therefore, that she returns to her thesis that the *Cinema* books offer the clearest incarnation of Deleuze's political philosophy, a thesis which is bound to cinema's rethinking of time. She writes that the "greatness of the filmmakers of time is that they were able to create other *livable* configurations of thought in images themselves." (79) This means that cinema itself is able to *image* an alternative to the action-image, an alternative to Hollywood's dream of "a transformation of the world and the creation of a new nation." (79) By thinking a cinema of time, Marrati enacts a move from the belief in human agency to the possibilities of believing in the world, that is, of believing in an immanent, dynamic and changing world, rather than relying on a transcendent historical narrative. A Deleuzian politics, as expressed through the cinema books, then becomes a politics of immanence which believes in cinema’s temporal ability to create new forms of life.

Paradoxically, *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy*’s greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. Throughout the text, Marrati makes clear use of many of the most difficult terms within Deleuze’s lexicon. Generous explanations of new technical language are paired with sophisticated engagement with the concepts, ensuring that the book will have value to the introductory reader of Deleuze and cinema, while still appealing to an audience that is well-versed in Deleuzian/Bergsonian concepts. However, such attention to detail ends up reading as though Marrati spreads herself too thin, particularly in the last pages where rather than strengthening what is a very compelling argument, she gets somewhat lost in the definitions. The result, therefore, is that as the book closes, its thesis seems to slip through one’s fingers, even though Marrati has added great depth to the temporality of Deleuzian cinema studies.


*Review by Aaron Landry, York University.*

This book engages one of the perennial topics of Platonic scholarship—the presence (or absence) of poetry in the ideal city as constructed in the *Republic*. What is unique to Mitscherling’s argument is the distinction between dramatic and non-dramatic forms of poetry, which is supposed to resolve the inconsistency between the early books and Book X. The book contains five chapters, ample endnotes and two appendices. The first appendix provides all of the refer-
ences—direct quotations and allusions—to the poets throughout the Platonic dialogues. The second provides all of the Homeric quotations in *Republic*. This is especially important given the role that Homer plays in Mitscherling’s argument.

In the first chapter, Mitscherling introduces the puzzle of *Republic* Book X, which is notorious not only for its apparent inconsistency with the position expressed in Books II and III but also for the extreme nature of its charge—the banishment of the poets. The author rehearses six interpretations of Book X. They are: that the aim of Plato’s critique is all art, illusionistic art, all poetry, only dramatic poetry, the Athenian educational system (*pace* Havelock) and finally the Sophists (*pace* Gadamer). The latter two are further specified to mean respectively: the way poetry functioned in Athenian education and the influence of the sophists on general culture. Finally, Mitscherling offers his own interpretation, which limns Plato to be exclusively focussed on the *technē* of *mimēsis* (imitation). This technique consists in “persuading by appearing to be what one is not, or by merely seeming to speak the truth.” (71) Accordingly, insofar as the poets and Sophists participate in *mimēsis*, they are synonymous and constitute the object of Plato’s critique.

Mitscherling proceeds to rehearse the pre-platonic conceptions to poetry—Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus and others—with the aim of identifying the degree to which poetry and *mimēsis* are historically linked. In Homer, for instance, we have a dual notion of poetry, one as the result of a *technē*, and one as divinely inspired. They function in tandem and there is no evidence to suggest that anyone thought the two conceptions were incompatible. Indeed, Mitscherling points out that this same bipartite account emerges in Hesiod and Archilochus as well, although with the latter the prestige of the Muses, often associated with inspiration, is beginning to wane.

During the tumultuous period of Socrates and Democritus, a new distinction was established between *technē* and *sophia* (knowledge or wisdom). Whereas in Archaic Greece, poetry had been treated, in part, as a species of *sophia*, that is, as exemplary knowledge, it is now treated as just another ordinary *technē*. One could respond to this division in two ways. First, one could think that the poets did not possess exceptional wisdom. Or, one could distinguish the poet’s greatness from his skill, and bequeath his prestige by some other means. Democritus’ notion of the poet as inspired follows this latter route.

In the third chapter, Mitscherling turns to the Platonic dialogues and examines the conception of poetry in dialogues other than the *Republic*. Poetry is ubiquitous in the dialogues and does not easily embody a unified account. For instance, consider inspiration in the *Ion*,...
which Socrates claims is the origin of Ion’s rhapsodic ability. As we saw in Homer, the notion of inspiration has Archaic origins but it is transformed in Plato. Inspiration is contrasted with technē, specifically the charioteer, the doctor and the general. In other words, poetry is not technical knowledge. Reason is completely absent.

Yet, when we turn to consider dialogues like the Meno and the Symposium, inspiration is identified as true opinion and occupies an intermediary position between knowledge and ignorance. That true opinion has practical value seems to contradict the hard distinction established in the Ion. Rather than explain these differences as developmental stages in Plato’s philosophical life, Mitscherling introduces the distinction between lyric and dramatic poetry. Whereas the former is the referent in the Ion, the latter is discussed in the Meno and the Symposium. The Phaedrus is the final dialogue considered, and for good reason, since philosophy is now connected with poetry in that both are products of inspiration.

Mitscherling concludes the chapter by noting the sophistic influence on education at the turn of the 4th century BCE. This event privileged poetry’s technical aspects and had the effect of uniting the genres of poetry—epic, lyric, tragedy, comedy—under one rubric. Thus, as Homer became perceived as a tragedian, his work was diminished because it was conceptualised as the result of inspiration. It could not compete with the sophistic logos, which enchanted with appearances of the truth rather than truth itself. Mitscherling sees Plato as responding directly to this cultural development.

In Chapter 4, Mitscherling turns to the Republic’s conception of poetry. He first discusses Books II and III. One of the most noteworthy features of the Republic is its silence on the notion of inspiration. This is especially conspicuous given the continuities between inspiration and the youth’s vision of beauty, which seems akin to a mystical experience. Furthermore, Mitscherling points to the various mischaracterisations of poetic genres. The most prevalent is Homer’s association with dramatic poetry, which will become a full-scale identification in Book X. As well, tragedy and comedy are treated as wholly imitative. Since epic and lyric are conjoined with tragedy and comedy, as we see by the treatment of Homer, Mitscherling concludes that the radical conclusion of Book X is already latent in these early Books. Nevertheless, these considerations lead Mitscherling to note that Plato cannot be seriously advocating the banishment of all poetry. Indeed, recall the six possible interpretations of the poets in the Republic. For Mitscherling, the final four interpretations coalesce under the rubric of the technē of mimēsis; this is Plato’s actual target throughout the Republic. This technē produces “appearances, mere images devoid of meaningful
content” (250), and it is this privileging of appearance over reality that necessitates ethical relativism, which is another harbinger Plato seeks to quash.

In the final chapter, Mitscherling sketches a Platonic aesthetics, which explicitly draws on the phenomenology of Ingarden and the hermeneutics of Gadamer. This cashes out as the division between human psychology and the mimetic nature of art. Again, further extrapolating the discontinuities in the Republic, Mitscherling argues that whereas Books II and III exhibit the frail psychology of people, Book X deals with the precise nature of mimēsis and why it is contemptible. The argument runs as follows: first, there is the familiar ontological criticism that mimēsis is distant from reality. Second, mimēsis has the potentially dire consequence of nurturing the non-rational parts of the human psyche. Consequently, censure is appropriate. Mitscherling then details aesthetic experience from a hermeneutical perspective. He draws principally on Gadamer and outlines three theses. First, the work of art is akin to a symbolic gesture. Second, it is a creation (Gebilde). Finally, it is self-sufficient. For Mitscherling, Plato’s aesthetics embodies these claims.

As should now be clear, this book deals with a wide scope of material. In my view, this breadth has the regrettable consequence of making several sections irrelevant to the main argument of the book. In particular, I have difficulty seeing the relevance of extrapolating a Platonic aesthetics when there is so much more to defend. For instance, contra White and Havelock, who maintain that Greek poetry was inextricably bound to performance, Mitscherling holds that that the two are distinct. He cites Aristotle’s Poetics as evidence for this conclusion. The problem is a diachronic one. Mitscherling fails to appreciate that from Archaic Greece down to Aristotle, there was a slow transition from an oral culture to a literate one, or in other words, from a conception of the poet as singer (aoidos) to one of maker (poiētēs). Such a transition diminished oral features of poetry—intonation, costume and dance—but promoted textual features like meter and plot. Still, poetic performance remained integral not only to the Greek educational system, but also to how Plato conceives of the ideal city. It is the poets, after all, who will disseminate the appropriate content to the citizenry. The “hymns to the gods” and “encomia of good people” are both permitted and poetic in the ideal state. Such considerations, together with further continuities that exist between the Republic and the Laws on the function of poetry in the ideal state, may not end up being decisive against Mitscherling’s account, but they do complicate it and deserve more treatment. So while the premise of the book is promising, the argument contains too many scholarly holes for
the reviewer to recommend. Finally, on the technical level, the table of contents does not match the page numbering.


*Review by Jason Harman, York University.*

Upon surveying the salons of 19th century Europe, Søren Kierkegaard noted the eagerness with which hungry minds sought to go beyond the drab palette offered by religion. Abraham, however, he told his readers, did not seek to go beyond religion. In fact, for Abraham, faith was an endeavour that requires a lifetime. In reviewing Christopher Watkin’s *Difficult Atheism*, I am reminded of these words, for, as Watkin shows, the task of overcoming religion is an arduous one that ultimately begs the question: what are we really going beyond? Watkin’s text seeks to chart contemporary French thought’s attempt to attain “a thinking that is truly without God” (1), through an analysis and critique of Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Quentin Meillassoux. It should be noted upfront that for sheer breadth and depth Watkin’s work is astounding. Watkin, I am led to suspect, feels perfectly at ease inhabiting the minds of Badiou, Nancy and Meillassoux. Further, where contemporary French philosophy often dallies in the obscure, Watkin’s rendering—with ample citations from a wide selection of primary texts—both clarifies and sharpens. Throughout this text, Watkin ushers the reader into the intimate circle of philosophy’s leading minds—certainly no small feat.

Indeed, I can offer nothing short of praise for the text’s descriptive and explanatory qualities, though I do have reservations regarding the method and criteria used to judge the philosophies in question. For starters, Watkin does little to actually clarify for us what God, religion, theology, or faith is. Though he reminds us early on that there are many atheisms (12), at least one for each of the prominent French philosophers whom occupy the text, there appears to be only one theology for which, “consensus” indicates, we must proceed beyond. (239) Watkin, following Nietzsche, whose name and philosophy he invokes early on, at times uses the phrase “Platonic-Christian” to designate the metaphysical structure that post-theological thought must overcome. (11) Yet, at other times—for example, in critiquing Jean-Luc Nancy for “Christian hyperbole” (240)—his concern seems to