

**Review: *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*, edited by John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray, Laurence and Wishart: London, 2014, 365 pp., ISBN: 978 1 909831 08 7**

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Since the first English translation of his work, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, in 1976, the influence of Jean Laplanche has steadily increased among Anglophone psychoanalysts and scholars. Until that point he was best known for the critical dictionary of psychoanalysis he co-wrote with Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, which offered an analysis of Freudian terms and concepts and can be seen to be the beginning of a project that continued until Laplanche's death in 2012—to constitute 'new foundations' for the theory of psychoanalysis. 'My tactic,' Laplanche states in his 1987 book *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, 'has always been to take an apparently classic theme in Freudian psychoanalysis, and to call it into question, challenge it and problematise it.'

In the excellent introduction to their book, which brings together essays by Laplanche and by a range of clinicians and scholars, John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray outline the themes and ideas behind these new foundations. New foundations that constitute a faithful reading and a radical departure from classical notions surrounding Freud's metapsychology; a going astray—from Freud and by Freud.

There are three essays by Jean Laplanche in this volume: 'Interpreting (with) Freud' from 1992, and 'Sublimation and/or Inspiration' and 'Exigency and Going Astray' from 2002 and 2006. They have been judiciously chosen by the editors to provide theoretical elaborations of Laplanche's foundational theories of psychoanalysis, and they show how he retains a faithfulness to the project of not only calling Freud to question, but using strictly Freudian methods to do so. They also retain, most faithfully, the two key elements of his reworking of Freud: the effects of translation on the psychical processes, and the development of his General Theory of Seduction.

The essays in the rest of the book think, in one way or the other, about how Laplanche is to be read and what Laplanche can be used for.

Many of these papers are able to strike an equilibrium between applying Laplanche's theories to texts from disciplines other than psychoanalysis, and attentive readings of the theory itself.

Jacqueline Lanouzière, one of three Psychoanalysts from France included in the volume, is one who manages to occupy this space, with her notions of two scenes of primal seduction—direct and indirect—as related to the Laplanchean idea of the primal fantasy and, in particular, the place that breast-feeding occupies vis-a-vis this dynamic. Lanouzière examines these ideas alongside a painting, Giorgione's *The Tempest*, in which the enigmatic message conveyed by the artwork is seen to have echoes of the enigmatic messages transmitted by the breastfeeding mother. Jacques André also draws on Laplanche's theories of primal seduction especially in the second essay he has in the collection where he references Delacroix's painting, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, to point to a moment of breaking in, in the form of a penetration of the infant by the adult's messages. He examines, with a reading of Freud's Wolf Man case, how various defences are formed as a result of this penetration. Judith Butler, in her essay, 'Seduction, Gender and the Drive', looks at the implications of Laplanche's theories on the politicised arenas of gender, sexuality and kinship, with gender itself being posited as an enigmatic message that must constantly be translated, detranslated and retranslated. Josh Cohen's paper, on the artist Bruce Nauman's 'art of helplessness', deploys a phenomenological description to look at the 'designified signifiers' of the drive as formulated by Laplanche, and should also be mentioned as a fine example of the stimulating, scholarly texts in this collection.

In producing this book—part homage to Jean Laplanche after his death, part attempt to widen the field of Laplanche studies—John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray continue to be part of an ongoing process of translation and dissemination of Laplanche's texts in the English-speaking world. Long may we be led astray.