



# Radical Indecision: Barthes, Blanchot, Derrida, and the Future of Criticism

*Leslie Hill*

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In his newest book, *Radical Indecision*, esteemed scholar Leslie Hill poses the following question: If the task of a literary critic is to make decisions about the value of a literary work or the values embodied in it, decisions in turn based on some inherited or established values, what happens when that piece of literature fails to subscribe to the established values? Put another way, how should literary criticism respond to the paradox that in order to make critical judgments of literary works, it is first necessary to suspend judgment and to consider the impossibility of making a final decision? Hill pursues these ideas in the works of leading French critics Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida, discussing writers such as Sade, Mallarmé, Proust, Artaud, Genet, Celan, and Duras.

Hill concludes that, despite their differences, Barthes, Blanchot, and Derrida share a conviction that criticism cannot take place without exposure to that resistance to decision that is inseparable from reading and that they address diversely as the "neuter" or the "undecidable." *Radical Indecision* offers the first sustained exploration of the "undecidable." This comprehensive book breathes new life into the discipline of literary theory and will be essential reading for students and scholars alike.

"*Radical Indecision* offers vivid and compelling original readings of Barthes, Blanchot, and Derrida. Leslie Hill provides much more than another guide to three major theoreticians. He makes concrete sense of Derrida's concept of the undecidable and of a 'justice to come' in the field of literary studies. This outstanding book is the work of a seasoned commentator who has gained international visibility through his canonical books on Beckett and Blanchot, who is a major player in the fields of deconstruction and literary phenomenology." --**Jean-Michel Rabate, University of Pennsylvania**

"Leslie Hill confronts us once again here with the event of literature, so abrupt and unmistakable that it leaves us completely at a loss as to what it is we have yet to encounter. Only a scholar as learned and exacting as Hill could remind us so well of this devastating experience of indecision, and of its baffling demand." --**Ann Smock, University of California, Berkeley**

"Leslie Hill argues for a response to writing that does justice to its singularity and otherness, and his superb readings of Barthes, Blanchot, and Derrida exemplify just such a response. The understanding of literature that emerges from his meticulous accounts of these writers in their intellectual contexts is one that grants it importance precisely because it cannot be evaluated according to existing norms. The literary work both invokes the laws according to which it must be read and suspends those laws in an opening toward the future; Hill's 'indecisive' readings trace both the operation and the suspension of the laws of literature and literary criticism in wonderfully detailed engagements with his three subjects." --**Derek Attridge, University of York**

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