terly "containers" for repressed, excessive drives where first the readers' parents and then perhaps their

analysts ought to have been.

V

This is why the body of *Dead Letters* is a series of detailed critiques of earlier Nietzsche-interpreters which we cannot do full justice to here: Lampert, Rosen, Bataille, Krell, and Kofman. We are called by Faulkner to pay “a heightened attention to the commerce of psychic material between us and Nietzsche’s texts,” as we read these figures, and read Nietzsche ourselves.(179) If the kind of ethical revaluation she sees in Nietzsche is to transpire, she argues, we are called upon to pose to Nietzsche’s dead letters the enigmatic question Lacan places at the subjective origin of symbolisation *per se: che vuoi?* What does Nietzsche want, when he tells us what he does? But equally, or rather primarily, Faulkner proposes we should ask, *what do I want from this?* “to each of Nietzsche’s propositions.”(185) What is it we “get” out of the exchange with our author: what sense of self, or of becoming who we are? Nietzsche, in what has always seemed to this author to be one of those aphorisms that one cannot cut one’s teeth upon too often, asks us to wonder whether we have not made our virtues from out of our weaknesses. So too, above all, Faulkner enjoins us to take on responsibility for those moments of ambivalent *jouissance* or attraction-repulsion in Nietzsche’s dead letter: “instead of locating the excesses elsewhere, readers must take responsibility for them in the knowledge that their attraction to Nietzsche’s philosophy demands excess as the site of projective identification.”(185) This means we ought, as Derrida for one does in *Otobiographies* or Camus and others have done, accept for all our love of Nietzsche that there are moments, indeed entire strata, of Nietzsche’s *oeuvre* that speak to reactionary, authoritarian, fascist wishes and tendencies. By contrast, Faulkner incisively suggests:

The tendency instead to deny the inherent ambiguities in the text—and to send the “bad reader” into the desert burdened with our collective guilt—indicates the very (schizoid) mechanism that leads to racism and sexism.(180)

If Faulkner is right, then, we *should* suspect David Farrell Krell of protesting too much that he is not “mad” enough to think a biographical novel on the lost years of Nietzsche’s life could recover the hidden truth of Nietzsche (when he has written such a text, moreover, in the first person: “mama holds my head by the hair...”(at 112)). We *should* question what was “in” Bataille’s impossible fantasy of shared madness and suffering with his literary progenitor, for Bataille and for us.(see: 110-111) We *should* wonder if we find ourselves in a Straussian mode transformed one day by reading Nietzsche or anyone else from a bashful modern youth, to a next generation philosopher-king in company with Plato, Farabi, Maimonides, or Machiavelli. We should equally question Sarah Kofman’s affecting lifelong engagement with Nietzsche, and the attempt to purge his text of all anti-Semitism, instead wondering at “the extent to which she is invested in Nietzsche’s good name for the sake of her own purity.”(179)

In the vein of such inquiries, *Dead Letters to Nietzsche*’s critical work enacts an ascent from hermeneutic and psychoanalytic premises (chapters 1 and 2), via the central chapters of exegesis and critique (3 and 4), towards a final rung on Klossowski’s Nietzsche. For Faulkner, Klossowski’s reading of Nietzsche comes closest to the type of reading of Nietzsche towards which what her own, psychoanalytically informed engagement would aspire:

although Klossowski documents Nietzsche’s mental disintegration as if it were the object of the philosophy, he approaches what I consider an ethical reading of Nietzsche to the extent that his interpretation preserves the ambiguity so central to its writing and to its effects upon the reader.(151)

At its height or end, that is, the stake of *Dead Letters to Nietzsche* is a call to a new ethics of reading Nietzsche, and more widely, of reading philosophy. We have not been able in this review essay to unpack all the riches and nuances of psychoanalytic theory Faulkner draws upon: in particular, the role of the figure of the mother in the Nietzschean texts Faulkner analyses, and the Lacanian notion of the object-gaze, which like Nietzsche’s abyss, stares back at us and prompts us to confront our own desire. Anticipating the dismissive tendency presently very

strong in our culture to dismiss psychoanalysis as “all bullshit ... psychobabble ... unscientific ... implicated in a torpid, last man therapeutism, tainted by Freud’s ills ...” Faulkner asks us in her Introduction to consider her arguments in relative independence from questions concerning psychoanalysis—a request we have tried to honour here.⁽⁷⁾ One merit of Faulkner’s work is to have highlighted how Nietzsche, who after all asked us to read other philosophers’ works as unwitting confessions,⁵ is psychoanalyst enough.⁽¹²⁻²³⁾ For all of Nietzsche’s contribution to the reactionary discourse which issues in critiques of the therapeutic culture, it is apposite to remember that he prided himself on his own psychological acumen. More than this, *Beyond Good and Evil* represents a call to reinstate psychology to the most august theoretical place:

Never yet did a *profounder* world of insight reveal itself to daring travelers and adventurers, and the psychologist who thus “makes a sacrifice”—it is not the *sacrifizio dell’ intelletto*, on the contrary!—will at least be entitled to demand in return that psychology shall once more be recognized as the queen of the sciences, for whose service and equipment the other sciences exist. For psychology is once more the path to the fundamental problems.⁶

There is not the space available here for us here to present in full our criticisms of Faulkner’s book. The largest of these must concern the effect that this type of highly reflexive form of psychoanalytic reading of Nietzsche has on the status of the “thetic content” in his books: in other words, on all of Nietzsche’s substantive hypotheses about the will to power, overman, slave revolt, and so on.⁷ To the extent that we highlight the way Nietzsche’s texts operate to fascinate and capture our desire, as Faulkner strongly shows that we must, does this necessitate that we downplay Nietzsche’s great theses as so many more psychological means to entice us, independently of their external truth? Does not such an emphasis on the rhetorical, *ad hominem* shaping of the Nietzschean text threaten to bracket its wider theoretical concerns?, or at least call for an analysis which can incorporate *both* dimensions of Nietzsche as necromancer-seducer, and also as philosopher-ontologist in more recognised senses. Of course, readers attracted by different Nietzsche interpreters will likely find more specific criticisms to level at Faulkner’s various, always-provocative readings of Nietzsche’s legacies.

But let us close, in Faulknerian spirit, by making a more intimate set of critical remarks. On the back of its criticisms of Krell, Bataille, and the other authors Faulkner considers, *Dead Letters on Nietzsche* at times seems to turn upon a notion of the irreducible ambiguity in Nietzsche’s texts. When she for instance criticises Rosen and Lampert’s post-Straussian Nietzsche, the ground of the criticism is the allegedly irreducibly Protean aspect of Nietzsche’s texts. This is what the Straussians’ dividing of these into esoteric and exoteric strata denies. Yet, to speak directly, we wonder whether positing the ultimately unfathomable mystery of Nietzsche’s texts is not one more potential mask or ruse which must halt us in our translational efforts to get to terms with, and so to pass beyond, Friedrich Nietzsche. In several of the (few) places in Faulkner’s text where she emerges from behind the guise of the commentator, and speaks in the first person, Faulkner significantly confesses “my strongest impulse is to twist myself away from Nietzsche, as if I were a snake shedding its skin.”⁽¹⁸¹⁾ It is a revealing moment, and a rich metaphor. With disarming candour and insight, the author situates this “strongest impulse” as the flipside to a disciple’s desire to speak for Nietzsche, and admits that in its own right it is akin “to a manner of incorporation” of the master.^(181, 182-3) There can be no stronger anti-Nietzschean, Faulkner recognises, than someone who was formerly his fascinated devotee—just as hatred can be the last mask through which we derisively hold onto a lost, amorous attachment.

So we wonder whether hypostasising, as Faulkner does, the indefinite undecidability, the infinite depth and protean elusiveness of Nietzsche is not, alongside the impulse to above all leave *him* behind a final mask the author might question in her own “working through” of Nietzsche, in the name of the salutary ethics of reading him which her book proposes. To let Nietzsche the man rest, that is, we must surely—with Faulkner—try to come to terms with our debt, our love, our frustration, and our anger for him. But this will also mean realising that he was a finite, fallible man, whose prodigious culture and gifts also harboured the types of weakness a Nietzschean reading of his own biography would inescapably suggest. Above all, our *own* final secrets cannot be delivered by reading Nietzsche, just as the work of criticism of his work need not amount either to betrayal,

or to decisively becoming who we are. Nietzsche said many things in many ways. Many of them are extremely seductive, revealing, and powerful, and continue to reward philosophical reflection. Many others are repulsive, and far from being the singular insights Nietzsche presented them as, belong in a long lineage of reactionary denunciations of the modern world. Others again simply reflect the type of smallnesses of character Faulkner points to when she notes, in the section on Kofman, how conveniently Nietzsche writes his own maternal, biological lineage out of the family myth he creates for himself in *Ecce Homo* (“true kinship is not a physiological, but also a typological order”). (129-131) Many of Nietzsche’s inconsistencies surely remain just that: all-too-human inconsistencies, signs of a development in thought or a changing of the mind, rather than oracular ciphers of a withheld and fully worked-through teaching which might also explain to us completely who we are or can become.

Such a response to Nietzsche, we believe, would in no way violate the spirit of Faulkner’s *Dead Letters to Nietzsche, or the Necromantic Art of Reading Philosophy*. Indeed, in paving the way for such a critical, “exorcised” reading of this remarkably brilliant and problematic figure in the history of philosophy, this book is to be highly commended.

NOTES

1. All bracketed page references in the text refer to Joanne Faulkner, *Dead Letters to Nietzsche, or the Necromantic Art of Reading Philosophy* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010).
2. See: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sections 30 & 40.
3. Plato, *Symposium* 203a-b
4. See: Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* (London: Verso, 1997), Chapter 2.
5. Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 6.
6. Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 23.
7. This criticism was well made by Dr. Jon Roffe at the review session of the 2010 Australasian Society of Continental Philosophy conference, at the University of Queensland.