compounded by a general lack of editorial rigour throughout: Dickinson over-uses filler phrases that ought to have been chopped; the book is also longer than it needs to be.) And yet Dickinson is not wrong when he reminds me that "scholars who work in cross-disciplines such as cultural studies and performance studies are not always comfortable with [...] the mixing of the personal and the professional, the social and the scholarly, the theatrical and the touristic" (137), and I admire the challenge he poses in response. I will, therefore, not be predictable and scold Dickinson for how-dare-he, but rather applaud him for his daring—for daring to expose, and also to revel in, the very things that make our work possible (like travel, like leisure, like money, like talented friends-of-friends). If Dickinson errs too enthusiastically in this work, so be it. His book sets an important precedent for talking out loud about the class privilege that attends academic privilege; more of us should try it some time.

ÉRIC MÉCHOULAN
D'où nous viennent nos idées? Métaphysique et intermédialité.
Montréal : vlb éditeur, 2010. 288pp.

ANDRÉ LOISELLE

As director of the "Centre de recherche sur l'intermédialité," at the Université de Montréal, Éric Méchoulan is fully aware that a fashionable buzzword like "intermedialty" runs the risk of quickly becoming a trendy piece of pseudo-academic jargon emptied of any significance through overuse and misuse by facile scholars and sophomoric students. He says so himself, early in his book *D'où nous viennent nos idées? Métaphysique et intermédialité* (35). The fear of vulgarization implicitly underlies Méchoulan's project. On the surface, the purpose of this study is to show that ideas are not merely *conveyed* by various media (oral language, the written word, the printed press, etc.); rather, they are in fact engendered and shaped by the media that perform these epistemological transmissions (29-31). Five pages into the introduction Méchoulan states the obvious: "One should not think that the institutional materiality and form of these transmissions has no effect on ideas and discourses" (17, my translation). However, beneath this assertion, which would not surprise anyone who has read McLuhan (as Méchoulan obviously has: 43), what the author really wants to present is a thorough demonstration that intermediality is *anything but* a facile, trendy, sophomoric concept.

Over the 245 pages of this rich and sometimes engaging book,

Méchoulan goes out of his way to nuance the notion of intermediality and affirm that it is worthy of the kind of profound metaphysical contemplations that would have made Socrates and Descartes proud. It does not require well over 200 pages to convince anyone that the clever ideas a 16-year-old might text to a BFF in 2012 are likely to be formally and substantially different from the clever ideas that a 16-year-old Descartes might have penned in 1612. What does take almost 250 pages, however, is the weaving of an intricate tapestry of erudite citations and rarefied classical references that bestow upon the topic at hand an aura of philosophical respectability. Arguing that ancient Greek sophist Protagoras relies on intermediality to discuss the pedagogy of virtue by intersecting the two distinct rhetorical modes of explicative Socratic dialogism and "gracious" epic mythos certainly helps to elevate the term to the rank of learned concept (192-193).

Of course, there is nothing wrong with trying to enhance the metaphysical capital of intermediality. As director of CRI, Méchoulan probably counts among his administrative responsibilities the task of convincing funding agencies that the whole enterprise is not entirely trivial. And in fact, he is quite successful in his attempt to demonstrate that intermediality provides a crucial heuristic tool to explain the ontological formation of western epistemology. For instance, the author convincingly articulates a genealogy of human intelligence through the intermediality of instinct and intuition (69). Discussing Bergson's philosophy of intuition, which cultivates new concepts from the experiential fringes of memory, the author represents intermediality as a wide net able to harvest the sea of non-symbolic debris of meaning that traditional philosophy ignores and leaves behind. Being "attentive to 'leftovers'" (73, my translation), intermediality is conceived by Méchoulan as Bergson's strategy to cut through the rigid symbols of modernity and reenergize a stale present with the putatively anachronistic means of intuitive thinking. Similarly, Méchoulan's discussion of the oral culture of seventh-century-BC Sparta, when legislator Lycurgus forbade the writing down of laws in favor of more flexible legal principles transmitted through the spoken word (118-119), elucidates the intermedial connection between a culture's dominant form of communication and its views on morality and justice.

The author's skillful prose and thorough argumentation throughout the book are undoubtedly impressive and sometimes even charming. But not everyone will enjoy the recondite style and pretentious tone of the book. Méchoulan's conceited loquaciousness will probably test the patience of those readers looking for a clear-cut definition of intermediality. I would suggest that Anglophone read-

ers, even those who are fluent in French, will have little tolerance for Méchoulan's verbosity. While the book might hold a great appeal for those Francophone readers who were born and raised in the tradition of "*grands philosophes français*," its long, convoluted sentences and interminable digressions are likely to annoy the English-speaker in search of straightforward and pragmatic answers. Case in point:

> Si l'une des originalités fortes du propos cartésien, selon une vulgate rapidement constituée, consiste à unir position d'énonciation (l'*ego* tacite d'un *cogito*) et fondement métaphysique, parcours des réflexions d'un sujet et constitution d'une épistémologie, l'élaboration même de la scène d'énonciation et de ses modes de publication implique une construction de la posture publique de cette manière de dire le vrai qui doit faire l'objet d'une réflexion attentive, non seulement pour ses usages historiques, mais aussi parce qu'elle compose un des enjeux propres de ce que nous pouvons appeler « métaphysique », ainsi que Platon l'avait fort bien senti. L'idée ne consiste pas à invoquer la nécessité d'une contextualisation pour mieux entendre la métaphysique cartésienne; elle fait de la question de la transmission, donc de la scène contextuelle d'énonciation, une des formes d'appropriation du temps propre de la métaphysique. Loin des seuls effets de substance, la métaphysique porte sur les relations et les nœuds ponctuels qu'elles forment, autrement dit sur les phénomènes de transmission dont l' « intermédialité » doit rendre compte. (76)

The reader's response to this brief but typical passage (admiration, inspiration, confusion, exasperation, indifference…) should be a clear indication of whether s/he should bother purchasing this book.

ALBERT-REINER GLAAP (with assistance from Michael Heinze and Neil Johnstone)
Jewish Facets of Contemporary Canadian Drama.
Reflections: Literatures in English outside Britain and the USA. Vol. 18.
Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008. 183pp.

AMANDA LOCKITCH

> "It is an encouraging development that today 105,000 Jews live in Germany again. […] Jewish life has again become an integral part of our culture, and most people do not merely accept but greatly appreciate this" (1).