

this review were first articulated. I am grateful to Ann Garry, Linda Greenberg, Anthony Ristow, Kai Kaululaau, Casey Keith, Molly Talcott and Ben Bateman for their insights.

2. Ladelle McWhorter, "Sex, Race, and Biopower: A Foucauldian Genealogy," in *Hypatia*, vol. 19, n. 3 (2004), 38–62.

3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, (tr.) Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 135–47.

4. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005).

5. McWhorter offers no references to substantiate this claim. In fact, many people who avow intersectionality as a method take themselves to be performing analyses of macro-level phenomena such as institutions and/or of meso-level phenomena such as social groups. Patricia Hill Collins, "Some Group Matters: Intersectionality, Situated Standpoints, and Black Feminist Thought," in *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, (ed.) Tommy L. Lott and John P. Pittman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 205–29. Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," in *Signs* vo. 30, no. 3 (2005), 1771–800.

6. A trivial point: "intersectionality" does not even appear in the book's index.

7. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretations of Culture*, (ed.) Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

8. McWhorter invites us to view the US institution of lynching and its justifying ideology of "the black rapist" "not so much in the context of more-or-less institutionalized ritual murder, but in the context of other discourses of sexual predation that arose and gained force in the late nineteenth century." (161)

Simon Morgan Wortham, *The Derrida Dictionary*. London: Continuum, 2010; 264 pages. ISBN: 978-1847065261.

Review by Steven Sych, McGill University

There is, as Simon Wortham points out in his introduction to *The Derrida Dictionary*, a danger inherent in his project. The dictionary form is, after all, an attempt to present language in a systematic manner by means of a master text; yet the work of Jacques Derrida is, at least in part, characterised by the rigorous thinking of the limits and conditions of systematicity *as such*. This, then, is a manifestly dangerous marriage: if a dictionary aims to present the indexed meanings of the *termes d'art* of deconstructive discourse (ideal, non-contextual, and systematically related), does it not run up against the very resistance of this discourse to

systematicity? Is not “Derridean vocabulary” only to be found within that unmasterable series of non-identical terms that occupy various texts? Do we not risk collapsing an unmasterable series into a small number of differently expressed bywords?

Wortham is under no illusions here. He states as much his introduction, noting that his dictionary can do no more than “actively assume its own limits and limitations,” that is, be forthright about its lack of “wholeness.” (2) With such a qualification in play, one can begin also to recognise the advantages of the dictionary form for the task at hand—the advantages, that is, of manifest and accessible *cross-referencing*. Each entry is packed with connections to other entries as well as primary texts—paths to follow, then, a way of stretching towards the whole that falls faithfully short of an encyclopedic overview. See, for instance, Wortham’s entry on “performativity” (134) that begins with Derrida’s engagement with speech-act theory before going to touch upon singularity, decision, forgiveness and hospitality, finally ending with references to logocentrism, otherness, and deconstruction in general. Each entry, then, acts as a jumping off point from within, like the smallest of a set of Russian dolls looking out onto the others.

At times, however, the referential aspect of the text proves overbearing. A surprisingly large number of entries consist *solely* in references, such as the entry on “mark” (96), which directs the reader to “see also re-mark”—yet the latter entry reads only as follows: “re-mark... See mark” (160)! Despite there perhaps being a performative interest in such entries, it is not clear how useful they are (especially for the newcomer looking for help entering into Derrida’s work). Still, if we look beyond this oddity (and similar instances), the thorough interwovenness of the *Dictionary* both performs a kind of faithfulness to the spirit of Derrida’s work, and presents a useful avenue of approach for the neophyte.

Looking beyond this faithfulness, we must still ask whether the *Dictionary* sends us on our way better equipped to read primary sources. Is the *Dictionary* a success? To answer this question, we must take a closer look at Wortham’s explicit goal. He tells us in the introduction that his text aims to “provide a grounding” for newcomers to Derrida’s corpus (1), and that it will do so by means of *breadth*, that is, the provision of “detailed and substantial accounts of the majority of [Derrida’s] publications over a period of six decades.” (1) With respect to breadth, the *Dictionary* is a remarkable achievement. In less than 300 pages,

Wortham's entries touch upon an enormous number of Derridean terms, engagements with other thinkers, and texts ranging from the more "canonical" of books (such as a full seven pages devoted to *Margins of Philosophy*) to those works which are perhaps less well-known ('*A Silkworm of One's Own*'). To my knowledge, there is no secondary source on Derrida's work that succeeds so well in this regard.

Beyond the wide swatch of entries and the canny use of the dictionary form, Wortham's style of writing is economical and clear. See, for instance, Wortham's lengthy exploration of *Of Grammatology*, where he tells us that this interpretation of language as being "never fully systematic, objectifiable, conceptualizable, idealizable...moves us from dreams and desires of 'science' to questions of the institution and historicity of the field, in its always partial and violent imposition." (114) With the beginning student in mind, the *Dictionary* is full not only of such useful glosses, but of short explications which one would not be incorrect to call "short essays."

The Derrida Dictionary nevertheless has certain drawbacks. As part of a series of philosophical dictionaries by Continuum, Wortham's text assumes the task of explicating Derrida's work without directly quoting *or* citing the former. At times this proves frustrating indeed. The entry on Freud, for instance, cites eight of Derrida's texts—including collections such as *Writing and Difference*—yet leaves the reader wondering where exactly *within* each text she is to look. (59) Further, although Wortham's writing style is concise and rigorous, there are times when he may elude the student not already familiar with the issues at hand. In his "artificiality" entry (19), Wortham writes the following: "the singular is much less an authentic essence, a unique 'real' or true origin which 'information' is unable to appropriate. It is far better described as a resistant after-effect found at the constituting limits of an artificial synthetic that is itself produced by effects of *différance*." (20) To put it mildly, this seems beyond the ken of the neophyte. Luckily, such instances of obscurity on Wortham's part are sparse, given the subject matter and stated "introductory" goal. For these reasons, Wortham's *Dictionary* stands as one of the best guides available for those looking to enter into Derrida's work.