A Bit of Faith in Ecology:
Paradox in Michel Deguy's Poetic Parables

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Abstract. For contemporary French poet Michel Deguy, ecology is a new epistemology capable of replacing a deconstructed Christianity. In his theology-inflected lexis, Deguy's poetic parables create an ontological and cultural logic seeing the paradox of difference rooted in poetic comparison and its analogical signifier, *comme* (like). With implications for the language of Western metaphysics and precepts inherited from Christian identity and its image of the human, Deguy also challenges the Hegelian dialectic with his poetic figures the end in the world (*la fin dans le monde*) and the flesh made word (*la chair se fait Verbe*) expressing analogy's profanation of revelation. This essay argues that in locating a secular core in a sacred poetics, Deguy has drawn out serious questions for post-theological community. By affirming literature's textual production and poetry's creative imagination, he tentatively expresses answers for the mutable meaning of terrestrial habitation.

In recent essay collections — *La Fin dans le monde* (*The End in the World*, 2009), *Écologiques* (*Ecologicals*, 2012), and *L'Envergure des comparses: Écologie et poétique* (*The Reach of Accomplices: Ecology and Poetics*, 2017) — the French poet-philosopher Michel Deguy (1930) has advanced career-long concerns with planetary space and literature's meaning to create intersections between critical poetics and cultural and political ecology. Supplementing prior questions of ontological identity destabilizing Western poetry's prevailing metaphysics, this poetic ecology was preceded by a text quartet concentrated on Christian faith which I interpret as Deguy's *trêves* (truces).[1] For Deguy, defying its Latin etymons of the faithful (*treue*), the true (*true*), and the conventional (*tregua*), shared speculation in the *trêve* aims at a leap beyond (*au-delà*). But describing this as the 'suspension volontaire des croyances mortellement affrontées, en vue de mesurer l'abîme qui nous disjoint',[2] through poetry's flattened auxesis,

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[1] The poetry collection *À ce qui n'en finit pas* (*To That Which is Never-Ending*, 1995), following the premature death of Deguy's wife, Monique; *Un Homme de peu de foi* (*A Man of Little Faith*, 2002), addressing the culturalization of religion; *Sans Retour* (*Without Return*, 2004), a response to an attack from Jewish existential philosopher Benny Lévy; and *Desolatio* (2007), autobiographical meditations on friendship, love, and mourning. All translations my own unless otherwise stated.

[2] Michel Deguy, *L'Énergie du désespoir, ou d'une poétique continuée par tous les moyens* (Paris:

he asserts, we can be 'a-thées et raisonnables, rapatriant les oxymores divins comme le programme du meilleur ici-*bas*'.[3] In this 'programme', his interests in phenomenology, poetic rhetoric, and deconstruction's response to religious discourse integrate three debates: 1. French phenomenology's 'theological turn' commonly conceived in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, Paul Ricœur, and Jean-Luc Marion; 2. Western poetics' production of identity through dialectical negation — Giorgio Agamben's 'primordial situation of signifier and signified'[4] where

> almost all modern poems after Mallarmé are fragments, in that they allude to something (the absolute poem) that can never be evoked in its integrity, but only rendered present through its negation,[5]

and 3. poststructural thought desacralizing the ethics of Christian doctrine. This essay focuses on the latter two debates and how Deguy's poetry and poetic thinking measure and intersect precepts of presence and absence, (in)visibility, and meaning. In this, he has sought — and, I will argue, located — a secular locus in the poetics of the sacred.

Poetry's *comme* and secular figures of the parabolic

Since Aristotle's ontological law of non-contradiction,[6] poetry's desire for identifying and tentatively naming its elusive object through affirmed negation is a hallmark of Western thought. During the past century, however, anxiety over absent origins has highlighted how the referent of poetry's signification remains caught between appearance and essence, sensible and intelligible.[7] Negation is a defining problem for its expression, the pull between materialism and idealism comprising Stéphane Mallarmé's unrealized, perfect *objet-livre*, and a post-war French poetry including Yves Bonnefoy's agnostic ambivalence — for Jean-Pierre Richard, his 'catégories sensibles de la présence'[8] — and Jacques Dupin's lost world of 'ressemblance, | Blanche écriture tendue | Au-dessus d'un abime approximatif'.[9]

   As one of Deguy's first collections *Ouï dire* (*Hearsay*, 1966) concisely noted, poetry encounters dual-contingencies of identity and meaning given how

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Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), p. 115. '[V]oluntary suspension of beliefs mortally confronted, measuring the abyss that separates us'.

[3] Deguy, *L'Énergie du désespoir*, p. 4. '[A]-theists and reasonable, repatriating divine oxymorons as the programme of the best here-*below*'.

[4] Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. by Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. xviii.

[5] Agamben, *Stanzas*, p. 32.

[6] The famous syllogism 'what is capable of being can both be and not be'. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. by Stephen Makin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 12.

[7] Agamben, *Stanzas*, pp. 156–57.

[8] Jean-Pierre Richard, *Onze Études sur la poésie moderne* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), p. 212. '[S]ensitive categories of presence'.

[9] Jacques Dupin, *Le Corps clairvoyant 1963–1982* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), p. 35. '[R]esemblance | White writing stretched | Above an approximate abyss'.

its subject can always declare '[m]a vie | Le mystère du comme'.[10] Adapted from the German *als* (as) and *wie* (like), Deguy's analogical signifier *comme* (parallel with the English 'like', the 'same as' and 'as much as') has re-evaluated singular meaning for both the human and beyond-human figure. This was a doubleness that Deguy defined as the parabolic — religious and geometrical; for Henri Meschonnic, it was an 'exercice de la parabole' which narrowed distinctions between the poet and prophet, poetry and the sacred.[11] Challenging conceptions of poetry as oracular vision, however, Deguy's first writings described corporeality conjoined with *géo-poétique* (geopoetic) figures of geological formations — the *rimaye* (bergschrund), the Dupin-invoking *moraine*,[12] and the recurring *lisière* (edge). This configured the human subject's comparative status with their environment as separate but similar entities in a non-mystical form of analogy.[13]

Deguy's poems then became allegorical parables where identity existed only figuratively through analogical expression. Affirming its contingent presence, this viewed the world figuratively *comme si* (as if). *Tout* (everything) prefigures the later importance of its antinomy for Deguy, *rien* (nothing),[14] but initially, after Paul Valéry's assertion on poetry's hesitation between *son* (sound) and *sens* (meaning),[15] the poetic parable carried meaning's irreducibility. Deguy's collection *Biefs* (*Canal Locks*, 1964) asserted the non-continuity of temporal poetic identity, 'longtemps poète et pas encore, jamais'.[16] In this line, Jean-Luc Nancy saw the displaced poetic subject as only 'à venir',[17] and in later calling for a poetic reason, Deguy reminded that poetry's work is never finished, rather suspended in the present tense, 'imageant plutôt qu'imagé'.[18] Poetic reason's autotelic identity and mutable imagery then appear quasi-theological.

For Nancy, religion's apostrophe and image are only designated to those who have already understood and seen them. Accordingly, he asserts, all modern literature in the West inherits Christianity's parables and grapples with the event that they may have no message but their message itself.[19] Deguy's *Figurations* (1969) then deconstructed tropes of Western metaphysics so as to reverse its

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[10]   Michel Deguy, *Poèmes 1960–1970* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 49. 'My life | the mystery of like'.
[11]   Henri Meschonnic, 'Poésie, langage du langage, pour Michel Deguy', in Deguy, *Poèmes 1960–1970*, pp. i-xvii (p. xiii). 'Exercise of the parable'.
[12]   Dupin, 'Moraines', in *Le Corps*, pp. 149–85.
[13]   This differentiates Deguy from André Breton's Surrealism and Francis Ponge's Epicurean emphasis on analogy's differences. See André Bréton, *Le Signe ascendant* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), pp. 7–9, and Francis Ponge, *Œuvres complètes I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), pp. 536–37.
[14]   In 2017, Deguy stated '"Le XXIe siècle sera poétique... ou rien". Rien n'est plus urgent que cet "ou rien"'. Michel Deguy, *L'Envergure des comparses: Écologie et poétique* (Paris: Hermann, 2017), p. 9. '"The twenty-first-century will be poetic... or nothing". Nothing is more urgent than this "or nothing"'.
[15]   Paul Valéry, *Œuvres Tome 3* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2016), p. 485.
[16]   Michel Deguy, *Biefs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 30. '[A] long time poet and not yet, never'.
[17]   Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Deguy l'an neuf!', in *Le Poète que je cherche à être*, ed. by Yves Charnet (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde/Belin, 1996), pp. 164–81 (p. 170). '[T]o come'.
[18]   Michel Deguy, *La Raison poétique* (Paris: Galilée, 2000), p. 45. '[I]maging rather than imaged'.
[19]   Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: Essai sur la levée du corps* (Paris: Bayard, 2003), pp. 13–14; p. 17.

poetics into secular space. This stressed poetry's indeterminate figuration, wherein negation's transcendental potential to sublate identity is held in reserve as analogy's signs carry difference(s) without effacement. This was so, he urged, because 'si l'on parle de *trans-figuration*, cela ne peut s'entendre que comme passage à la figuration, comme si le *trans*(port) donnait *figure*' — a relocation of meaning deemed the 'statut de *métaphoricité*'.[20] Whilst questioning the poetic imagination's shared figuration with theological perception — the empirically visible carrying invisible, transcendental meaning — Deguy recognized how the 'vue poétique' carries its own proof and 'nous permettait d'habiter cette terre'.[21] Poetry's *comme* then became akin with, whilst strictly opposed to, the transposition of Christianity's human *in the image of God* — Deguy adding that 'le comme de la poésie n'est pas le comme-si de la philosophie'.[22] Raising an inclusive, terrestrial, poetic vision, Deguy used *comme* to produce figures of ontology-as-analogy. *Ouï dire* had already explored modernity's absences — a common doxa, a shared ontology, and communal discursive space. Their defining spatial orientations concluded its central long poem, asserting that

> Le monde avait besoin d'être annoncé
> 'Le royaume est semblable au chemin par exemple
> Extérieur au mur bas de château grillagé
> Le royaume est semblable à ce lieu
> Qui a besoin de parabole pour demeure'[23]

Connoting defining lines of Christian exegesis from Matthew's gospel ('Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven'), Deguy's figuration inverted the Pauline tensor of *as if not* into 'est semblable'.[24] Rather than preparing identity's suppression through affirmed negation (what it is not), poetry's *as if* accompanies identity's perennial incompletion. Reversing comparison's direction into double affirmation, this indicated that, as created meaning, this world must be *like the world*, poetry's object divided, *semblable* to itself.

Poetic affirmation as meaning in common

To identity's Pauline suppressions, resolved neither by Marxist-communism nor G. W. F. Hegel's *Aufhebung* (sublation), poetry's parables speculatively affirm

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[20]   Michel Deguy, *Figurations: poèmes, propositions, études* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 146–47. '[I]f we speak of *trans-figuration*, this can only be understood as passage to figuration, as if the *trans*(port) gave the *figure* [...] *metaphoricity*'s law'.
[21]   Ibid., p. 229. '[P]oetic vision [...] allowed us to inhabit this earth'.
[22]   Ibid., p. 268. '[P]oetry's *comme* isn't philosophy's as-if'.
[23]   Deguy, *Poèmes 1960–1970*, p. 42. 'The world needed to be announced | "The kingdom is like the path for example | Exterior to the low wall of a screened castle | The kingdom is similar to this place | Which needs a parable for dwelling"'.
[24]   Matthew 6. 10. *Un Homme de peu de foi* also took its title from Matthew's gospel 14. 31, Christ castigating Peter with the admonition, 'O man of little faith, why did you doubt?'. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. by Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 24–25.

differences held separately through analogy.[25] Modifying Martin Heidegger's ontology of beingness whilst challenging Hegel's negative dialectic (*neither-neither*) of sublation — opposites preserved in determinate negations annulling contradiction[26] — analogy's parabolic affirmations (*and-and*) advanced Deguy's ontological comparativism of *l'être-comme* (being-like[-it]). In their spacing, poetic parables create meaning by interconnecting but simultaneously separating contraries, a paradox deemed poetry's fortune.[27] Deguy applied this rule to monotheism's scripture — where the Earth 'est et n'est pas celle que le livre révèle'[28] — asserting language's discordant but generative power of mutable truths, 'la paradoxalisation, au est-et-n'est-pas'.[29] Coterminous to the waning guarantees of faith, technology's image of being was also deemed to have devalued writing's letter. Deguy's *trêves* then offered hospitable rather than hostile alterations to religion's common doxa — immortality — with poetry's transitions later considered proportional to 'l'écologie fondamentale', which must equally

> prendre une autre direction, et pas simplement quelques mesures de protection [...] [plutôt] chercher à infléchir la direction 'fatale' [...] continuer à inventer un sens à l''habitation terrestre'.[30]

Increasingly, human habitation on Earth is technologically disoriented and estranged from sacred certainties — a deity as creator — leading Deguy to state for the new millennium that 'nous devons "aller" où nous n'avons jamais été: sans retour'.[31] However, this fatalism, as such, does not invoke nor identify a negative dialectic in the eradication of religious values. Rather, it stipulates that humanity's lack of salvation be teleologically suppressed, transcendent possibility substituted for meaning's affirmed immanent circulation and, through analogy, the paradoxes of its common carrying.

However, ontologically separate from its affirmed world, poetic identity confronts what Theodor Adorno described as the jargon of authenticity. Critiquing existentialism like Heidegger's, this is the artifice of a 'true and revealed language' transcending the word-thing dialectic, whereby 'profane language could only approach the sacred one by distancing itself from the sound of the holy'.[32] Heidegger's essay, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes' ('The Origin of

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[25] Deguy, *L'Envergure des comparses*, p. 75.
[26] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 67–70; pp. 50–53.
[27] Michel Deguy, *La Poésie n'est pas seule: court traité de poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), pp. 108–09.
[28] Ibid., pp. 183–85. '[I]s and is not what the book reveals'.
[29] Michel Deguy, *Choses de la poésie et affaire culturelle* (Paris: Hachette, 1986), p. 64. '[P]aradoxalization, in the is-and-is-not'.
[30] Michel Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde* (Paris: Hermann, 2009), p. 45. '[The] fundamental ecology [which must] take another direction, and not simply certain protective measures [...] [instead] seeking to inflect the "fatal" direction [...] continuing to invent meaning for "terrestrial habitation"'.
[31] Deguy, *L'Énergie du désespoir*, p. 103. '[W]e must "go" where we have never been: without return'.
[32] Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will

the Work of Art', 1950–60), imitated sacred language to posit art's unveiling of truth, clarifying a terrestrial totality that is *already there*.[33] Martin Rueff describes how Deguy's portents on an equivalent planetary imagery render poetic language responsive to the apocalyptic whole of late capitalism — where a technological *tekhné* eclipses its original Greek sense of 'craft' with an all-consuming 'culturel' totality.[34] After Heidegger's Earth-World duality, in which art modifies the technology of the *phusis* (nature) of terrestrial matter and 'work moves the earth itself into the Open of a world',[35] Deguy challenges cultural capitalism with terrestrial habitation sustained by the restored mutable *logos* of language, the craft of poetry's radical measures defined by 'la paradoxalité oxymorique, l'endurance de l'aporie, l'exercice de la contrariété et de l'impossibilité'.[36] To religion's culturalization, these measures seek relation to a material and ontological difference, with an a-logical *phusis-tekhné* paradox of separate affirmations existing without dialectical resolution.[37] Although initially grounded in Heidegger's lexis of dwelling, rather than clarifying terrestrial presence through impossibly neutral identity assertions, Deguy used signs of the sacred to invert the speculation of Pauline theology and Hegelian dialectics into poetry's singular *as if*.

Without affirming any totality, as is its paradox, this worked to logically deconstruct hyperbolic existentialism. Where Christopher Watkin has defined imitative atheism as any thinking which replaces the divine with a 'placeholder' (reason, history, or man), Deguy's work does not correlate precisely with Watkin's alternative, residual atheism, 'truly without God'.[38] By holding identity's paradoxes in meaning's *logos*, where the placeholder is analogy, poetry facilitates terrestrial habitation by creating mutable figures between the hypervisibility of technological scopics and the hyperinvisibility of mystagogy. For Deguy, this is because language 'conserve les apparitions du monde apparaissant [...] autrement dit du sens'.[39] As its 'communication de sens possibles, indéterminés, inachevables', Nancy exalts literature's transposition of immutable images back into mutable language held to an absent object and meaning's displacement.[40] As poetry captures meaning's visible reappearance

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(Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 7; p. 12.

[33]   Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), p. 41.

[34]   Deguy, *Choses de la poésie*, p. 11; Martin Rueff, *Différence et identité: Michel Deguy, situation d'un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme culturel* (Paris: Hermann, 2009), pp. 66–67.

[35]   Heidegger, *Poetry*, p. 43.

[36]   Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, p. 34. '[O]xymoronic paradoxicity, the endurance of aporia, the exercise of contradiction and impossibility'.

[37]   Deguy, *Choses de la poésie*, pp. 214–16.

[38]   Christopher Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 2–3.

[39]   Michel Deguy, *Le Sens de la visite* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2006), p. 91. '[P]reserves the appearances of the world appearing [...] in other words, meaning'.

[40]   Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Adoration: Déconstruction du christianisme II* (Paris: Galilée, 2010), p. 20. '[C]ommunication of incomplete, undetermined, possible meanings'.

— in the poem, its timeless appearing — Deguy asserted how the sacred exists now only in language's *reliques*. Accordingly, poetic parables reverse the residuals of a Christian lexis and identity potentially omnipresent in Western culture.

Following his early deconstructionist work on Edmund Husserl's presencing of the subject's intentional sign,[41] and Western phenomenology's repetition of metaphysics' photology,[42] Jacques Derrida's discussion of a post-communist crisis of Europe's Christian identity asserted that 'le propre d'une culture, c'est de n'être pas identique à elle-même', hinting at a corrective to Hegelian sublation shared with Deguy's subject formation through 'le non-identité à soi'.[43] For Deguy, *neither-neither* remained an amputation that analogy can repair by holding 'l'un-*avec*-l'autre',[44] and Nancy's essay '*"Prière démythifiée"*' ('*"Demythified prayer"*') later read Deguy's poetics to stress how oxymoron's power is only language's 'puissance de *présenter*'.[45] However, siting Deguy's relics within a paradoxical *dialectic* — 'impossible à y replacer, mais porteuse ou opératrice d'une exigence qui ne se laisse pas congédier' — Nancy overlooks the detail of a paradoxical *poetic*.[46] Deguy does not aspire to destroy theology, but with a deliberate contronym urges that

> ce qui nous vient du sacré, et qui est conservé dans la langue, les paroles de la langue, les *œuvres*, notre responsabilité d'*artiste* est de le *déposer*, et le transférer à la transmission culturelle elle-même pour empêcher sa disparition.[47]

Deguy's use of *déposer* (meaning both depose and deposit) appears ambivalent, and in its indicated 'transmission', dialectical. But, removing it to safeguard its cultural value, retreat from the sacred finds paradoxically secular meaning in poetry's analogical expression. What Deguy termed sublime paradoxes then carry nihilism's affirmation of annihilation *and* theology's affirmation of immortal life beyond Earth. Three relics express the ecology of poetry's paradox: *la fin dans le monde* (the end in the world), *la chair se fait Verbe* (the flesh made word), and together, their profanation of revelation.

[41] Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967), p. 82.
[42] According to which, operating by metaphors of darkness and light, the hidden and shown, every philosophy is a photology. See Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), p. 45.
[43] Jacques Derrida, *L'Autre Cap* suivi de *La Démocratie ajournée* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), pp. 15–16. '[A] culture's essence comes from not being identical to itself [...] non-self-identity'.
[44] Michel Deguy, *Au Jugé* (Paris: Galilée, 2004), pp. 59–60. '[T]he one-*with*-the-other'.
[45] Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Déclosion: Déconstruction du christianisme I* (Paris: Galilée, 2005), pp. 191–92. '[P]ower of *presenting*'.
[46] Nancy, *La Déclosion*, p. 195. '[I]mpossible to replace, but carrier or operator of an exigence that cannot be dismissed'.
[47] Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, p. 45. '[W]hat comes to us from the sacred, preserved in language, its words, its *works*, our responsibility as *artists* is to *de-posit* [*déposer*] it, and transfer it to cultural transmission to prevent its disappearance'.

A poetics of paradox

Adapted from Charles Baudelaire's incomplete final work 'Fusées' ('Rockets'), pronouncing 'le monde va finir', *la fin dans le monde* retains eschatological anxiety and the ecological event of humanity's self-destruction.[48] In *Tombeau de Du Bellay* (*Tomb of Du Bellay*, 1973), Deguy posited it as modernity's junction of exhausted metaphysics and capitalist expansion,

> mué en une pensée du monde disparaissant, en l'inquiétude de l'abîme où le monde peut paraître, croissante à la mesure de la 'fin de monde' où nous vivons,

declaring the poet 'celui qui croit à un monde qui ne sera sans cette croyance'.[49] Whilst indicting collective abdication of responsibility for the fate of its (present and future) subjects or objects, *la fin dans le monde* also indicates 'world' as an inoperative signifier. Removed from theological discourse, humanity's finite potential for *Earth* habitation means

> l'athéisme nous confie à un monde à demi transparent: à une révélation ou manifestation à demi engagée, continue, pré-babélienne, dialectale, 'comme si/comme ça'. Saint Paul espérait une vision enfin face-à-face, sans figure. Le visible n'est pas translucide; la transcendance désigne une autre traversée [...] Ce qui est manifeste, c'est le poème, qui n'est pas un manifeste de l'auteur, mais des choses.[50]

Reinforcing separation between word and thing, and with the *fin du monde* a grammatical impossibility corrected by the end *in* the world, poetry's transported figuration of meaning within *logos* holds Earth-World, theist-atheist differences through paradoxical relation.

It is in this sense that *la chair se fait Verbe* instigates withdrawal from haptic certitude with Deguy's communal ecology founded on the always divided logic of *logos*. Taken to the letter, ecology requires this different dualism:

> une catastrophe sans doute [...] mais salvatrice: il n'y a pas d'autre monde; ni Au-delà; ni altermondialisé, qu'ici-*bas* [...] Vie, sans mysticisme; la vie-mort repensée, ou chair se faisant verbe.[51]

Mortal creation and human life-in-language cultivate the invariant meaning (singular) of meanings (plural), recognizing that truth is only a mutable,

[48]   Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p. 665. '[T]he world will finish'.
[49]   Michel Deguy, *Poèmes II 1970–1980* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 160. '[M]utated into a thought of the disappearing world, into the anxiety where the world may appear, growing in the measure of the "end of the world" in which we live [...] one who believes in a world that will not be without this belief'.
[50]   Michel Deguy, *Écologiques* (Paris: Hermann, 2012), pp. 52–53. '[A]theism entrusts us to a semi-transparent world: a half-engaged revelation or manifestation, continuous, pre-Babelian, dialectal, "as if/like that". Saint Paul hoped for a vision finally face-to-face, figureless. The visible is not translucent; transcendence means another crossing [...] What is manifest is the poem, which is not an author's manifesto, but that of things.'
[51]   Deguy, *Écologiques*, p. 188. '[D]oubtless a disaster [...] but salvational: there is no other world, nor Beyond, neither alterglobalized, than here-*below* [...] Life, without mysticism; life-death re-thought, or flesh become word'.

language truth — but transferable. As the opening poem of *La Vie subite* (*The Sudden Life*, 2016), 'Passible', puts it:

> Il n'y a d'autre révélation
> Que de la chair se faisant verbe
> Le corps prend langue se fait pensée.[52]

Accordingly, art's space represents a possible fraternity (like the speculation of the *trêve*), and flesh attains significance through speaking. Given that *a* body is not what we have in common, Deguy argues, poetry hosts a new sense of non-haptic revelation touched by language.[53] In *Arrêts fréquents* (*Frequent Stops*, 1990), revelation was related to profanation as

> l'homme de l'art représente la relation symbolique au monde par quelque figuration de son rapport local à la terre. La 'métaphore' est l'opération qui fait passer le sacré en profane. Cet amour-là est sans cesse à réinventer. L'œuvre, par son passage, (re)pratique une traduction: une relation à la terre, une promesse de terre promise. Le sacré sera avec nous jusqu'à la fin du monde — en profanation.[54]

Reconciling the irreconcilable without destruction (Hegel's synthesis), profanation's expression updated Deguy's poetic parables for ecological meaning.

Signalling the presence of elevation in revelation, transcendence's ascension and fall become polarities sharing sublime movement. Although we are initially in a position of 'n'avoir rien en commun, sauf le rien',[55] because truth is pragmatic as well as paradoxical, through *and-and* atheism and faith form an exemplary, contemporary oxymoron.[56] In atheism's poetic reason, we pass through despair and affirm it, having faith, non-nihilistically, in the absence of faith. As poetry enunciates terrestrial-objects-for-subjects through secular *logos*, paradox and the mutability of *trans* transpose and translate new conceptions of transcendence and transfiguration. In *Un Homme de peu de foi*, accordingly, literature must translate faith because otherwise cultural capitalism will subsume the subject's desire. Poetic analogy then turns away from negation:

> [ils] se relaient, se *relèvent* chacun de la possibilité-impossibilité de l'autre. Apodictique est le paradoxe; qui roule sur lui-même, se rétablissant de se renier [...] inventer des paradoxes 'sublimes'.[57]

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52   Michel Deguy, *La Vie subite* (Paris: Galilée, 2016), p. 15. 'There is no other revelation | Than flesh made word | The body takes language made thought'.
53   Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, pp. 168–69.
54   Michel Deguy, *Arrêts fréquents* (Paris: Éditions Métailié, 1990), p. 92. '[A]rt's human represents the symbolic relation to the world by some figuration of their local relation to the Earth. The "metaphor" is the operation which moves the sacred to the profane. This love is constantly reinvented. The work, through its passage, (re)practices a translation: a relationship to the land, a promise of the promised land. The sacred will be with us until the end of the world — in profanation'.
55   Deguy, *L'Énergie du désespoir*, p. 103. '[H]aving nothing in common, except nothing'.
56   Deguy, *L'Énergie du désespoir*, p. 32; p. 88.
57   Michel Deguy, *Un Homme de peu de foi* (Paris: Bayard, 2002), p. 150. '[T]aking turns, each rising from the possibility-impossibility of the other. Apodictic is the paradox; which rolls on itself, restoring

Reversing Aristotle's law of non-contradiction into ontology-as-analogy, poetry's specific affirmative reason is a contrary sublimation, a non-dialectical separation of the human and non-human correcting a monistic, anthropic mastery of the Earth.[58] Its paradoxical movement rebuilds figurative, finite attachment to the Earth, its analogy standing as 'le movement de monter du logos, ou "transcendance", qui doit gagner — parce qu'il le *peut* — une hauteur'; 'une élévation qui lui permet de se retourner, de considérer, de comprendre'; a 'vue élevée, ou vision, qui coïncide (comme le littéral et le figurant dans tout vocable)'.[59] As a series of beloved's deaths portended planetary destruction, Deguy's little quantity *and* quality of faith confirmed retreat from theology's certainties, but Christopher Elson describes how his revivifying of relics do 'not constitute a simple refusal' nor its 'rationally overconfident refutation'.[60] For Wilson Baldridge, a(n) (un)veiling of attachment-detachment is always oxymoronic, and for Rueff, Deguy's relic reinvention translates the desired object's past identity and meaning into contemporary cultural resemblance.[61]

Poetry's parabolic revelation then renders '*in*effaçable ce qui est devenu *in*croyable'.[62] In its paradox, a figure can always signify less than what it means and mean more than it says, for Deguy, meaning that '[l']*écologie est une vision* [...] une (trans)figuration'[63] — not a substitute for religion, but a separation which 'compare pour penser [...] une géopoéthique'.[64] In Deguy's elegy for Derrida, reversing negation into speculative affirmation so that '[c]e qui n'est pas de ce monde | est de ce monde';[65] or in evoking an *éco-po-éthique* (eco-po-ethic) 'pour conserver l'attachement terrestre au monde de la terre en la transformant',[66] in Deguy's sublime paradoxes, he compares, translates, and transfigures faith, poetry appearing on Earth as it will be on Earth, a truce where 'entre la vie et la mort | Il y a la parabole'.[67]

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from renouncing [...] inventing "sublime" paradoxes'.
[58]   Deguy, *Un Homme*, pp. 160–62.
[59]   Deguy, *Un Homme*, pp. 171–72. '[T]he ascending movement of logos, or "transcendence", which must gain — because it *can* — a height [...] an elevation which allows it to turn, to consider, to understand [...] view, or vision, which coincides (like the literal and the figurative in any word)'.
[60]   Christopher Elson, 'To Conserve While Leaving Behind', in Michel Deguy, *A Man of Little Faith*, trans. and ed. by Christopher Elson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), pp. xv–xlv (p. xviii). Elson's co-authored study on Deguy and Derrida seemingly overlooks the significance of analogy's double, parabolic affirmation. See Christopher Elson and Garry Sherbert, *In the Name of Friendship: Deguy, Derrida and* Salut, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2017), pp. 83–84.
[61]   Wilson Baldridge, 'Lumière et révélation dans *Sans retour*', in *Michel Deguy, l'allégresse pensive*, ed. by Martin Rueff (Paris: Belin, 2007), pp. 337–46 (p. 339); Rueff, *Différence et identité*, pp. 88–89.
[62]   Deguy, *Le Sens de la visite*, p. 43. '[I]neffaceable what has become *in*credible'.
[63]   Deguy, *Écologiques*, p. 9. '[E]cology is a vision [...] a (trans)figuration'.
[64]   Ibid., p. 31. '[C]ompares for thinking [...] a geopoethic'.
[65]   Michel Deguy, *Desolatio* (Paris: Galilée, 2007), p. 85. 'What is not of this world | is of this world'.
[66]   Deguy, *La Vie subite*, p. 226. '[P]reserving terrestrial attachment to the Earth's world by transforming it'.
[67]   Michel Deguy, *N'était le cœur* (Paris: Galilée, 2011), p. 22. 'Between life and death | There is the parable'.