Morny Joy’s worthwhile collection offers various interpretations of Paul Ricoeur’s philosophy of narrative. The wide range of articles truly acknowledges the depth and width of Ricoeur’s writings. These essays are an important contribution for anyone who is seriously interested in studying Ricoeur’s work.

The contributors to this collection attempt to understand the narrative function in either Ricoeur’s own writing or within a larger, multi-disciplinary context. As the title of this book suggests, various authors interpret Ricoeur by constructing his theory of narrative within a different context and, in some cases, by contesting various aspects of his theory. Both the shortcomings and virtues of narrative are presented as related to identity, historical reconfiguration, action, testimony, psychology, gender identity, ethics, politics, and the discourse of suffering. The context of this collection is as wide as the many implications that narrative has for a variety of disciplines and debates.

Readers will find in this collection a wealth of ideas related to the question of how much we ought to demand from a theory of narrative. Understanding and questioning the political and ethical dimensions (or lack thereof) of Ricoeur’s writings on narrative is the guiding thread throughout the essays in this collection.

Readers will be delighted to find a thorough introduction by Morny Joy and “A Response by Paul Ricoeur.” Ricoeur’s brief response is a partial answer to the issues raised by various contributors. Ricoeur cautions readers and authors alike to be careful when ascertaining the practical implications of his writings on narrative and metaphor. He urges us not to “demand too much of a theory of metaphor or a theory of narrative, even when extended to the public sphere [for] it is within an ethics that we have to seek the reference to norms” (xliii). Ricoeur firmly states that “we must not ask of a theory of the imagination, even one completed by a narrative theory, both elevated to the collective plane, what can only be demanded of an ethics” (xliv).

The opening essay by Jocelyn Dunphy Blomfield, “From a Poetics of the Will to Narratives of the Self: Paul Ricoeur’s *Freud and Philosophy*,” is an excellent survey of the various narrative components found within Ricoeur’s work from *Freud and Philosophy* to *Oneself as Another*. Dunphy Blomfield focuses on how Ricoeur’s work concentrates on the “creative element” found in both the search for identity and the “semantics of desire” in psychoanalysis, and reveals the way in which hermeneutics is at work in these narratives.

Jamie Scott’s analysis of Ricoeur’s “The Hermeneutics of Testimony” (*Essays on Biblical Interpretation*) explores to what extent Ricoeur’s narrative aspect of testimony remains in the service of judgment. Scott turns to Bonhoeffer’s *Letters and Papers from Prison* and reveals its dialectic of literary and literal
testimony (i.e., Bonhoeffer’s actual writings and Bonhoeffer’s actual sacrifice of his life). These testimonies are then understood as a form of witness to a greater truth. While interesting, this essay contains some sweeping claims that most readers will find overly general.

Graham Livesey’s essay, “The Role of Figure in Metaphor, Narrative and Architecture,” is among the less impressive essays in this collection. For one thing, Livesey’s project is not as bold as it appears to be. Livesey sketches Ricoeur’s development from the figure of metaphor to the form of muthos (plot). Focussing on the general creative element in narrative, Livesey compares this creative element to the work of an architect. While an architect transforms and marks the world in an obvious way, Livesey provides no good reason why architecture is an interesting or unique case of narrative creativity. Clearly, there are many professions (e.g., law, gardening, advertising, etc.) that are equally capable of transforming and reinterpreting the world. The substance of Livesey’s essay could easily have been placed within a footnote of one of the more robust and thorough contributions in this collection.

Momy Joy’s essay, “Writing as Repossession: The Narratives of Incest Victims,” is one piece that readers will truly enjoy. Joy focuses on how narrative retelling is a way in which a self can mend its identity through gaining a different perspective on one’s life and past. In discussing narrative retelling, Joy carefully treads between the certainty of modernism and what she views as the nihilism of postmodernism. Joy suggests that “strategic identity” is a concept that is indispensable to successfully understanding the delicate process of rebuilding selves in narrative. Her emphasis is on female incest survivors, and she is driven to make sense of their reconstructed narratives in the face of the postmodern disintegration of selves: “...just when it seemed that women were discovering what it was to have a self, to take responsibility for self-definition, to assume some form of autonomy, along came postmodernism and declared that there was no such thing as a self” (35). Joy’s sources for her essay are both relevant and diverse, and she contributes a worthwhile and interesting point of view.

Pamela Anderson’s essay, “Re-reading Myth in Philosophy: Hegel, Ricoeur and Irigaray Reading Antigone,” begins with the author’s disclaimer: “I am not a classicist, nor am I an authority on the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel or the feminism of Luce Irigaray. However, recently, my interest in reading the figure, Antigone, in Sophocles’ ancient tragedy has been aroused—first—by Paul Ricoeur’s ‘Interlude’ in Oneself as Another” (51). In applying Ricoeur’s Oneself as Another to a reading of Antigone, Anderson focuses on the ways in which Ricoeur belongs to a “... modern male-centered tradition by reading this female figure of myth as disrupting the text” (xxx). Anderson shows how Ricoeur all too easily paints women into stereotypical and artificial roles. She then turns to Irigaray to find ways of narrating the various roles of women outside of standard categorizations. Anderson’s claim that Ricoeur’s narrative falls short of being
applicable and appropriate for women is definitely a criticism that even Ricoeur has heard and taken seriously (as evident from his brief "Response").

Henderikus Stam and Lori Egger concern themselves with the ramifications of Ricoeur’s narrative theory of psychoanalytic discourse. Noting similarities between Ricoeur and David Carr, these authors argue that the concepts of “life” and “reality” need to be looked at more closely in order to understand how narrative might transform our lives. Stam and Egger put forward a very standard view of narrative psychoanalytic therapy, i.e., that reality is configured and transformed by a mutual dynamic between the patient and the therapist, where new and unanticipated possibilities are disclosed. While there is nothing on the surface that a reader can disagree with in this article, there is, unfortunately, no startling or new insights offered on narrative’s relation to psychoanalytic discourse.

In “Women’s Memoirs and the Embodied Imagination: the Gendering of Genre that Makes History and Literature Nervous,” Helen Buss offers us a wonderfully refreshingly and creative piece that fuses together the two narrative genres of history and fiction. She focuses on the term “archive” and suggests that we understand the concept of imagination as yet another form of an “archive.” Buss warns that until we understand the imagination as embodied, it is not possible to narrate and fully appreciate our imaginative acts. She argues that we must focus on the fact that we belong to our bodies even before we begin to tell stories. Buss succeeds in making it convincingly clear that Ricoeur has not fully incorporated the emotional and bodily aspects of a total lived existence into his writings on narrative.

Hermina Joldersma’s article is an interesting thought experiment on the meaning of various late medieval religious song manuscripts. These manuscripts, depicting women’s feelings and their experiences, seem to point to something beyond the world that these women inhabited. In Ricoeur’s notion of narrative as a “thought experiment” Joldersma finds a way to interpret the meaning of these song manuscripts. With this in mind, Joldersma understands these manuscripts as imaginative variations of possible worlds. The focus on community identity is also apparent in the next two essays. David Brown shows a concern for understanding the collective identity of Latin-American seniors in a Canadian town, while Dominique Perron sets out to determine in what way Ricoeur’s idea of narrative can be applied to the Québécois l’identitaire.

The relevance of Ricoeur’s work on creating and maintaining a political identity is explored by Catherine Bryn Pinchin. Pinchin urges us to become critical of our acceptance of ideologies entrenched in our political identities, and to move beyond and challenge Ricoeur’s acceptance of certain political conventions. Jim Fodor is equally sceptical of narrative’s applicability to a larger worldview. Fodor claims that our values and identity cannot be properly understood by Ricoeur’s theory of narrative, and argues that Ricoeur’s project is far too abstract to account for culturally specific values and interpretations.
In “Ricoeur and Political Identity,” Bernard Dauenhauer uses Ricoeur’s difference between identity as idem and identity as ipse to contrast personal and political identity. Dauenhauer argues that we must maintain the distinction between idem and ipse in order to prevent the possible tyranny of a political narrative identity. Terrence Tilley’s essay, “Narrative Theology Post Mortem Dei?” assesses the way in which Ricoeur’s idea of narrative can be useful in creating a narrative theology for a postmodern age. Tilley’s essay provides an engaging and interesting discussion of the changing face of ethics and theology, and also of how Ricoeur might help in configuring the badly needed subject who stands against the backdrop of this postmodern ethics and theology. In Robert Sweeney’s essay, “Ricoeur on Ethics and Narrative,” the ethical current found in Ricoeur’s writing is highlighted and emphasized. He notes that ethics has always been a concern for Ricoeur, and explains that a deep connection exists between narrative and ethics. While Tilley’s essay is a worthwhile read, Sweeney’s contribution is neither insightful nor stimulating.

The final essay in this collection, Linda Fisher’s “Mediation, Muthos, and the Hermeneutic Circle in Ricoeur’s Narrative Theory,” explores the key role that the hermeneutic circle plays in our narratives. This essay provides a rich and excellent discussion of the various ways in which the hermeneutic circle operates in a continual, circular, and dynamic manner. In emphasizing that we live through the stories that we create and create more stories in which to live, Fisher conveys the critical importance of the hermeneutic circle for Ricoeur’s thought with exceptional ease and precision.

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Power and Parenting: A Hermeneutic of the Human Condition
KIERAN BONNER

This book draws on both classic political thinkers and contemporary writers on parenting. Its author is a sociologist who is influenced by Gadamer and Arendt. It is too narrow a volume to merit the subtitle “a hermeneutic of the human condition.” Rather, the focus is on the nature and problems of parenting.

Bonner begins with a paradox. After slavery, the parent-child relationship represents the most complete and unlimited power that one human being can have over another. It includes the legal right to inflict physical pain while moulding a child can give one a powerful sense of efficacy. Yet parenting in our society leaves many parents feeling powerless. Children are now an economic burden, not an extra set of hands to work in the household or on the farm. They inconvenience