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FOR THE CONTEMPORARY POET and theorist of poetry Michel Deguy the work of Stéphane Mallarmé stands in the rarest company. Implicitly situating himself and his own poetics of vigilance in the "guard-post where language keeps watch on itself," Deguy observes from that vantage point a source, ever-modern, toward which certain great poetic *œuvres* point:

Modern would be the movement of going back down, fully awake, to that source: the place where there is no longer an "avant-garde" but Dante or Hopkins, Mallarmé or Petrarch; the place where prose is not yet different from poetry, or poetry from thought, nor the spoken word from the written word.²

There is no nostalgia here: for Deguy the grand *indivision* of great works—a term which he takes from the French Civil Code and which he characteristically dilates and manipulates for poetic ends—is a wellspring, even to the extreme-contemporary.³

Among nineteenth-century poets admired, quoted or studied by Michel Deguy, Mallarmé is not the most frequently cited. That distinction would go rather to Charles Baudelaire. One thinks of such essays as "Esthétique de Baudelaire," "Le Corps de Jeanne," "L'infini et sa diction," "'Pour piquer dans le but, de mystique nature' (Que faisons-nous parlant de Baudelaire?)," to name but four important texts.⁴ One thinks also of innumerable references to "la profondeur de la vie," "le spectacle si ordinaire qui soit," "un diminutif de l'infini," "le monde va finir," "réversibilité," etc. Deguy is thoroughly Baudelairean.

Yet, he is no less steeped in the very specific richness of the Mallarméan corpus. Erudition, sensibility and long practice have produced a familiarity and an intuition, an understanding and an appreciation of the work, which make of Deguy a major reader of Mallarmé and a noteworthy inheritor within the difficult and in many respects inhospitable tradition founded by the sin-

gularly rigorous Mallarmé. Deguy was honoured with the eminently pertinent Prix Mallarmé in 1985, and the distinguished American Mallarmé scholar Robert Greer Cohn has expressed a view, shared by others, that Deguy may well be “the closest to Mallarmé in our era.” He makes this observation all the more significant by singling out Deguy from a list that also contains such formidable “Mallarméans” as Ponge, Butor, Boulez, Bonnefoy, Emmanuel, Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet.⁵

The influence of Mallarmé can be felt from the very outset of Deguy’s poetic career. *Fragment du Cadastre* with its very Rimbaldian search for a harmony between the “site” and the “formula” also integrates Mallarméan reflections on presence and absence into the emerging poetics of the earth that Deguy will come to call a “geopoetics.”⁶ Even a non-exhaustive search of Deguy’s work in its twin dimensions—poetic and critical—turns up a multiplicity of citations and quasi-citations, as well as the occasional gem like “T’introduire dans mon histoire,” where the famous *incipit* of Mallarmé’s sonnet is utilized to further Deguy’s reflection on desire in *Arrêts fréquents*.⁷ A quick list of quotations and themes from Mallarmé found in a *single* volume by Deguy (*Aux heures d’affluence*) includes “l’estampe originelle” (35), “l’idée suave” (35), “musicalement se lève” (17), “le mot total refait” (18), le “retranchement” (31), “Rien” (136), “sur fond de néant nous dansons” (152), “A la nue accablante tu” (161), and “comme Mallarmé et l’opéra” (199).

On the critical side of Deguy’s publications, the first essay explicitly devoted to Mallarmé is “Jalons de lecture de Mallarmé,” published in 1971 in a small, now-defunct review.⁸ In the present essay, attention is principally focused on the concentrated constellation of Deguy’s writings on Mallarmé which have appeared since the middle 1980s. Occasional references will be made to earlier texts, or to contemporaneous ones which have Mallarmé as a secondary focus, in order, more often than not, to demonstrate the constancy of certain references, occasionally to underline the evolution, interruption or reorientation of reflective priorities. Through a necessarily partial and fragmentary reading of a few of Deguy’s poems, some commentary is offered on the Mallarméan tonalities of such pages and their particular further development *chez* Deguy. What emerges is a clearer sense of just how extensive and decisive Deguy’s reflection on the author of the *Coup de Dés* has been.

Figures in Figuration: the Dancer and the Waterlily—The core group of writings referred to here are the following four essays: 1) “The Dancer: Mallarmé” (English translation of “La Danseuse: Mallarmé,” which appeared in *Choses de la poésie et affaire culturelle* [Paris: Hachette 1987]); 2) “On ne

peut se passer d'Eden," Deguy's preface to Cohn's collection *Vues sur Mallarmé*; 3) "The Energy of Despair," the translation of a paper given by Deguy at the Stanford Mallarmé Festival in 1996, organized in anticipation of the centenary of Mallarmé's death in 1998, and published in *Mallarmé in the Twentieth Century*. This essay has never appeared in precisely the same form in French, though considerable portions of it were taken up, particularly in the long notes; 4) "Je remplis d'un beau non ce grand espace vide," a text contributed by Deguy to *Po&sie*, the influential review he has directed since 1979, for a special issue on Mallarmé coinciding with the centenary celebrations.¹⁰ Deguy has also made available an unpublished piece, untitled except for a reference to the place where the paper was given in November 1999, "Séance de Tunis sur Mallarmé," which further develops some elements of the four core texts.

We shall begin with the most recent of the published pieces. "Je remplis d'un beau non ce grand espace vide" is a meditation on the "Nénuphar Blanc" (The White Water-Lily), one of Mallarmé's best-known prose poems from the collection *Anecdotes ou Poèmes*. More precisely, Deguy's article is a prolonged reflection on the last two narrative or quasi-narrative paragraphs of that text and on the two "distinct" and "insularized" sentences (one assertion and one interrogation) that precede them. Deguy takes the trouble to characterize the place and general logic of such one-line "scansions," as he calls them, in "The White Water Lily." They are "apartés," questioning or assertive asides uttered by the "subject of the enunciation" or the "narrator-scriptor." In these last four sub-units of the text, Deguy's reading discerns a poetics condensed: taking as a pivot point Mallarmé's statement "j'accomplis selon les règles la manœuvre," Deguy breaks the manœuvre (allegorically, that of poetry) down into two infinitives: *Résumer* and *Partir-Avec*. Summing-up and leaving-with (or making-away-with, as I prefer to translate it locally here because of the strong association present in the text, which Deguy develops, between this "*partir-avec*" and the "*rapt*" of mythological divine abduction).¹¹ Deguy's analysis of the poetic manœuvre draws a number of other associated notions into the consideration of these two aspects or phases of Mallarmé's poësis. In this way, the 1999 essay weaves together key strands of Deguy's ongoing thought and refers insistently again to certain privileged terminology and texts.

"Summing-up, then, is a matter of abridging, concentrating, abstracting, retaining and bringing together" ("Je remplis" 83). For Deguy, this can be expressed as a programme of metonymy (the definition of which he keeps very open, frequently citing Northrop Frye and the broad definition which that

author proposes so succinctly: putting for—"mettre pour"). Another term favoured by Deguy, who links it to both Mallarmé and the pre-surrealist generation in "The Energy of Despair," is *rapprochement*. To cite just one early example in illustration of this logic of "general Mallarméan rapprochement" ("Energy"), here is a section of the liminary poem of *Fragment du Cadastre*.

Le matin je sors avec les gestes du bouquet
 Pour rassembler
 L'assemblée des grands chardons violets et des feuilles
 Huilées des pousses du tilleul argenté
 Essences disjointes dans le spectacle,
 Afin que le feu de la relation brûle plus vif.
 Ainsi quand les fleurs se réunissent dans le vase.

Deguy's bouquet gestures are precisely a manifestation of Summing-up's *gathering* character; both the water-lily and the dancer are associated with verbs like *cueillir* and *recueillir*, they are figures of attraction, organization, composition, or simply of metonymic substitution in a chain of metaphors and comparisons. "Summing-up is gathering, picking, gathering together, it is *legein*, reading/saying" (Deguy, "Je remplis" 83). It is the poet in the first person who makes (says) such a reading. This is a frequently occurring motif of Deguy's writing on Mallarmé: "The 'I,' poet, subject of the word who will subject himself to language in that 'inspired' manner, is one who 'reads the being.' That which is, is describable aspect, decipherable; is an ideogram" ("The Dancer" 337). Both the dancer and the water-lily are ideograms for the poet-subject. Both are also figures of figurativity.

Following Deguy as he pursues the implications of such insights, we might ask the following questions: what does the reading/saying of the poet take as its object and through what method or technique is the reading/saying achieved? The question of means leads us to the rich area of suggestion; that of ends toward the question of the phenomenon. "The means of Summing-up is the gaze [regard]; that which may be summed up, or the correlative of summing-up, is the 'virgin/absence/scattered/in this solitude'" ("Je remplis" 83). Deguy will elaborate on both sides of the question in parallel; here, the analysis begins with summing-up.

The *Po&sie* essay holds that *résumer* and *suggérer* are "complementary." A sudden shift in focus underlines the close proximity of the two verbs in a selected passage from "Crayonné au théâtre" in the *Divagations*. Interestingly, in all of Mallarmé's work, it is this passage that has been the focal point for the most prolonged and intense of Deguy's recent meditations.

In every one of the core texts referred to in this article Deguy comments on this passage, this “judgement or axiom to affirm in the instance of ballet” (as the “scansion” above this paragraph rather elliptically introduces it). The dancer has become a major touchstone for his poetics¹²:

Which is to say that the dancer (female) is not a woman who dances, for the juxtaposed reasons that (a) she isn't a woman, but a metaphor *Summing-up* one of the elementary aspects of our form, sword, cup, flower, etc. and (b) she doesn't dance (in the ordinary sense; rather) *suggesting* by the prodigiousness of (either) short-cuts or élans, with a bodily writing what it would take paragraphs of prose dialogue as well as descriptive (prose) to express in a written text: (she is) a poem freed from all the apparatus of a scribe.¹³

In “The Dancer: Mallarmé,” a brief and concentrated analysis dealing only with this paragraph, Deguy reads this passage meta-metaphorically, we might say. The dancer becomes what Deguy has called elsewhere the “generalization of the figure.”¹⁴ The exchange between woman and metaphor in this passage functions like a “reciprocity of proofs”:

A woman is not a woman. And one might just as well say, taking the Mallarméan formula in its reversibility: the metaphor is woman; take the woman dancer as a chance to appear, a roll of the dice where chance is figured in formula or emblem, without being abolished because of it, but giving itself elsewhere under another aspect. Metaphor is woman to the extent that a woman is not a woman. (“The Dancer” 336)

From this follows a thinking of identity that proceeds negatively without settling for simple, one-sided negativity:

[...] the poetic grasp of things implies a double refusal: of identification (of the type: “men are beasts”); and of analogy, which would expel us from this world. It awakens us to the hearing of the like-or-as, and so to paradoxicalization, to the is-and-is-not; and attaches itself to the operation (work, art) which transforms, which allows its figurants to rise up in the world, making differences flourish in “correspondences.” (“The Dancer” 337)

Captured by neither identification nor analogy, essentially uncapturable, Deguy's Mallarméan dancer serves to illustrate the “being-like-or-as” (*l'être-comme*), which Deguy sees as poetry's specific contribution to recasting such theoretical dilemmas for the contemporary requirements of thought:

The principle of poetry is suspicious of identification; respectful of the fold of difference deployed by being-like-or-as, it has to do less with the common than with the *commune* [*le comme-un*], the as-oneness, in the experience of common diversity. (“The Dancer” 336)

This is not a statement about banal free association nor is it a programme for a being-together based upon arbitrary juxtaposition, neither is it an aesthetic extension of a political virtue of toleration or celebration of difference.¹⁵ It is a statement of the fundamental co-existence of comparability and incomparability, an interpenetration on the ontological plane that admits of no synthetic resolution. In this sweetly liberating tension of the comparable and the incomparable, paradox flourishes, like the dancer thriving and expanding—in a certain sense—under the vaulted ceilings of the theatre. She picks out metaphors, without being herself metaphorical, strictly speaking. She leads us, not to the illusion of elsewhere but to the full/empty dimensions (polypolarity, Cohn would say) within which the present/future phenomenon takes (its) place. She is poem and non-poem, the full flood of relation (“heures d’affluence”) and pure, disengaged, non-relation, sweet nothing¹⁶ (Deguy’s “Qui Quoi”¹⁷).

In “On ne peut se passer d’Eden,” Deguy considers suggestion as an ultimate stage or moment of metamorphosis and returns to the example of the ballerina as the furthest complexification (the ultimate *turn*, Deguy also says in other contexts like this one) of “the anxious ontological quest” (17) of anthropomorphosis, the becoming human of the human.¹⁸ “What does ‘suggestion’ suggest? It is a matter of a terminal phase of metamorphosis, at the very end of anthropomorphosis; a metamorphosis, then, of metamorphosis” (“On ne peut” 16). Rather than the separations, objectifications, depreciations and desolations which thought (metaphysical or philosophical) fatally produces, the poetic operation or manoeuvre might just push us through to this further metamorphosis: “an allegory in exercise, a figure in figuration” (“On ne peut” 16).

It is in this sense that, as we have already tentatively put it, Deguy’s reading of the Mallarméan dancer situates her as more than merely metaphorical. The line of argument taken in the preface to the 1991 volume makes what was implicit in “The Dancer: Mallarmé” even more apparent. There are two essential steps sketched out in this essay (and they are powerfully analogous to the global operations of Summing-up and Making-away-with): 1) The transformation—in reciprocity—of circumstance and poem, a possibility which is closely related to definition; and 2) a second and more difficult stage involving “definitions of definitions,” the “federation and configuration” of “isotopies” (“On ne peut” 17).

“Suggestion metamorphosizes a describable element into the figurative valence capable of returning to haunt it” (“On ne peut” 16). The relation of poem to circumstance cannot be reduced to description, however clever or subtle. It involves a “haunting” in the sense that a chosen element of the cir-

cumstance is presented in the fullness of its reified relations under the sign of like/as which, as we have seen, can never be summed up in an identity statement. Fantomatic figuration, playing with the is/is-not of metaphoricity, gives us conclusions like “The dancer is not a woman and she does not dance.” By changing the dancer into the metaphor of metaphor, she is defined, “de-limited by the ‘rapprochements’—or affinities—which speak of her ‘being-like-or-as,’ praising her incomparability” (“On ne peut” 17). This unlimited resource grounds the text of its discovery.

Deguy emphasizes that this is not a merely local operation, thereby introducing the second phase of “tightening-up” (“The Energy” 23), ratcheting the metamorphosis up to a new level: “it is not enough to operate one local metamorphosis, but to construct, put together, at a second degree, definitions of definitions, federating, configuring the isotopies [...] we would have said, once, long ago, *composing* in a system...” (“On ne peut” 17). This is poetic “induction,” according to Deguy.

“The poem is a successful abduction—at the price of making off with ‘nothing’: especially not a woman” (“Je remplis” 82). Deguy cleverly and decisively “sums up” the success of Mallarmé’s alchemy of poem and circumstance, relativizing that success, just as he will relativize Mallarmé’s declarations of failure with his repeated insistence on “The Energy of Despair.”¹⁹ This underlines a dimension that should not be neglected, namely that of suggestion’s relation to desire, eroticism, love. The English usage of the adjective “suggestive” gets at this, but what Deguy has in mind is something far more nuanced than such commonplaces. As the unpublished “Tunis” piece on Mallarmé puts it: “The poem is of course ‘erotic,’ but it is the opposite of libertine attractions, which turn on something censored to make ‘something else’ heard. Mallarméan suggestion is not of the order of ‘suggestive underthings.’ If it follows a clear erotic thread, it will be to allegorize” (“Tunis inédit” 2). We must be careful to distinguish here between the refusal of allegory, noted earlier, with its connotations of Bonnefidian *leurre*, and this less specific use of the term which is, as Deguy puts it here and elsewhere, more like an “autrement dit,” the capacity of saying otherwise, or something else altogether, at one and the same time. It is precisely the structural relation of desire to distance that opens up such allegorical room to “manœuvre.” In *Brevets*, in a passage which also discusses the Mallarméan dancer, it is a question of “the term Desire crushing what may be essential differences”: “Desire, distinct, distant from its object is then at the same time desire for the between, the interval, the transit—‘pure desire.’ The law which holds that ‘the more distant something is, the more the subject desires it’ indicates that desire brings with it a desire for distance, for élan.”²⁰

The cliché “absence makes the heart grow fonder” is a simple formulation of this infrastructure of desire. Through his repeated insistence on the “Ballets” passages of “Crayonné au théâtre,” in the 1980s and 1990s, Deguy makes of “the ecstatic impotence to disappear” the figure par excellence of this swirling attraction/repulsion which gives onto the entire range of desirable phenomena for the speaking subject.

The finale of Mallarmé’s “The White Water Lily” strikes with particular efficacy at the heart of both desire and poetry. Its logic of “non-privative privation” (“Je remplis” 87) is common to the poetic manœuvre and to the élan of erotic attraction and love. Among Deguy’s poems, we find many which contain recognition of this, and which most certainly adopt elements of a Mallarméan phenomenology:

Elancés ils s’enlacent, l’amour et la comparaison
L’amour compare la comparaison qui aime louer
avec des anaphores
et la lyre saphique tisse
l’incomparable beauté des bords
à contre-jour d’une éclipse de l’Etre

A reading *between* such poetic lines and the commentary offered on the Mallarméan text is conceivable. Let us follow the analogy. The poetic paddler’s “imaginary trophy” in the “Nénuphar,” the white water lily, is “seized” in just such a moment, and Deguy’s text from 1993 indicates that this moment of the “abduction of the ideal flower” is perhaps generalizable. Mallarmé’s poet, an “aquatic marauder,” self-propelled in his yole, will *dérâmer*, “unrow,” “un-paddle” himself from the edge of an incomparable beauty (because it is absent yet hauntingly present), finding himself, (not) making off with the ideal flower, which can nonetheless be seized (summed up in figuration) and made away with in a quasi-abduction, because of the non-appearance of the desired being (or the general eclipse of Being, as “Elancés” puts it).

“In fear of an apparition”: The Phenomenology of Appearing and Disappearing—It is this non-appearance that must now be considered. In the essays we have cited and elsewhere Deguy has repeatedly underlined the closeness of his phenomenology to that of Mallarmé. The axis along which this occurs is that of appearance or apparition with its associated question of presence. Put more broadly, it is the question of the visible, as the tight link between the gaze and its correlative in the logic of summing-up and making-away-with in “Je remplis d’un beau non” has already shown us. Deguy looks to the cele-

brated poet of “Apparition” when he considers what it is for the subject to find itself confronted by the appearance of a given visible phenomenon. He sees evolution in Mallarmé’s attitude:

From the “Apparition” of 1864 [...] which says “Tu m’es en riant apparue” (You appeared to me laughing) in the twelfth verse, to that “fear” in which inspiration (the poem) is held back, Mallarmé’s “art poétique” hollows itself out (the hollowing making a place for emptiness): from a certain belief in the possibility of simple astonishment, the possibility of the positivity of an apparition, like that of a desired woman who may be present “herself,” right up to and including the negative formula for the dancer, “extatique impuissance à disparaître” (ecstatic impotence to disappear). (“The Energy” 26)

In this evolution Deguy sees a progression to a greater truth about phenomena. It is one which he seeks to adapt and refine in his own work. Much of his recent writing about things and the visible has sought to take the insights of the dancer and the water-lily to the level of theoretical statements about the paradoxes of appearance.²¹ In this paragraph of “The Energy of Despair,” for example, he sets out a programme that is both Mallarméan and radically contemporary, utterly his own:

A thing disappears as it has appeared, or appears as it disappeared. The appearing depends on, or is contained in, this vibration disappearing/appearing on the flail of the *comme* (like-or-as) of comparison. The appearing as a trans-appearance (the French verb *transparaître* suggests this) takes and loses countenance, consistence, and measure in an oscillation/vibration where appearing and disappearing, apparition and disappearance are laced together around the like-or-as of comparison. This is clear whether I follow the formula, “He disappeared as he appeared” (which, again, is reversible), or another formula, “disparaître par où il est apparu” (he disappeared from whence he came), and again, this is reversible. Would disappearing in appearing (Baudelaire’s *beauté fugitive*) and the apparition in the disappearance (Emmaus), be reversible, equivalent formulations of the “phenomenon”? This would have to be analyzed very painstakingly, with multiple examples, taken from many poems. (“The Energy” 27)

A poetics of summing-up and making-away-with articulates the encounter with appearance, the “quasi-encounter” with “quasi-presence” (“On ne peut” 88-89). Deguy shows in his reading of Mallarmé and in his own poetic practice that from within the complex interplay of a phenomenological poetry emerges the uncertain possibility of a human proportion: “it is a matter of *proportioning one’s life to nothingness, by means of the work [...]*” (“The Energy” 25).

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Notes

1. Michel Deguy, "The Dancer: Mallarmé," trans. Christopher Elson, *Dalhousie Review* 77.3 (Autumn 1997): 337.
2. Michel Deguy, *Actes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 255. Here, as in other quotations from the original texts, all translations are my own.
3. It is worthwhile to note in passing, here, that the poetry/prose distinction is one which Deguy associates deeply with Mallarmé. In his own "prolonged hesitation" between poetry and prose (cf. "Résumé des propositions des livres précédents," in *Aux heures d'affluence* [Paris: Seuil, 1993]) Mallarmé is often cited by Deguy as the model: "Mallarmé invents a text, a textual space 'between' the 'on the one hand' of the poem disposed (justified) as a poem (be it in regular or in free verse) and the 'on the other hand' of ordinary prose where phrases with indeterminate syllabic counts get strung together." Michel Deguy, "The Energy of Despair," trans. C. Elson, in *Mallarmé in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Robert Greer Cohn (Madison/London: Fairleigh Dickinson UP and Associated UP, 1998), 24.
4. "Esthétique de Baudelaire" in *Critique*, 243-44 (août-septembre 1967); "Le corps de Jeanne" in *Poétique*, 3 (1970); "Sur la pensée politique de Baudelaire" in *Critique*, 355 (décembre 1976); "L'infini et sa diction" in *Poétique*, 40 (1979); "'Pour piquer dans le but, de mystique nature' (Que faisons-nous parlant de Baudelaire?)" in *Rue Descartes*, 10 "Modernités esthétiques" (1994). Yves Charnet has produced the only sustained examination of Deguy's ongoing reading of Baudelaire, situating it under the sign of imagination: "La Profondeur et l'Infini: L'imagination baudelairienne selon Michel Deguy," in *Baudelaire: Nouveaux Chantiers* (Lille: PU du Septentrion, 1995).
5. Robert Greer Cohn, "Mallarmé's Wake," in *Mallarmé in the Twentieth Century* 279.
6. Michel Deguy, *Fragment du Cadastre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).
7. Michel Deguy, *Arrêts fréquents* (Marseille: Métailié, 1991). "Love is abduction. To get you into my story, that is the abductive vow of love, the jealousy of its desire: to carry the other off into captivity" (24).
8. "Jalons de lecture mallarméenne," in *Syllepses* 5 (Grenoble, hiver 1971).
9. Robert Greer Cohn, *Vues sur Mallarmé* (Paris: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1991).
10. "Je remplis d'un beau non ce grand espace vide" in *Poésie* 85 (1998): 82-94. Michel Deguy informs me that a chapter bearing this title, but not identical in content, will appear in his forthcoming book *La Raison Poétique*, scheduled for publication with Galilée in 2000.
11. I have taken into account the translation of the "Nénuphar Blanc" ("The White Water Lily") by Robert Greer Cohn in his work, *Mallarmé's prose poems* (Cambridge UP, 1987), 86-94. *Leaving with* is certainly an uncontroversial choice in this passage but, for the reasons outlined above, I consider it legitimate to reinterpret and to sharpen the translation of *partir avec* in the context of Deguy's reading.
12. In *Jumelages/Made in USA* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), as part of a broader series of texts on American phenomena and meanings, the "Carnets de poétique transatlantique," Deguy addressed "Danse" as one category (171-81). The Mallarméan precedent is evoked in passing (178-79); the focus in 1979, though, tends to shift between issues of figuration revealed in dance, particularly modern dance—"Metaphor is space; space is metaphor; or rather: metaphoricity is spatiality; the spaciousity of space is metaphoricity" (177)—and dance as mimesis of social relations and rhythms. Wilson Baldrige has shown how this entire section adumbrates an "Ethics of Figuration" and has brought out the manifest dialogue between it and René Girard's thought of "mimetic rivalry." Wilson Baldrige, "Michel Deguy and the Ethics of Figuration," *Symposium* 41 (1987): 83-99.
13. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Crayonné au théâtre*, trans. Robert Greer Cohn, in *Mallarmé's Divagations: A Guide and Commentary* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 148. The italics are mine, following Deguy's emphasis.
14. Deguy has spoken of a logic of necessity inherent in much modern literature, which tends to produce a widespread generalization of figures within the *œuvres* of various writers. He has also argued for something more philosophically radical: the generalization of figurality itself. This is an issue for another day and it would be necessary to connect what Deguy has to say about a "generalized" figure and his notion of a "figurativity of existence." For the early formulations of these questions see Michel Deguy, "Vers une théorie de la figure généralisée," *Critique* 269 (octobre 1969), and Gérard Genette and Michel Deguy, "Question à Michel Deguy avec une Réponse à Gérard Genette," *Cahiers du Chemin* (janvier 1971). In these articles Deguy speaks of a "seeking after the unity of figurativity" (Deguy, "Réponse à Gérard Genette" 83).
15. Deguy has spoken of the slight interest of such untheoretical celebrations of difference. Cf.

- his numerous critical references to the logic of festivals of poetry (*Choses de la poésie*, 212; *Arrêts fréquents*, 103-06; *et passim*), or this sentence from *Nouvelles notes sur le culturel* in *La Part de l'Œil* 12 (Bruxelles, 1996): 33: "The competitive juxtaposition of "multicultural" differences is a weak, folkloric and mercantile programme [...]."
16. An essay on Deguy's relation to Mallarmé would not be complete without mentioning Deguy's reflections on the Mallarméan *rien* and the *néant*. Refusing an oversimplified vision of the negativity in the work, Deguy concentrates on a certain doubling of our approaches to Mallarmé's nothing and nothingness. And, indeed, on a doubling of that doubling. One reference will serve to introduce this: "it's as if there were two sorts of nothingness. As nothingness 'from below,' if I dare put it that way, down there, vertiginous abyss of the bottomless bottom, 'nothingness' [*le néant*] plays like a principle of destruction (of annihilation), of unhappiness and unluckiness. But if 'sensation' (Mallarmé) comes to us from above, as a principle of ascension, of absolution, of tutelary absence, if we dance under its protection, we would say that it is joy, the illusion of joy, which proceeds from it [...]. For the 'nothingness' of everything, sung since Ecclesiastes, does not annul the difference, does not neutralize the duplicity of our sharing and of its shares; but rather marks with a dark circle anything which becomes precious, detached, highlighted: the discernment of what is good and what is evil proceeds from this" ("On ne peut" 20). Cf. also "The Energy of Despair" 25, which evokes two sorts of *rien*.
 17. Title of the liminary poem of (not insignificantly) a poetic "Tombeau," *Tombeau de Du Bellay* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).
 18. See Christopher Elson, "Anthropomorphose: l'humanisme dans la poétique de Michel Deguy," *Littérature* 114 (juin 1999), for a discussion of Deguy's concern with anthropomorphosis.
 19. For a particularly poignant meditation on Mallarmé's remark, "Ratés, nous le sommes tous," see *A ce qui n'en finit pas* (Paris: Seuil, 1995), non-paginated. "We could say in general that any 'individual' situation is of the type where the drowning man comes very near to grasping the wharf, only failing by a centimetre or so, all it took was a centimetre, and his final and vain last effort to save himself *would not have been* in vain if ... until the current takes him away, and the great liquid tombstone closes over him. 'Failures, all of us,' there is a remark by Mallarmé that should be meditated upon."
 20. Michel Deguy, *Brevets* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 1986), 39-40.
 21. The entire closing development of "On ne peut se passer d'Eden," for example, is given over to a polemical orchestration on the salutary powers of paradox. "Paradox is the ether of thought" ("On ne peut" 21). Like "The Energy of Despair," this earlier text sets up the impasse as the site of our dwelling.