feminist philosophy, *Gender* is sufficiently complex and original to be stimulating reading not only to students new to the field, but also to scholars of continental and feminist philosophy.

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**The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida**

SEAN GASTON

New York: Continuum, 2006; 152 pages.

Comprised of three chapters ("The Precedant," "Histories—Décalages," and "The Gap Moves"), each representing roughly a month of daily diary entries (October 12 through December 17), *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* was chronicled during the first two months following Derrida's death in 2004. The book is a series of meditations that both directly and indirectly consider Derrida and his work, including personal stories of Gaston's life during this time of bereavement. The entries, which vary in length from five pages to a sentence or two, are at times intensely personal, autobiographical, and moving. At other times they are more formal and academic. Often they are a combination of both, where distinctions are not readily evident.

The character of this book is such that it probably will not be read by most at length but in small increments. Its fragmentary structure and short, often chaotic, bursts of thought make it a good daily devotional. Potential readers should not expect much in the way of a sustained interrogation of a given subject. More generally, *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* is in style and content the kind of book readers will expect from an author who faithfully and fully embraces the gleeful play of deconstruction. Yet as much as this is a playful, even cavalier text, it is also somber and sorrowful.

In the end, this book stands out as an oddity among philosophical texts. Gaston offers little more than a snapshot of Derrida and his work, his relation to Hegel, Husserl, and others. While there are a number of important insights offered there is almost no critical dialogue. Moreover, readers should expect only a brief survey and introduction to deconstructive thought found between the lines. Even so, one need not be familiar with Derrida or deconstruction to appreciate this book. As a response to the loss of Derrida it is both a mourning and a realization that such is impossible. It is an attempt to fill the gap left by Derrida's passing and it is the realization that such a filling is impossible. Gaston returns again and again to the gap left by the passing of Derrida and the
gaps that we find throughout Derrida’s work. Gaston asks how it is that we might mourn the one who so zealously forewarned of its dangers. Derrida is clear that we cannot avoid mourning, for it is thrust upon us, whoever we are, and yet we are told of its simultaneous impossibility.

Gaston offers readers a unique work that, while representative of a kind of mourning—a prolonged aching—offers a tribute that is careful not to “monu-memorialize” Derrida. How one should mourn is not answered by Gaston. In fact, the matter of mourning seems to get significant attention as a topic only in the last part of the book, leaving the rest of the text as an act of mourning itself. Some readers will no doubt be disappointed that many important questions are raised but receive only passing glances, e.g., the problem of history, the philosophy of literature, and so on. In such ways this book acts more like an anecdotal philosophy text, which is interesting because of its personal character more so than its depth of philosophical insight. Even so, this is a pleasure to read because of its existential honesty and its frustrating gaps.

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The Things Themselves: Phenomenology and the Return to the Everyday
H. PETER STEEVES
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006; 245 + xvii pages.

In this new volume in SUNY’s Contemporary Continental Philosophy series, H. Peter Steeves aims to renew the philosophical revolution that was inaugurated by Husserl’s phenomenological account of intentionality, a revolution that purports to replace the detachment that has traditionally characterized philosophy with a robust, concrete reengagement with the world capable of disclosing the structures of experience. The underlying contention is that the radical edge of this project has grown dull through idealist misinterpretation and internal theoretical disputes among later generations of phenomenologists. Thus, like many others over the years, Steeves aspires to “do” phenomenology rather than just produce textual commentary about it. As his title suggests, Steeves takes this up in terms of the dictum that ostensibly guided Husserlian phenomenology: to return “to the things themselves.” By returning to “the specifics of everyday existence” (xvii), his goal is to “make one small step within [the Husserlian] tradition, hinting at a possible direction for a phenomenology that takes seriously a return to the things themselves” (xiii).