Contents

Abb	previations	xi
Pre	eface to Second Edition: As my father, I have already died	xv
Preamble: Travels in Nihilon		
(a)	Philosophy begins in disappointment	2
(b)	Pre-Nietzschean nihilism	4
(c)	Nietzschean nihilism	8
(d)	Responding to nihilism: five possibilities	11
(e)	Heidegger's transformation of Nietzschean nihilism	15
(f)	Heidegger contra Jünger	18
(g)	Impossible redemption: Adorno on nihilism	21
(h)	Learning how to die – the argument	29
Le	cture 1: Il y a	35
(a)	Reading Blanchot	35
(b)	How is literature possible?	40
(c)	Orpheus, or the law of desire	48
(d)	Blanchot's genealogy of morals: exteriority as desire,	
	exteriority as law	52
(e)	If $y = a$ — the origin of the artwork	56
	(i) first slope – Hegel avec Sade	57
	(ii) second slope — a fate worse than death	63
	(iii) ambiguity — Blanchot's secret	71
(f)	The (im)possibility of death – or, how would Blanchot	
	read Blanchot if he were not Blanchot?	77
(g)	Holding Levinas's hand to Blanchot's fire	85

Contents

	(i) a dying future	85
	(ii) atheist transcendence	89
Le	cture 2: Unworking romanticism	99
	Our naïveté	99
, ,	(i) Kantian fragmentation	102
	(ii) deepest naïveté – political romanticism	105
	(iii) Hegel, Schlegel	110
	(iv) romantic modernity	113
(b)	Digression I: Imagination as resistance (Wallace Stevens)	114
	Romantic ambiguity	123
	(i) the fragment	125
	(ii) wit and irony	131
	(iii) the non-romantic essence of romanticism	135
(d)	Cavell's 'romanticism'	138
	(i) the romanticization of everyday life	138
	(ii) Emerson as the literary absolute	141
(e)	Digression II: Why Stanley loves America and why we	
	should too	147
(f)	Cavell's romanticism	154
. ,	(i) I live my scepticism	155
	(ii) Cavell's tragic wisdom	157
	(iii) finiteness, limitedness	161
Lec	cture 3: Know happiness – on Beckett	165
	Beckett and philosophical interpretation	165
	The dredging machine (Derrida)	169
(c)	The meaning of meaninglessness and the paradoxical	
	task of interpretation (Adorno I)	172
(d)	Hope against hope – the elevation of social criticism to	
. ,	the level of form (Adorno II)	181
(e)		
	(Adorno III)	184
(f)	Storytime, time of death (Molloy, Malone Dies)	188
(g)	My old aporetics – the syntax of weakness (The	
Ç,	Unnameable)	195

Contents

(h) Who speaks? Not I (Blanchot)	202
(i) No happiness? (Cavell)	207
Lecture 4: The philosophical significance	of a
poem – on Wallace Stevens	215
Notes	237
Acknowledgements	270
Index	273