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Philosophy and Culture

About This Volume

This volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* includes an editor's introduction by Rei Terada, with essays by Manu Chander, Ted Underwood, Thomas Pfau, J. Hillis Miller, and Daniel Tiffany.

This volume addresses a perceived opposition between philosophy and critical theory on the one hand, and culture or cultural studies on the other. It seeks to revalidate critical work that develops a philosophy of culture and a culturally historical philosophy. The contributors develop such cultural work by comparing Romantic, modern, and/or contemporary notions of individuality and society and by considering ways of thinking about the dynamics of autonomy and collectivity on which culture depends. Manu Chander discusses the perpetual antagonism of Kant's philosophical aesthetic and Bourdieu's cultural sociology; J. Hillis Miller examines contrasting senses of the performative in cultural studies and philosophy; Thomas Pfau explores the contrary relationship between nineteenth-century European liberalism and pessimistic notions of freedom; and Daniel Tiffany argues that an affinity-based model of culture may be understood through a dialogue between Leibniz's monadic thought and the "placeless places" of modern nightlife. All of these contributions suggest that culture is less about intentionality or a coherent group of people and more about a network of habits, ideas, and enigmatic affiliations. The difficulty of construing the relations between deliberate practices and their non-deliberate outcomes underlies each of the papers in this volume; a philosophy of culture and a culturally historical philosophy best address such difficulty.

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About the Romantic Circles Praxis Series

The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** is devoted to using computer technologies for the contemporary critical investigation of the languages, cultures, histories, and theories of Romanticism. Tracking the circulation of Romanticism within these interrelated domains of knowledge, **RCPS** recognizes as its conceptual terrain a world where Romanticism has, on the one hand, dissolved as a period and an idea into a plurality of discourses and, on the other, retained a vigorous, recognizable hold on the intellectual and theoretical discussions of today. **RCPS** is committed to mapping out this terrain with the best and mo st exciting critical writing of contemporary Romanticist scholarship.

About the Contributors

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Philosophy and Culture

"Introduction"

Rei Terada, University of California Irvine

1. These papers on philosophy and culture-culture, the vaguest of concepts—began as contributions to a set of panels organized by the MLA's Division on Philosophical Approaches to Literature for the 2006 convention. Our original call for work[1] invited

   > papers responding to the perceived incompatibility of theory and philosophy, on the one hand, and cultural studies, on the other; analyses of theoretically and philosophically inflected cultural studies or culturally based philosophy; readings of historical and contemporary interactions between the two fields; theoretical and philosophical genealogies of the concept of "culture."

   Our committee wished to encourage discussion of philosophy and culture because we sensed that the term "culture," perhaps along with some versions of cultural studies, might be falling into disfavor even as its possibilities and complexities could scarcely be said to have been explored; and because we regretted the perception that philosophy and critical theory have been or should be opposed to the study of culture, or cultural thinking, because of some necessary incompatibility between abstract and cultural thought. (That philosophy and theory *have* often been hostile to cultural studies and cultural thinking institutionally is unfortunately the case; I would argue that this does not need to have been so, and has been a great mistake and a great loss to our disciplines.) Believing that "culture" continues to be a rich and generative concept for philosophy and critical theory, and that philosophical cultural studies is not at all difficult to find, we hoped to inspire reflection on the nature and the history of the relations that the concepts and study of culture and philosophy have had with each other so far.

2. Arguably, those relations take a nascent version of their modern European form in the late eighteenth century. This is to say, first of all, that the history of the concept of "culture" itself is short. Schiller's assertion in the Sixth Letter of *Aesthetic Education* (1795), "Our reputation for training and refinement, which we justly stress in considering every mere state of nature, will not serve our turn in regard to the Greek nature, which united all the attractions of art and all the dignity of wisdom, without, however, becoming the victim of them as does our own [Der Ruhm der Ausbildung and Verfeinerung, den wir mit Rech gegen jede ander *bloße* Nature geltend machen, kann uns gegen die griechische nature nicht zu statten kommen, die sich mit allen Reizen der Kunst und mit aller Würde der Weisheit vermählte, ohne doch, wie die unsrige, das Opfer derselben zu Sein]" (Schiller, 90; Snell, 37, translation modified) implies that the Greeks had something better than disciplinary improvement. This something better is, in fact, beginning to take over the meaning of "culture"-to make "culture" itself designate a quasi-natural, more and less than merely intentional, enigmatic harmony among one's disciplinary practices. "*Kultur*" is not the word that comes to Schiller's mind as he searches for some alternative to "*Ausbildung*" (training, education). Attributing a "natural" quality to Greek humanity, Schiller also imputes ethnic character, falling readily into a racialized stereotype in a way that makes us nervous about the similarly collective and not-quite intentional sense of "culture" today.

3. In English literature, it is not easy to find references to "culture" that take on the sense of a broad set of practices or knowledge before the Victorian period. One finds instead a strongly metaphorical use of the word, in which the sense of "agriculture" is applied as a self-conscious figure. "Culture" in this sense is the culture of something in particular—of the body, of an art, of a young mind-and is strongly

intentional and opposed to unguided nature, or even to an economy's paths of least resistance. The sense is that of a deliberate training, similar to Greek *paideia*. It does not fully have the collective, enigmatic connotation of the contemporary term. Wordsworth's usage in Book XIII of *The Prelude*, where culture is associated with "language purified / By manners studied and elaborate" (190), is still old school, even as he feels his way, like Schiller, toward something else. It's not until Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) that talk of culture in the current sense of the word becomes truly popular.

4. In Europe in the Romantic period, "culture" seems to have been under construction, wavering from the intentionalism of the early modern figure, but not, for the most part, yet having attained the full-blown organicism of German idealist *Kultur*.[2] If this were so, we would not yet be able to assume that the invention of "culture" is necessarily implicated in an ethnicization of human production. Rather, it may be that "culture" comes into usage late in the day because earlier, notions of race that were utterly ontological did all of the work that would eventually come to be separated into concepts of race, class, nation, society, and culture. If culture were imported into debates about society from an earlier pattern of usage that stressed figuration and intention, it would have held potential for a mediation of concrete practices and projected deep structures, individual and social contributions, that could compete with the ontologically based mediation so conveniently offered by racial thinking. "Culture" and "race" may be often found together because they are competing for the same territory, not because they are one and the same; and they may each serve the convenient function of blurring the distinction between particular practices and a collective sense of "something else" without bearing the same implications or relying on the same assumptions. The myriad ways in which this is true can be explored in the work of a sophisticated practitioner of the philosophy of culture such as Georg Simmel.[3]

5. In practice, most of the papers at the 2006 MLA did not take up the relation between philosophy and culture head-on. (J. Hillis Miller's paper below is an exception, and generated a lot of interesting discussion at its panel.) They investigated elements of culture, such as literary education (in Ted Underwood's paper) and the development of models of individuality and society (which play a role in Daniel Tiffany's, Thomas Pfau's, and Manu Chander's papers alike). They inquired into the dynamics of autonomy and collectivity that are recurrently at stake in the concept of culture. And in order to do so, they compared Romantic theories to modern or contemporary ones. Underwood reconsiders Foucault's resistance to historical continuity in the light of the Romantic pedagogy that instituted the study of discrete literary periods; Pfau compares Charles Taylor's attack on the teleological systematization of liberal society as an economy, and what Taylor considers to be an illusory negative vision of "freedom" that shadows that systematization, with Schopenhauer's attack on "free will." Tiffany traces an analogy between Leibniz's *Monadology*, Schlegel's monadic model of the poetic fragment, and the unmarked "placeless places" of modern nightlife, showing how poetry finds in the monad an evocative figure for its own project of externalizing interiority. Manu Chander argues that Kant's dual recognition of empiricism and rationalism echoes in Pierre Bourdieu's dialectics of society and individual agency—the give and take between "position" and "position-taking" or avowed position as social act. These papers gain perspective from Romantic (and sometimes pre- and post-Romantic) elaborations of the ways in which manifestations of individuality, interiority, particularity, and privacy may coalesce quite tenuously to express an aspect of collectivity. An echo of this same concern appears in Miller's association of cultural studies with interest in the patterns of the performing—if not strictly performative—individual body. Interestingly, in none of these essays does "culture" take the shape of a culture industry or an ethnicized fantasy (important as these possible shapes are). Implicitly, "culture" appears here mostly in earnest, as it were, as a temporary network of habits, ideas, affinities, and position-takings that is not as coherent as an ideology and that has no particular valence, shape, or size. They are critical of unreflective formulations of freedom, but they don't seem to give up on the spontaneity of culture as creative chance.

6. Philosophical Approaches' call for papers also hoped to garner work that showed philosophy and cultural studies in action together, and the papers collected below move toward this goal in part or in whole. Miller calls for attention from performance and gender studies to to J.L. Austin's theory of performative utterances. Underwood's meticulous reading of period literature course syllabi historicizes his understanding of Foucault; Chander, working the other way around, from philosophy to reflection on the philosophical antecedents and implications of Bourdieu's sociology, reads the legacy of Kant's Antinomy of Taste within Bourdieu's work to analyze their common emphasis on a field of antagonisms. As Chander phrases it, "the theory of 'permanent conflict' within Bourdieu's conception of the cultural field is derived from the 'permanent conflict' between Kantian aesthetics and Foucauldian discourse-analysis that structures Bourdieu's work." In both Kant and Bourdieu, Chander suggests, the antagonism that is culture also implies continually the possibility of a solution to antagonism. Chander's essay thus complements Thomas Pfau's conclusion that nineteenth-century "pessimistic conceptions of freedom" should be read "less as a *separate* current opposing the dominant narrative of nineteenth-century liberalism" than as "a Blakean contrary" surfacing from within it.

7. Daniel Tiffany's "Club Monad," meanwhile, enacts cultural and philosophical thinking on several levels. Of course the whole idea of reading Leibniz through modern nightlife and vice versa literalizes a cultural philosophy and philosophy of culture. Tiffany's explanation of how this can happen may be interesting for the modeling of "culture" itself. When in this essay "the verbal topology of monadic substance offers a useful model for the secret world of the club—a placeless place—and for the infidel poetry associated with the topology of nightlife," there is a riddling "correspondence" but no common source for Leibniz's philosophy, Schlegel's philosophical poetry, and "the actual sites of nocturnal culture"; we have to find the correspondence monad-style, expressed and reflected in particularities. I'd like to suggest that the unaccountability of affinity apart from its instances is not a weakness in the concept of culture but what culture, in Tiffany's essay, and generated *by* the essay, can productively be seen to be made out of. Because the history of the subcultural nightclub "survives for the most part . . . *in writing*" and because the writing in which its trace survives is itself obscure, the literal and the literary forms Tiffany studies point together toward a reality that is "fundamentally dissolute." This ontologically tenuous organization models a way of thinking about culture that we now find useful; what we now call culture often consists in "the expressive correspondences" between verbal, topographical, and sociological modes of the kind that Tiffany identifies, "its very existence placed in question by the obscurity of its material conditions," as Tiffany writes of nightlife. In such a culture we don't know in advance, and in a real and happy sense don't ever know, what group we are and how exactly we are hoping to be changed. "Club Monad" participates in a process of correspondence-seeking that, it finds, selects societies according to an unparaphrasable affinity that is as much verbal as habitual; this process never reduces the group solidarity of the moment to a nameable identity.

8. From this perspective, the notion that "culture" implies a people because it has to belong to somebody is a kind of hysterical reaction to the presence of the second person pronoun, no more justifiable than the idea that a corporation, neighborhood or school is inherently a racial concept. The difficulty of construing the relations between deliberate practices and their non-deliberate outcomes, however, is real, and remains a problem that it's hard to imagine addressing without a philosophy of culture and a culturally historical philosophy.

Notes

[1] The call for papers was written by David L. Clark, Claudia Brodsky, and myself. The published version differed in small ways from the draft reproduced here because of the MLA's space restrictions on announcements.

[2] On the latter, see Cheah.

[3] See *Simmel on Culture*, especially 36-46, 55-100.

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Philosophy and Culture

"Contention and Contestation: Aesthetic Culture in Kant and Bourdieu"

Manu Chander, Brown University

1. To speak of Romantic aesthetics usually means to invoke an intellectual history, a philosophical lineage that stretches from, say, Baumgarten or Burke to Kant to Schiller to Hegel. Of course, it is possible to discuss aesthetics in terms of cultural history as well, a history of shifting relationships between artists and audiences, texts and institutions. Discussions of this sort rarely use the term "aesthetics," however, unless as a label for the conceptual other to a materialist approach to questions of art and judgment. In such cases, "aesthetics" is never far from "ideology."

2. In this essay, I want to place into dialogue with one another idealism and materialism, philosophy and culture, by addressing the idea of "aesthetic culture," which I derive from Kant and Bourdieu. As I will argue, although Kant and Bourdieu differ in method and purpose, they share a critical structure, which I describe, employing Kojin Karatani's neologism, as "transcritique":

   > Kant performed a critical oscillation: He continually confronted the dominant rationalism with empiricism, and the dominant empiricism with rationalism. The Kantian critique exists within this movement itself. The transcendental critique is not some kind of stable third position. It cannot exist without a transversal and transpositional movement. (Karatani 4)

   When Kant identifies in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the limit of Lockean and Humean empiricism and Cartesian rationalism (as developed by the Wolff-Leibniz school), namely the failure of each to theorize a subject representable to itself, he effectively empties the subject of all positive content, introducing, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy put it, a "hiatus…at the heart of the subject" (32). The reconstitution of the subject, which Kant never fully achieves, drives the critical project, propelling Kant's thought from pure to practical reason, aesthetic to teleological judgment.

3. "For Kant," Karatani thus tells us, "empiricism and rationalism were not simply two scholastic doctrines. Between them he encountered the paradox between being in the world and being the subject who constitutes the world. . . . Taken together, empiricism and rationalism struck Kant [as] a 'pronounced parallax' (95). I will suggest that we might begin to understand the relationship between Kant and Bourdieu by considering how a similar "parallax" underlies Bourdieu's thought. Further, each thinker's double-turn from dominant strains of subjectivism and objectivism leads him to insist in his theory of culture on the necessity of antagonism. For Bourdieu, this antagonism arises from the claim of each cultural producer (writer, artist, etc.) and consumer (reader, patron, critic) to "absolute judgment," or having the final say in matters of taste; for Kant, cultural antagonism functions as a potential accord, or a "hope of coming to terms" (Kant 205). Ultimately, I will argue that these two senses of antagonism mutually reinforce one another, and that what we call "culture" depends on this relationship for its continued renewal.

4. If the Kantian parallax arises out of the paradox of subjectivity—the subject's at once being in and constituting the world—the Bourdesian parallax, we might say, arises out of the paradox of agency, where the agent is caught between forging the societal relations that make up a cultural totality and being forged *as an agent* by these very relations. This paradox is revealed in Bourdieu's double-turn from what he calls the "substantialist mode of thought" and structuralist understandings of culture,

represented respectively by Kant and Foucault.[1] On the one hand, Kant's aesthetics, according to Bourdieu, develops a principle of "pure taste" which systematically ignores the relationship between social class and aesthetic judgment:

> Totally ahistorical, like all philosophical thought that is worthy of the name (every *philosophia* worth its salt is *perennis*)—perfectly ethnocentric, since it takes for its sole datum the lived experience of a *homo aestheticus* who is none other than the subject of aesthetic discourse constituted as the universal subject of aesthetic experience—Kant's analysis of the judgment of taste finds its real basis in a set of aesthetic principles which are the universalization of the dispositions associated with a particular social and economic condition. (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 493)

Against this universalist aesthetics, Bourdieu argues that judgment is contextual and contingent rather than "pure." For Bourdieu, the claims of a work of art, a cultural producer (writer, painter, etc.), or a critic exist in relation to all other claims—or "position-takings" (e.g. poems, novels, essays, paintings, reviews, manifestos)—in the cultural field. Such claims are derived neither from genius nor from transcendental *a priori* faculties of judgment.[2] Rather, they are grounded within an objective field of relations, a "space of possibles," wherein each position-taking "receives its distinctive *value* from its negative relationship with the coexisting position-takings corresponding to the different positions" (Bourdieu, *Field* 30). That is to say, Bourdieu's response to Kant's aesthetics is to emphasize how the agent's ability to voice cultural claims is defined not by the conditions of subjectivity but by those claims of other agents that constitute the cultural field.

5. On this point, Bourdieu is quite close to Foucault, who similarly emphasizes the relative position of a "statement" within what he terms the "field of strategic possibilities": "Neither the permanence of opinions through time," Foucault writes, "nor the dialectic of their conflicts is sufficient to individualize a set of statements [i.e. a discourse]. To do that, one must be able to register the distribution of points of choice and define, behind every option, a *field of strategic possibilities*" (Foucault 320). As Bourdieu readily admits, Foucault's "field of…possibilities," like his own "space of possibles," insists that "no cultural product exists by itself, i.e. outside the relations of interdependence which link it to other products" (Bourdieu, *Field* 32-33).

6. And yet Bourdieu charges Foucault with the same essentialism that he sees in Kant: "Like so many others, Foucault succumbs to that form of essentialism . . . that is manifested so clearly in other domains" (Bourdieu, *Field* 179). The difference between Bourdieu's conception of "field" and that of Foucault lies in Bourdieu's distinction between "position-taking" and "position," which he believes is elided in Foucault's thought. For Bourdieu, a position within the cultural field is a role, (ful)filled by a person, a text, or some other entity, and each role is invested with a particular capital. The position-taking, on the other hand, is a manifestation of position that functions as a defense of that very position. It can take any number of forms (the manifesto being, perhaps, the most obvious) and aims at acquiring cultural capital for the position; the position-taking is what tries to adjust the balance of power. "Strategies," for Bourdieu, "depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in . . . power relations" (Bourdieu, *Field* 30); they are manifested objectively in the form of a position-taking but are not reducible to position-takings. In other words, a possibility is not "strategic" merely because it exists in relation to other possibilities, but rather because it has, we might say, an agenda, namely the acquisition of cultural capital. Thus, where Kant essentializes the subject of aesthetic judgment by extracting it from the social world, Foucault essentializes discourse, "transfer[ring] into the 'paradise of ideas' . . . the relations between the producers and consumers of cultural works" (Foucault 179) forged in the sociological rather than discursive realm.

7. To some degree, Bourdieu seems to exaggerate the subjectivism of Kant and the objectivism of

Foucault. Kant, as I have mentioned already (and as I develop below) continually rejected what he saw as the subjectivism of the rationalists; and Foucault, who was never comfortable with the label "structuralist," was less invested in the importance of discourse above all than Bourdieu suggests.[3] Yet it is worth noting Bourdieu's position in relation to each of these "essentialists," whether or not Kant or Foucault deserves such a characterization. For what we see when we bracket the truth-value of Bourdieu's claim is precisely the structure of transcritique, where turning from one essentialism always risks finding oneself in another. Against both of these essentialisms, against both Kant and Foucault, Bourdieu offers a sociology of culture that emphasizes the agent's interested, strategic position within the field of cultural production and consumption, the "field of struggle":

> When we speak of a *field* of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is . . . the product and prize of a permanent conflict; or, to put it another way, that the generative, unifying principle of this system is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders. (Bourdieu, *Field* 34)

The totality of the cultural field—the field of (social) positions plus the field of (discursive) position-takings—is constituted by a double movement, whereby the agent is positioned by the system (of positions), which is ordered by various antagonisms (class, race, political affiliation, etc.), and thus positions himself or herself within the system (of position-takings) in such a way as to attain maximum privilege, or "cultural capital"; and the one movement continually necessitates the other. That is to say, in the effort to introduce agency into Foucault and social structure into Kant, Bourdieu develops a theory of culture in which the agent is continually pressed up against the system, the system continually pressed against the agent. Put differently, the theory of "permanent conflict" within Bourdieu's conception of the cultural field is derived from the "permanent conflict" between Kantian aesthetics and Foucauldian discourse-analysis that structures Bourdieu's work.

8. What we see in Bourdieu, then, is a dynamic critique of Kant and Foucault that gives rise to a theory of cultural contestation, where contestation suggests not only conflict and contention, but also contest, competition, and it is with this in mind that I wish to turn to Kant's transcritique. In the Antinomy of Taste, Kant writes:

> 1. *Thesis*. The judgement of taste is not based on concepts; for, if it were, it would be open to dispute (decision made by proofs).

> 2. *Antithesis*. The judgment of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise, despite diversity of judgment, there could be no room even for contention in the matter (a claim to the necessary agreement of others with this judgment). (206)

The thesis of the antinomy suggests that aesthetic judgment is merely *a posteriori*, derived from experience, that is to say empirical; the antithesis reads the same form of judgment as valid *a priori*, with reference to determinate concepts that condition our experience. The resolution, according to Kant, is that aesthetic judgment is indeed based on concepts, but that these concepts are indeterminate: "All contradiction disappears," Kant writes, "if I say: the judgment of taste does depend upon a concept . . . but one from which nothing can be cognized in respect of the Object, and nothing proved, because it is in itself indeterminable and useless for knowledge" (207-208).

9. What is significant about the Antinomy of Taste in the context of the present discussion is that, in the course of introducing what could not be theorized from a purely empiricist or purely rationalist perspective (namely a concept that can prove nothing), Kant raises a subtle but crucial opposition between "dispute" [*Disputieren*] and "contention" [*Streiten*], the first of which refers to "decisions made by proofs," the second to "a claim to the necessary agreement of others." Now, it is commonly

understood that Kant, in Hannah Arendt's words, "was disturbed by the alleged arbitrariness and subjectivity of *de gustibus non disputandum est*" (Arendt, *Between Past and Future* 222); however, this is not precisely the case. For Kant distinguishes this commonplace from another, "Every man has his own taste" [*Ein jeder hat seinen eignen Geschmack*], which more closely suggests the "arbitrariness and subjectivity" by which he is "disturbed."[4] Indeed, Kant accepts the claim *de gustibus non disputandum est* [*über den Geschmack läßt sich nicht disputieren*], with the qualification that "*there may be contention about taste*" [*über den Geschmack läßt sich streiten*], and the further qualification that "there must be a hope of coming to terms" (Kant 205).

10. The grounds for this hope lie within the *a priori* faculty or principle of *sensus communis*. Unlike the "common sense" or "common understanding" of such eighteenth-century empiricists as Berkeley and Reid, which refers to what is commonly held by a community, Kant's *sensus communis* is precisely what enables community. It is a "community sense," as Arendt notes, with which "earthbound creatures, living in communities…[are] endowed" (Arendt, *Lectures* 27).

11. It is on this point that Bourdieu and Kant seem irreconcilably at odds: whereas Kant conceives of the plurality of subjects on an equal footing, as it were, Bourdieu emphasizes the unevenness of the terrain and therefore denies the possibility of coming to terms. In Bourdieu's field of position-takings, "antagonistic classifications or judgments…are formulated in the name of a claim to universality—to absolute judgment" (*Field* 263). For Bourdieu, "absolute judgement" is the *illusio*, "the interest, the investment" (*Field* 159) that compels each agent to continually take up a position within the cultural field: to judge absolutely, without contestation, is not to come to terms with other agents but to dominate, as the antagonisms forged in the field of positions (by class struggle, for example) are reproduced in the field of position-takings. As the *illusio*, as illusion, absolute judgment is ultimately unattainable, elusive, and thus struggle is perpetuated: "if there is a truth," Bourdieu writes, "it is that truth is a stake in the struggle" (*Field* 263).

12. But perhaps it is precisely where Bourdieu and Kant are most markedly opposed that we might locate a point of contact. What Bourdieu's cultural sociology and Kant's aesthetics share is a theory of perpetual antagonism, perpetual contention, which figures as a structural necessity within the critical system of each, and which arises out of the merely potential status of objective "absolute judgement."

13. We have seen already how the theory of struggle emerges as a structural necessity out of Bourdieu's transcritique of Kant and Foucault. That contention is also a necessity within Kant's aesthetics demands, I suspect, further attention, since, as it has thus far been discussed, contention [*Streiten*] has been raised by Kant only as a possibility: "*there* may be *contention about taste*." Yet, just as the periphrastic construction of *de gustibus non disputandum est* suggests both in Latin and Kant's German the idea of necessity (Meredith gives us "*there is no disputing about taste*"), so the parallel "*läßt sich*" plus the infinitive construction of *über den Geschmack läßt sich streiten* might suggest not simply that there may be contention, but that contention is required—"in matters of taste there must be contention." [5]

14. Read in this way, Kant's proposition about contention reflects his continual critique of the empiricist "standard of taste." Paul Guyer writes, "In all of the empiricist theories [of taste] . . . it was held that nature imposed an essential similarity on all members of the species, by means of an identical 'sound state' or 'common standard' for the sense of beauty, and allowed merely accidental or apparent divergences from that norm" (Guyer 5). The empiricist standard of taste, derived from the observation of the contingent fact of agreement, cannot demonstrate its own *a priori* necessity, and any claims to the validity of such a standard are therefore suspect. When Kant suggests that there must be contention, then, he foregrounds the falseness of empiricist assumptions about taste: "divergences" from the common standard are not merely anomalous; they cannot simply be disregarded. Instead, within the

fact of divergence we see universal assent as a potentiality—as the stake of each singular judgment—yet as a potentiality only. A determinate concept to which the judgment of taste might refer continually eludes the subject; indeed, it eludes the entire field of subjects, the aesthetic community.

15. Aesthetic judgment, we might conclude, is for both Kant and Bourdieu teleological in its structure, "purposive," but the *telos*, objective universality, is absent. Bourdieu's *illusio* is not positively determined; it is merely an illusion, a placeholder at the very center of the cultural field. As an illusion, it stands in for any "real" universality: the subjective claim *qua* position-taking looks like absolute judgment even though it is not, just as for Kant the judgment of taste, "although it is only aesthetic . . . bears this *resemblance* [*Ähnlichkeit*] to the logical judgment, that it may be presupposed to be valid for all men" (Kant 51; my italics). The resemblance between the aesthetic judgment and the logical judgment thus opens up a gap that the subject aims (purposively, that is, formally, if not intentionally) to bridge. For Bourdieu and Kant, then, the subjective judgment gives the appearance of absolute, objectively universal judgment, though only the appearance.

16. This point of contact between Bourdieu and Kant is really only that—a point, the beginning and end of any relationship of identity between the two projects. Nevertheless, we might take the coincidence of purposive antagonism, antagonism that aims toward an unrealized aesthetic objectivity, as a point of departure for a transcritical project situated in the unsteady ground between aesthetics and the sociology of culture.

17. We might call this point (of contact between Kant and Bourdieu, of departure for our own transcritique) "belief" and the structural relationship between the two systems a "dialectic of belief." By employing the term "belief" I mean to suggest both the ideological illusion of aesthetic universalism that Bourdieu describes—the agent believes in "absolute judgment" although it *is not* realized—and the "hope of coming to terms" that Kant identifies as a necessity within the fact of contention—the subject believes in universality because it *might be* realized. By reading the relationship between the two critical systems in question as a "dialectic," I mean to suggest that the dual implications of "belief" are continually at odds with one another, each reinforcing the other. That is, even as material conditions of struggle (within the field of positions) give rise to an ideological illusion, whereby agents believe it possible to "win" the game of culture by means of "absolute judgment," they also create the possibility of "coming to terms," the "hope" that assent will be attained within a field of equals, which is also the hope that material relations will be reorganized in such a way that allows for equality. The persistent failure of this hope to be fulfilled, however, continually exacerbates the antagonisms within the field of position-takings, which suggests that the aesthetic community, not just for Bourdieu but also for Kant, is fundamentally dynamic.

18. The relationship between Bourdieu and Kant might thus shed light on Romantic aesthetics as a "cultural philosophy," both a philosophy of culture and a culturally rooted philosophy, a philosophy rooted specifically in the numerous and persistent aesthetic controversies of the Romantic period. From the "picturesque controversy" in the field of visual arts to the "Pope controversy," from the "Revolution controversy," waged in the field of cultural production and consumption, to what Coleridge referred to as "the whole, long-continued controversy" over the *Lyrical Ballads* (Coleridge 7), Romantic audiences and artists alike continually took sides against one another. As they competed for relative privilege, for cultural capital, "absolute judgment," they also reinforced the hope for accord, the potential for universal agreement. That art continually fails to ameliorate cultural tensions and that dispute continually fails to eradicate art thus seems to speak to the legacy of Romanticism not merely as an ideology but as a kind of cultural dialogue, an always shifting arrangement of those voices of assent and dissent that surround "art," which is by necessity multiply and inconsistently defined.

Notes

[1] While Foucault is by no means the only "structuralist" against whom Bourdieu positions his sociology of culture, he is, I would argue, the most important figure, for, as I discuss below, Foucault's theory of culture is in many ways in line with that of Bourdieu. Thus, by reducing Foucault to a "structuralist" whose work reflects the same problems as more obvious targets (such as the Russian formalists and statistical analysts), Bourdieu is able to distance himself not only from "pure" structuralists, but also from every shade of structuralist analysis that competes with his own.

[2] I am, for the sake of brevity, eliding two separate points of analysis in Bourdieu's work when I suggest that the theory of position-takings critiques the substantialist presumptions of aesthetic genius and of aesthetic judgment (or taste). The critique of genius is primarily concerned with cultural production, while the critique of the theory of aesthetic judgment is primarily concerned with cultural consumption (the former critique is the project of *The Field of Cultural Production,* while the latter is the project of *Distinction*). In both cases, Bourdieu emphasizes positionality over substance, relationality over autonomy. See especially *Distinction* 230-232, where Bourdieu discusses the homology between the production and consumption of cultural goods.

[3] See, for example, Martin 9; for a more unequivocal remark about the label, see Foucault's statement, "I have never been a Freudian, I have never been a Marxist, and I have never been a structuralist" (Foucault 437).

[4] On the distinction between these two adages, see Ferry 48-53.

[5] This sense of necessity more closely reflects Kant's earlier claim in the Analytic of the Beautiful that "there *must* be coupled with [the judgment of taste] a claim to subjective universality" [*es* muß *damit ein Anspruch auf subjektive Allgemeinheit verbunden sein*] (51; my italics).

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Philosophy and Culture

"Culture and Discontinuity (in the 1840s and in Foucault)"

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1. The premise of historical continuity plays a slightly awkward role in literary studies. Not that many scholars are now challenging the idea of continuity as directly as Michel Foucault challenged it in the 1970s. The majority of recent books on literary history seem to assume, in practice, that it is possible to trace one discourse or ideology as it gradually metamorphoses into another. But although we haven't transcended the premise of continuity as it once seemed we might, it remains a principle of good scholarly manners to write as though we had transcended it. Words that explicitly foreground assumptions about continuity—words like "tradition," "origin," and "development"—retain a distinctly ham-handed sound. As graduate students, we learn to master a set of euphemisms that allow us to make the same assumptions more discreetly: one talks about the "provenance" of an idea, for instance, rather than its "source," and about a "practice" rather than a "tradition."

2. No apology is necessary, on the other hand, for structuring an argument around the juxtaposition of discontinuous historical moments. Well-known works like James Chandler's *England in 1819* (1998) and Ian Baucom's *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005) have illuminated present-day concerns by connecting them directly to Romantic-era antecedents, while scrupulously resisting the temptation to connect a series of nineteenth- and twentieth-century dots that would link the two periods under discussion. Friedrich Kittler's *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (1985) announced a similar project in its title, and the reader may have noticed that the title of the present article (to compare small things with great) leaps without explanation from unspecified contexts of the 1840s to Michel Foucault.

3. Of course, all of these works also reason about influence and development. Continuity and discontinuity are both necessarily involved in any attempt to understand change; as Zeno's paradox demonstrates, one gets nowhere by treating them as absolutes. Moreover, as Chandler himself suggests, both concepts are relative to the scale of analysis: the same evidence that counts as continuous "explanation" in a year-by-year narrative might become discontinuous "information" in a more coarsely-grained study (51-74). But however complementary continuity and discontinuity may be in principle, literary historians do invoke one of these principles with more fanfare than the other, and although our preference has become especially marked in recent years, it is not an artifact of recent cultural theory. Source-study and influence-peddling were already disreputable at the beginning of the twentieth century; even a literary historian like Edwin Greenlaw, who defended the utility of source study in 1931, did so with a profusion of apologies (107-09). The surprising juxtaposition of remote eras, on the other hand, had already become standard procedure for cultural critics in the early nineteenth century (Carlyle, Pugin). This article will examine the academic study of English literature in the second quarter of the nineteenth century in order to suggest that literary scholars' preference for metaphors of discontinuity is rooted in long-standing educational practices that have given the concept of literary culture its institutional form. But since Michel Foucault did make an argument about history that is now widely understood as a rationale for our resistance to the vocabulary of continuity, it makes sense to begin by looking at his argument.

4. The critique of continuity remained central to Foucault's definition of his own historical method whether he was calling that method "archaeology" or "genealogy." His strategy also remained fairly consistent: he attacked the premise of continuity by reading it as a symptom of historians' investment in the stability and permanence of subjectivity. In a 1968 article, "On the Archaeology of the Sciences,"

Foucault remarks,

> [I]f history could remain the chain of uninterrupted continuities . . . it would be a privileged shelter for consciousness: what it takes away from the latter by bringing to light material determinations, inert practices, unconscious processes . . . it would restore in the form of a spontaneous synthesis; or rather, it would allow it [consciousness] to pick up once again all the threads that had escaped it, to reanimate all those dead activities, and to become once again the sovereign subject in a new or restored light. Continuous history is the correlate of consciousness. (300-301)

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971), Foucault pushes this symptomatic reading a step further, arguing that continuous history attempts to establish not only the stability of "the sovereign subject" but "the immortality of the soul" (379). By contrast, Foucauldian genealogy is devoted to "the systematic dissociation of our identity." Foucault explicates this contrast in a passage studded with quotations from Nietzsche:

> For this rather weak identity, which we attempt to support and unify under a mask, is in itself only a parody: it is plural; countless souls dispute its possession; numerous systems intersect and dominate one another. The study of history makes one "happy, unlike the metaphysicians, to possess in oneself not an immortal soul but many mortal ones." And in each of these souls, history will discover not a forgotten identity, eager to be reborn, but a complex system of distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by the powers of synthesis: "It is a sign of superior culture to maintain, in a fully conscious way, certain phases of its evolution which lesser men pass through without thought" (386, quoting Nietzsche 4.3 no. 17 and 4.2 "Vermischte Meinungen" no. 274).

For Foucault, in short, the choice between different ways of writing history is a choice between different models of immortality. In place of the old model of a single immortal soul, he offers a loose compound of distinct historical elements, each of which is in one sense dated and in another sense timeless. He also quotes, with apparent approval, Nietzsche's view that this dissociation of identity is a paradoxical form of personal cultivation. By separating out the diverse cultures that compose the self one becomes a man of "superior culture."

5. Throughout "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault's reliance on quotations from Nietzsche playfully dramatizes the dissociation of his own identity. The historical method he calls "genealogy" turns out to be built with materials borrowed from a nineteenth-century philosopher's critique of historians. So it would hardly have surprised Foucault that this essay's argument against metaphors of continuity has some connection to nineteenth-century ideas. But the connection may be stronger and broader than the essay recognizes, because the passages that Foucault borrows from Nietzsche are in fact quite typical of a certain late-nineteenth-century discourse about history. Nietzsche may criticize the aspirations of "scientific" historians, but he does so in large part by embracing another use of the past that already dominated histories of literature and art. The decentered immortality that Nietzsche attributes to the man of "superior culture"—who preserves in his own body fragments of a vanished past—closely resembles the immortality that Walter Pater, for instance, famously attributed to La Gioconda:

> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the

delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. (Pater 129)

The cultivation of the Paterian aesthete, like the experience contained in this mysterious visage, comes from unsystematic browsing rather than continuous narrative. La Gioconda has found herself immersed in widely-differing "modes of thought and life," and she is said to sum them all up in herself. But she "sums things up" more as a collector does than as dialectical reason does. By reducing incongruent mythologies to "the sound of lyres and flutes," she strips away the vectors of causality and change that would otherwise be implicit in Pater's catalogue, replacing them with the sort of non-linear synthesis embodied in weary and delicately-tinged eyelids.

6. Pater was by no means the first writer to suggest that personal cultivation requires internalizing history's contradictions and fractures rather than its unity. As it became clear that even basic assumptions could change from one era to another, a certain number of eighteenth-century readers embraced contingency and mutability themselves as the best available symbols of collective permanence. The ghosts of James Macpherson's Ossian poems, for instance, embodied readers' aspirations to a kind of immortality produced not by fame, or the continuity of tradition, but by difference and datedness (Underwood 237-242). Culture (in the normative sense) comes to depend on the incommensurable multiplicity of cultures (in the descriptive sense). In these circumstances, the instability of national identity could become a cultural advantage. Ina Ferris has recently suggested that the protagonists of Lady Morgan's later national tales construct their identities through role-playing that dramatizes conflicting versions of Irish history and even conflicting models of time; personal Bildung depends on what Ferris calls "hyper-hybridity" rather than on the unity of national culture (81, 84). By the early nineteenth century, in short, cultivated readers began to feel that they possessed something that was timeless, not because it was unchanging, but because it transgressed the ordinary laws of temporal connection. Culture was a mode of historical déjà vu.

> Sometimes I feel I have known Shakespeare, wept with Tasso, and journeyed through heaven and hell with Dante. A name from ancient times awakens emotions in me that resemble memories, as certain perfumes from exotic plants recall the land that produced them. (Sand 71)

In this description of a historically-refracted self (from George Sand's 1833 novel *Lélia*), the names of Shakespeare, Tasso, and Dante are admittedly connected by the tacit hypothesis that great authors from different nations and periods all feed into a single "European" culture. Lélia's mysterious "emotions . . . that resemble memories" are subjective correlates for the power of that cultural patrimony. The discontinuity dramatized by historical déjà vu thus often depends, in practice, on a suppressed premise of continuity. But some sort of continuity always has to be posited to make discontinuity rhetorically interesting. Foucault does the same thing: his epistemic shifts, however abrupt, take place against the implicit background of a European unity that makes it meaningful to contrast Bentham's Panopticon against, say, an execution in Paris in 1757. It is nevertheless fair to observe that the rhetorical emphasis falls, in Pater and Sand as in Foucault, on the differences and gaps that separate the radically disparate parts of this hypothetical unity.

7. For Pater, then, the cultural purpose of history (at least the history of art and literature) was not to emphasize continuities, but to form a mind capable of embracing disparity and difference. "He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal" (xii). I have suggested that this strategy of mapping historical discontinuity onto cultivated "immortality" articulates a consensus that was dominant by the later nineteenth century—a

consensus that Nietzsche and Foucault later reproduced, having mistaken it for a rebellion against nineteenth-century history. But George Sand and Walter Pater don't in themselves constitute a representative sample of nineteenth-century writers; how can we know whether their cultural investment in discontinuity was typical or idiosyncratic?

8. Institutional history makes it easier to locate the moment when literary cultivation began to depend on the idea of discontinuity, because the number of educational institutions that taught vernacular literary history in the nineteenth century was much smaller than the number of authors who wrote about it. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, vernacular literature was still taught under the aegis of rhetoric at all levels of the educational system; texts were usually organized by genre or by audience rather than by period. This first began to change in the second quarter of the nineteenth century at the new London universities: the institutions we know today as King's College and University College, London hired professors of "English Language and Literature" rather than "Rhetoric and Belles Lettres," and encouraged them to combine the teaching of literature with the study of history (Court 87-88).

9. But the nature of the connection between literature and history changed significantly and rapidly in the early stages of this project. Through the 1830s, syllabi and exams at both institutions emphasized connected and continuous development. The whole story of English literary history was invariably compressed into a single term. Courses were also structured to foreground the progressive development of both language and literature. Thomas Dale, for instance, taught literary history at both London institutions at different points in the 1830s. A summary of his literary history course has been preserved at the back of a catalog; subheadings like "Incipient English" and "Imperfect but Progressive English" speak eloquently about his emphasis on gradual progress (*King's College Calendar 1835-36*, 49-51). Dale's exams, preserved in the same catalog, similarly emphasize connection and development. Students are asked, for instance, to "give some account of the Mysteries, or Miracle-Plays; and show in what manner they operated to prepare the minds of the people for the Reformation" (*King's College Calendar 1835-36*, 182).

10. That emphasis on connected progress began to change in the 1840s, when the study of literary history at King's College was reorganized around courses that spent a whole term surveying an isolated period. These were the first "period survey" courses offered in Britain, and, as far as I can tell, in any Anglophone context. (The teaching of English literature may have developed precociously in India and America in other respects, but it doesn't seem to have anticipated this development.) The change took place first at King's College, I believe, because Dale was replaced by someone who had already worked out a new theory about the role history should play in personal cultivation. Frederick Denison Maurice later became well known as a theologian and Christian-socialist educational reformer. Hired at King's College in 1840, he began by spending a term on the Prologue to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. In the following eight years he taught courses on, for instance, the Elizabethan period, Jacobean literature, and the reign of George III. This marked contraction of the syllabus was accompanied by a change in the historical content of courses, as revealed in Maurice's final exams. Teaching Jacobean literature in 1842 Maurice asks, "In what respect do the writings of Ben Jonson bear the impress of this period?" (*Calendar 1842-43*, item 6) Teaching the Tudors he asks, "Write an essay on the connection between the politics and the literature of Queen Elizabeth's reign" (*Calendar 1848-49*, 247). Maurice consistently asks students to grasp the social specificity of a period. Teaching Chaucer, for instance, he asks his class to explain the words "Knight," "Courtesie," and "Chevalrie" (*Calendar 1840-41*, item 7). The emphasis of that question doesn't fall on Chaucer's contribution to the development of English; instead, Maurice is using Chaucer's language to reveal differences that separate his social world from everyday life in the nineteenth century.

11. This was a dramatic change not just from Dale's practice but from the practice of other professors at King's and University College in the 1830s. Moreover, Maurice didn't have additional staff until very

late in the 1840s, when he did get to hire one assistant. For most of the decade it was still a one-man show, and (since he also had to teach composition) focusing on one period a semester compelled Maurice to abandon the goal of producing a connected narrative of literary history. He seems to have abandoned that goal rather blithely, since he made no effort to offer his period courses in anything like a chronological sequence. But how was it possible for Maurice to justify this departure from existing practice? What did he think he was accomplishing by focusing on literary periods in isolation?

12. Fortunately for us, Maurice had already written extensively on education, and in particular on the importance of historical education. *Has the Church, or the State, the Power to Educate the Nation?* (1839) intervenes in a debate about state-supported education, and does so from a distinctly Anglican perspective. But it also contains a striking and precocious manifesto about the social function of English literary history. Maurice argues that the English middle classes need instruction in literature in order to counteract a modern tendency for middle-class interests to contract to the domain of immediate, personal, commercial gain. In this respect, Maurice prefigures an argument that would be made twenty years later and more famously by Matthew Arnold. But where Arnold is notoriously vague about the effects he expects literary culture to produce on the middle classes ("sweetness and light"), Maurice is extremely frank. The middle classes are hungry for a sort of distinction founded in collective permanence rather than private property. They need something equivalent to aristocratic pride in the antiquity of family. Lacking "ancient halls" and "venerable trees," they will need to find permanence in literature—and more specifically, in literary history (203). But the permanence they find there will paradoxically depend on the particularity of isolated moments. "The facts of a particular history are those which awaken the historical feeling, are those which make a boy feel that he is connected with acts and events which passed hundreds of years ago, thousands of miles away. The spirit of a particular poem, is that which awakens the poetical spirit in answer to it" (58).

13. This is a different kind of relationship to history than Thomas Dale had envisioned. Dale thought literary history mattered mainly as a connected narrative of improvement, and he accordingly asked students to explain causal connections in that narrative. What aspects of medieval drama operated to prepare the minds of the people for the Reformation? Maurice's reasons for teaching literary history, by contrast, didn't necessarily require a student to grasp the whole story.

> [T]he moment you bring the townsman of one age to feel himself connected with the townsman of another . . . that moment this meanness and narrowness disappear. The busy member of the particular corporation . . . belongs to burghers of another day, his corporation takes its place in the history of corporations, and bears upon the life of the nation. (205)

The goal was simply to "bring the townsman of one age to feel himself connected with the townsman of another," through a point-to-point connection that leapt over the intervening centuries. The intellectual effort required to bring this about is not the effort of comprehending a causal process. It's rather an exercise of historical imagination, analogous to the sort of exercise Walter Scott demanded of his readers. Students are asked to imagine how the ordinary social life of another era differed from their own, while remaining conscious that it was inhabited by flesh-and-blood creatures like themselves—and specifically like themselves as middle-class Englishmen.

14. This model of historical experience—history as an imaginative connection with another age, founded on a simultaneous consciousness of difference and of similarity—had become widely diffused by the 1830s. As I have hinted, it closely resembles the way Scott described his own practice, and Maurice acknowledges Scott's example. He believes that his proposal improves on Scott by exploring the antiquity of a "commercial hall" and not just a "baronial castle" (203-204, 206), but this means only that Maurice had probably read *Ivanhoe* more recently than *The Antiquary*.The latter novel contains an

important dream that brings the "townsman of one age" face-to-face with "the townsman of another" precisely as Maurice would desire (74-80). Many of Scott's other novels are designed to operate in an analogous fashion on their middle-class readers. There is an even closer precedent for Maurice's project in the 1828 historical lectures of François Guizot, which confer new dignity on the middle classes by sending a nineteenth-century bourgeois back to confront the armed camp that was a twelfth-century urban commune. In short, Maurice didn't invent the theory of cultivation by discontinuous historical imagination that he advanced in his 1839 lectures. But he did invent an institution that gave that theory an enduring social presence: the period survey course, which even today guarantees that cultural credentials are distributed only to students who have studied the distinctive character of isolated segments of time.

15. This pedagogical experiment was not notably successful with its immediate classroom audience. Looking back as adults, Maurice's students invariably remembered his passion for literary history. But many of them also remembered profound confusion about the reason for that passion (Court 94, Brose 159). Maurice's period surveys nevertheless took root; the professors who followed him at King's College sustained the curricular structure he had created, and it was imitated by English professors at University College in the 1860s. Meanwhile a period-centered approach to the teaching of history itself had become established at University College in the 1840s, and was adopted at Oxford by 1872 (Murray 536). When Oxford and Cambridge established their own English schools toward the end of the century, they also created curricula that focused on the quiddity of individual periods rather than the cumulative logic of development—an approach to literary history that by century's end had come to seem self-evident. By that point, the same approach also held sway in the United States.

16. Since late-nineteenth-century English departments were no longer limited to one or two instructors, they could pursue a period-centered approach without entirely sacrificing the idea of development. It was possible to require students to take period courses in a chronological sequence, for instance, or to devote the first term (or year) of instruction to a general survey that would then be followed by courses on individual periods. Both patterns were common at U.S. universities in the 1890s (Graff 101-02). But the compromise implied by this curricular structure was an unequal one. Where comprehensive survey courses were taught, they were always scheduled early in the major. In the 1890s, and for that matter where they still exist today, these courses are understood as an orientation that prepares students for the real work of literary study, not as a capstone or summation of the major. This positioning is not self-evidently necessary: it is possible to imagine a pedagogy that would begin with case studies and move toward broader conclusions. But the discipline of literary history has not (since the first half of the nineteenth century) felt that broad historical conclusions were really its raison d'être.

17. Whatever prestige attached to continuous evolution in society at large, the competitive advantage of literary history has seemed to lie in emphasizing the radical differences between past and present. "Thoughts, fashions, ideals change," as one frequently-reprinted manual for early-twentieth-century British students put it; "the fashion of their utterance changes likewise; chasms yawn between us and bye-gone generations; and many a book which once held its readers spellbound seems a vapid and futile thing to us who belong to another age, and are touched by other modes of passion and other manners of speech." Only by acknowledging this chasm, and emphasizing the "relativity of literature" to its age, do we "gain a point of view from which every aspect of literary art becomes quickened for us into fresh significance." The dated book becomes a living thing again "as a record of what men once found potent to move, charm, console, inspire"—or in other words, as a symbol of the timeless life contained in cultural discontinuity (Hudson 54-55).

* * *

18. I don't want to understate Michael Foucault's importance, either as a historian or as a philosophical

ironist. My own work has been substantially indebted to him. But I think Foucault's reflections on historical method itself are not the occasions for his most original contributions—certainly not, at any rate, to the discipline of literary history. One has to go back to the 1830s to find a moment when the model of continuity criticized by Foucault was actually central to the study of literature. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, literary history has tended to emphasize instead its special relationship to relativity and discontinuity. The concept of the literary "period" has provided a way to validate the contingency that historicism recognizes in all collective life, and even a way to find a kind of timelessness in that mutability. The institution of the period survey has ensured that this concept remains central to the distribution of cultural credentials, and literary cultivation has frequently been represented as Foucault represents genealogy: as a historical refraction of the self that locates a paradoxical sort of immortality in dispersion. In short, Foucault's "genealogical" method has never posed a fundamental challenge to our discipline's historical assumptions. On the contrary, it supports a prevailing disciplinary logic; it gives literary historians a new way to explain why they emphasize case studies and surprising contrasts—as we have, for about a century and a half, preferred to do.

19. But enough criticism; what positive conclusions, if any, follow from my argument? Since this article itself trades on a few surprising juxtapositions, I am evidently not suggesting that literary historians ought to renounce the sinister pleasures of discontinuity, or the cultural profits they return. But I suppose I am hinting that it would do us little harm to relax our vigilance against the language of continuity. There are certainly ways of misusing that language. I think it's accurate to say that F. D. Maurice designed the first courses that focus on a single period of literary history. If I added that the period survey is thus "in origin" an Anglican idea, I would be sidling toward the sort of fallacy that assumes that the persistence of one thing also implies the persistence of anything associated with it. Where fallacies of this kind are at issue, we have good reason to be wary of words like "origin" and the continuities they posit. But the point of this wariness is to discern real continuity and real change, not to avert the idea of continuity itself. Our disciplinary rhetoric doesn't always facilitate that distinction. I at least have often found myself erasing "origin" or "tradition" and typing "provenance" or "practice" in contexts where it made no substantive difference, out of a hazy recollection that the concept of origin is supposed to be a shelter for the sovereign subject. In these situations I suspect I have neither avoided a fallacy, nor decentered subjectivity. I have merely affirmed my discipline's long-standing belief that questions about causation and gradual change are not as properly literary as questions about the unrepeatable singularity of each historical moment.

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Philosophy and Culture

"The Melancholic Gift: Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Philosophy and Fiction"

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1. This paper presents some thoughts on the antagonism between nineteenth-century European liberalism (taken here in its broadest sense as a self-regulating narrative of economic and civic progress) and the simultaneously spreading idioms of cultural pessimism, anti-rationalism, and decadence. Behind these two ideological strata stands a more fundamental tension between a modern conception of political liberty with its supplemental language of rights, on the one hand, and an alternately mystical or mournful reflection on modern freedom and the metaphysical costs of modernity, on the other. Representative voices of the latter would include Burke, Coleridge, Carlyle, Schopenhauer, Burckhardt, Wagner, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, and Spengler (to name but the most conspicuous). My central contention with regard to these writers' pessimistic conceptions of freedom and their overall anti-modern pathos is that we ought to read them less as a *separate* current opposing the dominant narrative of nineteenth-century liberalism and its identification with rights, institutions, and the competitive individualism they foster than as a Blakean contrary surfacing within and disrupting the master narrative of nineteenth-century liberalism. What accounts for the aesthetic force and pervasive appeal of Romantic conservatism, cultural pessimism and/or neo-Stoicism within the industrial, nationalist, and imperialist phase of European modernity is something that liberalism's rights-based theory of social and economic organization was unable to accommodate—namely, the metaphysical dilemma of freedom.

2. At the heart of nineteenth-century liberalism, the political and economic self-description and self-legitimation of which is furnished in various inflections by Locke, Smith, Paine, Thelwall, Bentham, and Mill, we find two central notions—that of individual self-generation (*epigenesis*) and that of historical caesura (*epoche*), according to which, as Thomas Paine puts it, "every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require, . . . [for] the living, and not the dead, are to be accommodated" (Paine 42). It is in the languages of "bourgeois radicalism" (as Isaac Kramnick has called it) that political legitimation and economic expediency converge most fully, a phenomenon articulated forcefully in Marx's and Engels's paean to the revolutionary force and infinite resourcefulness of capital with its "constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation" (Marx and Engels 224). In transposing the self-originating and iconoclastic force of the Cartesian *cogito* into the domain of political and economic life and so melting "all that is solid into thin air," the classical liberalism of Hume, Smith and, even more so, the Whig radicals of the 1790s, construed liberty as the *absence* of external constraints on individuals' pursuit of their contingent motives. Accounting for the status of these motives within a broader social framework or general theory of the *polis* was no longer a recognized obligation for either *homo economicus* or *homo politicus*. Hence Hume's and Smith's influential construction of sympathy as a kind of virtual social compound supplants, as John Milbank puts it, "the irreducible primacy of an inherently ethical end or *telos* and . . . ground[s] the moral in something specifically pre-moral, natural and sub-rational," just as the virtues of justice are now anchored in "force of habit" in the "regular exercise of property and contractual laws, so that we perceive that we have an 'interest' in justice" (Milbank 29).

3. Pared down to the mere lubricant for a means-end rationality whose most dogmatic form would be that of utilitarianism (as in Bentham, Ricardo, and Mill), "liberty" thus is defined as the sum total of so many disaggregated "rights." Just as the accent in James Steuart is on "wage-labor as a mode of

discipline, not as a mode of freedom" (Milbank 35), the rights of life, property, and contract serve one purpose only, namely, to facilitate the pursuit of so many discrete and non-negotiable "motives." It is therefore quite inconceivable, as Bentham bluntly states, that "the word *right* can have a meaning without a reference to ultility," for what possible "motive . . . can a man have to pursue the dictates of it" (Bentham 7)? In its radical, utilitarian inflection, Liberalism's strength lies in its unwavering, indeed wholly unreflected commitment to a notion of process as interminable, self-regulating, and essentially non-transparent to the individual agents who advance it. What Max Weber would later scrutinize with growing alarm as the hegemonic role of *Zweckrationalität* in the modern, bureaucratic nation-state already troubles Hegel in 1807. For in constricting the notion of "value" to mean solely a given thing or notion's ability to accommodate an end forever deferred to a hypostatized future, utilitarianism's strictly instrumental concept of rationality treats a given thing as something pure and absolute, to be sure— albeit only as "absolute *for an other*." It constitutes "pure insight, not as such, but insight *conceived* by it in the form of an object." Hegel sees it steeped in an unacknowledged, unreflected, and hence dangerous metaphysics. Impelled by what Charles Taylor has described as the "ethics of inarticulacy," the "punctual or neutral self" on whose opaque agency utilitarianism and liberalism are premised in turn defines its own private pursuits by appealing to a likewise unreflected notion of "utility" as the new and exclusive criterion of value and meaning. Having pared the Aristotelian notion of "ends" down to merely intuited "motives" and fantasized outcomes and mediated both through a strictly formal notion of utility, Bentham's skeletal rendition of classical liberalism can locate utility only in *an object* outside its punctual agent whose self "is defined in abstraction from any constitutive concerns" and whose "only constitutive property is self-awareness" (Taylor 49). Hence, as Hegel puts it, utilitarianism does indeed constitute a "metaphysics, but not as yet the comprehension of it. [It] is still a predicate of the object, [and] not itself a subject" (Hegel 354).

4. Not only does the "bad infinity" (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*) of utilitarianism instrumentalize all things within a general and unreflected economy of exchange (namely, as accommodating contingent motives with their varying degrees of utility); it also instrumentalizes consciousness itself. Unconstrained by, indeed necessarily opposed to, any normative set of ends or social frameworks, classical liberalism's model of individual, competitive agency understands its flourishing to be premised on the absence of external constraints and obligations and on its positively merging utilitarianism's notions of "instrumentality" and "efficiency." Yet in carving out the space of opportunity by appealing to liberty as the sum total of "rights," classical liberalism forgets that its own ideological justification, too, is driven by historically contingent and ephemeral circumstances. As Alasdair McIntyre remarked some time ago, the language of rights invariably appeals to "the existence of a socially established set of rules" that "only come into existence at particular historical periods under particular social circumstances" (McIntyre 67). Not only does the language of rights manifestly coincide with the rise of economic and political liberalism and utilitarianism, but its putative universality has been reduced to a value-free formalism.

5. Invoking the pivotal role of Hobbes, Hannah Arendt thus speaks of a "process of never-ending accumulation of power necessary for the protection of a never-ending accumulation of capital [that] determined the 'progressive' ideology of the late nineteenth century.. The realization that power accumulation was the only guarantee for the stability of so-called economic laws" established a new conception of history as limitless progress, one that "not only did not want the liberty and autonomy of man, but was ready to sacrifice everything and everybody to supposedly superhuman laws of history" (Arendt 191-192). Aided by the new discourses and methods of speculative dialectics, statistics, probabilistic theory, and an array of evolutionary paradigms, individual agency proves most efficient when least cognizant of the deep structural logic of which it is but one fleeting manifestation. Arendt observes that "public life takes on the deceptive aspect of a total of private interests as though these interests could create a new quality through sheer addition. All the so-called liberal concepts of politics . . . simply add up private lives and personal behavior patterns and present the sum as laws of history,

or economics, or politics" (Arendt 192). If, as Marx put it, "the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development [*das Produkt eines langen Entwicklungsganges*]" (Marx 1977, 223), the trajectory in question involves the continual recalibration of means and ends whereby initially conceived goals or outcomes, once attained, are treated as the material base for further and equally transient objects of conquest. In such a world, there are no longer any "ends" but only mutations of capital awaiting future investment.

6. Inevitably, then, all frameworks and norms had to yield to the iconoclastic and self-certifying rationality of historical and economic progress. It was Marx, above all, who clearly grasped and forcefully articulated how the shift from an intentional to a systemic paradigm of rationality would eventually merge capital with "the species-being of man" and, in so doing, render "both nature and the intellectual faculties of his species into a being that is alien to him" (Marx 1977, 81-82). Nineteenth-century liberalism's conception of historical process as inexorable, instrumental, and self-regulating thus presupposes the constitutive blindness of individual agents to the deep structural significance of their economic, social, and cultural practices and pursuits. Indeed, it is this very *non-transparency* of the dialectical process to its individual agents—be it Hegel's "natural consciousness" or Marx's competitive and delusively "free" bourgeois—that guarantees its forward momentum and eventual articulation as a history of progress. At the same time, such a model leaves its individual agents in a metaphysically precarious and volatile position. Already in his 1844 economic manuscripts, Marx's musing that "the production of human activity as *labor*—that is, as an activity wholly alien to itself and non-transparent to consciousness and expressive life alike—the *abstract* existence of man as a merely *laboring being*" carries within itself the perpetual risk that the latter "may on any given day crash down from the determinate nothingness into absolute nothingness, into his social and hence actual non-being."[1] The lack of any stable, supra-individual framework (an issue to which I'll return at the end of this paper) is the price paid for the intrinsic volatility of capital itself which, as Marx was to analyze in exhaustive detail later on, realizes its local purposes and macro-historical mission by metastasizing into myriad forms, a process facilitated by so many free, competitive, and uncomprehending individuals. Notwithstanding their profound and well-known differences, Hegel and Marx both find in dialectics a logical framework that allows them to articulate the rationality of a supra-historical process—the plot of freedom—that can be advanced only by individual agents and only at the price of remaining essentially opaque to them. The advancement of the material narrative of history thus appears to rest on the terminal loss of meta-narrative perspectives now reserved solely for the closeted expertise of "critique."

7. For Hannah Arendt, it is this opaque, "unconscious," or "repressed" element, this lack of conceptual and expressive clarity that is positively constitutive of bourgeois liberalism and at the same time accounts for the ideological susceptibility of the so-called "free bourgeois individual" to the totalitarian utopias of the twentieth century. Echoing Marx's analyses and presaging Charles Taylor's critique of liberalism's "ethics of inarticulacy," Arendt thus sees imperialism as the extension of classical economic liberalism, even as this later phase also reveals the entirely partial and self-serving status of modern "rights" and "liberties" within its expansionist master-narrative. It is above all the long shadow of Hobbes that looms large in Arendt's diagnoses of the transition from classical liberalism to bourgeois imperialism and from the Enlightenment's deliberative to utilitarianism's instrumental paradigm of rationality. In what she calls "the conquest of the state by the nation" during the nineteenth century, we find "hardly a single bourgeois moral standard which has not been anticipated by the unequaled magnificence of Hobbes's logic. He gives an almost complete picture, not of Man but of the bourgeois man: 'reason is nothing but Reckoning'; 'a free Subject, a free Will' . . . [are] words . . . without meaning" (Arendt 186). It is here that the full conflict between the operational logic and the public claims, between the grammatical structure and propositional content of liberalism's language of self-legitimation comes into full view. Let me close, then, by adumbrating one particularly forceful instance of anti-Liberal and anti-progressive thinking, namely, Arthur Schopenhauer's 1839 *Prize Essay on the*

Freedom of the Will.

8. To the official self-image of modern Liberalism—viz., a progressive, secular nation whose economic expansion and civic progress is driven by literate, industrious, and self-possessed competitive individuals—Schopenhauer is surely the politically incorrect other *par excellence*. An essentialist, necessitarian, and neo-Stoic pessimist, Schopenhauer is quick to separate his inquiry from theories of "liberty" and "rights," which "only refers to an *ability*, that is, precisely to the absence of *physical* obstacles to the actions of the animal" (Schopenhauer 4). Instead, his 1839 essay focuses on "moral freedom," which concerns the relationship between the will and its rational, self-conscious individual. Once the question becomes whether "the *will itself* [is] free," the concept of freedom, "which one had hitherto thought of only in reference to the *ability to act*, [is] now brought in relation to *willing*" (Schopenhauer 5). The customary assertion of the self-possessed and entrepreneurial self of classical liberalism—"I can *do what I will*"—hardly helps answer the underlying question, namely, "whether the will itself is free" and whether "you can also *will* what you will" (Schopenhauer 6). Forever secondary and *re*-active to the primary determinant of the will, self-consciousness can only respond to the affective cues ("repugnance, detesting, feeling, fearing, being angry, hating, mourning, suffering, etc.") that enter "immediately" into it as "something agreeable or disagreeable to the will." It is, as Schopenhauer puts it, "very greatly, properly speaking even exclusively, concerned with the *will*" (11). For the self-conscious individual to say "I can will, and when I will an action, the movable limbs of my body will at once and inevitably carry it out the moment I will it" is to define freedom strictly as "*being able to do in accordance with the will*" (14). Yet there's the rub; for even as "self-consciousness asserts the freedom of *doing* under the presupposition of *willing*," Schopenhauer reminds us that "what we have inquired about is the freedom of *willing*" (14). To the extent that it is claimed as an attribute by and for self-consciousness, modern freedom only allows individuals to act in accordance with motives whose appeal to the will is logically prior and hence inaccessible to any deliberation.

9. What's more, the entire Cartesian axiom of reflexive, deliberative self-possession—of rational agents examining and then choosing this or that course of action—is itself illusory: "to imagine that, in a given case, opposite acts of will are possible . . . [is to] confuse wishing with willing; [people] can *wish* opposite things, but can *will* only one of them; and which one it is is first revealed to self-consciousness by *the deed*" (Schopenhauer 15). While enjoying an "infinitely wider range of view" (30) than the animal, the human agent is free in only the most relative and conditional sense. Driven by motives rather than instincts, the human being can represent to himself the motives whose influence he feels on his will in any order he likes. In this way "he certainly is *relatively free*, namely from the immediate compulsion of objects that are *present through intuition*" (31). Yet this does not fundamentally change the determinacy of action by a given motive: "its advantage lies merely in the length of the guiding wire" (31). For to construe the mere absence of a readily identifiable, intuitively present motive as positive evidence of a "free will" is to assert *ex negativo* the existence of something that will ultimately prove absurd on its own terms. In fact, the axiom of "a free will . . . determined by nothing at all" (8) merely confirms that "clear thinking is at an end," since the proposition in question asserts "an effect without a cause" (40). To make a purely formal appeal to an *absent* "determinacy" is a meaningless proposition, since to talk of "determination" (or lack thereof) can signify only if the claim itself is acknowledged to have been licensed by a specific framework of possible meanings.

10. As Schelling had argued in his 1809 essay on "Human Freedom," some notion of "essence" and "ground" is fundamentally indispensable for the work of philosophy. Although he writes less in the tradition of Boehme than that of Epictetus and Seneca, Schopenhauer echoes Schelling's claim that "in the final and highest instance there is no other Being than Will. Will is primordial Being [*Wollen ist Urseyn*]" (Schelling 26). Most famously, of course, it is Schopenhauer who posits the will as the very essence of the human. Inasmuch as "every *existentia* presupposes an *essentia*" (Schopenhauer 51), the empirical reality of human (deliberative) action rests on the tacit, indeed inscrutable premise of the

"real self, the true kernel of his being; it therefore constitutes the ground of his consciousness, as something absolutely given and existing beyond which he cannot go.. Therefore to ask him whether he could will otherwise than he does is tantamount to asking him whether he could be different from what he himself is; and this he does not know" (18). Characteristically, Schopenhauer drives home this crucial point with a few succinct metaphors, as when he speaks of the will's essential role vis-à-vis the self-conscious, deliberate human agent: the human agent is "like a crab in its shell" (44), a noble projection encrusted within a primitive hard casing. Flagging the exalted scope and ambition of the intellect (logic, concepts, thoughts, etc.), Schopenhauer cautions that for the self-conscious subject "great brightness and clarity" do indeed present themselves, albeit only "*outside;* but *inside* it is dark, like a well-blackened telescope. No principle *a priori* illuminates the night of its own interior; these lighthouses shine only outward" (19).

11. The will thus names every human's unconditional, holistic, and strongly evaluative take on the world. Yet "world" here means not some distinct correlate of perception, deliberation, and a host of intermediate steps taken according to the principle of causality. Rather, it is at all times already something ontologically "given," a "framework" within which alone specific perceptions are able to acquire significance and so delineate possible avenues for human practice. Schopenhauer's entire conception thus is diametrically opposed to Cartesianism's and classical liberalism's ontology of *in-der-Welt-sein*, which is built on the *cogito* as a self-originating and supposedly value-neutral point of departure. By premising its concept of "world" (or an all-encompassing framework by some other name) on an originary act of reflexive self-possession, Cartesian epistemology and the political philosophy of classical liberalism revolve a model of agency constituted *ex negativo*—that is, defined by the alleged absence of any inner pre-determination. At the same time, that very subjectivity exhibits a fierce commitment to taking possession of a world avowedly "separate" and "indifferent" through its methodical cultivation of skepticism. The modern self is thus defined by its utopian journey towards reacquiring the world it had disavowed on principle, namely, as the determinate "other" of its countless acts of negative predication (i.e., Descartes' *dubito*). In transposing that pure method to the realm of political economy, the classical liberalism of Locke, Smith, and Hume reconstitutes skeptical prevarication as progressive acquisition. As an inherently temporalized agency, subjectivity in the eighteenth century is plotted as a trajectory of self-creation whose perennially emergent self discovers itself happily to be free from the interference of either inner presuppositions or external constraints.

12. Hobbes's dismissive view of the free will as an illusion held two distinct and momentous implications, only one of which liberalism was prepared to acknowledge. He posits that individuals prove acutely responsive to motives long before self-consciousness has the opportunity to grasp and evaluate these motives in the form of intersubjective representations. Conceding the absence of a rational framework *a priori*, the Scottish political economists and their utilitarian successors thus argue for the self-regulation of reason as a framework that will *eventually and involuntarily be distilled* from the unchecked pursuit of so many interests and motives. Yet while that projected rational framework operates as a Benthamite fiction or Kantian "regulative idea"—that is, as a utopia forever deferred—liberalism also asserts, departing from Hobbes, that the individuals thus enslaved to their contingent motives and interests are nonetheless "free." It credits them with the power of deliberating on and choosing in accordance with nothing but their own interests—their political "liberties" and "rights" having been guaranteed by the modern nation—and unconstrained by anything else. In a formal-logical and in a metaphysical sense, this conflation of liberty *qua* "rational choice" with a freedom that is inscrutably volitional proves at once illogical and dangerous. It is no accident that virtually all of the great nineteenth-century novelists take a jaundiced or ironic view of the prevailing, expedient view of history as the progressive, rational, and dialectically (self-regulating) realization of freedom. More programmatically than Flaubert or George Eliot, Dostoevsky zeroes in on the vexing, not to say terrifying, implications of "freedom" conceived as absolute indeterminacy when, through the grim eloquence of his Grand Inquisitor, he chastises Christ for going "into the world . . . empty-handed, with

some promise of freedom, which they in their simplicity and innate lawlessness cannot even comprehend, which they dread and fear—for nothing has ever been more insufferable for a man and for human society than freedom! . . . Man has no more tormenting care than to find someone to whom he can hand over as quickly as possible that gift of freedom with which the miserable creature is born" (252; 254). According to the Grand Inquisitor, there are only two ways to remedy this dilemma: either focus on the means ("bread") or (quasi-Aristotelian) ends of life: "with bread you were given an indisputable banner: give man bread and he will bow down to you, for there is nothing more indisputable than bread. But if at the same time someone else takes over his conscience—oh, then he will even throw down your bread and follow him who has seduced his conscience. In this you were right. For the mystery of man is not only in living, but in what one lives for. Without a firm idea of what he lives for, man will not consent to live" (Dostoevsky 254). Schopenhauer's and Dostoevsky's critiques reveal Liberalism's propensity to conflate liberty with freedom and to construction of subjectivity largely *ex negativo*—that is, as a strictly formal or pragmatic concept of agency achieved by jettisoning any norms, values, and frameworks that would coordinate the discrete projects of modernity's *vita activa* with a significant telos.

13. Martha Nussbaum, Alasdair McIntyre, and Charles Taylor have extended that critique by challenging the methods and assumptions about selfhood in such disciplinary formations as behaviorism, rational-choice theory, or Foucauldian deconstruction. In closing, let me draw attention to Charles Taylor's particularly strident criticism of liberalism's central premise, namely, that any "framework" (including the purely formal, anti-normative project of modern reason) is but a historically contingent, perhaps altogether arbitrary construct realized vicariously through the aggregate effort of so many self-interested, "punctual" selves—each singular agent understanding his or her project within a world conceived as a value-neutral *tabula rasa* for an entrepreneurial intelligence. Writ large as the Napoleonic fantasy of *l a carrière ouverte aux talents*, the projects of classical liberalism (of Humboldt, Louis Philippe, Bentham, Mill, Macauley, Gladstone, and Bismarck) invariably proceed from the utopion vision of a harmonious national community in the theoretical future. Since the attainment of that vision pivots on the absence of any actual normative framework and ethical constraint on free agency in the present, economic liberalism in particular accepts pervasive material injustice and social inequality—indeed the broader reality of historical life *tout court*—as a necessarily fluid and inherently provisional state that is not to be constrained by normative commitments of any kind. This "naturalist fallacy," as Charles Taylor calls it, thus dismisses frameworks as

> things we invent, not answers to questions which inescapably pre-exist for us independent of our answer or inability to answer. To see frameworks as orientations, however, does cast them in this latter light. One orients oneself in a space which exists independently of one's success or failure in finding one's bearings, which, moreover, makes the task of finding these bearings inescapable. Within this picture, the notion of inventing a qualitative distinction out of whole cloth makes no sense. For one can only *adopt* such distinctions as to make sense to one within one's basic orientation. . . . The portrait of an agent free from all frameworks rather spells for us a person in the grip of an appalling identity crisis. Such a person wouldn't know where he stood on issues of fundamental importance, would have no orientation in these issues whatever, would not be able to answer for himself on them. If one wants to add to the portrait by saying that the person doesn't suffer this absence of frameworks as a lack, isn't in other words in a crisis at all, then one rather has a picture of frightening dissociation. (Taylor 30-31)

A fundamental challenge to the current field of critical theory, and indeed to literary and cultural studies broadly speaking, is to reflect on the extent of its commitment to the constructivist position that Taylor here critiques. To do so certainly does not entail signing on to Taylor 's project in its entirety (any more than to the partially cognate arguments of Arendt, McIntyre, and Milbank). Yet as the

foregoing reflections suggest, a significant body of nineteenth-century writing (novelistic and philosophical) makes a strong case for why it is no longer possible for contemporary critique to predicate its own specialized type of lucidity on the nominalist, constructivist, and individualist model of rationality that classical liberalism had derived from Descartes. As I argue in greater detail elsewhere (Pfau), today's specialized, institutionally embedded, and professionalized mode of intellectual production will likely fail to recognize itself as yet another symptom of a wholly "deregulated" modernity by construing the endless accumulation of new critical perspectives as the practical realization of liberty. Yet the emancipatory gestures of contemporary critique will likely ring hollow for as long as the irrational and ineffable underpinnings of modern "liberty"—premised on what Schelling called the "non-ground" (*Ungrund*) of freedom—remain unexamined.

Notes

[1] "Die Produktion der menschlichen Tätigkeit als *Arbeit*, also als einer sich ganz fremden, dem Menschen und der Natur, daher dem Bewußtsein und der Lebensäußerung gleich fremden Tätigkeit, die *abstrakte* Existenz des Menschen als eines bloßen *Arbeitsmenschen*, der daher täglich aus seinem erfüllten Nichts in das absolute Nichts, sein gesellschaftliches und darum sein wirkliches Nichtdasein hinabstürzen kann-wie andererseits die Produktion des Gegenstandes der menschlichen Tätigkeit als *Kapital* " (Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, in *Werke*, I, 578 [trans. mine]).

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Philosophy and Culture

"Crossroads of Philosophy and Cultural Studies: Body, Context, Performativity, Community"

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I had wild Jack for a lover;
Though like a road
That men pass over
My body makes no moan
But sings on:
<u>All things remain in God</u>

<div align="right">W. B. Yeats, "Crazy Jane on God"</div>

A fourth modern phenomenon announces itself in the fact that human action is understood and practiced as culture. Culture then becomes the realization of the highest values through the care and cultivation of man's highest goods. It belongs to the essence of culture, as such care, that it, in turn, takes itself into care and then becomes the politics of culture.

<div align="right">Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture"</div>

"What about the materiality of the body, *Judy*."

<div align="right">Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*</div>

There is no "the" body; there is no "the" sense of touch; there is no "the" *res extensa*.

<div align="right">Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*</div>

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1. I begin by asking how one should read Yeats's lines in my first epigraph. Are they blatantly sexist, or are they an example of work by a male writer able to sympathize with, and represent from within, the immemorial bodily experience of women? Is such a transfer from a virile to a feminine point of view, or point of contact, even possible? Women's bodies have always been roads "that men pass over" on the way to somewhere else. Why does Crazy Jane's body nevertheless "sing on," rather than "making any moan," whether in anguished pain or in sexual ecstasy? Why is what her body sings the words, "*All things remain in God*"? What does Crazy Jane's ideology of the female body have to do with religion, with the Christian religion? I mean more specifically the Christian doctrine of the incarnation (*Hoc est enim corpus meum*), along with the Christian doctrine which holds that although sublunary things pass, like men passing over Crazy Jane's body, or like progress down a road, all those temporally moving things do not vanish. As Yeats says in ""Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen": "Man is in love and loves what vanishes, / What more is there to say?" (Yeats 208). All things, nevertheless, without exception, have "in God" a static permanence. They remain. All things remain in God.

2. Do Yeats's lines have a *performative* dimension? Are they a way of doing something with words, or are they just an imagined dramatic performance? What *context*, biographical, cultural, intertextual, or whatever, should govern my reading of what Crazy Jane says? When I read these lines do I join a *community* of other readers, past and present, which has read the lines in a way similar to my own

reading, or is my reading necessarily solitary and idiosyncratic, *sui generis*? Which would be better, to be a singular reader or a member of a community of readers? To ask, as I just have asked, "Exactly what are body, context, performativity, and community?" is a properly philosophical question; at any rate, Western philosophers over the years have asked questions about these topics. These topics are also features of cultural studies, whether as questions or as taken-for-granted methodological presuppositions.

3. My title is a little misleading. It suggests that philosophy and cultural studies do, perhaps inevitably, meet at some crossroads or other, perhaps where the three roads meet in Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*. My hypothesis, however, is the reverse. As this brief paper will sketch out, my claim is that these days philosophy and cultural studies often, though of course not always, fail to connect. It is as though the scene of patricide, Oedipus's angry slaying of the stranger who is really his father, had never occurred. It never happened because Oedipus was too early or too late, counter-temporally, out of sync, in a contretemps, to reach the crossroads just when Laius did. The Oedipal slaying of philosophy by cultural studies has rarely taken place. This is because cultural studies has often, more or less deliberately, forgotten all about Western philosophy. Dead white males wrote almost all of Western philosophy, in any case. That forgetting, that non-event or non-encounter between philosophy and cultural studies, it might be argued, is a more effective parricide than the one Oedipus performed. This is because the practitioners of cultural studies can always say, "Plato or Aristotle; Descartes, Kant, or Hegel; Wittgenstein, Husserl, or Heidegger; Austin or Merleau-Ponty are not relevant to what I am trying to do. In any case, I am too busy mastering film noir, or popular music, or fashion magazines, or whatever, to have time for philosophy." One result of this implicit claim is that those working in cultural studies may sometimes be mystified, unknowingly, by unexamined philosophemes that go back to Aristotle and that have persisted in our culture down to Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, and beyond. They are prisoners of just what they want to escape. Such ideological mystifications are not innocent. They can cause great harm and suffering. One example is an almost irresistible "intuitionism" that views the body as something taken for granted, something there to touch, something outside language, in no way a philosophical problem. This intuitionism may be the assumed ground of Western philosophy and of current cultural studies too. Everybody knows, and has always known, what is meant by the materiality of the body.

4. The possibility, of course, is that workers in cultural studies would gain much for their own enterprise from reading philosophy, just as philosophers who do not pay attention to cultural studies may miss some properly philosophical insights in the work cultural studies scholars do. Philosophers, for example, still tend a little too much (to speak ironically) to couch their enunciations as universal truths valid anywhere in the world at any time. They tend to forget history and cultural differences even when they are making pronouncements about history or culture. It is true, moreover, that most Western philosophy from Plato on down to Levinas has been written not just by men, but from what Derrida, speaking of Levinas, calls "a resolutely virile *point of view* . . . or *point of contact* . . . . Indeed, the touching touch of the caress is touching (without touching) on the untouchable as inviolable, and the one stroking is always masculine and the stroked one (the untouchable) feminine" (Derrida, *On Touching* 80). Can the caress be talked about from the point of view, or point of contact, of the feminine, the queer, or the lesbian? Judith Butler certainly tried to do something like that in *Bodies that Matter*. The cataclysmic blow that cultural studies in its feminist branch has directed at the Western tradition of virile philosophy has perhaps not touched many philosophers yet. It has been like a roundhouse punch that does not land. Male philosophers, Levinas for example, still go on imperturbably talking about the way "the feminine is the Other refractory to society" (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 265), and, implicitly, about Jehovah as an old man with a long gray beard.

5. Let me briefly indicate four interconnected realms where this missed encounter between philosophy and cultural studies happens as the failure of a happening. Each would require a long development to

elucidate what is at stake in each failure to meet at the crossroads. From the perspective of philosophy, the failure is manifested in the way philosophy tends to go on making pronouncements about "universal Man." From the perspective of cultural studies, the missed encounter manifests itself as a reluctance, much of the time, to see that such concepts as community, context, performativity, and body are problems with a long philosophical history, not taken-for-granted answers or presuppositions on the solid basis of which empirical studies of culture, what Heidegger calls "taking care" of culture, can take place. The prevalent ideology of cultural studies tends to be a constructivist one. It sees culture, through iterative reinforcement, creating out of some passive residue or ground, such as the materiality of the body, the structures of power that determine our lives. That means things could be different. For example, the hegemony of heterosexualism could be undone. At the same time, somewhat paradoxically, this ideology presumes that as our culture is so will we be. Circumambient culture has more or less irresistible power to make me what I am.

6. That we more or less know already what a normative community is tends to be assumed in such discussions of community as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*. A long philosophical tradition, however, going back to Aristotle's *Politics*, Plato's *Republic*, and down to recent work by Bataille, Blanchot, Agamben, Lingis, and Nancy (see Works Cited), views or feels the question of community as a big problem, a problem demanding virtually interminable reflection. Nancy alone has written three difficult books trying to work out what he thinks about community. This contemporary philosophical tradition is rarely mentioned or seriously confronted by practitioners of cultural studies.

7. Much cultural studies tends to assume that context is determining, even though cultural artifacts are sometimes granted power to generate, or even to put in question, context. As my cultural context is, so will I, and all my works, be. The power of the New Historicism was, on the basis of this assumption, to describe dazzlingly some more or less obscure feature of popular culture, often British Renaissance culture, and then to assert that this feature explained some piece of high culture, for example Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Philosophy, on the contrary, tends to think of the transfer from circumambient cultural context to cultural artifact as a big mystery. That transfer is something extremely difficult to demonstrate persuasively and empirically. A notorious example is Derrida's "Signature Event Context," in which Derrida argues, against Austin and Searle, that the "context" of a performative utterance can never be "saturated (*saturé*)" (Derrida, *Limited Inc*. 20). As a result, the "felicity" of a performative speech act, such as the minister's "I pronounce you man and wife," can never be firmly known, predicted, or confirmed.

8. Much confusion in cultural studies has been caused, in my view, by an incautious conflation of "performative" in the sense of a speech act and "performative" in the sense of "performativity." This confusion can be seen or felt in the widely practiced discipline of "performance studies," or in Butler's widely influential claim that an individual's "sex" is a result of iterated "performances" of culturally determined, power-imposed ideas about masculinity or femininity. It is important not to confuse kinds. We must, as Wikipedia puts it, "disambiguate." I contend that "performativity" in the sense of the way a dance, a musical composition, or a part in a play is performed has practically nothing to do with "performativity" in the sense of the way a given enunciation can function as a performative speech act. "He gave a spectacular performance of Hamlet" does not exemplify, nor does it refer to, the same use of language as does saying, "He gave his solemn promise that he would be here at ten," even though both are forms of enunciation, of speaking out, even of doing something with words.[1] Though Austin's deplorable misogyny is evident everywhere in *How To Do Things With Words*, people in performance studies need to grit their teeth, return to the source, and see what Austin actually said about, for example, performances on the stage. He saw such performances as devoid of performative force (Austin 22). This is a huge subject. Amazon.com gives 456 results under "Performativity and Performance." The introduction by Andrew Parker and Eve Sedgwick to the English Institute volume

on *Performativity and Performance* begins by distinguishing sharply between performativity as applied to speech acts and performativity in the theater: "For while philosophy and theater now share 'performative' as a common lexical item, the term has hardly come to mean 'the same thing' for each" (Parker and Sedgwick 3). By the end of the essay, however, after a subtle and penetrating discussion of how one can go beyond Austin in the direction of queer theory, Parker and Sedgwick give their blessing to the appropriation of the term "performative" for theatrical and other performance studies: "Arguably," they say, "it's the aptitude of the explicit performative for mobilizing such transformative effects on interlocutory space [they've just been discussing Charlotte's great speech to the Prince early in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*] that makes it almost irresistible—in the face of a lot of discouragement from Austin himself—to associate it with theatrical performance" (Parker and Sedgwick 11). I suggest that one ought to resist. It is important to resist.

9. The materiality of the body, finally, tends to be taken for granted by those in cultural studies, as for example in that citation I began with from Butler's *Bodies that Matter*. She is citing a common protest from women in her audiences when she gave lectures on the body. Everybody, these women assumed, knows what is meant by the materiality of the body. It is just my too too solid flesh right here. Appealing to it deictically, or with a touch of the forefinger or the foot, as when Samuel Johnson kicked the stone to disprove Berkeley's idealism, is taken as an irrefutable refutation of any claim that it is "all language," as so-called deconstruction is, falsely, assumed to say. Almost innumerable books and essays in recent decades have contained the word "body" in their titles. Amazon.com gives 428,366 results. That boggles or googles the mind. The methodological references in such works are more likely to be medical or psychoanalytical, specifically Lacanian, than properly philosophical. Some such works display the word "body" on their title pages like a flag of allegiance, a talisman, or a shibboleth: "I am not a deconstructionist. Heaven forfend." Others stage an encounter, or at least a touch, a tangent, sometimes a "touch without touching," a glancing blow, between philosophy and cultural studies, for example a response by Gayatri Spivak to a preliminary version of Nancy's *Corpus* in a collection edited by Juliet MacCannell and Laura Zakarin called *Thinking Bodies*.[2]

10. One of the earliest of such books was Jean H. Hagstrum's *The Romantic Body: Love and Sexuality in Keats, Wordsworth, and Blake*. Since this essay appears in the *Romantic Circles* Praxis Series, it is appropriate to say a word or two about Hagstrum's fine book. Discussing the major romantic poets by way of love, sexuality, and the body was relatively unusual in 1985, so it took some courage then to focus on these topics. Moreover, Hagstrum's pioneering, learned, and intellectually generous book initiated the tradition I am identifying of more or less taking the body for granted. *The Romantic Body* is hardly a "feminist" book. It is written, for the most part, from a resolutely and unashamedly virile perspective, though with some proto-feminist due respect for women's sexual experience, as in the discussion of Blake's Oothoon. Yet *The Romantic Body* helped establish the program for all those subsequent books about the body, including many central texts in feminism or in queer studies.

11. Hagstrum begins by firmly distinguishing his stance from that of Paul de Man. He cites a remark Patricia Spacks had made about Hagstrum's own previous book on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century love, *Sex and Sensibility*, a book preliminary to *The Romantic Body*: "'If you want to talk about men [sic!],' Paul de Man remarked at the English Institute, 'you're in the wrong field. We talk about letters.' Hagstrum talks about men and women and their representations" (Hagstrum viii). Hagstrum goes on firmly to confirm that allegiance: "I am confident that the frequent glances I make in the ensuing pages to authors' lives predispose us to respond to zones of verbal energy and do not finally divert attention from the proper locus of critical attention, the work itself. That work I find to be best when its mythic beings and events convey real experience within fictional, rhetorical, and verbal structures" (Hagstrum ix-x). You can see that the backlash against "deconstruction" was already in full swing in 1985, just two years after de Man's death. Hagstrum returns, somewhat defiantly, *pace* de Man, to a straightforwardly mimetic and referential concept of literature, to the notion that good literature

"conveys real experience," that words have "energy," and to the notion that literature is based on the "real experience" of the author. That means biographical data may always be relevant. The real experience registered by Wordsworth, Keats, and Blake and discussed by Hagstrum is not so much of the body as such—primarily the female body from a male perspective—as of what is named in the subtitle: "love and sexuality in Keats, Wordsworth, and Blake," that is, the female body as an object of male sexual desire, though occasionally the male body as an object of female desire. Hagstrum also reproduces and discusses some Romantic graphic works of nude and clothed females, by Henry Fuseli, James Barry, William Etty, and of course Blake. He specifies, for example, whether the pudenda are exposed or veiled in each of his examples. *The Romantic Body* is primarily a thematic and paraphrastic book about sex in work by three poets. It is primarily about the heterosexual sex act, or the desire for it, although due attention is given to sex's idealizing, transcendentalizing, or politicizing by the poets in question. Hagstrum asserts in one place, for example, that for Blake "what poisoned sexuality was not the body itself, desire per se" (Hagstrum 121), as though the body and sexual desire were the same thing. He asserts in another place, wrongly if Derrida is right, that to "give primacy and beauty to the sense of touch," as Blake does, is an alteration of "traditional psychology" (Hagstrum 115; Derrida's *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy* is devoted to showing that touch is primary, from Aristotle to Nancy). A brief coda by Hagstrum, "Philosophical Epilogue: Nature and Imagination," does indeed discuss some philosophers: Diderot, Archibald Alison, Thomas Holcroft, Kant, Hegel, Schiller, and Schopenhauer, though primarily to find the last four "deficient" (Hagstrum149) and male chauvinist. They are deficient because they pay scant attention to sexuality in the way it was celebrated by Keats, Wordsworth, and Blake, that is, as a give and take between the sexes that involves both Eros and Agape. The close attention to what major philosophers actually say about the body never occurs in Hagstrum's book in anything like the way it occurs in Derrida's close readings of philosophers in *On Touching*. The body never becomes a challenging philosophical or theoretical problem in Hagstrum's book, in spite of his careful attention to Blake's sexual theories. By saying that Hagstrum tends to take the body for granted, I mean that like most, but not all of the authors of the recent books about the body I have listed in my bibliography, he does not draw himself up, as Nancy and Derrida do, and ask, "Just what is 'the body'? How can I ever be sure that I know it, or make contact with it, or touch it? What do the major Western philosophers have to say about the body and about touch?"

12. For the philosophical tradition, on the contrary, the body, from Aristotle all the way through Merleau-Ponty to the present, is an enigmatic problem, not a solution, perhaps not even a problem amenable to rational elucidation. Embodiment, incarnation, or incorporation, is, moreover, not detachable, in our Western culture, from its theological roots. *Hoc est enim corpus meum,* "This is truly my body," said Jesus, in the Latin Vulgate version, when he broke bread at the Last Supper.[3]

13. Some idea of the issues involved can be obtained from Jean-Luc Nancy's *Corpus* and Derrida's aforementioned *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, although these two books are by no means singing exactly the same tune about the problem of the body.[4] Derrida's book reads notions of touch in texts from Aristotle's *De Anima* down through Kant, Maine de Biran, Ravaisson, and Hegel to Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and Guattari, Levinas, and Nancy himself. "For that which touches on it [touch] or that about which one speaks in speaking of touch is also the *intangible*," says Derrida. "To touch with tact is to touch without touching that which does not let itself be touched: to embrace eyes, in a word (or in several words, and the word ["embrace," *embrasser* in French, which means "kiss"] always brings to your ear the modest reserve of a kiss on the mouth). To touch as tact is, thanks to you, because of you [i.e., Nancy], to break with immediacy, with the immediate given wrongly associated with touch and on which all bets are always placed, as on self-presence, by transcendental idealism (Kantian or Husserlian intuitionism) or by ontology, the thinking of the presence of being or of *being-there as such* in its Being [the reference is to Heidegger], the thinking of the body proper or of flesh [as in all those present-day feminist appeals to the 'materiality of the body,' as well as in discussions in the male philosophical tradition, recapitulated by Derrida, of the 'body proper' or of flesh (*Leib)]*" (Derrida,

On Touching 292-293). "The" "central thesis" of *On Touching*, if I may put it that way, which Derrida explicitly forbids me to do, is the untouchability of the heart of touch, the possibility/impossibility both of touching itself, either of touching oneself or of touching another presumed body or embodied person, and, as a result, the impossibility of talking or writing directly and unequivocally about touch or about the body. You cannot touch touch. An interval, interruption, or spacing, that cannot itself be touched, any more than can the object of touch, or the limit of touch, always intervenes between my finger and what I reach out to touch, as in the old telephone ad, "Reach out and touch someone." "What is a contact," Derrida asks, "if it always *intervenes between* two *x*'s? [intervient *toujours* entre *deux* x]" (Derrida, *On Touching* 2, trans. modified). In another place Derrida makes clear that he thinks our ordinary assumptions about the body are culturally specific, but have been around a long time, though they are extremely problematic: "And so it is our very old habit in this or that historical culture, 'at home' [*chez nous*] in the West, to make use of these terms (the 'logic' and 'arithmetic' of the five senses, and so forth) so as to adjust them more or less well [*tant bien que mal*] (and often not very well at all, as we are experiencing it here, and that is all of philosophy) to suit some pretended [*alléguées*] ontophenomenological evidence in 'our body.' Empirical ontophenomenology + historical legacy + language of a culture: perhaps this makes a common habit, a way of being social, a praxis, a pragmatics, a consciousness, and so forth" (Derrida, *On Touching* 106-7, trans. modified).

14. I do not say that it is necessary to agree with Derrida or with Nancy. Far from it. I am arguing, rather, that those in cultural studies would do well to take into account the challenge Nancy and Derrida, in different ways, pose to the "intuitionist" tradition. This tradition, from Aristotle to the present day, tends to take for granted "the materiality of the body."

15. I conclude that both cultural studies and philosophy would be doing their different tasks better if more meetings, however Oedipal or Judith-like (I mean like Judith in the Biblical story of Judith and Holofernes[5]), had occurred or were to occur, at that crossroads or at that mountain pass.

Notes

[1] I have discussed this confusion and its origins at some length in Miller 2007.

[2] Here are a few other representative book titles: *The Body in Pain*; *Writing and the Body*; *Body Politics*; *Bodies that Matter*; *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*; *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*; *Body Work*; *Slave to the Body*; *Scripting the Black Masculine Body*; *Politics of the Female Body*; *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women*. One section of a recent issue of *Wired* (January 2007) is called *Beyond the Body: The Science of Human Enhancement*.

A panel at the Modernist Studies Association meeting in October 2006 was entitled "The Avant-Garde Body." Below is the call for papers for that panel. I cite it because it gathers together in a few sentences received opinions within cultural studies about the body, including a tacit taking for granted of the more or less unproblematic materiality of the body:

Avant-garde art, performance, and theory of the early twentieth century portrayed the body as an entity to be molded, manipulated, and even transcended. Fused with machines, fashioned à la mode, or compressed into geometric shapes, avant-garde bodies functioned in the promotion of new social orders and visual forms. Yet many avant-gardists also regarded the body suspiciously, as a vestige of the natural world that remained resistant to aesthetic and political transformation. Such negotiations between the ideal and the reality of the body are the focal point of this panel. By redefining the body's role within avant-garde production and rhetoric, this panel will open up new ways of theorizing the social discourse of the body; explore the historical deprivileging of

groups commonly associated with the body; and examine the body's function as an interdisciplinary site upon which visual, physical, and political culture converged during this period. We invite papers on avant-garde art, theater, literature, photography and film that consider some of the following questions: How has the dynamism of the live body worked with and against static or non-visual art forms? What role does the body play in styles that would seem to obfuscate or obliterate its presence (such as abstraction)? How did avant-garde figures construe the relation between the individual body and the body politic? How has the body served as a tool of (or a hindrance to) political and social cultural change? How has it been utilized to express attitudes towards gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality and class?

As you can see, almost everything is up for grabs in this call for papers except the question of what we mean by the materiality of the body. That is taken for granted as a given, on the basis of which all these further investigations will be carried out.

[3] The King James translation drops the *enim* and just says, "This is my body" (Matt. 26:26). I suppose this may have been to bypass controversies about whether the Eucharist is a matter of transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or just as symbolic remembrance (as I was taught). If Jesus really said, in Aramaic, something like, "This is really, truly, my body," it is difficult to hold that he meant anything other than transubstantiation.

[4] In a forthcoming essay, "Touching Derrida Touching Nancy," I have attempted, among other things, to identify what is at stake in the differences between Nancy and Derrida on the questions of touch and the body.

[5] In the deuterocanonical *Book of Judith*, the Assyrian army is camped just outside the mountain pass leading to the besieged Jewish city of Bethulia. Judith entices the invading Assyrian General, Holofernes, in his tent, gets him drunk, and then beheads him with his own sword, thereby saving Bethulia and becoming a great heroine in Jewish history (Judith 12:12-20; 13:1-19).

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Philosophy and Culture

"Club Monad"

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1. A philosophy of metaphysics is judged by its simplicity, universality, and comprehensiveness—that is, by its capacity to explain not only the nature of being, or substance, but also the nature of non-existent things—such as phenomena—which being may not encompass. Aside from the metaphysical claims of scientific materialism (atomism, quantum mechanics, string theory, etc.), Leibniz's theory of monads, developed in the late seventeenth century, is generally viewed as the most powerful and consistent modern metaphysics. In this brief essay, I'd like to consider whether Leibniz's theory of substance, outlined in the *Monadology,* might help to explain a phenomenon that appears to be remote—almost inconceivably remote—from philosophical metaphysics: modern nightlife. Although I understand nightlife quite literally as a mode of experience which has evolved historically in the anomalous space of the nightclub, I also understand nightlife as a phenomenon determined in part by the history of certain kinds of vernacular poetry and therefore sharing with poetry a kind of lyric *substance*. More precisely, in relation to Leibniz's theory of substance, I am interested in the labyrinthine topology of nightlife, especially the *topos* of the nightclub, a place or event infused with verbal reflection (hence its adulterated substance); its ambiguous relations to what lies outside its windowless space; its open secrecy (which amounts to a spectacle of obscurity); and its sociological, topographical, and even architectural *obscurity*.

2. Leibniz is known today principally as one of the founders of modern logic, as perhaps the greatest mathematician among the major European philosophers (he was the inventor of infinitesimal calculus), and, as I've indicated, for his metaphysical system, summarized near the end of his life in a text known as the *Monadology* (Leibniz never gave it a title)—a treatise of some twelve pages written in French in 1714. Leibniz's metaphysical doctrine, which has stirred controversy among philosophers and admiration among poets since its formulation in the 1690's, holds that nothing is real except "monads," simple entities without parts, possessing "neither extension, nor shape, nor divisibility"—that is, without sensory or material properties (Leibniz, *Monadology* 213). Monads, according to Leibniz, are "incorporeal automata," consisting solely of perception and appetite—indeed, perception (a term used by Leibniz in a manner requiring careful explanation) *is* substance, in a world defined by mind-like, immaterial entities (*Monadology* 215). Although monads—the "true atoms of nature"—are beings of reason, they supply, in aggregate, the *a priori* conditions of all material bodies, a conception granting only partial reality to matter (insofar as it may be understood as a "mode" of monadic perception) and subjecting the status of material entities to endless debate.

3. "Each monad," according to Leibniz, "is a living mirror, or a mirror endowed with internal action, which represents the universe from its own point of view and is as ordered as the universe itself" (Leibniz, "Principles" 207). Substance therefore, according to Leibniz, is essentially a *medium*—a mirror in constant flux. Yet monads have no direct or causal interaction with other monads, or with the phenomenal reality designed—and "perceived" indirectly—in concert with other monads. Hence, perception, the very substance of monads, occurs without external influence: a paradox defining the essential lyricism—that is, the obscurity—of monadic being. All monadic relations are therefore *immanent* relations. Leibniz's theory of the solipsistic perception of monads and his explanation of relations between these hermetic substances—each with its own imperfect perspective on the universe—provides the basic terms for an explanation of the open secrecy of the modern nightclub.

4. Leibniz's *Monadology* attracted the interest of Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, and other writers associated with the *Athenaeum* magazine towards the end of the eighteenth century. For the young experimentalists of the *Frühromantik* in Germany, the appeal of Leibniz's ideas could not be separated from his philosophical style.[1] Schlegel, placing Leibniz "among the greatest masters" of a "thoroughly material wit," describes his manner of writing and thinking as falling between science, philosophy, and poetry: "The most important scientific discoveries are *bon mots* of this sort—are so because of the surprising contingency of their origin, the unifying source of their thought, and the baroqueness of their casual expression. . . . The best ones are *echappés de vue* into the infinite. Leibniz's whole philosophy consists of a few fragments and projects that are witty in this sense" (Schlegel, *Athaneum Fragments,* Fragment 220).

5. Implicated in what may be called "a cult of infinity" among members of the Jena Circle, Schlegel deduced from Leibniz's attempt to free mathematics from geometric intuition a "language of infinity" (corresponding to the "necessary fiction" of infinitesimal calculus) in the guise of the fragment. Indeed, Schlegel's most important stylistic innovation (practiced in concert with his friend Novalis)—the literary-philosophical fragment—clearly takes inspiration not only from the *philosophy* of the monad, but from the monadological style of Leibniz's treatise: "A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself" (Schlegel, *Athaneum Fragments,* Fragment 206). Moreover, the fragment and the riddle are united in Schlegel's mind by the substance of wit—a monadic substance—which somehow exceeds its comprehension: "A good riddle should be witty; otherwise nothing remains once the answer has been found" (Schlegel, *Critical Fragments,* Fragment 96).

6. Though Leibniz's "witty" philosophical style—a "chemical wit," in Schlegel's phrase—furnished a cool example of the new aesthetic ideology of the enigma, his appeal to the Jena Circle was not primarily stylistic. At a moment in literary and cultural history when the I-know-not-what of aesthetic experience was being redefined in revolutionary ways, the "new Leibniz" emerged as *the* philosopher of the German counter-Enlightenment, a rallying point—in part for his ostensibly unsystematic approach—for anti-Kantian views. Probably most important to the new aesthetic formulated by Schlegel and his counterparts was Leibniz's theory of unconscious perception *(petites perceptions)*—the first modern conception of the unconscious. This form of perception is characteristic of all substances, including objects.[2] In addition, Leibniz's theory of monadic perception—a psychology of ontological substance —provided the philosophical rationale for placing sensation, intellection, and feeling on a continuum, so that perception, or feeling, might be regarded as a "confused" form of thinking, yet remain clear in its effect.

7. One could therefore begin to conceive of perceptions that are "clear, but confused"—a formulation of ontological substance (since perception *is* substance in the *Monadology*) that relies on a complex rhetoric of clarity and obscurity. What's more, the obscurity—the perspectival nature—of monadic perception is not simply unavoidable: it is constitutive of individual substances. In the context of this dynamic transvaluation of obscurity, the evocative monad became for Fichte a model of the self; for Novalis a template of the natural object (think of Keats' negative capability); and for Schlegel a principle of aesthetic form.[3] The psychological inflection of monadic substance thus activated a series of transitive relations between Romantic conceptions of subjectivity, objecthood, and aesthetic form—all oriented around the axis of poetological research.

8. The essential features of the Romantic Leibniz survive into the twentieth century in surprising ways. The Marxist critic Georg Lukacs, for example, called the work of art "*ein fensterlos Monad* " (a windowless monad) in an early essay on aesthetics, published in 1917 (16). The most illustrious (and discreet) modern student of the *Monadology* in its Romantic aspect was, curiously, another Marxist, Walter Benjamin—an indication, perhaps, of the latent sociological prospect of the monad. Benjamin's

dissertation director, Richard Herbertz, published a book on Lebniz, *Die Lehr vom Unbewussten in System des Leibniz (The Doctrine of the Unconscious in the System of Leibniz*) in 1905, a work that almost certainly influenced Benjamin's dissertation, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," which views the "medium of reflection" posited by Schlegel and Novalis as essentially monadological. Although Benjamin's career as a Leibnizian idealist reached its peak and breaking point in his formulation of the guiding principles of *The Origin of the German Mourning Play* in the mid-1920's, his thinking never lost its Leibnizian cast.[4]

9. From a phenomenological perspective, the correlation between modern nightlife and metaphysical substance begins with the intuitive resemblance between the hermetic forms of the monad and nightclub, each constituting a place, a topos, which has disappeared from the map of the world. Yet this correspondence is more than intuitive, as Leibniz employs architectural analogies to characterize the formal—that is, non-intuitive—properties of the monad. Leibniz describes monads as "architectonic models" (*echantillons architectoniques*) of a universe from which each monad is nevertheless radically isolated by its incorporeal substance (Leibniz, *Monadology* 223). Further, in a famously eccentric and remarkable image, he declares, "Monads have no windows through which something can enter or leave" (Leibniz, *Monadology* 214). Walter Benjamin later indentified the windowless monad as the incorporeal paradigm of his conception of the Parisian Arcades. Describing the Arcades Project as a fragmentary vision of "the true city—the city indoors," Benjamin explains, "What obtains in the windowless house is the true. And the arcade, too, is a windowless house. The windows that look down on it are like loges from which one gazes inside, but one cannot look out from them" (cited in Fenves 273-274 n14). The introverted vista of the windowless arcade corresponds in remarkable ways to the naked hermeticism of modern nightlife.

10. One must bear in mind, however, that Benjamin's monadology of the Arcades always reverts to an understanding of language and its role in configuring experience, a deductive regression also characteristic of Leibniz's formulation of monadic substance. Furthermore, Benjamin's appropriation of Leibniz's monadology betrays a significant debt to the poetological theories of early German Romanticism—especially to Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, whose lyric monadologies remain, as I've indicated, the most significant literary engagements with Leibniz's philosophy. Ultimately, because the basic elements of Leibniz's thought (symbolic logic and metaphysics) betray the influence of his early thinking about artificial languages and his lifelong interest in etymology, one should emphasize that Leibniz's formulation of ontological substance (monads) and his understanding of logical procedures reflect, essentially, a conception of *linguistic* being.

11. Leibniz's analytic project yields a methodological "device" capable of navigating by "calculation" and with "the aid of signs" what he calls "the labyrinth of the continuum" (the maze of phenomenal appearance), or other structures characterized by obscurity—such as the branching of historical languages.[5] In keeping with the rhetoric of labyrinthine forms (which may be compared to the topographical obscurity—the garbled location—of the underground club), Leibniz often refers to the analytic key, or calculus, as the "thread of Ariadne," echoing his conception of the "Ariadne thread" of etymology.[6] Most importantly, and consistently, Leibniz conceives of the calculus—the Ariadne thread—as a system of "rational writing," a "philosophical language," or, more commonly, a "universal characteristic":

No one should fear that the contemplation of signs will lead us away from the things in themselves; on the contrary, it leads us into the interior of things. We often have confused notions today because the signs are badly arranged, but then with the aid of signs we will easily have the most distinct notions, for we will have at hand *a mechanical thread of meditation* [emphasis added], as it were, with whose aid we can easily resolve any idea whatever into those of which it is composed. (Leibniz, letter to Tschirnhaus, May 1678,

12. So great are the analytic powers of this "mechanical thread of meditation," elsewhere compared to the inventions of the microscope and the telescope, that Leibniz describes it as a "guiltless kind of magic." [8] Though Ariadne's thread reveals itself to be a "mechanical"—that is, logical—instrument that allows one to *calculate* one's way out of the maze, the magical thread and the riddling topography of the labyrinth remain, in essence, linguistic phenomena.

13. The verbal topology of monadic substance offers a useful model for the secret world of the club—a placeless place—and for the infidel poetry associated with the topology of nightlife. For the tradition of English poetry harbors a kind of rude song written in cant, the jargon of the demimonde, garbled and misplaced by design, which draws the reader into an historical underworld of taverns and nightclubs. The expressive correspondences between various modes of obscurity—verbal, topographical, even sociological—are essential to understanding the explanatory value of the *Monadology* as a model for the substance of nightlife. Placing poetry in this particular way—tracing lyric to one of its hidden sources—helps to recover a little-known vernacular tradition, a genre of "lost" poems; yet it also raises, more generally, certain theoretical questions about configurations of place, or placelessness, in language and about the topography of poetic form. Equally important, the taverns and clubs of the historical underworld may be described as *obscure* in various ways that thereby match, or compound, the verbal obscurity of "infidel" poetry.

14. These correspondences confront the reader, for example, in a line of Hölderlin's poem "The Rhine," which states: "*Ein Rätsel ist Reinentsprungenes*" ("Pure of source is the riddle") (Hölderlin 73). The purity of the river's source is not, according to this statement, a mystery—a mode of obscurity that is unresolvable—but a riddle: "a device of language," according to Paul de Man, "that can, in turn, be deciphered only by another operation of language" (de Man 206). Thus, the river's enigmatic source appears to be defined by the "operation" of a verbal figure. At the same time, however, the principle of verbal obscurity, conventionally defined as a failure of meaning or communication, appears in Hölderlin's poem as a topographical phenomenon. Places characterized by obscurity appear objectively in the world, though their exact location may be unmarked or unknown. Whether marked or unmarked, however, the place of the riddle (or the riddle of the place) resists discovery. Verbal obscurity, the place of the riddle, therefore expresses the condition of that which is neither lost nor found, but *undiscovered* or unanswered.

15. As a *form* of secrecy, nightlife and the history of nightlife describes a topology, a study of lyrical sites, in language and in correspondingly anomalous material environments. Giorgio Agamben stumbles upon this site when he discovers in the principle of the *topos* a model for understanding the lyrical chamber of the *stanza*. The poetic stanza may be thought of as a *topos*, according to Agamben, if we

> accustom ourselves to think of 'place' not as something spatial, but as something more original than space. . . . Only a philosophical topology, analogous to what in mathematics is defined as *analysis situ* (analysis of site), in opposition to *analysis magnitudinis* (analysis of magnitude), would be adequate to the *topos outopos*, the placeless place. (Agamben xviii-xix)

16. The poetic *topos* of the stanza exists, under these terms, without material extension or "magnitude," like the monad or the clandestine place of the nightspot, insofar as the actual sites of nocturnal culture continually elude material and pragmatic definition and thereby approximate the ambiguous substance of verbal reality. Reading the *stanza* into the *topos* (and vice-versa) allows Agamben to define poetry generally as "a topology of the unreal" (Agamben xviii)—a phrase that aptly describes the partial world (demimonde) of nightlife as well.

17. Taverns and nightclubs are places where casual social interaction, business, and even crime coexist in a place governed ostensibly by pleasure. They are also sites where the illicit and often subversive habits or "trades" of the demimonde become intelligible—and available—to members of law-abiding society. As a verbal site, a place in poetry, the topology of the nightspot has its origins in the drinking songs of the canting tradition. "Cant," the earliest term for slang in English, refers to the specialized jargon of the criminal underworld, employed by thieves, beggars, prostitutes, and vagabonds. Evident since the fourteenth century, a submerged tradition of poems written in canting speech has developed with increasing resonance, sometimes in conjunction with the dominant literary tradition. Cant is thus the idiom of a vernacular tradition embedded in the "flash crib," the place where flash talk, or cant, is spoken. In this sense, the rhymes of the canting crew, embedded in a variety of literary texts, function as sources of historical and profane illumination, fitfully and haphazardly lighting the topography of nightlife.

18. One may present evidence evoking a *history* of nightlife, yet one must always bear in mind that the nightlife of the past survives for the most part in cant, *in writing*: a place finding its tempo, its economy, its afterlife—its charm—in language. Since much of the evidence comes from plays and ballads, the tavern or nightspot is essentially a place contingent on literature, and on vernacular poetry in particular, for its specific qualities and its enduring substance. The chiaroscuro of the canting song, its dappled sense and senselessness (what Hopkins would call its "pied beauty"), its rude but alluring textures: these verbal qualities constitute the very substance of the nightspot and its clandestine society.

19. One should not presume, however, that the inescapably verbal substance of nightlife under these conditions is somehow secondary to the physical reality of nightlife, either in the past or the present. For that reality is fundamentally dissolute, its very existence placed in question by the obscurity of its material conditions: its nomadic timetable and improvised venues; its revolving, unmarked locations; its nameless (or nicknamed) and promiscuous society. That is to say, the external conditions of nightlife continually revert to the material ambiguity of verbal reality, thereby betraying the essential inwardness and incommensurability of its primary substance. The appearance of nocturnal culture thus always follows the logic of disappearance, dissolving into the material and social fabric of the world, in order to secure a location which betrays no outward aspect—an impossible place, an open secret, in the façade of the city. From this perspective, the lyrical *topos* of nightlife in poetry is the primary form of that which takes place, secondarily, in the world. The secretive and senseless charm of the canting song would thus be the truest form of nightlife, in contrast to the more explicit and therefore degraded version of it taking place in the streets.

20. In order to understand the hermeticism of the verbal topology comprising the substance of nightlife, and in order to articulate the various modes of obscurity intrinsic to the nightspot, one must attend more closely to the solipsistic *relations* characteristic of monadic substance. Leibniz consistently emphasizes the partial or perspectival nature of monads as well as their solipsism, as in the following citation: "a monad, in itself and at a moment, can be distinguished from another only by its internal qualities and actions, which can be nothing but *perceptions* (that is, the representation of the composite, or what is external, in the simple" (Leibniz, "Principles" 214). All monadic action is, furthermore, spontaneous: "the monad's natural changes come from an *internal principle*, since no external cause can influence it internally" (Leibniz, *Monadology* 214). Perception thus constitutes the only possible form of monadic relation, and the changes from one perception to another constitute the only possible form of monadic action. Nothing therefore exists, according to Leibnizian metaphysics, but an endless series of immanent representations coordinated among the infinity of monads—though the term "representation" fails, as it implies an extrinsic relation, to capture the autistic nature of monadic perception. Thus, while Leibniz declares that every "monad represents the whole universe" and that "the nature of the monad is representative," we must take care to understand representation in this context as a species of perception characterized by *immanent* relations (Leibniz, *Monadology* 221,

220).

21. Leibniz's theory of monadic "perception" is obscure in part because it does not involve—in its most rudimentary form—the experience of sense perception, or sensation; it erodes the absolute distinction (dear to Kant) between thinking and perceiving—an idea of explosive importance for Romantic poetics and epistemology. The riddle of solipsistic perception prompted Bertrand Russell to explain, "Perception is marvelous, because it cannot be conceived as an action of the object on the percipient, since substances never interact. Thus, although it is related to the object and simultaneous with it (or approximately so), it is in no way due to the object, but only to the nature of the percipient" (Russell 132). In a sense, as Fabrizio Mondadori observes, "it is *as if* what is perceived (whatever it may be) were not there at all: given the denial of causal interaction, what is (said to be) perceived might as well melt into thin air" (32). Although no direct, physical or causal relation obtains between monads, or between a monad and the phenomenal world, the disparate perceptions and "appetites" of individual monads are synchronized by what Leibniz called *expressive* correspondences. The principle of expression, which is essential to the coherence of Leibniz's metaphysic, therefore accounts for the monad's ability to "mirror" and hence multiply the universe from its own perspective. The monad, an obscure analogue of the totality of monads comprising the phenomenal world, *expresses everything outside of itself*.

22. The principle of expression, which solves the riddle of solipsistic perception, supplies as well a key to the logic of the open secret which characterizes the topology of nightlife. Siegfried Kracauer described Josef von Sternberg's film *The Blue Angel*, set in the Tingeltangel Club in Berlin, as an instance of "the appearance of lost inwardness"—a phrase that may be applied as well to the nightlife portrayed in the film (Kracauer 631). Strictly speaking, the appearance of "inwardness" in the external world—that is, the appearance of forms incommensurable with the "laws" of the visible world—is an impossible event, a contradiction that produces the intrinsic obscurity of nightlife (its location, its language, its social composition). As a form of inwardness, the nightspot appears in the world, though it seeks to erase, or obscure, any trace of that manifestation: it is an open secret, a productive paradox. And the dialectic of obscurity—Milton called the light of the underworld "darkness visible"—is precisely what aligns nightlife historically and conceptually with lyric poetry. For poetry as well may be described as "the appearance of lost inwardness," an impossible event yielding unmappable places and unreal combinations of social being. From the very beginning, we have known that Orpheus couldn't turn his back on the underworld and that by turning back he drew the gaze of those living in the upper world to the lyrical *topos* of the underworld. We have not sufficiently understood, however, that the underworld is at once a lyrical or metaphysical site and a historical place, even if the ambiguity of its material conditions cannot be isolated from the substance of poetry.

Notes

[1] The role of the *idea* of philosophical style in Leibniz's thought is carefully delineated in Fenves 13-32.

[2] On the origin and historical vicissitudes of Leibniz's theory of unconscious perception (which has no mechanism of repression), see Miller 43.

[3] Walter Benjamin discusses these adaptations of monadological principles in his dissertation, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism" (134-135, 147).

[4] The monadological schema of the Trauerspiel book appears in its notoriously difficult "Epistemo-Critical Preface." In 1923, when he was writing the book, Benjamin wrote to his friend Christian Rang describing his regard for "Leibniz's entire way of thinking, his idea of the monad, which I adopt for my definition of ideas"

(Selected Writings 1:389). The most explicit contemporaneous account of Benjamin's monadological method appears in Kracauer, "On the Writings of Walter Benjamin." In addition, Benjamin's correlation of riddles and names (the verbal counterpart of the monad) in "Riddle and Mystery," a fragment written in 1921, reveals a distinctive feature of Benjamin's monadology (Selected Writings 1:267-268).

[5] The phrase "labyrinth of the continuum" appears in Leibniz, *Theodicy* 53.

[6] Donald Rutherford remarks on Leibniz's use of phrases such as "the thread of Ariadne" or "thread of meditation" to describe his conception of symbolic logic. (Rutherford 258n17). Leibniz's reference to the "Ariadne thread" of etymology appears in a letter to Ludolf (1687)(Samtliche Schriften und Briefe 5:31, cited in Aarsleff 94-95, 100n42.

[7] In the seventeenth century the phrase "mechanical philosophy" refers to the new critical philosophy associated with the revival of atomism (and with Descartes in particular), which is to be contrasted with scholasticism, or the "common philosophy." Discussion of Leibniz's phraseology of the *characteristique* can be found in Rutherford (228-230, 256-257n12).

[8] Referring to his "invention" of the "universal characteristic," Leibniz offers a number of analogies for its analytic potency: "My invention includes the whole use of reason, a judge for controversies, an interpretation of notions, a balance of probabilities, a compass which will pilot us through the ocean of experience, an inventory of things, a table of thoughts, a microscope to scrutinize the closest objects, a telescope to individuate those most distant, a general calculus, a guiltless kind of magic, a kind of writing that everybody will read in his own language" (Leibniz, Samtliche Schriften und Briefe 2: 167-169, cited in Rossi 289)

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