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The Academic Postmodern and the Rule of Literature. A Report on Half Knowledge. by David Simpson

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ing the Fascist era, and once we know more about her relation to *his* relation to the Soviet leadership during the same period. Since relations are usually dialectical, we would also have to know what the leadership of the Italian CP, or which factions thereof, expected or did not expect from Gramsci, or from Giulia Schucht for that matter. And the same holds, of course, for the leadership of the international communist movement, the Komintern. And so before we raise other questions concerning Giulia Schucht's intermittent silence, we might first have to ask whether she in fact was intermittently silent. We would have to get a hold of as many of the letters she wrote to Gramsci in particular, and the letters the other women wrote to Gramsci in general, in order to find out more details about the circumstances. Ursula Apitzsch, a renowned sociologist at Frankfurt University, has precisely begun to do that with her *Gefängnisbriefe. Briefwechsel mit Giulia Schucht* (Hamburg/Frankfurt: Argument/Cooperative, 1994), volume one of a series which publishes the letters written to Gramsci by the major women in his prison life. Rosengarten, to be sure, whose edition focuses on the letters written by Gramsci, and not on those written to him, has less of a reason to get involved with the problem as to how the content of these women's letters might reveal the extent and quality of the prisoner's relations with individuals, groups, or political agencies alike. But by approaching the topic of Giulia Schucht in a sensitive way and thus against tradition, by setting a tone of endowing her memory with

respect and dignity, with time, place, agency, and history, Rosengarten's edition with its excellent introduction bring us much closer to wondering about the extent to which the primary relations in Gramsci's life are not only as personal as they are political, but also as political as they are personal.

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***The Academic
Postmodern and the
Rule of Literature. A
Report on Half-
Knowledge.***

By David Simpson.

University of Chicago Press, 1995.

200 pp.+xii.

This book cogently examines the postmodern turn in the academy. The object of Simpson's concern is not a global "condition of postmodernity" but specifically what the author calls "the rule of literature" in academia. For Simpson, the "completely new configuration of knowledge" vaunted by many "postmodernists" is in fact the much more modest result of the exporting of literary-critical modalities into disciplines that had previously resisted them because they were more confident of the sufficiency of their own. Thus, he claims, the purported new paradigm of knowledge can be better described as "the narrative turn in contemporary aca-

demic writing" (25). So much of what academics refer to as the postmodern, then, is caught up in this migration of the terminologies and priorities of criticism into other fields of study, such as philosophy and historiography, and then back into literature. The adoption of the rhetoric of fiction by other disciplines brings to life "otherwise potentially tedious details" (23) that are their stock-in-trade but effectively forestalls efforts at gaining critical distance (23-24). The change in vocabulary modifies the academy's view of the world and this in turn motivates the proposal that the world has indeed changed (3).

Simpson contends that the postmodern storyteller is quite different from Benjamin's. The latter, by allowing the listener to participate in the authenticity of shared experience, gives counsel for the future. In the "academic postmodernism" convincingly described by Simpson, the "self-enthusiasm and self-projection" (26) of the "autobiographical moment" prevails. Storytelling is limited in scope to the writer's situatedness or historic specificity, a state of affairs that dovetails nicely with the postmodern valorization of local knowledge and delegitimation of all metanarratives. Legitimacy is gained when writing about oneself, ostensibly the only thing the individual is capable of knowing, and the particular is considered "as effectively imbued with the determining powers of the social whole" (13).

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Confronti con Heidegger

a cura di Giuseppe Semerari.

Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1992.

The volume edited by Semerari presents a series of confrontations with Heidegger—confrontations which occur at two levels: 1) between the philosophers who have contributed to the volume and Heidegger, and 2) between Heidegger and various philosophers of the western tradition.

These confrontations set for themselves the task, and have the merit, of deepening and widening our understanding of the thematic and problematic ramifications of Heidegger's thinking throughout the history of philosophy—a ramification that for Heidegger himself was never above all and necessarily historical, except for the fact that the history of Western philosophy, as the history of metaphysics, represented for him the history of the concealment of the truth of being.

Heidegger comes out of these confrontations as a philosopher modernity cannot dispense with, and yet as one whose thinking needs to be critically examined and gone over again.

The volume starts with an essay by Valerio Bernardi on the relationship between dialectical theology and Heideggerian ontology. The essay focusses on Bultmann's appropriation of certain Heideggerian themes such as the historicity of man as *Dasein* and his potentiality-for-being and resoluteness, as well as the theme of being-towards-death. For Bultmann, Bernardi says, Heideggerian philosophy is not "a philosophy, but the philosophy" (8);