

Editing Jean Starobinski

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Starobinski, Jean. Le Corps et ses raisons. Édité et préfacé par Martin Rueff. Paris: Seuil (series «Librairie du XXI^e siècle»); 2020. 532 p. ISBN: 978-2021238402. 26,00€.

I

Jean Starobinski (1920-2019), the great Genevan literary critic and medical historian, was an extremely prolific writer. The most recent version of his official bibliography lists over 1.500 references¹. Even subtracting translations, excerpts from books printed in article form, and integrally or partially republished texts, which

1. Wenger, Jonathan. Les écrits de Jean Starobinski. Bibliographie officielle du Cercle d'études internationales. Available from: <https://www.nb.admin.ch/snl/en/home/about-us/sla/literature-bibliographies.html> (updated August 2020). On Starobinski, see Colangelo, Carmelo. Jean Starobinski. L'apprentissage du regard. Geneva: Zoé; 2004; Trucchio, Aldo. Les deux langages de la modernité. Jean Starobinski entre littérature et science. Lausanne: Éditions BHMS; 2021.

he might have modified (often very slightly), shortened or retitled, the count would be in the hundreds. Two factors exacerbate the challenge of traceability that such plethora presents to potential editors of Starobinski's œuvre: its huge dispersal in collective volumes and journals, many virtually unobtainable; and the author's own compositional practices. Thanks to the Swiss Literary Archives and the *Cercle d'études internationales Jean Starobinski* at the Swiss National Library (Bern), the former factor has become easier to handle. The latter, however, subsists. The two books discussed here —the first ones to appear «edited by» after Starobinski's death— pertain to the corpus of his writings on the history of medicine and the sciences of mind and body.

An incursion into matters related to the above-mentioned factors is necessary to assess them correctly. Several of Starobinski's books are compilations prepared by himself, to which he sometimes added introductions or prefatory notes. In these cases, he maintained a close control over the volumes, not only choosing the texts to be included, but also reworking them to various degrees, though without leaving traces. Such practice of silent self-editing is intrinsically related to Starobinski's preferred genre: the *essay*, a label that applies to the vast majority of his writings, from the short article to the large book. Theodor Adorno described the essay as «both more open and more closed» than usually imagined. More open insofar as «its structure negates system» and «satisfies its inherent requirements better the more rigorously it holds to that negation», neither «deduc[ing] itself rigorously from theory» nor constituting «a down-payment on future syntheses». But more closed «because it works emphatically at the form of its presentation»².

These remarks capture two features of Starobinski's approach: a demanding attention to form, and a refusal of jargon, methodolatry, and totalizing intentions. The lack of *esprit de système* combines here with erudition and analytical rigor, which Starobinski employed to follow the «movement» embodied in the works he examined. *Movement*, a notion enshrined in the title of one of his most notable books (*Montaigne en mouvement*, 1982), reflects the way he understood his own writings and intellectual endeavors. For example:

2. Adorno, Theodor W. The essay as form [1954-58]. In: Adorno, T. W. Notes to literature, vol. 1. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Shiery Weber NicholSEN. New York: Columbia University Press; 1993, p. 3-23, 17-18.

«Rousseau's case became for me a privileged one, because there is in him a multiplicity of concerns both on the personal level, on the level of collective history and on the level of the aesthetics of the novel, and because he is someone who perceived himself in movement, as I try to perceive myself in movement»³.

The essay allowed Starobinski to begin over and over again, yet always returning to a set of primordial questions. The critic was an accomplished musician, always keenly aware of the melody and rhythm of a text; from the formal point of view, the essay as genre matched his taste for variation as a compositional technique⁴. The essay, he also said,

«[...] has allowed me to be true to a set of concerns and motifs that attracted me from very early on. I persevered in the form of the essay. Every occasional pretext has been convenient for me to pursue such work, which is linked to the desire to put myself in a situation of start, onset or overture. Nothing pleases me more than the feeling of the good takeoff, of the first step»⁵.

Starobinski considered the essay as «the *freest* literary genre» —a form that enabled of combining «science and poetry», understanding someone else's language and at the same time inventing one's own, grasping past meanings while creating new relations that make sense in the present. The essay, he wrote, «requires the simultaneous practice of a hermeneutics and an adventurous audacity»⁶. Starobinski brought them together, refusing to keep criticism «within the limits of verifiably knowledge», and preferring to take the risks of the full-fledged creative act⁷.

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3. Cudré-Mauroux, Stéphanie; Mahrer, Rudolf. Jean Starobinski —«J'essaie de me percevoir en mouvement» [interview]. *Genesis*. 2017; 44: 157-164, p. 161-162.
 4. «Je sens se déployer une incomparable jubilation lorsque j'entends la grande Passacaille pour orgue ou les Variations Goldberg de Bach. Le genre de la variation s'affranchira de la soumission à la coupe initiale, et renoncera au retour de la basse: une liberté s'ouvrira». Starobinski, Jean. *La perfection, le chemin, l'origine*. Conférence. 1997; 5: 167-197, p. 187. [Also in Gagnebin, Murielle; Savinel, Christine. eds., *Starobinski en mouvement*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon; 2001, p. 471-492].
 5. Grosrichard, Alain; Miller, Judith. Entretien avec Jean Starobinski, l'essai et son éthique. *L'École de la Cause freudienne*; 2019; n.º 102: 21-32, p. 21. [Originally published in *L'Âne*, n.º 24, 1986].
 6. Starobinski, Jean. Les enjeux de l'essai. *Revue de Belles-Lettres*. 1983; 2-3: 93-105, p. 102 and 105. Also available (among various possibilities) as *Peut-on définir l'essai?* In: Jean Starobinski —*Cahiers pour un temps*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou; 1985, p. 185-186.
 7. Starobinski, Jean. «La relation critique» [1968]. In: *La Relation critique*. Paris: Gallimard; 1970, p. 33.

The preceding observations hint at the challenges that might follow from Starobinski's essayistic and editorial praxis. Although the silent editing and retitling mentioned above were often prompted by invitations to republish a text, revision was inherent to that praxis. We can in this regard distinguish three types of essay compilations. First, the ones Starobinski composed. He alone gave them the form in which he wished them to reach the public, sometimes elaborating briefly on what brought his texts together. Those compilations, however, were never definitive. As shown in the following examples, they could be expanded, and its elements sometimes reappeared elsewhere, including in other assemblages devised by the author himself.

La Relation critique, one of Starobinski's most influential critical works, appeared in 1970 as a compilation of texts from 1954 to 1970, and was enlarged in 2001. Some of the essays had already been republished; one was reprinted in *Les Approches du sens* (2013) and another in *La Beauté du monde* (2016), two anthologies of his writings on criticism, literature and the arts⁸. The latter introduces considerable confusion, since it includes texts previously published, among other places, in *Approches* and *L'Encre de la mélancolie* (discussed here in section II), as well as in two compilations with a long career as self-standing books, *Trois fureurs* (mentioned below) and *Les enchanteresses* (broadly scattered and reprinted essays on opera, including a series on the character of the seductress written for the magazine of Geneva's Grand Théâtre).

L'Œil vivant, another of Starobinski's major critical compilations, which appeared in 1961 and was expanded in 1999, includes texts originally published from 1951 onward. Other collections are more narrowly thematic. *Trois fureurs* (1974) consists of three essays on exemplary figures of madness (Ajax in Sophocles' tragedy, Christ's exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac, and Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting *The Nightmare*); one, originally published in 1965, had already appeared in revised form, and another would be reprinted in *La Beauté du monde*. *La Mélancolie au miroir* (1989) is made up of three studies on Baudelaire; the 1992 German translation includes an additional one — which had already appeared in the anthology *Kleine Geschichte des Körpergefühls* (discussed below) and would in turn be reprinted in *La Beauté du monde*. In 1971, Starobinski's groundbreaking doctoral dissertation, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle* (1957),

8. Starobinski, Jean. *Les Approches du sens. Essais sur la critique*. Édition établie et annotée par Michaël Comte and Stéphanie Cudré-Mauroux. Geneva: La Dogana; 2013. Starobinski, Jean. *La Beauté du monde. La littérature et les arts*. Édition établie sous la direction de Martin Rueff. Paris: Gallimard; 2016.

was republished alongside seven essays on Rousseau; they were clearly designated as an addition to the original monograph, and can be considered as a compilation in itself. With the exception of these seven essays, all of the texts collected in the other volumes were presented as having been revised. That, however, does not mean that every single text was altered; in any case, what the revision consists of is never stated. The volumes are nonetheless the direct outcome of Starobinski's decisions, which include that of neither explaining how he modified his writings, nor leaving traces of his amendments. The same can be said of his other collections, including (to mention only major ones), *Le Remède dans le mal: critique et légitimation de l'artifice à l'âge des Lumières* (1989), *Accuser et séduire* (on Rousseau) and *Diderot: un diable de ramage* (both 2012).

A second type of compilation gathers essays around a theme without presenting itself as composed by Starobinski or as an edited volume. It may hint at an editorial presence or explain what occasioned it. There are several instances in connection with the history of medicine, mind and body. In 1995, *La Coscienza e i suoi antagonisti* gathered the short articles Starobinski wrote in 1989-1991 for the journal *Sfera* of the Fondazione Sigma-Tau. The French versions appeared at the same time in a not-for-sale volume, and some were printed later elsewhere. Its unity is thematic, but also derives from a specific writing commitment. *Kleine Geschichte des Körpergefühls* (1987) includes four essays on the history and experience of the body and bodily sensations⁹. A 1993 Romanian anthology collects eight studies on melancholy, nostalgia, irony, and the history of cenesthesia and bodily sensations¹⁰. Finally, *Razones del cuerpo* (1999) includes three of the articles translated in *Kleine Geschichte*, as well as other essays on the history and philosophy of medicine and the body, an interview of 1970, and two texts (dated 1977 and 1996) where Starobinski elaborates on being «present» in the world, and on the dynamics of the poetic and scientific languages¹¹. «Brève histoire de la conscience du corps» (1981), which has been translated into English as «A short history of bodily sensation», is the only article common to the three compilations.

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9. Starobinski, Jean. *Kleine Geschichte des Körpergefühls*. Translated by Inga Pohlmann, introduction by Hans Robert Jauss. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz; 1987. [Reprinted: Frankfurt am Main, Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag; 1991. Norwegian translation, 1992].
 10. Starobinski, Jean. *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie*. Translated by Angela Martin, «selectia textelor» and preface by Mircea Martin. Bucharest: Editura Meridiane; 1993. [Reprinted: Pitești, Paralela 45, 2002.]
 11. Starobinski, Jean. *Razones del cuerpo*. [Introduction by Fernando Vidal, translation and afterword by Julián Mateo Ballorca.] Valladolid: cuatro ediciones; 1999.

These details could be a first step toward a concordance. I mention them here only to highlight two features that the just-mentioned anthologies share in addition to their partial overlap: none has formal editors, and none is in French. *Kleine Geschichte* was part of a book series entitled Konstanzer Bibliothek, which published lectures delivered at the University of Konstanz in the cycle «Konstanzer Dialoge». In 1984, Starobinski was the second lecturer. The volume includes translations of texts published between 1980 and 1987; except for one, references are provided for the French versions. It also carries a three-page introduction by the literary scholar Hans Robert Jauss, who was professor in Konstanz and was united to his Genevan contemporary by bonds of mutual admiration and intellectual affinity¹².

The Romanian collection includes «texts selected by» the literary scholar Mircea Martin, who, in a remarkable introduction, explains how melancholy, nostalgia and irony are intertwined in Starobinski's critical endeavor, and outlines his anthropological and metacritical outlook¹³. The editorial information it provides is significant for our current purpose:

«This book is not Jean Starobinski's: all the texts in the table of contents belong to him, of course, but not the choice or their arrangement. The author has also written other pages on melancholy that, however, he has reprinted in a book himself (*La Mélancolie au miroir*) [...]. It is understood that the contents of this book are linked to those lectures, studies or essays which, over the years, the author has published and left in the pages of journals. [...] The table of contents has been seen and approved by the author. By its very composite character, but revolving around several major themes, it is, in comparison with the volumes compiled by Starobinski himself, no less representative of the breadth of concern, of the firmly guided encyclopedism of one of the foremost contemporary humanists»¹⁴.

These remarks depict Starobinski's openness to unplanned opportunities, something that allowed him to remain constantly turned toward the future of

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12. Rudy Hiller, Daniel; Sábado Novau, Marta. De Constance à Genève: Jauss lecteur de Starobinski et vice versa. *Bulletin du Cercle d'études internationales Jean Starobinski*. 2017; 10: 17-19.
 13. Martin, Mircea. Cerneala ironică a melancoliei [The ironic ink of melancholy]. In: Starobinski, n. 10, p. i-xiv.
 14. [Martin, Angela and Martin, Mircea]. Notă asupra ediției [Note on the edition]. In: Starobinski (n. 10), p. xv-xvi.

his œuvre¹⁵. He often saw his scattered essays as drafts and preparatory materials for future large-scale studies or compilations that would be carefully crafted; revising for republication was part of a long-term existential work in progress. Though not assembled by him, the collections just discussed afforded stepping-stones toward the final goal. That is why he welcomed them, while not wanting to have them published in French.

In the early 1990s, preparing my chapter on Starobinski for Mark Micale and Roy Porter's *Discovering the History of Psychiatry* led me to realize the dispersal and inaccessibility of his writings on the history of the mind and body¹⁶. When I suggested compiling them, he explained that he intended to pursue topics such as melancholy, nostalgia and bodily sensations, and perhaps turn them into books. This was not an incidental excuse. In 1985, regarding projects he dreamed of —«*Je rêve à mes projets [...]*»— Starobinski mentioned among others the history of «listening to the body» (*l'écoute du corps*), and a «series of studies on melancholy» that «awaits to be completed, revised, organized, for one or two volumes that would be better than compilations» (*mieux que des recueils*); he also described the «dizzines» he felt before the multiplicity, correspondences and diversity of the subjects he wished to develop: «Just considering bodily sensations, from Sappho to Beckett, offers enough to keep me busy...»¹⁷. In 1986, he wondered if the book on melancholy would ever see the light of day: «*Question elle-même mélancolique*»¹⁸. Prefacing in 1989 the English translation of two texts also included in *Kleine Geschichte* and *Razones*, he declared:

«The following essays are part of a larger study, currently in preparation. It will examine, on the one hand, the particular register of the body's life which consists of somatic sensations, and, on the other hand, the literary use of the images and modes of expression pertaining to that register. Also under investigation will be several of the main variations that have occurred in history, both in the area of medical and psychological theory, and in the most prominent literary works. [...] Further, [...] these essays will also focus on the notion of

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15. This, for example, is how Starobinski explained why he published so much: «Parce j'ai eu la chance de vivre dans un milieu où la sollicitation était à la fois insistante et cordiale, et que j'étais constamment soucieux d'y répondre». Cudré-Mauroux and Mahrer, n. 3, p. 163.
 16. Vidal, Fernando. Jean Starobinski: The history of psychiatry as the cultural history of consciousness. In: Micale, Mark S.; Porter, Roy, eds. *Discovering the History of Psychiatry*. New York: Oxford University Press; 1994, p. 135-154.
 17. Starobinski, Jean. [Conversation with Jacques Bonnet]. In: Jean Starobinski —*Cahiers pour un temps*, n. 6, p. 9-23, 12-13, 22-23.
 18. Grosrichard, Miller, n. 5, p. 23.

person, [...] the way sensory experience (and, more particularly, the organic and locomotive elements) contributes to the formation —or the decomposition— of the subject or the self, and on the several literary representatives of this kind of bodily message»¹⁹.

«Currently» here signifies «ever». Like Starobinski's «perpetually in preparation book on melancholy», which he brought up as late as 2006²⁰, the announced study does not seem to have been actually «in preparation» as such. It nonetheless existed in the author's vision, and its partial and interim materializations were a matter of opportunity.

In the late 1990s, Mauricio Jalón, historian of science at Valladolid and a fine connoisseur of Starobinski's work, solicited the critic for his publishing house. Starobinski then gave the green light to some form of the compilation I had proposed — but not in the texts' original language, which he reserved for a less provisional opus. Like the Romanian *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie*, the Spanish *Razones del cuerpo* is neither an edited book *stricto sensu*, nor a collection devised by the author himself. The dream of a «larger study» did not go away. It was a recurrent topic in our conversations, and by the summer of 2011, the ninety-year-old Starobinski was ready to lean on others to assemble his scattered writings while still holding the reins. As I prepared a concept and tables of contents, and provided the publishing house CDs containing the scanned articles I had gathered over the years, it became clear to me that there would have to be two volumes: one devoted to melancholy, the other to «the reasons of the body». In contrast to the compilations that punctuate Starobinski's career, these volumes were planned to gather the almost entirety of his publications on their respective topics.

The book was not going to appear as an edited volume, but I further helped with such matters as defining its structure, finding section titles, and identifying the sources of quotations. The result was *L'Encre de la mélancolie* (2012), which includes Starobinski's 1960 medical thesis on the history of the treatment of melancholy, followed by a large collection of texts²¹. In his foreword, the author

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19. Starobinski, Jean. The natural and literary history of bodily sensation. In: Feher, Michel; Naddaff, Ramona; Tazi, Nadia, eds. *Fragments for a history of the human body II*. New York: Zone Books; 1989, p. 351.
 20. Starobinski describes *Portrait de l'artiste en saltimbanque* (1970) as the «version documentée d'un chapitre de mon livre en perpétuelle préparation sur la mélancolie». Griener, Pascal; Cudré-Mauroux, Stéphanie. *Jean Starobinski et les arts: une relation critique* [conversation with J. Starobinski]. *Perspective*. 2006; 2. Available from: <http://journals.openedition.org/perspective/344>.
 21. Starobinski, Jean. *L'Encre de la mélancolie*. Paris: Seuil (series «Librairie du XXI^e siècle»); 2012.

situates his interest in the topic within his medical and literary studies, explains the periodization of his thesis (see below), and concludes: «During more than half a century several themes or motifs related to melancholy have guided my writing. In a certain sense, the book published today was born in 1960». The list of sources at the end of the volume states that the chapters «either profoundly rework, barely modify or reproduce without changes» the original texts. Title modifications are recorded in that list. Although there is no visible trace of the alterations, two stand out: the largely overlapping articles on nostalgia underwent cuts, and an entire section vanished from a 1965 article on Kierkegaard. My afterword links the topic of melancholy to Starobinski's practice of criticism, without dealing with editorial matters²². Despite its genealogy, the final product was not intended to have an external editor, and must therefore be considered in the same way as the author's earlier compilations of essays.

For the second volume, it was agreed to adapt the Spanish title and call it *Le Corps et ses raisons*. But a couple of things happened between 2012, when *L'Encre de la mélancolie* appeared, and 2020, when *Le Corps* was published. One was a *fait accompli*: even though it was anticipated that I would continue with the project, after several years of silence, it was announced that the book would appear in its present form. Another is that the health of Starobinski, who at ninety-three still gave brilliant interviews²³, declined; *Le Corps* could not be prepared and published under the same conditions as *L'Encre*. This underscores the need to differentiate Starobinski's texts from the editorial work that surrounds them. Such distinction applies to the two volumes examined here.

II

Both *Histoire de la médecine* and *Le Corps et ses raisons* mirror Starobinski's life-long engagement with the history of medicine and the historical and literary dimensions of the bodily and sensorial experience of the self²⁴.

22. Vidal, Fernando. L'expérience mélancolique au regard de la critique. In: Starobinski, n. 21, p. 625-639.

23. For example, https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2014/06/12/jean-starobinski-ma-presence-au-monde-est-philosophique_4437106_3246.html.

24. On the topic, see Colangelo and Trucchio, n. 1, and more specifically: Trucchio, Aldo. Jean Starobinski e la storia della medicina. *Scienza & Filosofia*. 2014; 11: 84-101; Vidal, Fernando. Jean Starobinski: the history of medicine and the reasons of the body, *Mefisto*. *Rivista di medicina, filosofia, storia*. 2020; 4 (2): 63-88.

The French version of Starobinski's *History of Medicine* (1963) has been republished by the small Genevan house Héros-Limite. The presentation lives up to the publisher's reputation for elegant books. The size (between a crown octavo and a 12°), the typography, and the paper quality make for comfortable reading; the choice of reproducing mainly line images, in black and white, with wide margins and on pages with no other text than the captions, enhances legibility. In this format, Starobinski's text totals 86 pages. The book opens with a twelve-page introduction by Vincent Barras, director of the Institute of Humanities in Medicine at the University of Lausanne.

Lacking bibliography and scholarly apparatus (but including chronological tables at the end), embellished with hundreds of images often unrelated to the text, and appearing almost simultaneously in French, German, Italian, English and Dutch in a popular encyclopedic collection entitled «The new illustrated library of science and invention», the original *History of Medicine* was a decidedly commercial product, and as such, unusual in Starobinski's oeuvre. Responsible for the iconography was Nicolas Bouvier, who would become the author's close friend. Best known for his travel narratives (the first one, *L'Usage du monde* [1963] became a cult book), Bouvier made a living mainly as picture editor. Barras quotes Starobinski's recollection:

«[Bouvier] asked me to write, for the «general public», a *History of Medicine*, which he had agreed to illustrate. I was seduced by the idea of working together with him. He found surprising documents. But the publisher's haste and the dictates of an overbearing layout artist prevented us from adjusting text and illustrations according to our desires. What remained was the common hope to try a new adventure by better controlling, together, the form of the book»²⁵.

These circumstances justify the editorial decision to reprint the totality of the original text, but only a selection of the images.

Barras describes the editorial principles he applied, and contextualizes a book barely discussed by commentators, and about which the author himself was not happy. He also situates Starobinski's approach to the history of medicine as a *critique engagée* in the framework of medical historiography. While the critic's narrative traces a linear progress (from «archaic medicine» to the mid-twentieth century), it also manifests positions he affirmed throughout his life,

25. Quoted in Barras, Vincent. Une critique engagée: Jean Starobinski et l'histoire de la médecine. In: Starobinski, Jean. *Histoire de la médecine* [1963]. Édition établie par Vincent Barras. Geneva: Héros-Limite; 2020, p. 7-18, p. 11.

such as the refusal to see medicine as a total descriptive and explanatory system, or his emphasis on the distinction between medicine and anti-medicine. The editor notes that Starobinski's history is fundamentally an ethics, a call to accompany medical progress with a reflection on the ends and values of existence. And, indeed, the book opens reminding its reader that medicine is «knowledge transformed into power», and closes remarking that it «will make us happier only if we *know* exactly what we should ask of it».

Barras' introduction remains focused on the edited work and its author, limiting bibliographical references, but including a note with indications for learning more about Starobinski as historian of medicine and the body. In sum, the reprint of *Histoire de la médecine* combines editorial care with interpretive tact and able scholarship.

The same cannot be said of the volume published under the title *Le Corps et ses raisons*, «edited and prefaced» by Martin Rueff, professor in the Department of Modern French Language and Literature at the University of Geneva (page references will be given in parenthesis in the text). In addition to Starobinski's writings, it includes an editor's preface, a note on the book's genealogy, and indices of names and notions. The volume, described as Starobinski's «first posthumous book» (7), follows the blueprint adopted for *L'Encre de la mélancolie* and appears in the same collection. Readers are informed that the critic established the book plan together with the collection's director; «we therefore can», writes the editor «without betraying him, give it to the readers» (8).

Le Corps is obviously related to something Starobinski wanted. It originated as a companion to *L'Encre*, and actualizes a possibility, partly materialized in German, Romanian and Spanish, but left on hold in the original language. Yet it is not without reasons that a knowledgeable reviewer considers it unlikely that he would have published it quite as it is²⁶, and it makes sense to ask if *Le Corps* matches the author's idea of a book that would be «better» than a compilation. A clue can be found in Starobinski's glowing review of *The Double Face of Janus* (1977), a collection of essays by medical historian Owsei Temkin, whom the critic met during his life-changing stay at Johns Hopkins in 1953-1956²⁷.

Temkin opens with a lengthy autobiographical introduction written for the volume; its «theoretical implications», Starobinski notes, «are considerable, for

26. Jackson, John E. Jean Starobinski, le corps dans tous ses états. *Le Temps*, 17 November 2020. Available from: <https://www.letemps.ch/culture/jean-starobinski-corps-etats>.

27. Zanetta, Julien. *Entre Genève et Baltimore: Jean Starobinski à Johns Hopkins*. MLN. 2009; 124 (4): 986-995.

it amounts to a reflection on the historian's vocation and his craft, and on the sense of purpose an entire life can find in them». The rest is organized in thematic sections, two of which are chronologically defined. «This elegant volume», Starobinski writes,

«[...] is a major work. For it is certainly no mere collection of articles written at various times on various subjects. Rich and multifaceted, this work forms a self-evident unity which will strike any attentive reader; its unity is a matter of style of thinking. By this I mean not only the method of exposition and investigation —invariably carried through with exemplary clarity and precision; in a deeper sense I am speaking of the choices made, which always lead Temkin to problems that *matter*, even (or especially) when he is dealing with relatively circumscribed topics. I am speaking of his constant concern with enlarging the horizon by precise correlations, with interrelating different problems in order to make them significant for us. In short, in all the essays contained in this book we find the quality that defines the great historian: a balance between the exigencies of subjective interest and those of objective precision»²⁸.

Starobinski's encomium can be read as an intellectual self-portrait, as a list of ideals he pursued and criteria he applied to himself. *Le Corps* demonstrates features he celebrated in Temkin: a multifaceted oeuvre, a lifelong sense of purpose, unity in style of thought, an orientation toward problems that matter, a concern with broadening horizons, the interweaving of questions so as to make them «significant for us», a balance between objective analysis and subjective presence, expository clarity and investigative originality. But *Le Corps* does so by virtue of the texts by Starobinski it contains. The volume is in that respect akin to the author's other collections, including those, such as *L'Encre de la mélancolie*, which required external help. The difference does not lie in authorship, but in editorship; and it is therefore this aspect that must be assessed.

Le Corps comprises twenty-six texts of various lengths and types published between 1951 and 1996. When the editor says that they were «written between 1950 and 1980» (7), he either makes a mistake or is privy to other information. A quibble perhaps, but representative of the untidiness pervading this «edition». As in *L'Encre*, the way to make the book cohere involves grouping the texts under thematic headings: The Speaking Body, The Learned Body (divided into Medical Reason, History of Medicine, and A Few Cases), and The Written Body. Like most

28. Starobinski, Jean. Review of Owsei Temkin, *The Double Face of Janus and Other Essays in the History of Medicine* (1977). *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*. 1978; 52 (2): 281-285, p. 281.

attempts to organize a heterogeneous corpus, this one sometimes makes sense, sometimes less. An alternative would have been to reprint the texts chronologically. That would have given a better picture of Starobinski's development with regard to the history of medicine and the body, while enabling a grasp of the multiplicity of themes he simultaneously pursued. A detailed examination of this dimension is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

More relevant is that readers are not told why the book is organized as it is. Doing so may have seemed schoolish, yet it is an elementary requisite for any collection «edited by». Similarly, readers are informed (in the same words as in *L'Encre*) that the chapters «rework extensively, slightly modify or reproduce without alteration» the originals (523). Such vagueness would suffice to render this «edition» unserviceable for scholarly purposes. Things are aggravated by the fact that nothing is said about contexts of production; instead, readers are directed to the list of sources placed at the end of the volume, where they can find «an indication of the circumstances in which the chapters of this book were first written» (8, n. 1). Such «indication», however, says nothing about circumstances; it consists of bibliographical references, arranged in the order of the volume's chapters. It is the minimum, but carelessly done. Thus, two sources are given for «Médecine et antimédecine»; the texts are slightly different, but we do not know which one is reproduced. Although the chapter on Galen was first published as preface to the translation of three Galenic treatises, only a later republication is mentioned. «Le philosophe couché» first appeared in Italian in 1989; the authoritative text is naturally the French original, but it was published later, and dates are important. Since the chapter on Henri Michaux had already been reprinted in *La Beauté du monde*, it would have introduced some order to record it²⁹. By itself, each oversight, like the errors mentioned below, may seem unimportant; their accumulation demonstrates that even prestigious book series and publishing houses can fail in their editorial responsibilities. As for the compilation's overall structure, it matches the noted disregard for contexts, scattering texts that belong inherently together, such as the five essay-reviews published between 1951 and 1954 in *Critique*, which it reprints over three different sections.

29. Thanks to the list of sources, readers can in addition perceive at a glance how damaging editorial retitling can be, as when traces of the main topic are obliterated, or when «Le monde physiologique» and «L'échelle des températures. Lecture du corps dans *Madame Bovary*» become, respectively, «Figures monstrueuses. Michaux» and «Emma Bovary entre chaud et froid».

At fifty-three pages, the preface would not be excessively long for a book that is over five hundred—if it provided proportionally copious insights. It turns out not to be the case. For that, three qualities would have been necessary: competence in the history and philosophy of medicine and the sciences of mind and body, a deep knowledge of Starobinski's work in those areas, and the humility and self-effacement integral to the task of editing.

The overall manner of the preface is given right from the title, a ponderous «Que la raison...». Not all readers will immediately think of Blaise Pascal's aphorism, *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*. In an effort to gloss «the reasons of the body»—a title that, contrary to what is suggested, Starobinski welcomed, but neither coined nor explained—the editor asks, «What is the sense of the shift (*déplacement*) operated by Jean Starobinski with respect to Pascal's formula?» (45); and he answers, pleonastically, «The plural of reason unites Pascal's formula and Starobinski's title: just as the reasons of the heart transcend reason, so the body has its reasons» (46). Thus opens what could be considered, for the sake of convenience, the third part of the preface (it is divided into continuous headings).

The first part traces Starobinski's development, including the family background, his medical studies, his stay at Johns Hopkins and his initiation, which the critic often recounted, to the history of medicine and the history of ideas, his residency in 1957-1958 at the psychiatric clinic of Cery near Lausanne «under the auspices» of Roland Kuhn (17)³⁰, his appointment at the University of Geneva in 1958, and the writing of his medical thesis on the history of the treatment of melancholy, published in 1960³¹. The narrative rehashes, but with mistakes and

30. As a medical student in residency at a Swiss institution, Starobinski was not an *interne* (17), as he would have been in France, but a *médecin assistant*. As for Kuhn, we read (18) that he was director of the Münsterlingen psychiatric clinic since 1939 (when in fact he assumed that position only in 1971), and that the clinic was on Lake Geneva (actually, on Lake Constance). The depiction of his role is baffling: Starobinski is said to have defended his medical dissertation before Kuhn (10) and under his direction (19). But Kuhn did not have an academic position; two professors of clinical psychiatry at the University of Lausanne approved the thesis (which gives this very information on the verso of the title page). Starobinski explained that he stopped at 1900 because Kuhn, discoverer of the antidepressant properties of imipramine, was going to cover the twentieth century. «In the meantime», he also recalled, «we had written to each other and become partners in dialogue: friends by correspondence». Starobinski, Jean. On receiving the Merck-Serono Prize [2009]. Translated by Richard Pevear. *The Hudson Review*. 2012; 65 (3): 381-386, p. 382.

31. *Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie des origines à 1900* (1960), reprinted in *L'Encre de la mélancolie*, n. 21. Starobinski (*L'Encre*, p. 10) says, using quotation marks, that the thesis «circulated under the mantle». This, however, does not mean (as claims the preface to *Le Corps*) that «it was only

distractingly cluttered footnotes, information that is easily available, or was provided by Starobinski or other scholars. In addition, it does not discuss or otherwise engage with the research devoted to the topic beyond a minimal footnote (10, n. 3)³². This feature, which characterizes the entire preface, brings to mind Starobinski's review of *The Birth of the Clinic* and his reference to a medical historian «whose way of quoting fellow-scholars is exactly contrary to Foucault's autistic and self-sufficient manner»³³.

The second part of the preface opens on page 19, and concerns Starobinski's hermeneutic practice in connection with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Michel Foucault, Georges Canguilhem, and the «German-American school» of medical history³⁴. To different degrees and in various ways, these are important for situating Starobinski's thought. It would have therefore been desirable to sketch them in a less disjointed and derivative fashion. Still, the preface offers an interesting lead, not pursued, when it notes that the critic could be associated with the «French style» of epistemology (34). Unfortunately, it does not explore those connections rigorously, and again ignores relevant scholarship³⁵. Quoting Foucault more than anyone else, crammed with digressive footnotes, and peppered with Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Giorgio Agamben, the preface is a rambling, free-associative pursuit of its author's intellectual hobbyhorses.

The third part begins on page 45 with the question, quoted above, about Starobinski's *déplacement* of Pascal's aphorism, and gropes for a way to unpack

made public» when reprinted in 2012 (10). While it did not appear as a commercial book, it was n.º 4 of *Documenta Geigy — Acta Psychosomatica*, which can be found in libraries around the world. Moreover, Geigy published it simultaneously in French and German, and in Spanish and English in 1962; an Italian translation appeared in 1990, and in 2011 a new German one.

32. A couple more articles are mentioned in the «Note éditoriale sur la généalogie du livre» (503-505) —but they come from a text furnished by me to Éditions du Seuil, and appropriated for that Note. There are other signs of the same *modus operandi*, for example (21, n. 2) when the editors' names are omitted from the reference of *Les Approches du sens* (n. 8 above).
33. Starobinski, Jean. Gazing at Death. Translated by Peter France. Review of Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*. New York Review of Books. 1976; n.º 21-22: 18-22.
34. Starobinski is quoted on «the admirable historians of the 'German School'» (16), an allusion to German émigrés O. Temkin and Ludwig Edelstein, whose lectures he attended at the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine. Although the German presence there was crucial, the critic's quotation marks are well used; there is in addition no historiographically recognized «German-American school of medical history» (40).
35. To mention only one particularly important item: Colangelo, Carmelo. *Le corps, l'œuvre, la relation (autour de Starobinski, Merleau-Ponty et l'esthétique phénoménologique)*. Études Phénoménologiques. 2000; 31-32: 125-143.

the very idea of «reasons of the body». The expression, it argues, designates in the first place different «regimes of rationality» (48) through which the body can be understood; then, «the sick person's individual reason, since health or illness are only experienced in the body in the first person singular» (51); and finally, «political reason» (we are reminded that Starobinski was a contemporary of Foucault's notion of *biopolitics*, 54). In sum, the reasons of the body encompass medical reason, the individual reason of the phenomenal, experienced body (*corps propre*), and political reason (56).

Having quoted at length from Virginia Woolf's 1926 essay *On Being Ill*, the preface abruptly turns to calling Starobinski «poet of medicine», explaining that that is how Pliny the Elder dubbed Hierophilus. Pseudo-erudition fails the compliment because, while Hierophilus was the little-known Byzantine author of a treatise on dietetics, Pliny referred to Herophilus, born in Chalcedon in 335 BCE and active in Alexandria until his death in 280 BCE. Often seen as «father of anatomy», Herophilus was one of the most famous physicians of Antiquity; Pliny, however, did not call him «poet» but *medicinae vate[s] miranda arte*, i.e. *seer or prophet of medicine, a wonderful art* (*Natural History* XI, 219).

Again without transition, the preface moves on to Starobinski's choice of Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* for the second edition of *La Relation critique* (readers, though, are not told that a small detail of the painting appears on the cover of that edition, and that a larger one fills the dust cover of *Le Corps*). Maybe, the editor comments after mentioning Agamben, «it is in Titian that the reasons and the uses of the body come together» (60, n. 2). A long-winded, jumbled description of the painting leads to the following closing lines:

«The reasons of the body are also these: to sleep, to dance, to pee, to orgasm³⁶, to play, to bend one's cheek to lightly touch the skin of the other. And all this cheerful company now leaves to bask under the ragged tent of the sky where Starobinski leads us with his living eye to take up the investigation where he left it» (60).

Some readers may like such phraseology, which is the prefacer's very own. Others, perhaps in particular those most conversant with Starobinski's work and sense of style, or those who witnessed up close the man's personal and intellectual refinement, will not see anything unbecoming in the references to the body, yet may experience such affectation as unworthy —so dismal is the

36. *Jouir* also means «to enjoy», but it is the sexual sense that seems intended here.

contrast between the edited and the «editor». This feeling may be all the more upsetting that in 1939, the nineteen-year-old future critic had «dreamed a lot» in front of the *Bacchanal* when it was exhibited in Geneva, where it had been taken, with other Prado treasures, for safeguard during the Spanish Civil War, and that Titian's painting had since become «one of the sacred places» where his memory lingered³⁷.

We may salute the fact that *Le Corps et ses raisons* makes many of Starobinski's texts on the history of medicine and the body more readily available, for they provide new possibilities of admiration, enjoyment and learning. We must, however, deplore that it does so in such an unpardonably flawed manner. Given the scattering of the critic's essays, the books he announced but did not write, and the abundance of his notes and correspondence, one can imagine an editorial future for a considerable portion of the Starobinskian corpus. That is why the editorial fiasco of *Le Corps et ses raisons* should be an occasion for serious reflection on the ethics of editing, and on how eventually to edit Jean Starobinski in accordance with his ideals and standards. ■

37. «J'ai beaucoup rêvé devant *La Bacchanale des Andriens* de Titien qui est aujourd'hui encore un des lieux sacrés où mon souvenir s'attarde». Starobinski, Jean. *La parole est moitié à celui qui parle...* —Entretiens avec Gérard Macé. Geneva: La Dogana; 2009, p. 22. See also Griener and Cudré-Mauroux (n. 20), where he recalls his emotion at finding himself alone in front of Titian's artworks.

