



SUBJECTS AND SIMULATIONS

BETWEEN BAUDRILLARD AND LACOUE-LABARTHE

Edited by **ANNE O'BYRNE AND HUGH J. SILVERMAN**

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*Between Baudrillard
and Lacoue-Labarthe*

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AND HUGH J. SILVERMAN

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Abbreviations

- B-A* Jean Baudrillard. *America* (1986), trans. Chris Turner. (New York: Verso, 1989).
- B-Critique* Jean Baudrillard. “Requiem pour les média” (1971) in *Pour une Critique de l'économie politique du signe*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).
- B-EC* Jean Baudrillard. *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1987), trans. Bernard and Caroline Schutze, ed. Sylvère Lotringer. (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1988).
- B-FS* Jean Baudrillard. *Fatal Strategies* (1983), trans. Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Nieslochowski. (New York: Semiotext(e) / Pluto Press, 1990).
- B-IE* Jean Baudrillard. *Impossible Exchange* (1999), trans. Chris Turner. (London and New York: Verso, 2001).
- B-Mirror* Jean Baudrillard. *The Mirror of Production* (1973), trans. Mark Poster. (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975).
- B-Paroxysm* Jean Baudrillard. *Paroxysm: Interviews with Philippe Petit* (1997), trans. Chris Turner. (London: Verso, 1998).
- B-PC* Jean Baudrillard. *The Perfect Crime* (1995), trans. Chris Turner. (New York: Verso, 1996).
- B-Seduction* Jean Baudrillard. *Seduction* (1979), trans. Brian Singer. (London: MacMillan, 1990).
- B-SED* Jean Baudrillard. *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), trans. Ian Hamilton Grant. (London: Sage Publications, 1993).
- B-ST* Jean Baudrillard. *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays* (2002), trans. Chris Turner. (New York: Verso, 2003).
- B-SS* Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), trans. Sheila Glaser. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).
- B-SW* Jean Baudrillard. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. and introd. Mark Poster, trans. James Benedict. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
- B-TE* Jean Baudrillard. *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (1990), trans. James Benedict. (New York: Verso, 1993).
- Benjamin* Walter Benjamin. *Illuminations* (1955), ed. and introd. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

- Borges-Infamy* Jorge Luis Borges. *A Universal History of Infamy* (1935). (London: Penguin, 1975).
- Borges-Aleph* Jorge Luis Borges. *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969*, ed. and trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni in collaboration with Jorge Luis Borges. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970).
- Buber-OB.* Martin Buber. *On the Bible*. (New York: Schocken, 1968).
- CBH* Anthony King. "A Critique of Baudrillard's Hyperreality: Towards a Sociology of Postmodernism." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 24, no. 6. (1998).
- D-Points* Jacques Derrida. *Points....: Interviews, 1974-94* (c. 1992), ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
- Darton* Eric Darton. *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center*. (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
- F-AK* Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).
- F-LCP* Michel Foucault. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, (1977) ed. and introd. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).
- F-OT* Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things* (1966), trans. unnamed. (London: Tavistock, 1970).
- Freud-CL* Sigmund Freud. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, trans. ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1985).
- Freud-CP* Sigmund Freud. *Collected Papers*, 5 Vols., trans. under the supervision of Joan Riviere. (New York: Basic Books, 1959).
- Freud-SE* Sigmund Freud. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and edited by James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953/1966).
- H-LPWH* G. W. F. Hegel. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
- H-TRS* Jürgen Habermas. "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" trans. Jeremy Schapiro in *Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

- I-ESD* Luce Irigaray. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1984), trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- I-ILTY* Luce Irigaray. *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History* (1992), trans. Alison Martin. (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- IR* Luce Irigaray. *Irigaray Reader*, ed. and introd. Margaret Whitford. (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991).
- K-AKA* Franz Kafka. *Amerika*, trans. Edwin Muir. (New York: New Directions, 1946).
- Kellner* Douglas Kellner. *Jean Baudrillard. From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*. (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989).
- KR* Julia Kristeva. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
- K-RPL* Julia Kristeva. *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), trans. Margaret Walker, with an introduction by Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
- L-DF* Jean-François Lyotard. *Discours, figure*. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).
- L-LR* Jean-François Lyotard. *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989).
- L-PMC* Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, forward by Frederic Jameson. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984).
- LL-HAP* Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (1987), trans. Chris Turner. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
- LL-SP* Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. *The Subject of Philosophy* (1979), ed. and fwd. Thomas Trezise, trans. Trezise, Silverman, et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
- LL-T* Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk, introd. Jacques Derrida. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- LR* Emmanuel Levinas. *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
- Lucinde* Friedrich Schlegel. *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans with an Introduction by Peter Firchow. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971).

- N-BT* Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golfing. (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday Books, 1956).
- PD* René Descartes. "Optics" (1637), in Vol. 1 of *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- PJNRP* Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy. "Le peuple juif ne rêve pas" in *Le Psychanalyse: est-elle une histoire juive?* Colloque de Montpellier, ed. A and J.J. Rassial. (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981).
- PLT* Martin Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1947/51-1950), trans. Albert Hofstadter. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- Poster-CTT* Mark Poster. "Critical Theory and Technoculture: Habermas and Baudrillard" in *Baudrillard: a Critical Reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994), 68-88.
- PPS* Hugh J. Silverman, ed. *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
- R-P1* Richard Rorty. *Objectivity Relativism and Truth*, Vol. 1 of *Philosophical Papers*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- R-P2* Richard Rorty. *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, Vol. 2 of *Philosophical Papers*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- R-CIS* Richard Rorty. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- R-CP* Richard Rorty. *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays 1972-1980)*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).
- S-PT* Benedict de Spinoza. *A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise* (1670, 1677), trans. and introd. R.H.M. Elwes, with a new bibliographic note by Francisco Cordasco. (New York: Dover, 1883 /1951).
- S-E* Benedict de Spinoza. *Ethics* (1677), trans. William Hale White, rev. Amelia Hutchinson Stirling. (New York: Hafner, 1949).
- V-MWW* Gianni Vattimo and Wolfgang Welsch (eds.). *Medien-Welten Wirklichkeiten*. (Munich: W. Fink, 1997).
- V-OL* Gianni Vattimo. *Oltre l'interpretazione: il significato dell'ermeneutica per la filosofia* (1994). Rome: Laterza, 1995.

- W-LB* Monique Wittig. *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David La Vay. (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1986).
- W-SME* Monique Wittig. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1992).

General Introduction

Between Subjects and Simulations —at the Limits of Representation

Hugh J. Silverman
and Anne O’Byrne

Seduction tears beings away from the reign of metaphor to return them to that of metamorphosis . . . It is what tears beings and things from the reign of interpretation to return them to divination. It is an initiatory form, and it restores to signs their power.¹

Once upon a time, there was a war in Troy. The Achaians gathered under the leadership of Agamemnon to avenge his brother Meneleus’s embarrassment at his wife being carried off to Troy by Paris, the young son of Priam the Trojan King. The war was waged by the Greeks against the Trojans over the course of ten long years and its story has been told over and over again in the words of Homer and then in the presentations of the great tragedians—most notably Aeschylus who reports Agamemnon’s fate upon returning home to Argos. The story of the war and the events that preceded and followed it form a narrative of enormous discursive and seductive power. Images of this war are reiterated throughout the history of the West in epics, poems, novels, plays, and films. But how is it known? Was it “real”? Did it happen? Did it take place? Did it mean the same for Homer as it does enacted by Brad Pitt in the cineplexes of twenty-first century America? Is the Trojan War akin after all to the first Gulf War which was played out on TV screens across the world, censored, mediated by retired military officers who recounted what they would have known or done had they still been in active service? The first President George Bush claimed that he was following the war by watching CNN and that everyone—presuming that everyone had access to cable TV—could follow the events as he was doing. Was anyone home? What was known of this war was entirely mediated by a highly controlled news mechanism such that even the Commander-in-Chief had limited knowledge of the events taking place.

Or did they take place? Jean Baudrillard challenges this very reality. But then when the second Gulf War came around and the second President George Bush held the reigns of power in the United States, there was a change that seemed to promise better access to the precisely the reality of war. Reporters embedded with

U.S. troops were able to give much more detailed eye-witness evidence of very local events, recounting what they saw and heard on the street in Baghdad though too often from inside U.S. military vehicles. Each story became so local that it was impossible to grasp the whole that might have given it meaning, that might have made it real. Homer, who lived three hundred years after the (presumed) conflict in Troy, himself thoroughly blind and unable to see anything, could only recount in formulaic terms the main outlines of the war. How he told the story—his simulated narrative—marked Greek culture and thus Western culture and thought for centuries. And each time the story was told, it meant something very different—so much so that one might even wonder whether it wasn't a composite of various wars that had taken place in the interim. Or can one even say that there was a single set of real events that took place and that could be called the essence of the Trojan War. We find ourselves asking, then, what was the Trojan War to Homer? To Aeschylus? To Euripides? To Virgil? To Dante? To James Joyce? To Wolfgang Peterson? To George Bush the Second? Will the real Trojan War please stand up? Or can it? And for whom? For what subjects? Viewers? Policymakers? Warmongers and pacifists?

Is the Trojan War a metaphor? That is to say, is it a substitution for something that is real, that exists out there as objective and external? Is it a transport, a metaphor, a carrying over from here to there, a translation from one frame to another, a condensation of multiple events reduced or consolidated into one image, one story, one event? Is the Trojan War a simulation of something else, a reference to something that actually happened or is it its own meaning? What is the truth of the Trojan war? In what sense can one say that the Trojan War was true or false? A fiction or a lie? A construct or a real event? Did it happen? Or is it a series of transformations, changing shapes, metastable identities, metamorphoses that, in Baudrillard's words, "restore to signs their power?"

Once the veracity and reality of the Trojan War come into question, signs themselves are undermined. In Saussure's semiology, signs achieve their signification from the relation between signifiers and signifieds and establish a language or discourse of their own without a required reference to the real. Signifieds are concepts that are arbitrarily related to words or signifiers and whether they refer to something out there in the world is open to question. And yet they do have a logic of their own which can always include a reference to the real. Signs are not restricted to an internal logic any more than they are deprived of an external reference. The logic or *logos* of the Trojan War—the saying or language of the story—is not determined by an internal set of narrative requirements nor is it motivated solely by an external set of events in the world. Thus the Trojan War as a semiological system is a narrative that tells a story that is lived and retold in different times and places.

In January 2007, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe died in France and just over a month later, on March 6, so did Jean Baudrillard. They came at the end of a long line of philosophical thinking that stretches back to the very beginnings of the

post-structuralist, phenomenological, hermeneutic, psychoanalytic, and deconstructive practices that continue to shape continental philosophy today. At the same time that Husserlian phenomenology and Saussurean semiology began to take shape in the first decade of the twentieth century, Freudian psychoanalysis was also surfacing in European culture. In each case the centered subject is placed under scrutiny. This subject is the source and condition of all acts of consciousness in Husserl's pure phenomenology; for Freud's psychoanalysis it is the domain of the active conscious with its concomitant subconscious and unconscious realms; for Saussure it is the source of linguistic practices as they produce sign systems. However, this centered subject once set in place within each of these theoretical frameworks opens itself to a variety of specific challenges. Husserlian phenomenology with its transcendental ego at the core of intentional acts is soon threatened by the Heideggerian appeal to *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world and then by the Sartrean insistence that transcendental reflection cannot have any egological content. In his later writings Freud himself undoes the primacy of the individual psychic realm as the dominant area of concern and turns to cultural and societal discontent. Saussurean semiology loses its emphasis on the physiological linguistic subject in favor of the proliferation of sign systems. Heideggerian hermeneutics goes on to place its emphasis on the ontico-ontological difference as the place where *logos* happens [*sich ereignet*] and language speaks [*die Sprache spricht*]. Sartrean existential phenomenology comes to be elaborated in Merleau-Ponty's thought where embodied perceptual experience is understood in terms of the lived speaking subject as the coincidence of speaking speech [*langage parlant*] and spoken speech [*langage parlé*]. Lacanian psychoanalysis marks its distance from the centered subject by regarding the unconscious as "structured like a language" while Levi-Straussian structural anthropology places the "savage mind" in the articulation of structures in multiple societal contexts.

The subject thus displaced is made an explicit theme of Foucault's 1966 *The Order of Things*.² In the last chapter, he accounts for what could be called the postmodern era, the period when the modern *episteme* based on the empirical/transcendental binary that had prevailed from the time of Kant at the end of the eighteenth century is overcome. When the human sciences no longer take the combination of the subjective-objective pair as primary, the subject is absent but nevertheless figures in the scene precisely as absent, as, for example, in Foucault's account of Velasquez's *Las Meninas* (*F-OT*, 3–16). The subject in this Foucauldian account is dispersed among the theoretical practices of the time. Structures take precedence over centered meaning-producing subjects. Similarly, Derrida's notion of *différance* is a matter neither speaking nor writing but is rather the mark of the difference between which gives precedence neither to the subject or origin of speech nor to an objectified essential referent. This space for the dissemination of difference is a membrane or structure between the inside and the outside and it becomes the mark of the displaced subject in what Foucault called "a discursive practice." This place between, the disseminated mark of difference both brings the

inside and outside, the subjective and the objective, the real and the ideal, the true and the false together while also separating them in what Jean-Luc Nancy calls sharing [*partage*].

These structures or membranes where the disseminated, displaced subject happens is neither empirical nor transcendental, but rather a domain in which narratives, discursive practices, singular pluralities take place. These are events that happen neither as raw facts nor ideal forms, neither as particulars in the real nor as universal concepts, but as what is lived, meant, and experienced, albeit not by a subject. These differential spaces are limited, framed, and circumscribed. They call for interpretive and deconstructive strategies and they result from the work of interpretation and deconstruction. They are cultural, intermedial, and global. In short, they are hyper-real.

The Trojan War took place and takes place as disseminated into many narratives, discursive practices, and singular pluralities. The Homeric Trojan War is one narrative among many. The CNN version of the first Gulf War is one discursive practice among many. The then New York mayor Rudi Guiliani's September 11§ is a singular plural among many. Al-Jazeera's reporting of the second Gulf War is another. The U.S. Government's account of the military surge in Afghanistan from 2009-2012 is yet another. Each of these multiplicities is a simulation. In the words of Jean Baudrillard: "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."³ A hyperreal occurs as "a synthesis of models in a hyperspace without atmosphere" (*B-SS*, 2). With the advent of the hyperreal, the distinctions between the real and the imaginary vanish and what remains is "the simulated generation of differences" (*B-SS*, 3). Neither eye-witnesses on the ground nor military observers from the sides, nor pundits at their news desks, nor presidential advisors can provide a true account of what is happening. The syntheses of these models constitute the war. Each of these accounts is not individual but rather part of a "programmatically, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real, and short-circuits all of its vicissitudes" (*B-SS*, 2).

These simulacra of the war as the war and as narratives, discursive practices, and singular pluralities are the fictionalities of the war. They are lies not in the sense in which the lie is opposed to the truth but rather in Nietzsche's lie in the "extra-moral sense." The fiction of the war is lived as hyperreal, as daily occurrence, as simulation, and not as the representation of a reality that is something other than these discursive practices. As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe taught us, the war as such is unrepresentable. Representation calls for an outside, a reference, a reality that is other than the simulacra of the war. And the war is not representable; it cannot tell a single story that will resolve all conflict, that will give a true account of what takes place, that will give place to a modern subject that longs to be constituted as a location within the events of the war. The unrepresentable war happens as disseminated into a postmodern space of simulacra that is haunted—in its narratives, discursive practices, and singular pluralities—by the displaced

modern subject. The unrepresentable war is a fable with a moral sense, namely, a hyperreality without a centered theme or lesson to be learned.

* * *

We should not be surprised that an immediate effect of Baudrillard's announcement of the precession of simulacra is a resurgence of the real. Just as the subject draws attention to itself with more clamour than ever once it has been pronounced dead, the real, once it is declared to be inaccessible, roars its demands more loudly than ever. What has changed is that its demands—that we be chastened by real pain, that we be awed in the face of real war, that we succumb to real violence—now also demand to be thought. The real is never now the end of the matter but the beginning of a train of thought and an exercise in interpretation.

For Drew Hyland, the problem of the recalcitrant real comes into focus in the very texts in which Baudrillard pronounces it gone. The real haunts those pages. It looms, for instance, in the very definition of simulation as “the generation of models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal.” (*B-SS*, 2) Or, in the most powerful example, it emerges as part of the analysis of the global atomic threat. Such a threat is of the third order of simulation, Baudrillard argues; it occurs on the level that has no foundation in reality and “the whole originality of the situation lies in the improbability of destruction (*B-SS*, 59). Yet, as Hyland argues, to be improbable rather than impossible this must be a first-order simulacrum, one where there is a very real possibility of disaster just one lapse in judgment away. More relevantly, this particular possibility now lies in the fact that however committed the old nuclear powers are to deterrence and the infinite deferral of the use of nuclear weapons, the “young powers” may be tempted by (Baudrillard's term) or may decide upon (my term) another—tactical—use. What is compelling in Baudrillard's displacement of reality, then, is the very fact that it compels by seduction. When the real keeps being abolished and then returned we experience those sudden reversals that characterize seduction, revealing at last that the deepest question for such a work concerns not the truth of the analysis it offers but rather why we find the thought of the disappearing real, the decentred subject, the loss of anything essential so very seductive. Indeed, why does seduction itself continue to seduce even as the dominant forces of our culture range themselves against it?

While Alina Clej does not hesitate to acknowledge the seductions built into Freud's writings, she argues that the reality that surges to the fore there is above all the real experienced as the pain of living. If Freud hesitates, if his scientific fictions leave us feeling enticed but nonplussed, these are less the reversals of a studied seducer and more the fateful, pained stumblings of Oedipus. In a revealing comparison, Clej sets Freud's depiction of his mentor Charcot's practices alongside Freud's accounts of the scope and difficulty of his own work. Charcot was a physician who relied more than anything else on the capacity of his gaze

to make clear the contours of the inner landscape of his hysterical patients. This gift of making clear what is inchoate is an artistic, poetic gift, and Charcot, as he does his rounds “amid all the wilderness of paralyses, spasms and convulsions” at Salpêtrière becomes, for Freud, a Dante making his way through the Inferno. In contrast, he saw himself as neither an artist nor a man of science but something altogether bolder, a fiercely ambitious adventurer who would, of necessity, have to engage a new mode of research and writing that struggles, in its fictions, to reveal real pain.

The question of fiction is revisited often in this volume, most often as the question that lies between philosophy and literature or indeed as the question of *what* lies between philosophy and literature. After all, from Parmenides on, philosophy’s manifest aim was to eschew the lie, so fictions—lying fictions—must be rejected. Hugh J. Silverman points out that, after Nietzsche, philosophy has been struggling rather to grasp the fictional character of thought and to open a space where philosophy can operate in fictional language. His concern is the fate of the subject in post-modernity and his argument is that it is illuminated only when we appreciate philosophy’s embrace of fiction in its pre-modern manifestation as fable. Thus the post-modern subject is a fable, one that is told and re-told but that is nevertheless capable of bearing a moral. It is not that the subject is no more. Rather, it no longer *consists* in an identity but, as Derrida argues, it *de-sists*. It is subject to its own (de)constitution and thus, Silverman argues, to its own middle-voiced telling and re-telling.

At the root of Stephen David Ross’s worry about philosophy in chapter 4 is that categories, philosophy’s stock in trade, are inevitably tools of domination. Literature is itself no refuge since it too can represent domination; a philosophy that was only literature would be another domination. More worryingly still, it could be that all this domination, as Monique Wittig argues, is a repetition of men’s domination of women, the system of control that is the truth of heterosexuality and that executes its plan in the name of humanity’s future in the face of death. The path Ross treads lies between philosophy and literature understood (following Lacoue-Labarthe) as the place of ethics and, even if Ross does not find a recognizable ethics there, he does reach a characterization of the good. It is not an abjected subject, thrown down into subjection but, rather, an ethical movement that avoids domination by avoiding binaries, whether of man and woman or philosophy and literature. The subject of that good is finally an exalted I that is univocally but never self-identically human and thus gives the model for literature as the exaltation of philosophy.

Massimo Verdicchio also follows Lacoue-Labarthe into the gap between philosophy and literature, also in search of the subject, and he also finds the question of feminine sexuality at the heart of the matter. Yet, as he maps Lacoue-Labarthe’s wanderings through Hegel’s attempt to separate figure and truth, art and philosophy, representation and speculation, Verdicchio’s encounter with this sexuality—in the character of Schlegel’s *Lucinde*—is not a step towards totality or an over-

coming of binary oppositions but the first inkling that love—even though it is *the* universal principle—is precisely what separates us. Schlegel’s heroine refuses to be contained by the institution of marriage and her love is the demonstration that, as Schlegel writes: “Only in the answer of its “you” can every “I” wholly feel its boundless unity.”²⁴ The subject, Verdicchio concludes, is always thus displaced by its other, and only then is there unity. The subject of philosophy is thus neither the “I” of Descartes nor the “no one” of Odysseus but the “you,” unrepresentable, unrepresentable but nonetheless the very possibility of philosophy, literature and philosophy as literature.

Richard Rorty has argued that philosophy—as literature—is best understood as a use of language in the service of getting what we want and his radical pragmatism is the target of Gary Aylesworth’s argument in chapter 6. Rorty tells his story persuasively, even seductively: when freedom rather than truth is recognized as the proper end towards which philosophy moves, democracy can emerge as the real story of the subject. Yet Aylesworth throws into sharp relief the enormity of the assumption upon which this is based, that is, the assumption of identity itself which undergirds the pragmatist acknowledgment of the very constructed character of identity. Lacoue-Labarthe reminds us that the written subject confronts us with a subjectivity for which non-identity is constitutive, a subject that conjures the possibility of another origin, an otherness that will never lose the capacity to destabilize our self-formation. The aesthetic, the realm of appearance as appearance where identities and divisions are suspended, is thus precisely the place of the political, and only the politics that can grasp this Nietzschean insight can be a properly post-metaphysical politics.

For Basil O’Neill the most poignant invocation of the real does not occur in the realm of the aesthetic but is associated instead with something that has no realm and can scarcely be said to occupy a place at all, that is, the Sublime. In fact, the Sublime, particularly in the formula explored by Edmund Burke, takes us a step beyond, hurried out of ourselves as we are “by a croud of great and confused images” and this, for Burke, establishes the tension between what is presented and what remains hidden. Baudrillard, in contrast, denies the second term. There is no outside where the self might take up a position; he insists that there is no hiding place from which the real asserts itself. Yet assert itself it does, and O’Neill’s contribution is to identify the mythical, categorial and ecstatic modes of its assertion in Baudrillard’s texts. This is the disillusioned condition of post-modern art which comes to the edge of the Sublime but, in the absence of any place beyond, remains in the thrall of that crowd of images.

“Melancholic fascination” is one of the terms Baudrillard uses for this condition: “fascination” because the word describes our response to disappearance (in this case the disappearance of the real) and “melancholia” because we are unable to leave behind what has already disappeared. Yet what can such a fascination mean? Thomas Brockelman identifies it as a symptom, even as he grasps its absurdity; after all, as visual, passive, and non-productive it offers a model for

the precedence of theory over practice but is lodged within a system where the possibility of theoretical distance has been eliminated. If O'Neill has established the place of art in the age of transparency, Brockelman succeeds in identifying in this fascination the occasion, if not the place, for critique; it remains possible, he argues, at its own wake, in the aftermath of its disappearance, as the event of its being sacrificed. *Simulacra and Simulation*, finally, is Baudrillard's memorial to the death of critique, struggling to consign it to oblivion and in so doing celebrating its wake.

Could this also be the occasion for politics? If we attend only to Baudrillard's assertions of the advent of hyperreality it is impossible to find an argumentative foothold; if we attend instead to the re-telling of the historical narrative according to which European culture has turned all the cultures of the world into museum pieces, each one illustrating an episode in the story that seems to culminate in the triumph of the West, we begin to find the material for an alternative account. The process could not stop there, the original argument goes, and now this very culture, and indeed all of us, have been reduced to the status of mere museum pieces; action finally lies beyond us. The flaw in the argument, as Anne O'Byrne argues in chapter 9, is its unspoken reliance on a deeply modern notion of the subject—bereft, passive, alienated but nonetheless the entity capable of experiencing its alienation as such. This hides the complexities of sociality and ignores the scope—ineradicable, since embedded in the fact of social being—for politics, for meaning and indeed for revolution. The difference must be that now we do not find or give meaning, we *are* meaning; we do not stage revolution but we *are* revolution.

This is the meaning of the political for beings whose subjectivity is infinitely deferred. That is to say, in the terms Bettina Bergo in chapter 10 adopts from Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's "The Jewish People do not Dream," we are the sort of beings who are exposed in our shared origin; we are not set ready-made into place but rather are born, profoundly incomplete, into a social network which ensures that our completion is never achieved. In fact, completeness turns out to have been a confused and confusing fantasy, one that made it possible to throw ourselves into a process of identification that forged nationalities and ethnicities to spectacularly destructive effect. What if such identification is foreclosed? We are left face to face with our being natal, which is our being-with, which can perhaps be called subjectivity if we now understand subjectivity as happening in the between, that is, between us, between ourselves, between the experience of being affected that constitutes identity and the sacrifice of all given identifications. We are left, finally, with our bodies inscribed with experience and trauma.

As embodied beings we are always vulnerable to pain and violence, but our being-with means that we also have the capacity to suffer with others. In her essay, Robin May Schott examines the categories available to us for understanding this experience. Do I experience my friend's pain in the way a spectator experiences the fate of the tragic hero on stage? And when it comes to his death, is

Lacoue-Labarthe right when he argues that death will always be obscene, both in the usual sense and in the sense of being beyond spectatorship, unrepresentable? Is it the case that the only way to perceive the suffering of the victims of a distant war is through the aestheticizing mediation of television? And while we do seem capable of identifying with the suffering other across differences of race and gender (Freud's bleak view of the limitations of such identification notwithstanding), what confusions and conflicts must happen within the spectator in the course of such identification? Precisely by raising such questions Schott alerts us to the social formations that make it possible to suffer-with but that, at the same time, structure the experience of another's suffering according to the norms of gender, race and class.

The very possibility of community is indicated by our capacity for sharing pain in this way, but the community that falls short—inoperatively short—of complete identification is constantly under threat. We subjects of philosophy (whoever we are), might well form such a community because the very writing of philosophy is, according to James Watson, always incomplete. It stands as witness to “the anguish of repressive overdetermination.” Perhaps there was a time when the servants of truth worked in Levinas' Platonic anarchy of the Good, but Watson argues that that has long since been usurped by the Christian, neo-Platonic privacy of the inner world laid bare to one's confessor but only made public in the convention of the Penitential. What drives the anti-aesthetic element of our writing now are the forces of philosophical purification and their attempts to excise all that could remind us (or, as Watson puts it, *we*) of pre- or post-penitential possibilities. We liberate ourselves and open the space for unfigured communities when we escape that repression.

In the final section of this volume, “Media/tions,” four authors work to open such a space by taking on the question of representation in the age of mass media. Damian Ward Hey is highly aware of both the dangers and the possibilities for a public that is exposed to and constituted by mass media. What sets his contribution apart is both the refusal to accept the media simply as forces for conformity and his use of the concepts of Chora and the Aleph to reconstrue the work of mediation as the work of challenging the very public it precipitates. While the disordered mass of Chora comes to be ordered by the body and by social relation, opening the way to historical narrative and symbolic order, Aleph—the Borgesian place where all places are—is the model for convergence that at the same time demonstrates that every claim to completeness is false. Mediation, for Hey, is mediation between these two, a non-dialectical relation that generates possibilities for its public but also, essentially, a wariness and suspicion of mediation itself.

Katherine Rudolph is similarly concerned in chapter 13 with locating resources that will free us, on the one hand, from media's insistence that it shows us the real world and from cynical passivity on the other. She identifies these resources in a tradition that includes Berthold Brecht, Walter Benjamin and also Franz Kafka. Baudrillard cites Brecht in “Value's Last Tango” and, Rudolph ar-

gues, the two authors share a sense of the continuing strategic value of alienation. Benjamin's conviction that film has the potential to generate mass resistance to the system is echoed in Baudrillard's thought of a mass passivity that rejects the demand that each of us constitute herself as a subject and a player of the mediated game. As for Kafka, his *Amerika* is read here as a defense against the dazzling bleakness of Baudrillard's *Amerika*, with the final scene where Kafka's hero finds himself in the Great Nature Theater of Oklahoma becoming the moment of his vocation, freedom, and homecoming.

As Martin Weiss points out, Gianni Vattimo begins from a starting point very similar to Baudrillard's but arrives at a point far removed from his negative nihilism. Media do indeed strive to present the world to us as it really is, conceiving their activity on the paradigm of scientific attention to the facts of the material world. Yet what can this mean when science self-consciously undoes the status of facts by treating the world precisely as a world of interpretations? Weiss argues that it issues a demand for radical hermeneutics as the only possibility for a relation with our life world. After all, we are living, post-Nietzsche, in conditions of plurality which surely provide an occasion for as much joyful affirmation as pessimistic prophecy. Freedom now resides in seeing the finiteness of every position, which insight is the opening of the space—perhaps cyberspace—where the cultures and sub-cultures of the world get up to speak. This is what it means to celebrate the death of God.

Finally, though his tone is anything but celebratory, Henk Oosterling brings this collection to a close with a reading of the Baudrillardian move from metaphor to metamorphosis, a reading that in the end finds its own expansive possibilities through the chink opened by irony. Since Baudrillard adopts a position in *Fatal Strategies*, among other texts, that undermines both his opponents' stance and his own, he invites the question of whether the philosophical life is possible now. The answer comes in his understanding and use of irony as a strategy of pushing a system or argument to its limits, finally making it stumble over its own logic. Thus the writing subject no longer wields irony. Rather, irony occurs as the province of the subject now translated into pure objectivity, a subject moved. But what can move us now? What can bring about this metamorphosis in the age of the hyper-real? Now that God is gone, could it be that we are called to reaffirm our faith but this time it is a faith in thinking and writing that is moved, passionately, by appearances?

* * *

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It was Hugh’s wish that this volume be dedicated to the memory of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean Baudrillard. Wilhelm Wurzer died in 2009 and Hugh in 2013. This book is dedicated to the memory of them all. We continue to work in their wake.

PART ONE

REPRESENTING

SUBJECTIVITY

Introduction to

Part One

Representing Subjectivity

Anne O'Byrne

I am. I talk. I dream. I do not dream. I fantasize, I veil, I dominate. Perhaps I used to play a lot of basketball.

Despite everything, despite the protracted death throes of modernity—or have those just been the latest stages of its maturing?—despite the death of the subject, despite the many attempts to decide who comes after it, despite all that, we find ourselves still speaking the language of subjectivity. We indulge as much as ever in the first person singular, and we still behave as though the term refers to something or, at least, as though it does some work. Which of course it does. The difference is that now we cannot avoid the constant question of what that work might be. Here, as we make our way towards that question through various strands of Continental thought, we find ourselves asking another range of questions, questions that serve to establish the register in which we will operate and that offer clues as to the traditions we inherit. Is the work of the first person singular the same in ethics as it is in politics? Does the I—*das Ich*, the ego—of psychoanalysis enjoy a privileged position? Does the I have an origin? What is at stake in asserting its finitude? Its mortality? Its natality? Its sexuality? Can we approach it at all if we decide that it is forever engaged in a game of deception and seduction? Does it matter whether this is a Baudrillardian seduction or a Freudian one? What becomes of the modern subject in postmodernity? In these four essays, the questions are occasioned by readings of texts from Genesis 3 to Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, Baudrillard's *Simulations and Simulacra* and Monique Wittig's *The Lesbian Body*.

Baudrillard has famously argued that we have reached an historical moment in which *the real*—the real world, real relationships, real others—are no longer accessible. It is no longer even possible to talk of our access to simulations of the real, he claims, because we have moved on to hyperreality where the best we can do is third order simulations, that is, simulations of simulations. The genius of the hyperreal is that it masks the very absence of the real, just as Disneyland is not a fake America but rather the simulation masking the fact that all America is Disneyland. We are fated, then, to live at several removes from the lack of the real.

Yet where am I in this? Who or what am I? If I tell a story about myself, where am I in that story? When Drew Hyland tells a story about himself here, about the days when he used to play a lot of basketball for Princeton, he may be making some claims about the real world. If that is a possibility, then it is also possible that he is making false claims about that real world, that he's telling lies. Yet, if narrative is the subject's effort to tell itself, the value of that distinction is not at all clear; the story might as well involve building a fiction or spinning a yarn. But Hyland refuses to let the story spin off into thin air, just as he refuses to let Baudrillard's hyperreal float free, pointing instead to the recalcitrance of the real: real atomic bombs, real space ship explosions, real deaths in real wars and, for that matter, real playing of real basketball games. The real returns—in the very midst of a text devoted to simulation and simulacra—but its return, curiously, does not serve to send us rummaging back through the third, second, first order simulacra in search of the real world. Baudrillard has made those naïve hopes impossible. Rather, it raises the question of another of Baudrillard's titles, that is, the question of *Seduction*. Why are narratives—perhaps deceptive, perhaps revealing—still so appealing, so enticing? Why, now, do we find the idea of simulation so seductive?

Baudrillard describes seduction like this: "Seduction takes from discourse its sense and turns it from its truth. It is, therefore, contrary to the psychoanalytic distinction between manifest and latent discourses. For the latent discourse turns the manifest discourse not *from* its truth but *towards* its truth" (Hyland, p. XX). If this were the case, analysis would have to be understood as quite excluding any thought of seduction, and the task of analysis would be a pursuit of truth. What Alina Clej indicates is the difference between a Baudrillardian and a Freudian seduction. Freud is a seductive writer, one who, in the manner of a detective novelist, draws his reader in, withholding information and serving it out in portions for dramatic effect but also in order to lead, to entice, the reader to the conclusion. Freud was a doctor, and we should take those conclusions to enjoy the status of medical truths, products of medical science but also of the art of medicine, that is, the art of diagnosis and interpretation of disease. As for the task of analysis, it may be to orient the subject towards truth—in the manner of a regulative ideal—but, more importantly, its progress is necessarily, seductively, hesitant. Freud experiences checks and interruptions (think of the phenomenon of resistance) in his research and seems to celebrate them by recreating the experience for his reader. How are we as readers to take this? Perhaps we experience them as Kantian sublime moments, the mind's vacillation in the face of the magnitude of its object, the vital forces stalled before the phenomenon that cannot be grasped. Perhaps we undergo them as a sort of hermeneutic sublime, a glimpse of the peak of non-understanding beyond understanding. Or perhaps we are seduced, let down by the faltering of reason but beckoned on by the desire that is thus sustained. As Flaubert might have it, the most erotic experiences are those we never have; the most satisfying conclusion is the one forever deferred. So, while Habermas thinks of psychoanalysis as serving personal emancipation, and Lacoue-Labarthe sees

it as masking death which is the un(re)presentable, Clej argues that the relevant category is neither freedom nor truth, but pain. Psychoanalysis is a seductive process of self-deception by which I learn to shield myself from the pain of living. It allows me to displace (if not replace) the chaos of suffering and uncertainty with the concept of the unconscious that grounds the I and holds life at bay.

Yet in order for us to understand the work of psychoanalysis, we must have an appreciation of the concept of cure, and, Hugh Silverman argues, we must be able to imagine—though perhaps only as an ideal—that there is such thing “as *presentation*, a full, whole, virginal, inviolate, and inviolable presence, a wild state where we could be, where we would be, ourselves, unalienated and undissociated subjects” (*Primal*, 109). In the history of the modern subject which he details in his contribution, Silverman identifies the crucial turning point in the Nietzschean revelation—postmodern *avant la lettre*—that the subject has become a fiction, and the Freudian ego is one of the passionate and desperate attempts to revive this fiction of the modern subject in the wake of that revelation. Such activity continues as passionately at the start of the twenty-first century as a hundred years before and so the subject has become thoroughly narrativized. What is postmodern in this, however, is a step beyond narrative towards the fable, a pre-modern form of fiction that provides the model for what comes after the modern subject: the post-modern subject is a fable, a form of fiction that nonetheless carries its moral. It is a Socratic poetry, a poetic thinking that Heidegger approaches as *Denken* and *Dichtung*. In fact, each enactment of the fable carries a different lesson, what Silverman will call a different way of being and so, instead of the subject, we now have many subjects, many stories whose contexts and messages are different but who are united precisely in their difference. More accurately, we now are many subjects, and in each case, each time, the moral has its elaboration in *who one is*.

In all of this, is there a role left for the body in placing or enacting an answer to the question of who one is? What is to be said of the body as the locus of newly (un)grounded subjectivity? We would, of course, be wise to beware of body talk. There is a lot of it about when formulations like “Like our embodiment . . .” trip so lightly off the tongue, and it has become easy to neglect the necessary questions: “What embodiment? Whose body?” In the age of third order simulation, what is there to reassure us that we can experience at least our bodies as real? That we can really experience them? Or, as Stephen David Ross asks, do the veils and masks through which we experience bodies veil and mask flesh or some spiritualized other of spirit? And is philosophy complicit in exactly this, and more? Naked in the Garden, Adam and Eve could not be counted spiritual beings. They conversed with God, but only the knowledge of their mortality, the knowledge of their terrible distance from God opened in them the spiritual domain, and it is not accidental that the knowledge also made them aware of their own exposure and sent them running to get dressed. Lacoue-Labarthe, reading Hegel, thus identifies the veil as covering shame, signalling spirituality and denying animality. As such, Ross

argues, it constrains every relation we might have to what veils; we cannot name it without domination, and we cannot refuse to name it without another domination. Body remains a determination of spirit and, as a result, philosophy continues to circle around embodiment. Heidegger does it, and so too, in their own ways, do Irigaray and Foucault and, finally, Monique Wittig for whom, even in the midst of smoking intestines and gashing claws, the work of bridging animal body and animal soul is under way. Yet, for Wittig, it is a work in the service of what she calls lesbianization, a rejection of binaries that leads to a universality without totalization and an exaltation of the *j/e*, the subject displaced, subjected, set out of joint and, despite everything, the subject of something we can still call the good.

Chapter 1

Simulate This! The Seductive Return of the Real in Baudrillard

Drew A. Hyland

I used to play a lot of basketball.¹ In my college years on the basketball team at Princeton University, I adopted the custom of not coming onto the floor with the rest of the team before the game. While they came on the court to the cheers of the crowd, I would wait in the locker room as they went through their opening warm-ups. Then, a few minutes later, I would enter the gymnasium and walk onto the court alone, joining the team as they completed their pre-game preparations. I did this to indulge in the image I had established for myself as a loner, someone who never quite bought into the hype of team togetherness, someone who always went his own way. In the image I had, the spectators were waiting for me after the team came on the floor, wondering when the team existentialist was going to appear. And there was, in fact, considerable applause when I would finally walk, with a very studied casualness, onto the court.

Not that I *was* a loner, not at all. I got along very well with my teammates. In fact, several of them were my roommates, one my brother. They actually got a kick out of the stunt I pulled, realizing that I was simulating “the loner” for the benefit of an image I enjoyed perpetuating. We’d often joke about it at practice. Or *was* it simulation? Perhaps I really was a loner, the camaraderie I always exhibited ostentatiously with my teammates a show to hide my genuine sense of alienation from them, from basketball, from the whole absurd situation of major Division I college athletics of which I was a part and which played such a significant role in my life at the time. Perhaps walking late onto the basketball court alone was a mark of the *real*.

What would be the difference? How would you know unless (and for that matter even if) I told you? And what—in the spirit of Baudrillard’s remarks on play and games in his *Seduction*—is real about college basketball in the first place? What could be more of a simulation without a simulated than a basketball game, especially one with all the artificial hype of Division I American basketball, with its pretense to there being a genuine stake in its outcomes?

What is Real?

In the above little story I told you, only the first sentence is true. Yes, I used to play a lot of basketball. The rest—the walking onto the court alone, the sense of alienation, even the speculation about the unreality of basketball (which, incidentally, I don't believe for a second; in truth, that experience playing college basketball was as profoundly real—physically, psychologically, emotionally, even intellectually—as almost anything I have ever experienced)—all the rest was a ruse, a simulation. I was trying to seduce you into believing a story, taking as real what is not. What's more, you can prove this for yourself. You can (though I don't especially recommend this) look up some old game films of Princeton University basketball games in the late fifties and early sixties, and you'll see me enthusiastically coming on the court with the rest of my teammates, as integral a part of the team as any other member. Or, you can check with some of them. Such was the extent of our closeness and rapport that I still stay in touch with some of them, and so I can give you their names and addresses. Either way, you'll see that I was just now playing at seduction, at simulation.

On first, and perhaps second and third reading, of Baudrillard's *Simulations*, one gets the impression that a central thesis of the book is that in our epoch "the real" has been *abolished, superseded* by simulation, especially by what he will call third-order simulations, simulations of simulations, without even a reference or a relation to a simulated real. Thus in the opening pages of *Simulations*, playing with Borges' tale of the mad cartographer who constructs a map of the empire so precise that it ends up exactly covering the territory, Baudrillard contrasts the cartographer's enterprise of exactly *representing* the real with the advent of simulation: "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal [*d'un reel sans origine ni réalité: hyperreel*]." ²² Moreover, this change, from an epoch of simulations of realities to that of simulations of simulations without end, no longer representing anything real, has decisive consequences. "With it goes all of metaphysics. No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept" (*Simulations*, 3). That is, we (along with, in the context, psychoanalysts) must face up to "the spectre raised by simulation—namely that truth, reference, and objective causes have ceased to exist" (*Simulations*, 6).

This change, which, as we shall presently see, Baudrillard strongly suggests is an historical phenomenon, has decisive consequences on a number of cultural fronts that he addresses. He cites, for example, the theatre of religious iconography, where, he argues, it is those iconoclasts who try to abolish images of the divinity who truly understand the real effect of religious simulations. "Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they sensed this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have of effacing God from the consciousness of men, and the overwhelming, destructive *truth* [*cette vérité, destructrice, anéantissante*] which they suggest: that ultimately there has never been any God, that only the simula-

crum exists, indeed, that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum” (*Simulations*, 8, my emphasis). The implication of simulations of simulations accordingly is that the supposed real of which they were once *thought* to be representations no longer exists. Thus, “the transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing, marks the decisive turning point” (*Simulations*, 12).

The phenomenon of Disneyland is another very different cultural phenomenon that embodies the same general point about the loss of the real. Acknowledging that the *ideology* of Disneyland is that it represents a “digest of the American way of life, panegyric to American values” (*Simulations*, 24), Baudrillard nevertheless draws a very different inference: what he calls the “ideological blanket” of the representation of American life and values

serves to cover over a *third-order simulation* [*simulation de troisième ordre*]. Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the “real” country, all of “real” America, which *is* Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle (*Simulations* 25, Baudrillard’s emphasis).

Disneyland, that is, cannot even any longer be considered an *illusion* of America because in a world of third-order simulation, illusion itself, entailing a reference, however misleading, to the real, is no longer possible. “Of the same order as the impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real is the impossibility of staging an illusion. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible” (*Simulations*, 38). The same, he adds, is true of Watergate (*Simulations*, 25ff).

Or consider an example that Baudrillard does not use but could have: the notorious phenomenon, in America at least, of the Barbie Doll. Ideologically, the Barbie Doll is supposed to simulate various possible life-choices for the little girls who buy them. Thus one can buy Scuba Diver Barbie, Wedding Bride Barbie, Nurse Barbie. I’ve even been told of a Paleontologist Barbie for more intellectually minded little girls (or their parents). But of course, in truth, no woman is anything like Barbie. It simulates no real women. Instead, thousands upon thousands of little girls are now going around *trying to simulate their favorite Barbie doll*, sometimes with deplorable results. They are simulating simulations of women that are themselves simulations without a reference to reality. Our little girls are becoming third-order simulations. What is real here?

As Baudrillard adds later in the book, even such scientific developments as DNA inscription, far from gaining access to some sort of genetic real, in fact is the very embodiment of the principle of simulation. “At this level the question of

signs, of their rational destination, their real or imaginary, their repression, their deviation, the illusion they create or that which they conceal, or their parallel meanings—all of that is erased” (*Simulations*, 104). Instead, “such is the genetic code: an erased record, unchangeable, of which we are no more than cells-for-reading. All aura of sign, of significance itself is resolved in this determination; all is resolved in the inscription and decodage” (*Simulations*, 105).

All of this strongly suggests, to repeat, that Baudrillard is claiming that the old metaphysics of the real and its appearances or representations, whether those representations be accurate or inaccurate, the old, supposedly Platonic degrees of reality debate, etc., is no longer valid because there is no longer a real to represent. It has been abolished in favor of third-order simulation, simulations not of a real but of other simulations. Alternatively, one might say that there is a kind of reverse Platonism at work in Baudrillard. Instead of the supposedly Platonic degrees of reality metaphysics, we have a degrees of unreality doctrine: first order simulations, second order, and finally third order simulations, three removes from reality, as one is tempted to say.³ Moreover, as the various historical examples he uses suggest and as his very language implies (reality is no longer possible, etc.), our present situation of simulation is an *historical* development. Indeed, early in the text he even adumbrates a kind of historical geneology of the movement toward our present epoch. These would be the successive (N.B.) phases of the image:

- it is the reflection of a basic reality
- it masks and perverts a basic reality
- it masks the *absence* of a basic reality
- it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum (*Simulations*, 11).

This is important: Baudrillard *could* have argued for precisely the same four possibilities, but as ever present, transhistorical possibilities. Thus, an ancient Greek, he might have argued, could have experienced one then another of the four possibilities, as could a medieval monk, a Renaissance man, or anyone else in any epoch. But in that case, the whole question of simulation would have been simply part of the *metaphysics* of appearance/reality, and that is precisely what Baudrillard would seek to deny. The simulation of which he speaks is an historical, historicized characteristic of our contemporary culture, indeed, its distinctive trait. We *are* the culture of simulation, of third-order simulation, and so the culture of the *loss* of the real.

The Deferred Real

So Baudrillard’s evident, and to all appearances intended, meaning is that ours is the culture in which the real has been abolished in favor of simulation. But his text invites a Derridean strategy. A deconstructive reading of the text

would suggest that at the margins of this evident meaning, as a trace, deferred, the real returns again and again. It is as if Baudrillard cannot be rid of the real because he needs it, needs it precisely in order to attack it. The spectre that haunts Baudrillard's text is the real. Let me point to just a few of its not always ghostly appearances.

Beginning at the beginning. In virtually his opening statement, Baudrillard must insist on a reality, albeit a transformed reality. "Simulation," he says in a passage quoted earlier, "is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a *real* without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (*Simulations*, 2, my emphasis). Whatever we are to take a "real without . . . reality" to mean, it remains that a "real without origin" may be a *different* real from the real of the metaphysical tradition, but it is a *real nevertheless*. It is one thing, and not especially new, to say that our real today is *different* from the real of yesterday. But again, a different real is a *real*. Even if, to go all the way, our reality is that of simulations of simulations without end, then, to risk tautology, if that is our reality it is our *reality*. But one thing we cannot get rid of, Baudrillard cannot get rid of, is reality.⁴

Again, in the section of *Simulations* notably entitled "Strategy of the Real," entering into his analysis of the present political situation and its status as third-order simulation, Baudrillard appeals to the striking example of the simulated holdup and the trouble we would likely get in if we enacted such a simulation. Were we to simulate a holdup, he suggests, we would get ourselves in a huge fiasco precisely because and to the extent that it would not be taken as a simulation. But notice the language in which he must introduce such a contrast: "For example, it would be interesting to see whether the repressive apparatus would not react more violently to a simulated holdup *than to a real one* [*un hold-up reel*]?" (*Simulations* 38, my emphasis; *Simulations et Simulacrae*, 36). It will be a disaster, he concludes a page later: "But you won't succeed: the web of artificial signs will be inextricably mixed up with *the real elements* [*des éléments réels*] (a police officer will really shoot on sight; a bank customer will faint and die of a heart attack; they will really turn the phoney ransom over to you)—in brief, you will unwittingly find yourself immediately *in the real, one of whose functions is precisely to devour every attempt at simulation, to reduce everything to some reality . . .*" (*Simulations*, 39, my emphasis). Despite his insistence on "third-order" simulations with no reference to reality, his very analysis of that situation brings him again and again back to "first-order" simulations, simulations that get their sense and meaning by reference to their similarities to and differences from a given *reality*. And a reality, as his own sentence acknowledges, that "devours every attempt at simulation" (*Simulations*, 39). Even today, in our epoch of simulation.

As he continues his analysis of the simulations of the present political situation, Baudrillard takes up the supposed danger of an atomic holocaust, consequent upon the danger of unbridled nuclear proliferation. He takes this entire scene to be a massive simulation. The new world order is precisely one which, as he boldly

asserts, “*excludes the real atomic clash*—excludes it beforehand like the eventuality of the real in a system of signs” (*Simulations*, 59, author’s emphasis). But the very boldness of this assertion, whose point is to establish the “atomic threat” as a *third-order* simulation, one without foundation in reality, must be qualified within the same paragraph, in the following way: “But there are precisely no strategic stakes at this level, and the whole originality of the situation lies in the *improbability* of destruction [*l’improbabilité de la destruction*]” (*Simulations*, 59, my emphasis; *Simulacrae et Simulation*, 57). Baudrillard chooses his words carefully and prudently. Atomic destruction is “improbable.” Why “improbable” and not “impossible”? The difference is crucial. Atomic destruction would be impossible if the situation *really were* a third-order simulation, without a connection to a reality. No reality, no real fear of atomic destruction. But the danger is improbable rather than impossible precisely because it is *not* a third-order simulation, but at most a first-order one, which is to say, one founded all too precariously in a very real possibility, lurking only one serious misjudgment or misunderstanding away.

Baudrillard acknowledges this explicitly some pages later. Summing up his argument on this issue, he asserts, “That is why nuclear proliferation increases neither the chance of atomic clash nor of accident—*save in the interval where ‘young’ powers could be tempted to use them for non-deterrent or ‘real’ purpose*” (*Simulations* 72, my emphasis). Ah yes, those young powers, young powers that remind us that we are *not* here speaking of anything like a third-order simulation, but one founded in an ever-present, ever-dangerous, *reality*. A reality that even in Baudrillard’s own text “devours” his attempts to turn it into simulation, which has the effect of “reducing everything to some reality.” All of this of course happens in spite of Baudrillard’s writing.

The deferred real is spoken in many ways, to paraphrase Aristotle. In another example of a situation that has become a simulation, Baudrillard cites the remarkable success of the space program—a program that may have begun as an adventurous, bold, dangerous enterprise, but has which with astonishing speed turned into a masterpiece of technological control so pervasive as to remove those very risks that define and constitute the real. Writing in 1981, Baudrillard notes the significance of this transformation of the space program from a bold and altogether real adventure, with real dangers, into a simulation—one without chances, without flaws, without reality. As a result, “We no longer fantasize about every minutia of a program. Its observance alone unbalances. The vertigo of a flawless world” (*Simulations*, 63).

How could he have known? How could he have known that the reality that had been marginalized, repressed by the massive effort at a perfected technology, would return to the center in the most spectacular and horrifying of ways, before the televised gaze of all the world, in the Challenger explosion of January 28, 1986? What that event showed, in the language of deconstruction and against Baudrillard’s intention here, is that the real can indeed be marginalized, but it cannot be eliminated. Or perhaps we should say that the very claim to have elimi-

nated the real, to have replaced it with third-order simulation, is the postmodern *hybris*, a *hybris* for which we all will pay, or for which we have all already paid.

Ask any soldier. In his often insightful analysis of the Vietnam War, Baudrillard argues that the war *became* a simulacrum once the real issue had been established, namely, that China would not intervene and so would join the other major world powers in the strategy of “peaceful coexistence” (See *Simulations*, 66ff.). It became a simulation in the sense that, “What no longer exists is the adversity of adversaries, the reality of antagonistic causes, the ideological seriousness of war—also the reality of defeat or victory, war being a process whose triumph lies quite beyond these appearances” (*Simulations*, 70).

Suppose we agree. There is a sense, if Baudrillard is right, in which the war did indeed become a simulation, one no longer anchored in the reality of genuine ideological conflict. But it was a simulation only in this extremely limited sense. In every other sense, and quite especially to the soldiers fighting on both sides, the war retained its horrific reality to the very end. Baudrillard acknowledges this, must acknowledge it, if only in passing and, it must be said, somewhat dismissively. Here is his acknowledgement: “Moralists about war, champions of war’s exalted values, should not be greatly upset: a war is not any the less heinous for being a mere simulacrum—the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead ex-combatants count as much there as in other wars” (*Simulations*, 70). One need hardly be a “champion of war’s exalted values” to observe that the sense in which the Vietnam war became a simulacrum—at the level of super-power politics—pales beside the sense in which the utter reality of the war continued to assert itself in the lives of the combatants and their families. Which is again to say, the real finds a way to stay, and not only to stay, but to devour, continually, every attempt at simulation. Often in the most horrific of ways.

Right to the end of the book, as he moves toward his conclusion, Baudrillard argues that what has happened in the simulatory transformations of modern culture is that “*It is reality itself today that is hyperrealist*” (*Simulations*, 147, author’s emphasis). As he explains, “Today, it is quotidian reality in its entirety—political, social, historical and economic—that from now on incorporates the simulatory dimension of hyperrealism” (*Simulations*, 147). But again, his wording is at once crucial and revealing. If reality has “incorporate(d) the simulatory dimension of hyperrealism,” then it is *reality* that has done so, and it remains a *reality* so transformed. There is a world of difference—indeed, a very *real* difference—between the bold opening claims about the “disappearance” of reality (*Simulations*, 2), that is, its abolition in favor of third-order simulations *without* reality, and the altogether more moderate, more *metaphysical*, claims of the conclusion that reality—*our* reality—has been inflected by a strong dose of simulation. As I have shown in the various examples cited, this is because such simulation is at most a first order simulation, still grounded in its relation of similarity and difference to a reality.

Finally, our deconstructive reading must take account of what we might call the self-referential real in Baudrillard’s text. Baudrillard himself gives no indica-

tion that he is in his own writing indulging in a simulation of previous analyses of modern culture. To the contrary, he gives every indication that he is presenting an alternative analysis of our culture to those of other cultural critics, some of whom he mentions and explicitly criticizes. But to criticize others' analyses in favor of his own is surely to claim that his own analysis accords more adequately with what we can only call *the reality* of contemporary culture. Baudrillard must have that reality in order to offer an account of it, even if that account includes convoluted claims as to its unreality. In yet one more way, then, the real, though it may be marginalized in Baudrillard's text, can never be abolished. The repressed, as we know, always returns.

The Real Remains

One might entertain a very different reading of Baudrillard's central thesis. On this alternative reading, Baudrillard is not at all denying that reality any longer exists. Indeed, his book hardly touches on the question of reality at all! Instead, Baudrillard is addressing only the question of the status of *simulations*, and the correct statement of the central thesis we have been discussing so far is that Baudrillard is calling into question not whether reality exists but rather the old metaphysical claim that simulations are simulations *of the real*, and are to be assessed primarily in terms of their similarity to and difference from the real. What is different today, on this thesis, has nothing in the end to do with the status of reality. What is different today is that *simulations* no longer take their warrant from the real. They are simulations *of simulations*, *third-order simulations*, as he says. This means that today we do not lack reality so much as simulations that are based upon reality. The real is with us and will always be so.

Part of the appeal of such a reading is that it would enable Baudrillard to deflect what are otherwise a host of ambiguities and opacities about just what this real is that is no longer with us. What, after all, *is* this real to which he so regularly refers? Is it the old metaphysical real of traditional metaphysics? Certain passages in his text certainly suggest this reading. But if so, does Baudrillard really believe that such a metaphysical real *once really existed*, but is no longer? That would be strange indeed. Or is the real in question more of an ethical or political real? That is, by the real does Baudrillard have in mind something like the authentic? Or is the real that has disappeared something more like a pragmatic real? On such a view, to say that the real is with us no longer, is no longer real, means something like that in our culture *the very idea of the real no longer matters, is no longer efficacious*. Sentences in Baudrillard's text can be found that support each of these readings, and nowhere does he clarify these ambiguities. Suffice it to say that without such clarification, there is an abysmal opacity about the very subject of Baudrillard's text. But if Baudrillard were to interpret that text as not at all about the real, and so not at all about these metaphysical issues, and if he were instead to approach it as a treatise on the character and status of simulations in contemporary

culture, then he would finesse the problem nicely.

This revisionist reading of *Simulations* must be rejected for two major reasons. First, it would have Baudrillard presenting a far, far weaker thesis, one hardly calling for elaborate commentary, critique, or controversy. If all that we are talking about are the various simulations that one from time to time encounters, and if the only point about those simulations is what they are or are not simulations *of*, then we are no longer in the presence of a challenge to metaphysical interpretations of the real, or even a radical interpretation of our culture. But surely, the whole point of Baudrillard's book is to call our attention to a central aspect of modern *culture*, the loss, as he supposes, of the real within that culture, the transformation of that culture into a culture of simulations without end and without ground. But to say that is to speak of the *reality* of contemporary culture, and it seems to me obvious that Baudrillard does just that.

Second, the text itself will not support this weaker reading. It is the real, not simulations of the real, which, he writes, has disappeared (*Simulations*, 2). The spectre raised by simulations is not that *simulations* of truth, reference, and objective causes have ceased to exist, but that "truth, reference, and objective causes have ceased to exist" (*Simulations*, 6). The significance of religious simulacra is not that they show that *simulations* of God have never existed, but the more profound and troubling revelation that "ultimately there never has been any God" (*Simulations*, 8). And so on. Baudrillard's text does indeed address the status of contemporary reality. That is its strength and challenge. But that also makes it susceptible to the deconstructive analysis, as well as to the set of deep ambiguities that we have outlined.

Seduction Today

But Baudrillard has read Derrida. Can he really be unaware of the deferred presence of the real in his text, even if marginalized? In a sentence at the very beginning of the book, he implicitly acknowledges in advance these traces of the real. "It is the real, and not the map, whose *vestiges* [*vestiges*] subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself" (*Simulations*, 2, my emphasis). Could he really believe that in our culture of third-order simulations the once present real has been *abolished*? Have we adequately encountered the point of his discourse through the deconstructive resurrection of the real just adumbrated? Or, is Baudrillard doing something else in this text? Is his strategy toward the real that he plays with abolishing, after all, itself in the realm of simulation? Is Baudrillard's enterprise toward the reader in the text, vis-à-vis the question of the real, one of . . . seduction?

In his text addressing the question of seduction, entitled simply *Seduction*, Baudrillard argues that, in effect, seduction has received a bad rap. This is because seduction as a stance, as a strategy, one is tempted to say as a way of life, is deeply and fundamentally *opposed* to the dominant forces in contemporary culture.

Indeed, it is opposed to them and subversive of them. In particular, it is opposed to 1) the valorization of nature, 2) it is opposed to the forces of production, 3) to power, 4) to the drive for coherence and finality, and decisively for our purposes, 5) it is opposed to the real. Let me detail each of these points briefly.

The oppositions cited above are of long standing, beginning, Baudrillard asserts early in *Seduction*, with the “bourgeois Revolution” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whereas prior to that, people, especially the aristocracy, “still spoke of seduction,” “the bourgeois era dedicated itself to nature and production, things quite foreign and even expressly fatal to seduction.”⁵ The relevant opposition viz-a-viz nature is that of artifice: “Seduction, however, never belongs to the order of nature, but that of artifice—never to the order of energy but that of signs and rituals” (*B-Seduction*, 2). The opposition between nature and seduction plays itself out as the opposition of sex and seduction—a difference on which Baudrillard concentrates at some length. Seduction is never, he insists, of the order of nature (as is sex), but always has to do with the construction of artifices and rituals.

Perhaps the most pervasive aspect of bourgeois culture, in which we still dwell, is the affirmation of the primacy of production. Seduction, Baudrillard insists, is unalterably opposed to production. All great systems of production, he says, “have not ceased to exclude seduction . . . from their conceptual field” (*B-Seduction*, 2). Part of this opposition has to do with the urge to transparency. “Seduction is, at all times and at all places, opposed to production. Seduction removes something from the order of the visible, while production constructs everything in full view, be it an object, a number, or concept” (*B-Seduction*, 34).

Related to transparency is the issue of coherence and finality. Nature and production constitute “disciplines which have as an axiom the coherence and finality of their discourse,” and such disciplines “must try to exorcize (seduction)” (*B-Seduction*, 2). Moreover, production, essentially tied to the issue of power, is opposed to seduction in that regard as well. “Seduction is stronger than power because it is reversible and mortal, while power, like value, seeks to be irreversible, cumulative, and immortal.” As such, and crucially, seduction is inalterably opposed to the real. “Seduction, on the other hand, is not of the order of the real—and is never of the order of force, nor relations of force” (*B-Seduction*, 46).

If seduction is opposed to these dominant phenomena of modern culture, what, more positively are its defining characteristics? First, as already noted, seduction is a strategy of artifice and ritual (*B-Seduction* 2). Opposed, as indicated, to notions of coherence and finality, it is characterized instead by the ever-present possibility of “sudden reversibility” (*B-Seduction*, 2, 7).” As such, seduction employs strategies of “illusion and deception,” (*B-Seduction*, 69); it is oblique rather than direct (*B-Seduction*, 106), all of which means that it is akin to play and games. “The law of seduction takes the form of an uninterrupted ritual exchange where seducer and seduced constantly raise the stakes in a game that never ends” (*B-Seduction*, 22). Baudrillard later develops in intriguing ways the kinship of se-

duction, play, and games. Finally, all these characteristics obviously put seduction in the realm of simulation. Having just associated seduction with “the feminine,” he writes: “Now surprisingly, this proposition, that in the feminine the very distinction between authenticity and artifice is without foundation, also defines the space of simulation” (*B-Seduction*, 11).⁶

Let us gather together the gist of all this for the issue at hand. In *Simulations*, we have been told that the real has been or is fast being abolished in favor of a culture dominated by simulation, indeed by third-order simulations, simulations of simulations. Yet in *Seduction*, seduction is presented as opposed to the dominant order of the real (characterized by production, nature, power, and discourses of finality) and as *akin to simulation*. There would, therefore, seem to be a certain tension, even contradiction, a lack of coherence and certainly of finality, between the two books. In the first, simulation is characterized as the now dominant order of culture, as opposed to the real. In the second, seduction, akin to simulation, is, we are told, *excluded* from the dominant order of production, power, and the real.

But could he who writes all this about seduction fail to engage in seduction himself, fail, that is, to *write seductively*? And what would it mean to write seductively? Certainly it would mean, first of all, to abandon the goal of coherence and finality in favor of a writing characterized by playfulness and sudden reversibility. Far from seeking or claiming an access to the *truth*, say, about contemporary culture, simulation, even seduction itself, a seductive writing would employ “[t]he capacity immanent to seduction to deny things their truth and turn it into a game, the pure play of appearances, and thereby foil all systems of power and meaning with a mere turn of the hand” (*B-Seduction*, 8). After all, “[t]here is no need to play being against being, or truth against truth; why become stuck undermining foundations, when a *light* manipulation of appearances will do?” (*B-Seduction*, 10, author’s emphasis).⁷ A writing that was seductive in this sense would thus exhibit just the characteristics we have seen in Baudrillard’s own writing: it would abolish the real, then restore it. It would assert the cultural dominance of “nature, production, and power,” then announce the dominance of simulation: claim that seduction has been excluded by our dominant culture, then assert that seduction will always triumph over power. The *measure* of such writing would then be not, certainly, anything like truth, coherence, or finality, but rather precisely the *seductiveness* of such writing. Baudrillard himself explicitly suggests the possibility of just such a measure:

Can one imagine a theory that would treat signs in terms of their *seductive attraction*, rather than their contrasts and oppositions? Which would break with the specular nature of the sign and the encumbrance of the referent? And in which the terms would play amongst themselves within the framework of an enigmatic duel and an inexorable reversibility? (*B-Seduction*, 103, my emphasis).

Perhaps, I suggest, Baudrillard’s own text can be read as an exhibition of just this; a seductive simulation of a straight book on seduction or simulation.

If so, then anything like our earlier deconstructive reading of the marginal return of the real is vitiated. For deconstructive readings are too closely akin to psychoanalytic interpretations, which, Baudrillard argues in a long but suggestive paragraph, are decisively undercut by seductive strategies.

Seduction takes from discourse its sense and turn it from its truth. It is, therefore, contrary to the psychoanalytic distinction between manifest and latent discourses. For the latent discourse turns the manifest discourse not *from* its truth but *towards* its truth. It makes the manifest discourse say what it does not want to say; it causes determinations and profound indeterminations to show through in the manifest discourse. Depth always peeks through from behind the break, and meaning peeks through from behind the line. The manifest discourse has the status of an appearance, a labored appearance, traversed by the emergence of meaning. Interpretation is what breaks the appearance and play of the manifest discourse and, by taking up with the latent discourse, delivers the real meaning. In seduction, by contrast, it is the manifest discourse—discourse at its most superficial—that turns its back on the deeper order (whether conscious or unconscious) in order to invalidate it, substituting the charm and illusion of appearances (*B-Seduction*, 53).

Here, it seems, Baudrillard deprives deconstructive readings of their force, founded as they are, if not on the unconsciousness of the play of meanings at the margin, then at least on the irrelevance of any authorial intention. Baudrillard is no unconscious or decentered author subject to the unintentional play of meanings without end in his text; he is instead a seducer, consciously playing with the meanings of his text, and with us. The apparent and the marginal are *intentionally* involved in a play with each other, given, then taken away, then returned in a series of sudden reversals characteristic of seduction. The real now is abolished, now returned. Simulation is and is not the dominant strategy of contemporary culture. Seduction is and is not always at work therein. The guiding question of *Simulations* would then not be about the *truth* of his analysis of the rise of third-order simulation and the disappearance of the real. It would instead be something like, why are the notions of the disappearance of the real, the decentering of the subject, of the loss of any essential, of the construction of so much that was once thought natural, why are these notions so very, very *seductive* to us today? The guiding question of *Seduction* would become, why is seduction itself so persistently *seductive* in the face of the opposition to it by the dominant forces of culture? But if that is so, to what, then, are we being seduced?

But if I have applied a self-referential reading to Baudrillard's texts, then surely I should close by considering self-referentially the paper I here present. What of the status of the very paper I have just written? Baudrillard may have read Derrida, but I have read both Derrida and Baudrillard. Does this paper get to the real of Baudrillard, or even try to? Or is it too a simulation, a seduction attempt, as is, perhaps in its way, all writing? What happens to the very meaning of discourse, of dialogue, of meaning, if this sort of reading is applied without end not only to

other texts but to itself? Or on the contrary, must there not be, eventually, an end to this latter-day third man argument, this infinite regress of simulation and seduction? Must we all not, finally, be trying to gain access to the real, experiencing the real in its depth and power? At some level, must I not mean what I say? After all, I used to play a lot of basketball.

Chapter 2

The Fiction of the Unconscious: The Use and Abuse of Representation in Freud

Alina Clej

It has become a commonplace in recent years to criticize Freud for his scientific limitations and clinical incompetence, even as his concepts continue to inform a wide range of discourses from literary and cultural theories to popular psychology. The arguments against Freud's authority are by now familiar: on the practical side, the clinical evidence that Freud used to validate his psychological theory is viewed as insufficient, flawed, or even willfully distorted.¹ On the theoretical side, Freud's psychological assumptions turn out to be so deeply contaminated by poetic fictions and pseudoscientific concepts that they lose credence.²

Given the incriminating power of most recent critiques coming from all quarters of knowledge, one is left to wonder why psychoanalysis, at least in its Freudian form, cannot be buried once and for all. Why shouldn't it be allowed to rest in peace, in the common grave of scientific heresies, where some of the repudiated ancestors of psychoanalysis itself—such as oneirocritics, mesmerism, or hypnotism—have ended up? The continuing interest in Freudian psychoanalysis could not have been kept alive by the sole efforts of its practitioners in their determination to safeguard a lucrative practice. The persistence of Freud's theoretical concepts in our postmodern age must be attributed to wider, if not loftier, motives.

Freud himself deserves some credit, after all, for the continuing appeal of psychoanalysis, even if it may not be exactly of the sort that he fully expected. Firstly, although Freud was patently wrong most of the time, as his critics have convincingly shown, he was not wrong all the time. A significant number of psychological concepts that Freud invented or refashioned still offer a valuable means of assessing puzzling forms of human behavior, even though their etiology, management, or even exact definition may no longer correspond to Freud's understanding. Concepts such as ambivalence, anxiety, deferred action, disavowal, displacement, fantasy, idealization, narcissism, obsession, projection, repetition compulsion, resistance, transference, and (the) unconscious are among the Freudian notions that have not only penetrated our everyday vocabulary, but have also gained a certain legitimacy through their occurrence in a broad spectrum of respectable disciplines (including cognitive psychology). In addition to this, these concepts have also received independent corroboration by medical practitioners and social workers,

who may not always know or else approve of Freud's doctrines.

Secondly, and this is the aspect that I would like to focus on in this essay, the fact that Freud's arguments can read at times as a "scientific fairy tale"³ does not ultimately detract from their power to convince a large (and not necessarily uneducated) public. Strange as this may seem, it is by virtue of its fictional quality that Freud's ambitious theorizing about the mind still enjoys widespread currency. In other words, I will argue that beyond the legitimate relevance of some of Freud's concepts to the understanding of psychological phenomena, it is, paradoxically, the mythical dimension of Freudian psychoanalysis that secures its survival in our postmodern age. If, on the whole, patients and health practitioners, as well as the public at large, have become more conscious of the fallibility of medical sciences, this enhanced skepticism, combined with the ongoing crisis of authority and faith, has created an even greater need for meta-narratives and totalizing explanatory models. This is where, in spite of its faults and incompleteness, Freud's meta-psychology finds its *raison d'être*.⁴

The same kind of paradox, I wish to argue, holds for Freud's much celebrated or disparaged rhetorical talents. Although it is quite true that "[Freud's] use of rhetoric has a quality of massive deception (and, not infrequently, of self-deception)," as a critic put it, this does not imply that "his authority is *no greater* than that of any highly talented writer who uses acute observations to imaginative effect (Poe, Balzac, Zola, Proust for example)."⁵ It is precisely because Freud operated, fraudulently perhaps, but unabashedly, within the legitimizing terrain of science that his pronouncements carried, and still carry, more credence and use-value than those of Proust, for instance. Freud's appeal to a large public lies for the most part in this duplicity, and as I will try to show, in his particular use of representation, which served to keep the readers' or listeners' interests alive.

While Jacques Lacan beguiled his audience with his cryptic pronouncements, Freud played a different hermeneutic game: he would emphasize the obscure and difficult nature of his explorations, without being either difficult or obscure. The ease with which Freud's concepts can be popularized and simplified for general consumption (Freud himself was well aware of this particular quality of his thought, and exploited it in his public lectures) ensured the large circulation of his ideas. If, in addition to these factors, one also takes into account Freud's notorious talent for self-promotion during his lifetime, and the zealotry of his followers after his death, it becomes less difficult perhaps to explain why, in spite of all the justified critiques directed against Freud for well over half a century, the ghost of depth psychology is still with us.

My argument will develop along two lines that are ultimately related, but do not always overlap: one may, roughly speaking, be called philosophical, since what I propose to show is that Freud's meta-psychology or "scientific myth" (to borrow the term used by Freud himself in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*) is underwritten by an epistemology, whose broad outlines are Nietzschean in character, insofar as Freud emphasized the fictional or fantasmatic quality of

our mental lives. The second line of approach is biographical and historical, and is meant to show that the epistemic modalities adopted by Freud in his exploration of the psyche are often tied to his desire of promoting or marketing his scientific myths. To this end Freud made a liberal use of his imagination and *literary* talent for which he could not find a better legitimate outlet.⁶

Like Nietzsche's poetic fictions, Freud's scientific myths have been a consistent source of irritation, as well as seduction, for later commentators. But in the wake of deconstruction, and especially with the work of critics like Jacques Derrida and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe crossing the boundary between philosophy and literature, words like *fiction* or *fable* have lost their pejorative connotations. In fact, it is the concept of fable or writing that serves, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, to obliterate the difference between philosophy and literature. "For fable is the language with respect to which (and in which) these differences—which are not differences—no longer obtain: literal and figurative, transparency and transfer, reality and simulacrum, presence and representation, *mythos* and *logos*, logic and poetry, philosophy and literature, etc."⁷ In this statement, Lacoue-Labarthe takes Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical stance to its ultimate consequences, a move Freud would have probably resisted to the extent to which he wished to retain a certain appearance of positivism about his enterprise.

Also, unlike Nietzsche, and in spite of intellectual affinities, Freud was still in many ways an heir of the Enlightenment. Indeed, he was attracted to the idea of a universal system, which, due to the demise of traditional theogonies, occasionally haunted the so-called positive sciences throughout the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly then, spiritualist interpretations found their way in experimental fields, such as medicine, and as Henri Ellenberger convincingly argued, "it was sometimes the same men who pioneered the anatomophysiology of the brain who also indulged in brain mythology [*Hirnmythologie*], although they conceived themselves as 'positivists' and scorned the philosophy of nature."⁸ In this respect, Freud did not differ essentially from his master Jean Martin Charcot with whom he studied hysteria in Paris in 1885. Although Freud tried to combine his philosophical ambitions with his experimental ones (sometimes with disastrous consequences⁹), it is ultimately the agility with which he moved between *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft* that assured the success of his psychological theories.

Freud was not, however, a builder of systems and in this sense he differed from his nineteenth century predecessors. The grand theory that would make sense of his various discoveries eluded him to the end, which did not stop him from constantly revising previous hypotheses, and fitting them into new contexts. Like Nietzsche, Freud found in myths—Greek myths in particular—an ideal way to make up for his deficiencies as a systematic thinker. Oedipus, Eros and Thanatos, Totem and Taboo supplied both the canvas and the texture for his theoretical speculations. Ancient myths also provided a noble genealogy to modern psychological conflicts, and lent symbolic prestige to the mundane and often petty tribu-

lations of his bourgeois clients.

In spite of his *literary* propensities, however, Freud was less daring than Nietzsche in his use of fictions. This is due to the fact that a residual Kantianism that made him believe in the *Ding-an-sich*, and in part because his scientific training urged him to grant a certain positivity to phenomena, even if these were merely imaginary or difficult to interpret. In fact, as we shall see, one of the reasons why Freud resorted to fictions in the description of the psychic apparatus was precisely because, in Kantian fashion, he saw an unbridgeable gap between observable phenomena and their originary source. This divide in fact preoccupied him throughout his career.

In his important article on “The Unconscious” (1915), Freud recognized the hypothetical nature of the investigative model he proposed for the study of psychological phenomena: “Our mental topography has for the present nothing to do with anatomy; it is concerned not with anatomical locations, but with regions in the mental apparatus, irrespective of their possible situation in the body” (*Freud-SE*, 14: 175). The unconscious could only be recognized through certain disturbances in behavior that signaled its existence:

Unconscious processes can only be observed by us under the conditions of dreaming and of neurosis; {that is to say, when the processes of the higher system revert to an earlier level by a certain process of degradation (regression).} Independently they are unrecognizable, indeed cannot exist, for the system Ucs is at a very early stage overlaid by the system Pcs which has captured the means of access to consciousness and to motility (*Freud-SE*, 14: 187).

In his final survey of the main tenets of his psychological theory, presented as *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940), Freud makes no secret of the epistemic handicap that affected his psychological enterprise from the very beginning.

We know of two kinds of things about what we call our psyche (or mental life): firstly, its bodily organ and scene of action, the brain (or nervous system) and, on the other hand, our acts of consciousness, which are immediate data and cannot be further explained by any sort of description. Everything that lies between is unknown to us, and the data do not include any direct relation between these two terminal points of our knowledge. If it existed, it would at the most afford an exact localization of the processes of consciousness and would give us no help towards understanding them (*Freud-SE*, 23: 144–5).

In order to distract the reader from the misty distance separating “these two terminal points of knowledge” (i.e., the brain and consciousness) Freud brings in auxiliary narratives that serve to bridge the cognitive gap. In this respect, Freud’s imagination is as fertile as that of a *literary* writer.¹⁰ He compares, for instance, the “derivatives of the unconscious instinctual impulses” to “those human half-breeds [i.e., mulattoes] who, taken all round, resemble white men, but betray their

colored descent by some striking feature or other, on account of which they are excluded from society and enjoy none of the privileges of white men" (*Freud-CP*, 4: 123); or, in the same vein, he compares the "content of the Ucs" to "a primitive population in the mental kingdom" (*Freud-SE*, 14: 191). From colonial to archeological images, Freud's figurative language provides imaginary support to his psychological constructs, revealing at the same time a more or less comprehensive picture of the ideological repertoire of his time.

Conservative, and even retrograde in certain aspects of his thinking, Freud could also be daring and unconventional. In the creative enterprise of presenting his theories, Freud could display, for instance, a modernist sensibility, to the extent to which he invited the audience to witness his own theoretical uncertainty, and accept the fallible or else provisional nature of his interpretations. Commenting on the myth of the "primal horde," which underlies the theoretical argument of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), Freud observed:

To be sure, this is only a hypothesis, like so many others with which archaeologists endeavor to lighten the darkness of prehistoric times—a "Just-So Story,"—as it was amusingly called by a not unkind English critic [A. L. Kroeber, the *American* anthropologist]; but I think it is creditable to such a hypothesis if it proves able to bring coherence and understanding into more and more new regions (*Freud-SE*, 18: 122).

On the other hand, and to complicate the picture, Freud never doubted his ability of making a significant contribution to the progress of knowledge. If anything, he claimed that psychoanalysis was subject to the same uncertainties as other natural sciences, such as chemistry or physics, at the time, which did not mean that they were not valid, or susceptible of future improvement. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, he claimed that the hypotheses and concepts of psychoanalysis could "lay claim to the same value as approximations that belongs to the corresponding intellectual scaffolding found in other natural sciences, and we look forward to their being modified, corrected and more precisely determined as further experience is accumulated and sifted" (*Freud-SE*, 23: 159).

But there is another possible reading, seldom explicit in Freud's writings, namely that the scaffolding is simply there to hide the absence of a building. In this respect, consciously or not, Freud comes closest to Nietzsche in the idea that hypothetical concepts or fictions, irrespective of their claims to truth, are absolutely necessary to human survival. They serve to protect us against the otherwise distracting noise of our physical beings, and the surrounding chaos Lacan would call the Real. I suspect that it is this Nietzschean meaning that Freud had in mind in describing his notion of endopsychic myths to his friend Wilhelm Fliess:

Can you imagine what "endopsychic myths" are? The latest product of my mental labor. The dim inner perception of one's own psychic apparatus stimulates thought illusions, which of course are projected onto the outside and, characteristically, into the future and the beyond. Immortality, retribution, the entire beyond are all reflections of our psychic internal [world]. *Meschugge?* Psycho-mythology.¹¹

Freud's explanation of our ideational world (including moral and philosophical ideas) as the by-product of our imperfect awareness of the workings of the psychic apparatus parallels Nietzsche's commentary on humankind's propensity for fables.

[Men] are deeply immersed in illusions and dream images; their eye glides only over the surface of things and sees "forms"; their feeling nowhere leads into truth, but contents itself with the reception of stimuli, playing, as it were, a game of blindman's buff on the back of things. Moreover, man permits himself to be lied to at night, his life long when he dreams . . . What, indeed, does man know of himself! Can he even once perceive himself completely, laid out as if in an illuminated glass case? Does not nature keep much the most from him, even about his body, to spellbind and confine him in a proud, deceptive consciousness, far from the coils of the intestines, the quick current of the blood stream, and the involved tremors of the fibers? She threw away the key; and woe to the calamitous curiosity which might peer just once through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and look down, and sense that man rests upon the merciless, the greedy, the insatiable, the murderous, in the indifference of his ignorance, hanging in dreams, as it were, upon the back of a tiger. In view of this, whence in all the world comes the urge for truth? (*Freud-CL*, 286).¹²

Freud embodied this desperate urge for truth and calamitous curiosity, which led him to "peer . . . through a crack in the chamber of consciousness," so as to gaze at all the monsters in the cellar he called the unconscious. This curiosity was tempered, however, by the opposite desire described by Nietzsche, the desire to forget, and ignore the turmoil that goes on within. The whole project of psychoanalysis is informed by this double, contradictory impulse, which Nietzsche defined so well: of knowing and not knowing, of remembering and forgetting.

From this perspective, it is not surprising that the psychic apparatus, according to Freud, is geared towards avoiding pain or unpleasant instinctual stimuli through processes of repression and conversion, or in other words through neurotic behavior. From his early *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) to his last work, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940), we find the leitmotif of "flight." Consciousness is forever fleeing from the processes that make it possible, and from whatever stirrings might impinge upon its ideally placid surface. In his attempt to theorize this tendency of the psyche, Freud contrived various explanatory principles: the principle of inertia, the principle of constancy, the pleasure principle. In all these instances, and especially clear in the essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the tendency to avoid unpleasure, which manifests itself through a lowering of energetic levels, comes perilously close to the zero degree of energy implied by the Nirvana principle, that is, the death instinct. Ultimately, the best protection against the strains of life is death, a conclusion in which Freud seems to agree with Schopenhauer, for whom death is the "true result and to that extent the purpose of life."¹³

Short of reaching this ultimate consequence, however, Freud recuperates

the negative to promote compromise, productive repression, and sublimation as forms of survival and “civilized” existence, which he promotes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). In this sense, Freud’s general project, and his use of representation in particular, are not so much designed to mask death, the obscene, or the unrepresentable, as Lacoue-Labarthe asserts in his otherwise powerful essay, “The Scene is Primal” (*LL-SP*, 111-12), but rather to mask the ever-present pain of living.¹⁴ This is in fact what Schiller called “the burden of existence” (*die Schwere des Daseins*) (*Freud-SE*, 18: 45). Freud’s thought is not so much tragic as it is histrionic, and like Nietzsche, Freud would rather have been a buffoon than a holy man.¹⁵ His use of fables, like Scheherazade’s stories, served to skirt the abyss without succumbing to it. But there was also more to gain from this maneuver than mere brinkmanship, so to speak.

As a cognitive modality, Freudian psychoanalysis could be viewed as a peculiar variant of Kant’s hermeneutic sublime, a compromise formation, which served, at one and the same time, Freud’s theoretical and mundane interests. Freud’s philosophical, as well as existential, attraction for the abyss was replicated, and occulted at a formal level, by his propensity for deep and dark secrets, in which sexuality inevitably played a major role.¹⁶ His compulsive fascination with dark regions of the mind (i.e., the unconscious or the id) or with the dark continent of female sexuality took the form of a peculiar style of inquiry, which may be called cryptonymic, insofar as the object of the search is construed as a *crypt*, i.e., something that is both buried and inaccessible.¹⁷

When I speak of Freud’s cryptonymic style I don’t mean to say that he was in any way obscure or muddled in his presentation; his logical coherence, and clarity of expression were always impeccable. What I mean is that Freud was irresistibly drawn to enigmas, and that he often chose to present them with all the piquancy and imaginative verve of a detective storyteller, like Sherlock Holmes or his creator, Conan Doyle. Indeed, Freud’s case-stories, and especially the case of Dora, published as *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905), are constructed with all the skills of a fiction writer intent on seducing the audience with the shrewd manipulation of detail. This case in fact shows that the enduring appeal of Freud’s meta-psychology resides, at least in part, in his masterful use of representation (including poetic devices and sublime effects), and particularly riveting style of exposition.

The case of Dora raises, moreover, a number of intriguing questions, many of which have already been answered.¹⁸ I would like, however, to raise a further question, here, which in turn may explain Freud’s predilection for enigmas, namely: To what extent did Freud present his discoveries as enigmatic, for the sole purpose of solving them? For it is, paradoxically, in the process of interpreting Dora’s strange hysterical symptoms that Freud is actually producing the enigmatic effects he proposes to solve. More generally speaking, is Freud interested in finding a cure for suffering humanity, or at least in alleviating its woes, or simply intent on satisfying a desire to prove his intellectual sagacity, and impress his audience?

Freud himself confessed to his friend and biographer Ernst Jones his rather peculiar investment in psychology and medicine: “Neither at that time [as a young man], nor indeed in my later life, did I feel any particular predilection for the career of a physician. I was moved, rather, by a sort of curiosity, which was, however, directed more towards human concerns than towards natural objects.”¹⁹ Or, as he put it in a more radical formulation: “I have no knowledge of having had in my early years any craving to help suffering humanity. My innate sadistic disposition was not a very strong one, so that I had no need to develop this one of its derivatives . . . In my youth I felt an overpowering need to understand something of the riddles of the world in which we live and perhaps even contribute something to their solution” (*Jones*, 1: 28). All in all, these statements might better fit a novelist than a physician.

Throughout his life, Freud was involved in solving and constructing riddles. He was drawn to psychological phenomena that had traditionally been considered mysterious or impenetrable (e.g., the dream), or puzzling and amusing (e.g., jokes and parapraxes). He also proposed to unravel the maladies of the mind which had bedeviled physicians since Antiquity (neurosis and psychosis). And, time and again, Freud referred to the processes of the mind as veiled, dim, or elusive. In his descriptions, the unconscious is forever inaccessible, and only manifests itself through indirect and disguised means. “I always envy physicians and mathematicians,” Freud once confessed to one of his patients. “They can always find support on firm grounds. As to me, I rest on nothing . . . Psychic events seem impossible to measure, and will probably always be so.”²⁰ But how original or ingenious is Freud’s remark?

For one thing, the notion that the mind is obscure, and yet susceptible of analysis, is part of a more general shift in medical perception. As Foucault pointed out in *The Birth of the Clinic*, at the end of the eighteenth century, “the relation between the visible and the invisible changed its structure, revealing through gaze and language what had previously been below and beyond their domain . . . [S]eeing now consists in leaving to experience its greatest corporal opacity; the solidity, the obscurity, the density of things closed in upon themselves, have powers of truth that they owe not to light, but to the slowness of the gaze that passes over them, around them, and gradually into them . . . The residence of truth in the dark centre of things is linked, paradoxically, to this sovereign power of the empirical gaze that turns their darkness into light.”²¹

No one, perhaps, better exemplified this model of medical knowledge than Charcot, Freud’s professor and revered model. Indeed, with Charcot, the observer’s gaze both deciphers and cures, by bringing the secret cause of the disease into the open. And it is little wonder that Charcot’s lessons at the Salpêtrière and his legendary ability to identify hysteria through the mere power of his gaze made a deep impression on the young Freud. This is how Freud describes Charcot in the commemorative article dedicated to his master:

He was not a reflective man, not a thinker: he had the nature of an artist—he was as he himself said, a *'visuel,'* a man who sees. Here is what he himself told us about his method of working. He used to look again and again at the things he did not understand, to deepen his impression of them day by day, till suddenly an understanding of them dawned on him. In his mind's eye the apparent chaos presented by the continual repetition of the same symptoms then gave way to order: the new nosological pictures emerged, characterized by the constant combination of certain groups of symptoms. The complete and extreme cases, the 'types,' could be brought into prominence with the help of a certain schematic planning, and, with these types as a point of departure, the eye could travel over a long series of ill-defined cases—the *'formes frustes'*—which, branching off from one or other characteristic feature of the type, melt away into indistinctness (*Freud-SE*, 3:12).

There are several interesting elements in this passage that are relevant to our discussion. For one thing, the coordinates that organize the field of medical perception in the nineteenth century are explicitly laid out. The eye of the observer moves between clear types and ill-defined cases, order and chaos, a visible realm of intelligibility and a dark zone of indistinctness. The prowess of the eye lies in its ability to distinguish clear shapes in what at first sight appears to be formless and obscure. Charcot's visual gift is inevitably said to recall that of the artist, who is similarly endowed with the virtue of giving shape to inchoate feelings and experiences. The artist Freud had in mind might well have been Dante, since Charcot's rounds at the Salpêtrière "amid all the wilderness of paralyses, spasms, and convulsions" evoked, in Freud's words, Dante's journey in the *Inferno*. Like Dante, Charcot was able to bring to light the monsters of the mind by casting them into types, or allegorizing.

Nosography, the ability to describe and classify diseases, is thus brought into a curious analogy with the descriptive powers of the poet, and with the art of coining, since the clear types are like new coins compared to the ill-defined cases, the *formes frustes*, an expression which in French refers to rubbed coins or medals. The art of interpreting or naming diseases is thus not only elevated to the value of artistic creation, but is also viewed as remunerative, as a means of amassing capital. It is easy to see how much psychoanalysis owed to this model, in spite of Freud's deliberate rejection of hypnosis, and of his reliance on the ability to listen rather than observe.

But Freud's insistence on the difficulty of his enterprise is quite unlike Charcot's easy-going manner or the nineteenth century serene confidence in science. Judging by his own accounts, one has the impression that Freud needed to assume a formidable task in order to prove his value and improve his status. He aimed, so to speak, much higher than his master. Writing to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, Freud confessed that he had the ambitions of a conqueror, intent on discovering new fields of knowledge, among which one could list the dark continent of female sexuality. As he candidly put it, "I am actually not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker. I am by temperament nothing but a

conquistador—an adventurer, if you want it translated—with all the curiosity, daring, and tenacity characteristic of a man of this sort. Such people are customarily esteemed only if they have been successful, have really discovered something. Otherwise, they are dropped by the wayside” (*Freud-CL*, 398).

It is no secret that in the difficult period when Freud was courting Martha Bernays, his future wife, and saw his marital prospects thwarted by poverty, he was looking desperately for a revolutionary discovery that would ensure the material well-being of his future family.²² In the famous letter to Fliess from September 21, 1897, where Freud confesses to his friend the abandonment of the seduction theory, which had previously bolstered his understanding of hysteria, the art of psychological interpretation is explicitly linked to fame and financial prosperity. Not to be able to interpret is to be bankrupt, like a seer or a chiromancer who has lost his faculties of divination: “The expectation of eternal fame was so beautiful, as was that of certain wealth, complete independence, travels, and lifting the children above the severe worries that robbed me of my youth. Everything depended upon whether or not hysteria would come out right” (*Freud-CL*, 266).

One could speculate that Freud was interested in enigmas precisely to the extent to which their solution could bring him the fame and material well being that he so strongly coveted, not just as an ambitious young man but as an assimilated Jew who hoped to transcend the humiliations of his forbears.²³ *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), the work that established Freud’s reputation as an analyst, is perhaps the most obvious example of his successful art of interpretation. In his introductory chapter, Freud observed that, “in spite of many thousands of years of effort, the scientific understanding of dreams has made very little advance” (*Freud-SE*, 4: 1). This statement can only enhance Freud’s own epochal achievement in deciphering the “true” meaning of dreams. “[E]very dream reveals itself as a psychical structure which has a meaning,” Freud declares, and he further contends to be able “to elucidate the processes to which the strangeness and obscurity of dreams are due and to deduce from those processes the nature of the psychical forces by whose concurrent or mutually opposing action dreams are generated” (*Freud-SE*, 4: 1).

And yet, one can find numberless examples in which Freud appears puzzled, baffled by his own discoveries, as if the objects of his exploration were too intricate to be unraveled, or as if his discourse was unable to cope with the complexities of the matter, the resistance of his patient, or his own inhibitions. It is in these instances that Freud’s cryptonymic style is most evident and where metaphoric language flourishes.

Needless to say, Freud’s invention of psychoanalysis is inextricably bound up with language, or more precisely with figurative language that represents or makes sensible “the bewildering and obscure processes” unfolding at the level of energetic exchanges, in a non-verbal economy.²⁴ As Freud put it, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the “scientific terms” with which psychoanalysis is obliged to operate, “that is to say the figurative language, peculiar to psychology (or, more

precisely, to depth psychology)” is only a *pis aller*: “We could not otherwise describe the processes in question at all, and indeed we could not have become aware of them” (*Freud-SE*, 18: 60). Indeed, as Freud intimates, the very facts that he has to explain only become apparent in the act of naming them. In this sense, there could be no distinction between Freud’s style and his object of analysis. The unconscious speaks as much as it is spoken, or as Lacan’s put it, there can be no meta-language.²⁵

But to assert that Freud’s style is mimetic or blindly performative—on the mode of automatic writing—is to ignore Freud’s craftiness as a writer, the degree to which his papers are re-writings and elaborations of previous conversations with his patients, and the product of endless ruminations. The fact that he wrote at one go, and with very few erasures, does not mean that he was not deliberate and calculating in the way he wrote. And if Freud’s commentary appears to mime its object, is not this an effect of what he called “ideational mimetics,” in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905)? Freud’s writings could be viewed as an aesthetic device meant to compel the reader into the same state of mind and expenditure of energy as that described by the text (*Freud-SE*, 8:192–93). And, the more supposedly obscure the phenomena Freud describes, the more he must have recourse to figurative language. One could almost say that Freud posited the unrepresentable to better display his stylistic ingenuity.

At moments of daring pronouncements or ventures into “forbidden territory” (the latter is Freud’s own privileged metaphor that matches the image of the conquistador), and more frequently so in his later writings, especially in those dealing with female sexuality—the figure of the enigmatic, par excellence—Freud’s cryptonymic style is always in evidence. This is, for instance, how Freud introduced his reflections on “Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes” (1925): “An analysis of early childhood such as we are considering is tedious and laborious and makes demands both upon the physician and upon the patient which cannot always be met. Moreover it leads us to dark regions where there are as yet no sign-posts” (*Freud-SE*, 19: 248). And again, speaking of the pre-Oedipus phase, Freud asserts that “everything connected with the first mother-attachment has in analysis seemed to me so elusive, lost in a past so dim and shadowy, so hard to resuscitate, that it seemed as if it had undergone some specially inexorable repressions.”²⁶

But this is not the only way in which Freud presents himself as hampered in the discovery of truth. At the end of his troubling discussion of the dream of Irma’s injection, Freud disappoints the reader with the news that his interpretation might be incomplete. “I could spend much more time over it, derive further information from it and discuss fresh problems raised by it . . . But considerations which arise in the case of every dream of my own restrain me from pursuing my interpretative work” (*Freud-SE*, 4: 121). In the case of Dora, it is the patient’s own resistance, not to mention the phenomena of transference and counter-transference, that account for the incompleteness of Freud’s medical account. “[Patients] can, indeed,

give the physician plenty of coherent information about this or that period of their lives; but it is sure to be followed by another period as to which their communications run dry, leaving gaps unfilled, and riddles unanswered" (*Freud-SE*, 7: 16). If for much of the case-story Freud appears remarkably deft at filling gaps and answering riddles, including the riddle concerning the source of Dora's sexual knowledge, he is ultimately unable, according to his own version of the story, to conclude the case. Dora's growing resistance to her own analyst stops it short.

But the interruption or hesitancy can also be due to Freud's avowed inability of probing further, as it were, his self-resistance. The riddle of femininity, which puzzled many famous poets before him, is certainly the most obvious instance of Freud's failing powers. According to Ernest Jones, "There [was] little doubt that Freud found the psychology of women more enigmatic than that of men. He said once to Marie Bonaparte: 'The great question that has never been answered and which I have not been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is "What does a woman want?"'" (Jones, 2: 421).

If Freud has so much at stake in solving psychic riddles, why should he present himself so often as a thwarted explorer, who suddenly met an impracticable pathway or an unassailable boundary? Why should Freud display his theoretical gropings in front of his readers when he could have easily disguised them? Why did he adopt a halting, circuitous manner, when he could have chosen a more straightforward presentation?

One could argue that Freud was sincerely possessed by epistemological doubts, and indeed his use of epistemic fictions discussed in the first part of this essay justifies this hypothesis. But, one could also argue that emphasizing the moments of difficulty or interruption in his thought—resistance being the most notorious one—was Freud's way of achieving sublime effects, that "momentary checking of the vital powers," described by Kant in his "Analytic of the Sublime," the vacillation of the mind faced by the magnitude of its objects.²⁷ Or, to use Thomas Weiskel's terms, the cognitive blockage described by Kant could be reformulated in terms of the hermeneutic sublime as a rhetoric whose "signs consist of relations between indeterminacy and a 'meaning' predicated of indeterminacy." According to Weiskel, this type of rhetoric rests on "the claim that the failure to understand something has the very highest meaning."²⁸

Why would Freud enjoy creating these sublime moments in his theoretical essays? One reason, no doubt, is in order to assert the totalizing powers of the mind, in a Kantian fashion, when the vacillation is followed by a moment of cognitive triumph. What about the moments when this is not the case? Various answers may come to mind. There is something intrinsically appealing about "gaps," and Freud, who was an avid reader of literature himself, was certainly aware of their potential for attracting the curiosity of the reader. Refusing to close an argument means perpetuating the possibility of desire, so that even in Freud's story of Dora, where he is spurned and dismissed by his patient, he still manages to keep alive the desire of his readers.

Moreover, the moment of faltering is intrinsically seductive. The failing of reason, like a moment of swooning, can be replete with erotic value. When, during a meeting in Munich with some of his colleagues, Freud suddenly fainted, he declared after coming to, "How sweet it must be to die." Later on he confessed to his friend Jones how he had suffered from a similar weakness in the same hotel room in Munich, where he was meeting with Fliess. According to Freud himself, there was "some piece of unruly homosexual feeling at the root of the matter" (Jones, 1: 317).

Evidently, solving enigmas provided Freud as much intellectual and erotic satisfaction as not solving them. If one agrees with Peter Gay's hypothesis according to which Freud was intent on solving enigmas in order to secure his mother's love,²⁹ one could then assume that by playing Oedipus' role, and as the celebrated solver of the Sphinx's enigma, he could both possess the mother, and accede to a superior social status—that of king, a symbolic position which his real father never enjoyed. Speaking of the slow pace at which knowledge advances, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud said, quoting Rückert, the poet, and the Bible: "What we cannot reach flying, we must reach limping . . . The Book tells us it is no sin to limp" (*Freud-SE*, 18: 64).³⁰ Limping and faltering were Freud's way of reaching the coveted object—truth, and what it entailed—but as an Oedipus who is forever *en route*, since keeping the desire alive (be it his mother's or, more probably, his readers') was more important to him than getting to his destination, which was prohibited anyway.

As I tried to show, Freud adopted the language of a depth hermeneutics (more so than its principles), in order to give an enticing and, at the same time, familiar image to the intractable, alien phenomena that he proposed to describe. By allegorizing the psyche through his fictional topographies, Freud was mapping out and narrativizing what remained, and still remains to a large extent, a complex web of multiple phenomena, whose intricate patterns of occurrence elude any simple temporal sequence or verbal explanation. For Freud, hermeneutic narratives were a way of making intelligible and acceptable to consciousness the inner workings of the mind, while at the same time producing the sublime effects on which his practice and reputation thrived.

Chapter 3

The Postmodern Subject: Truth and Fiction in Lacoue-Labarthe's Nietzsche

Hugh J. Silverman

... what interests us here is neither the subject nor the author. Nor is it the “other”—whatever this may come to mean—of the subject or the author. Rather (and to limit ourselves for the time being to the question of the subject alone), what interests us is what is *also* at stake in the subject, while remaining absolutely irreducible to any subjectivity (that is, to any objectivity); that which, in the subject, deserts (has always already deserted) the subject *itself* and which, prior to any “self-possession” (and in a mode other than that of dispossession), is the dissolution, the defeat of the subject in the subject or *as* the subject: the (de)constitution of the subject or the “loss” of the subject—if indeed one can think of the loss of what one had never had, a kind of “originary” and “constitutive” loss (of “self”). (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy*)¹

Near the beginning of Nietzsche's *Götzen-Dämmerung* [*Twilight of the Idols*], written in September 1888, one finds the last of six theses concerning the question “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable” [*Wie die “Wahre Welt” endlich zur Fabel Wurde*]:

Die wahre Welt haben wir abgeschafft: welche Welt blieb übrig? die scheinbare vielleicht? ... Aber nein! mit der wahren Welt haben wir auch die scheinbare abgeschafft! (Mittag; Augenblick des kürzesten Schattens; Ende des längsten Irrtums; Höhepunkt der Menschheit; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)

The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? but no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.* (Noon; moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)²

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe cites this very same sixth thesis in his own essay “The Fable (Philosophy and Literature)” first published in French in 1970 and collected in *Le Sujet de la philosophie* (1979) and later in the English version, *The Subject of Philosophy* (1993). Suppose now that—and this will be my thesis here—Zara-

thustra's moment were also the prefigured moment of postmodernism announced decades before its time. In a moment, according to Zarathustra's pronouncement, the true world would be turned into an apparent one and the apparent one would also be abolished. The result would be that neither the true world nor the apparent one would prevail. At this precise moment, this noontime, this moment of what in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*³ had been called the moment of the eternal return, both the real world and the apparent one would be simultaneously abolished. What remains would be only remains: the remains of the whole history of metaphysics. Also what remains would be the postmodern world—announced by Nietzsche more than one hundred years ago. And equally critical would be the status of the subject which had become—somewhere at the time of the Enlightenment—a reality to be reckoned with. In the postmodern world, the modern subject will also have become a fable, a fiction—neither real nor apparent . . . *incipit* (here begins) postmodernism.

The Truth of the Modern Subject

The modern subject became a reality in the discourses of modernity at a time when the concept of the self shifted from a simple representation of personal identity, to the idea that the subject itself was the source of its own thinking processes. Beyond the Cartesian conception of the subject as the self-same *cogito*, Lockean and Humean personal identity appeared and, subsequently, the Kantian "*Ich denke*." It was assumed that the subject was somehow *outside* of the representations of itself. It was assumed, as Lacoue-Labarthe reports, that there is "such a thing as *presentation*, a full, whole, virginal, inviolate, and inviolable presence."⁴ This reality was distinguished from all actual or virtual appearances to the self. Appearances were appearances for a consciousness and that consciousness would retain its pure "full, whole, virginal, inviolate, and inviolable" state. Rousseau named this condition "*l'homme sauvage*" and sought to recover this state somehow in spite of the corrupt nature of society.

The Hegelian consciousness would seek to incorporate all appearances into itself while retaining its own protected encompassing qualities. The modern subject would ultimately know whatever it knows, incorporate all that it could incorporate, consume all that it could consume. That would be its reality. Above all, the modern subject would confirm and reaffirm the history of metaphysics of which it was an integral part.

Hence, when Nietzsche suggests that the history of metaphysics is itself concluded in the history of an error, the modern subject would also be so concluded. Yet the modern subject has survived and persevered well into the twentieth century. And with it the history of metaphysics has also been preserved. Heidegger's report that the subject is nowhere to be found in his conception of the relation of beings (or possibly *Dasein*?) to Being marks the subject in crisis. For Heidegger, the subject appears as difference, as a truth that cannot be thematized in the ontic

world of experience. In the relation of Dasein (or a being?) to Being, there is only the speaking of difference, the calling of Being, the naming of alterity as *Mitsein*. Yet the subject is reaffirmed in Sartre as a transcendent object, as an in-itself, as an object of consciousness. The reality of this subject is the reality of a history of metaphysics in which the subject plays a key role.

In 1966, Foucault announces at the end of *Les Mots et les choses* that “man is like a face drawn in the sand,” that the human subject is dead, and that it will soon vanish from the terrain of human discourse. What this implies is that with the death of the subject, the subject will no longer participate in the contemporary *epistemē*, the *epistemē* which we have come to understand as postmodern.⁵ However, with Lacoue-Labarthe, it is evident that the modern subject is not dead, that it has not vanished from the scene, that it is not erased from the discourses of the contemporary. Rather the modern subject has become—like Nietzsche’s true world—a fiction. As with his reading of Nietzsche, Lacoue-Labarthe notes that “the ‘concept’ of *fiction* escapes conceptuality itself, that . . . it [is] not included in the discourse of truth” (*LL-SP*, 4). If fiction is somehow outside truth, then it is also outside appearance. Hence, the question of literature is a question of the thematizing of the subject without reference or appeal to its truth or appearance. Fiction is indeed the operative term for the postmodern discourses of the contemporary age. And the human subject has become one such fiction.

As Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, “to think fiction is not to oppose appearance and reality, since appearance is nothing other than the product of reality. To think fiction is precisely to think without recourse to this opposition, *outside* this opposition; to think the world as a fable” (*LL-SP*, 5). And correspondingly, to think the subject as opposed to the objectivities of the world is also to think outside the opposition between the subject and the object, subjectivity and objectivity. Merleau-Ponty had struggled for years—from the time of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), and even *The Structure of Behavior* (1942) has evidence of the same—to overcome the dualism of the subject and the object. His interrogations always ended up with a concept of the ambiguity of the two—both subject and object interwoven in what he later—in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1961)—called a chiasmatic intertwining. Still the idea was that somehow the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity as a conflict, as an antagonism, as a distance, could be overcome through incorporation, through embodiment, and ultimately through visibility. But Foucault announces—perhaps prematurely, like Zarathustra (and Nietzsche’s Madman) who believes he has come too early—that the subject is dead altogether. This would mean that there is no longer even any opposition or dialectic between the subject and the object. The death of the subject necessarily implies the death of the object, because with the erasure of the subject would come the obliteration of the objectivities which have so fascinated modern empiricist thought since the seventeenth century. The Husserlian version of the Hegelian dialectic between *Bewußtsein* and *Gegenstand* is itself erased with the death of the subject—if the *Bewußtsein* goes the *Gegenstand* must also go. Hence,

Merleau-Ponty's last effort to save the subject by seeing it as an embodied subject—rejected by Foucault when he reads the contemporary *epistemē* as the end of the age of the human subject—also implies the loss of the objects of consciousness as well.

What Lacoue-Labarthe offers—almost a decade after the death of Merleau-Ponty and half a decade after Foucault's 1966 pronouncement concerning the death of the subject—is the account that the (de)constitution of the subject or the loss of the subject is “the loss of what one has never had, a kind of ‘originary’ and ‘constitutive’ loss (of ‘self’)” (*LL-SP*, 82). This loss which he represents as a translation of *Verwindung* is not a getting over something that one once had, but a recovery from a belief in a reality that never was. For Lacoue-Labarthe the subject is a fiction, a fable which is told not in opposition to some reality, nor as just some appearance, but as *outside* both reality and appearance, as a view of both reality and appearance. But as we have come to learn with Derrida, to be outside is also to reaffirm the inside—in this case, now as a fable. When the modern subject becomes a fable, it is a story that can be told again and again—often in different versions but never as some originary condition of reality.

The Truth of the Fable

Lacoue-Labarthe inquires: “What if, after all, philosophy were nothing but literature? We know how insistent philosophy—metaphysics—has generally been in defining itself against what we call literature” (*LL-SP*, 1). Philosophy in its history of metaphysics has struggled to be other than literature, to define itself as concerned with the truth, with what is, with what cannot be otherwise . . . Philosophy in its obsession with logical thinking has exhibited a profound fear of literature, of what might be nothing more than a story, of what is confirmed only through interpretation and critical readings. Philosophy in its passion for truth has excluded all forms of fiction from its State as dangerous, as corrupting, and as terrifying—unless it is properly and fully controlled by the State, by ethical devices that limit its range and effect, by technologies that weed out the harmful effects of the literary. And yet, as Lacoue-Labarthe asks (along with Merleau-Ponty in his critique of the algorithm) whether philosophy's desire for a pure speech has not always been compromised by the necessity of exposition through a text, through some sort of writing (the dialogue, the treatise, the essay, etc.). Each time philosophy is obliged to speak itself in a text it runs the risk of being taken for literature. But, as Lacoue-Labarthe asks, what is meant by literature? Is literature a set of traces, marks, inscriptions, writings? Or is literature what has conventionally been called fiction? (*LL-SP*, 2). If the term *literature* is meant to signify the former, then philosophy would have great difficulty separating itself off from literature since most philosophy is eventually written. But if *literature* is meant to signify fiction, then philosophy becomes fearful. In this second sense too philosophy would have to somehow ask about the differences between philosophy and literature as if

from the *outside*: “the outside would have to allow of unfolding, that is, exposition, properly metaphysical *Darstellung*: presentation, unveiling. The discourse of truth, in other words” (*LL-SP*, 2). Yet, he continues, “exposing would therefore be a way of not posing the question; posing the question prohibits exposing, for by necessity it is impossible to expose the question of exposition itself” (*LL-SP*, 2). Only if literature is taken as ideology can it be exposed by philosophy—as philosophy. But if literature resists the transference into ideology, if it remains something other than philosophy, then it can neither be exposed from within exposition itself, nor can it be resolved into a theoretical position of its own. In order to develop this curious relation of philosophy to literature, the question of its fictionalization, Lacoue-Labarthe cites a text from Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*, a note from the year 1888. Here Nietzsche writes: “Parmenides said: ‘one cannot think of what is not’;—we are at the other extreme, and say ‘what can be thought of must certainly be a fiction.’”⁶ [*“Parmenides hat gesagt ‘man denkt das nicht, was nicht ist’;—wir sind am andern Ende und sagen ‘was gedacht werden kann, muß sicherlich eine Fiktion sein.’”*] If this text from Nietzsche is situated at the end of the history of metaphysics—at the other end—as opposed to the beginning (where Parmenides is located, and where there can be the possibility of non-being outside of what is thought), then Nietzsche’s text returns to what is not said in Parmenides: namely, that what is thought must surely be a fiction. But if what is thought is a fiction, then all philosophy must be a fiction. And with the completion of the history of metaphysics—at the other end [*am andern Ende*]⁷—all that can be thought must be read as a fiction. Thus, either fiction is included in conceptuality itself, or all conceptuality is literature. This location of fiction somewhere between *what cannot be thought* (Parmenides’ beginning) and *what can be thought* (Nietzsche’s end)—“*Le pensable et le pensé*”—opens up a space in which philosophy—and the whole history of metaphysics—“is not the discourse of truth but a fictional language [*la métaphysique n’est pas le discours de la vérité mais un langage fictif*].”⁷

Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that for Nietzsche this whole history of metaphysics is dominated by the official (Parmenidean, Platonic, Hegelian) line. In this version, the discourse of truth wants to separate itself off from literature, from fiction. Literature would then be associated with appearance—with Heracliteanism. And Heracliteanism—as opposed to the official line—would be at the other side of the history of thought. This other side would reveal appearance to be the true fiction for philosophy. Here Lacoue-Labarthe again cites Nietzsche, this time from *Twilight of the Idols*: “Insofar as the senses show becoming, passing away, and change, they do not lie. But Heraclitus will remain eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty fiction. The ‘apparent’ world is the only one: the ‘true’ world is merely added by a lie.” [*Sofern die Sinne das Werden, das Vergehen, den Wechsel zeigen, lügen sie nicht . . . Aber damit wird Heraklit ewig recht behalten, daß das Sein eine leere Fiktion ist. Die ‘scheinbare’ Welt ist die einzige: die ‘wahre Welt’ is nur hinzugelogen . . .*]⁸] Hence for Nietzsche, “fiction is the lie that is truth” (*LL-SP*, 5). This reversal—at the other end, or perhaps only behind,

the official history of metaphysics—moves to the other side, operates at the opposing site in which the discourse of truth prevails. But this move to the alternative is insufficient. It is only half of the deconstructive move. And for this reason, Nietzsche is not yet deconstructive. For as has already been noted: “Nietzsche is the reversal of Platonism and hence still a Platonism—and ultimately the accomplishment of metaphysics itself” (*LL-SP*, 5). To the extent that Nietzsche can only offer appearance as fiction in opposition to reality as truth, the role played by fiction has not yet been found. For, the history of Platonism and anti-Platonism is the history of philosophy—and this history has become a fiction, an episteme, a discourse in which reality and appearance are opposed, in which, near its end, subjectivity and objectivity are the last attempts to separate off the real from the apparent, the unitary from the multiple, the self from alterity. The modern phase of the history of philosophy is the final phase in the development of the opposition between philosophy and literature. And this history is ultimately a fable, a story told again and again—full of sound and fury, . . . *Sturm und Drang*, . . . hope and despair, . . . control and madness. Thinking fiction is thinking the world as a fable where the history of philosophy is always a story told with a moral—a particular truth to be told.

The Postmodern Subject as Fable

If the history of metaphysics, the history of philosophy, the history of the opposition between Platonism and anti-Platonism, between reality and appearance is fiction, then what of the modern subject that appears on the scene near the end of this history? After Nietzsche, after the history of philosophy became fiction, Heidegger links *Dichtung* to *Denken*. What was already a question in German romanticism—the “*dichterisch* completion of philosophy”—is transformed into the identity of thinking and poetizing. With Heidegger, it is not that the poets themselves could speak the truth, that they could say what they themselves are for in a destitute time, but that *Denken* itself opens up the space for *Dichtung*. With Heidegger, *Dichtung* takes place in the Open established by the ontico-ontological difference, but this is also where *Denken* occurs [*sich ereignet*]. And *Denken* takes place where truth (*alētheia*) is the coming out of concealedness of what has been hidden. Heidegger’s truth, Heidegger’s *alētheia*, is a poetized truth. Heidegger’s truth is already an appearance, a *Scheinen*, a fiction narrated—not by a subject but in a space of difference. Heidegger’s truth is neither Platonic nor anti-Platonic. His truth comes after the end of the history of metaphysics. Heidegger’s truth narrates the fiction of the identity of difference, the story that there is some identity to the differential Open in which Dasein’s possibilities are articulated. From the Being of beings to language (*Sprache*), Heidegger discovers *Dichtung*—first the *Dichtung* of the German romantics, then the *Dichtung* that itself discloses as the “house of Being.”

But Derrida’s Heidegger is what is in question here. Derrida views Hei-

degger's thought as differential to the core, because it offers a notion of difference that is both temporal and spatial. Indeed, it describes difference as both veiled and unfurled, as both pointed and open, as textual and philosophical . . . Difference itself is a fiction. There cannot be anything that is difference. There cannot be any subject that is not already a fiction. There cannot be any text that is not already an outside the text. There cannot be any outside the text that is not already text. There cannot be any difference that is not already textuality.

And Lacoue-Labarthe remarks on the poetic character of Zarathustra.⁹ He also asks—in contrast to Heidegger's "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?"—"What is Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*?" (*LL-SP*, 47). The question is a perplexing one since it is no longer a question—as it was in Heidegger—of what sort of being Zarathustra might be, of what sort of prophet, of what sort of philosopher, of what sort of thinker Zarathustra could be, but rather what sort of site is Nietzsche's text called *Zarathustra*? Is Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* a philosophical book or is it *dichterisch*? Or is it, as Heidegger suggests, *denkerisch-dichterisch*? The *Darstellung* of *Zarathustra* is critical here. *Zarathustra* is neither purely *denkerisch*, nor purely *dichterisch*. It is also not fiction. With *Zarathustra* something begins and something ends. With Zarathustra, the whole history of Platonism and anti-Platonism comes together in a fable. *Zarathustra* is a story—or perhaps many stories—told about the overgoing and undergoing of a discourse, of a speaking, of a perspective. It is not that Zarathustra is some sort of subject. It is that many stories are told. In each story, there is a difference. In each narrative, a new perspective is offered. In that there is a difference, the narrative is the fiction of a subject that is not yet of its time, in that there is a new perspective with each coming, the modern subject is still presenting itself. *Zarathustra* is located somewhere between this modern subject and the postmodern subject that remained (and still remains) a fiction. The moment of *Zarathustra*, however, is—as Nietzsche recognized—untimely. It comes before almost a hundred years before its time.

Zarathustra is both poetic and thoughtful. *Zarathustra* is a patchwork of the poetic and the thoughtful, of the literary and the philosophical, of appearance and truth, of the subject speaking and the subject spoken, of the centered identity of the self and the de-centered differential self . . . And what is Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*?¹⁰ If *Zarathustra* is the speech of Nietzsche, what is *Ecce Homo*? "Behold the man." Is the man in question a modern subject? Is it Nietzsche himself—a nineteenth century wayward philologist-philosopher? "Why I am so clever." "Why I am so wise?" "Why I am a destiny?" Who is this *I*? Is it Zarathustra? Is it Nietzsche? Is it a fiction? Nietzsche himself was a receding, quiet, unobtrusive person, we are told. The titles of *Ecce Homo* sections ring truer to the persona of a Walter Kaufmann or a Jacques Lacan than they do that of a Nietzsche. And the book *Ecce Homo*, is it not a fiction too? Would it not be a mistake to take it for autobiography? And its autobiographical textuality is equally transferrable to *Zarathustra*. Or is it? At the end of his writing career, Nietzsche desperately attempts to make a show of the human subject—*ecce homo*. "Only when you deny

me can I come again,” he writes—or quotes from his *Zarathustra* in his *Ecce Homo*. But he fails at his *Selbstdarstellung* in *Ecce Homo*—perhaps even more than in his *Zarathustra*.

The modern subject—in its purity, in its unity, in its identity, in its inviolable condition—proved to be the object of *recherches* long after Nietzsche’s death in 1900. Indeed at this turning from the nineteenth century into the twentieth, the search for the self, for the modern subject became even more desperate, even more passionate, even more futile, even more absurd. With Freud, for instance, it can be expected that there is somewhere a pure, unadulterated, uncomplicated, unperverse subject. Perhaps it is only an ideal. Perhaps it is even an ideal which is not even desirable—too Apollonian for Freud’s taste. Yet what would one need psychoanalysis for if there were not a concept of cure, if the modern subject could not reveal what lies latent in its unconscious life. It is assumed that “there is, in general, such a thing as *presentation*, a full, whole, virginal, inviolate, and inviolable presence, a wild state where we could be, where we would be, *ourselves*, unalienated and undissociated subjects (in whatever form), before any transgression or prohibition, before any war or rivalry—obviously also prior to any institution” (*LL-SP*, 101). Husserl—another contemporary of Freud—also had a conception of a pure, transcendental ego. If only he could recover, uncover, disengage, engage, activate, reactivate a subject that is pure of corrupting assumptions, expectations, presuppositions. Sartre knew that the ego could not be pure, but he tried to make it into an object nevertheless. Skinner and the behaviorists wanted the subject to be an object—controllable, predictable, conditionable—at all costs. The modern subject had to play the role of the condition of all acts of consciousness or the conditioned of all behaviors. Lacan wanted to understand whatever it was that speaks in the language of the patient. If it was a subject, it was a speaking subject—signifying, discursive, narrated.

With Lacan—the *Écrits* appeared the same year as Foucault’s *Les Mots et les choses* in which he announces the death of the modern subject—the speaking subject operates as if it were a fiction. Lacan’s interest in Joyce is no accident. He could read as much into Joyce’s subject as he could in the language of his patients. The speaking subject—the postmodern subject—is a fiction.

Like philosophy itself, the subject is narrativized, textualized, contextualized. Like philosophy itself, the modern subject has become a fiction. The modern subject has become one story or another. But there is more. The modern subject in Lacoue-Labarthe—following Derrida—has become a fable.

A fable is a fabulation, a tale told with a moral—usually a tale about animals—Aesop’s fables, Lafontaine’s fables, where animals undergo a trial, a test of experience, and they learn a lesson from what they have undergone. The fable offers a distinctive lesson, a moral that will be evidence to humans that if they act accordingly they will be better people. To say that the postmodern subject is a fable is to say not only that it is a potential fiction, but also that each enactment will bring a different lesson, another moral, one further way of being. The post-

modern subject is many tales, many morals, many lessons. It is not any one way to be—the modern ideal has been surrendered, the loss or distortion (*Verwindung*) cannot be recovered. It is a matter of getting over the loss. But there was nothing lost in any case. The postmodern subject is not dead. It is not wiped from the scene. It is not despairing of its lost unity. The postmodern subject is many fables—each juxtaposed alongside the others. The postmodern subject is indeed already many subjects, many stories, many different narratives, many ways to be. The styles are perhaps different, the contexts are perhaps different, the traditions are perhaps different, the engenderings are perhaps different, but the differences are not different.

The moment of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the moment of the beginning of the postmodern. *Incipit Zarathustra*, *incipit* the postmodern. The postmodern is both a completion and a commencement, an end and many different beginnings.

Conclusion

In the essay "Obliteration," (*LL-SP*, 57–98) Lacoue-Labarthe raises the question of the (de)constitution of the subject. Derrida returns to this question in his Introduction to the English translation of *Typography*. Derrida writes:

[I]f the 'desistance' of the subject—the giving up (*aufgeben*) of the subject, taking distance (*Abstand nehmen*) from the subject (and its ex-sistence), and refraining from addressing (*unterlassen*) the subject—does not first signify a 'self-desistance,' we should not come to some conclusion thereby about the passivity of the subject, or about its activity. Desistance is better for marking the middle voice. Before any decision, before any desition (as one might also say in English to designate a cessation of being), the subject is desisted without being passive; it desists without desisting itself, even before being the subject of a reflection, a decision, an action, or a passion. Should one then say that subjectivity *consists* in such a desistance? No, that's just the point—what is involved here is the impossibility of *consisting*, a singular impossibility: something entirely different from a lack of consistency. Something more in the way of a '(de)constitution.'¹¹

Derrida makes a case for desistance as a new configuration—but a configuration suggests a stability of the figure—a stability of the figure of the subject that neither Derrida nor Lacoue-Labarthe find appropriate. But this configuration is understood as a desistance—"a certain *desistance* of the subject, a (de)constitution rather than a destitution" (*LL-T*, 2). Derrida reads *desistance* as ineluctability—a pre-impression that marks the desistance of the subject.

What this all means is that the modern subject—neatly constituted by/from a transcendental ego (Husserl), or a libidized ego (Freud), or a pure ego (William James), or an enduring consciousness (Bergson), or a subjectivity (Sartre)—is, in the postmodern, (de)constituted. Any particular configuration of the figure of the subject consists in a fable told in one of many different ways. Each accounting is the subject's *Selbstdarstellung*, the subject's textuality. Who one is is how the

moral is elaborated. This does not mean that we are not who we are. Quite the contrary. But we also do not live the fiction of a pure, inviolable, indivisible identity. The configuration of a self is no longer that of an “existing” self—the existential identity, or Heideggerian *Eigentlichkeit* that was the last effort to save the modern subject from its anguish, errancy, absurdity. The postmodern subject—as a fable—tells many stories about itself. It is not as though any story will do. To de-sist—to be ineluctable—means to be a patchwork of a self that is seeking an outside to the existing self. If the outside as a fable turns out to designate the inside—the identity of the self—the subject in its postmodern phase will survive, will (de)constitute itself, will desist. We are not just the stories we tell ourselves or the stories that are told about us. Yet we do live by our de-constituted selves. Nietzsche says that he is a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus. Is this a true story? Or is it fiction? Once philosophy has become a fiction, it is no longer a matter of sorting out the difference. We live in the differences, the postmodern differences.

Chapter 4

The Subject of the Good: Exaltation without Representation

Stephen David Ross

“What if, after all,” Lacoue-Labarthe asks, “philosophy were nothing but literature?” (*LL-SP*, 1). Why can’t her majesty, philosophy, be more like literature, still a woman? Why can’t a woman be more like a man?

Wittig responds in the accusative:

“Man” and “woman” are political concepts of opposition, and the copula which dialectically unites them is, at the same time, the one which abolishes them . . . The concept of difference has nothing ontological about it. It is only the way that the masters interpret a historical situation of domination (*KR*, 29).

Man and woman are categories of domination. Perhaps all categories, perhaps *categories as such*, are dominations, without neutrality. If so, our responsibility before the good—which, perhaps, is nothing, or everything: as Levinas says, *before being*¹—would be to resist categories, resist domination, perhaps with universality, perhaps with univocity.

As if universality and univocity and the good were not categories or dominations. “This thought [the category of sex] which impregnates all discourses, including common-sense ones . . . is the thought of domination” (*W-SME*, 5); “one must assume both a particular *and* a universal point of view” (*W-SME*, 67). Perhaps this assumption is the subject of the good.

For the moment I would follow the thought of domination *everywhere*, affecting *everything*, impregnating *every* discourse, institution, social relation. Yet perhaps there is something to be heard in the categories of man and woman beyond domination: universals without universality; universality beyond categoriality. I have suggested that categories, abstract thought and language in general, knowledge and truth, are dominations, including philosophy and literature. Perhaps all categories, including philosophy and literature, together or apart, represent domination. Perhaps all knowledge, truth, and thought—even a thinking against representation or a philosophy that was only literature—represent another

domination. Perhaps each and every all resists domination.

I cannot go on without recalling something else in Wittig's thought. This thought, in the extreme, is that all dominations repeat the domination of women by men, for only in that reproductive control, the truth of heterosexuality, the ordering of populations, can institutions control the future of humanity against death. Everything is at stake for humanity in general, against the reality of extinction in the mastery of women as agents of reproduction, as vehicles, containers, and envelopes of production. No biopolitics without women.

It seems that we are struck down by ethical failure on both sides. That is how I mean to follow the line of thought opened by Lacoue-Labarthe between philosophy and literature—where, he suggests, yawns the abyss of ethics. Hegel enters that abyss in contaminated form, repeating the subjection of women to men's law, to marriage, subjected to the category of being-woman in a heterosexual economy. But what possibility exists of resisting the category of being-woman, or being-man, if we are women and men, especially when homosexuality replays the domination?

Here is Lacoue-Labarthe reading Hegel:

If woman alone needs to be veiled, it is because she alone expresses—and arouses?—*sensual* desire. In accordance with what the whole philosophical tradition has always said or implied, there is, properly speaking, no *pudendum* other than female *pudendum*; or, what amounts to exactly the same thing, male homosexual desire (we should write: *homosexual* desire) is spiritual desire: the phallus is the “organ” of the spirit (*LL-SP*, 141).

Several questions arise in relation to this passage. I foresee the rest of my discussion turning around and back upon it, retracing these questions. But they may be summarized here within a crescendo.

1. Is this veil that woman alone needs—*woman*, a category of domination—another category demarcating the limits of truth, discourse, language, philosophy? In other words, is truth still a woman, under the category of veils? Does the veil fall into language and truth as another binary opposition? Does this mean that concealment and unconcealment, dissimulation and simulation also work as categories? And if not, what would resist their categorization except a certain univocity or universality of being, truth, language, and masks that resist the domination of identity? Here we may understand the conflicted and dangerous possibility that veils veil women only—European veils and European women, not to mention others—and similarly, that masks mask European men from within the very gesture that would resist both Eurocentrism and phallogocentrism: a gesture with the name of philosophy.

2. The question then becomes, in Lacoue-Labarthe's words, what do veils veil? From my own perspective, the question must become: what do masks mask, what do dissimulations dissimulate? To what are we exposed within the

call of the good before being? Foucault speaks directly to this subject: “we are difference . . . our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and make” (*F-AK*, 131). We ourselves are the difference of masks, where difference and masks mark disparition, discontinuity, and rupture, expose the groundlessness of our identity, break open the hold of reason on discourse and philosophy. Masks mask nothing (or everything). But veils veil women’s *pudenda*—coveted, we may say, by men.

3. Is this *pudendum* flesh—this erotic sexuality that attaches to women as men’s desire—that must be veiled? Or rather, is the sensuality—the desire, of which Lacoue-Labarthe speaks here and elsewhere, in relation to *Lucinde* and the threat of romantic art for Hegel—flesh, material and bodily sensuality, or is it spirit’s poltergeist, i.e., still spiritual? Shall we think of literature as philosophy’s poltergeist, still too spiritual, not filled with mucus, oozing, spilling, fragrant with embodied life, with natural juices? I wonder if the body that protrudes from the mind|body problem, its remainder, materializes in its fleshy glory, or remains spiritualized in literature, spiritualized in Latin, spiritualized in italics, spiritualized in the singular (for the fleshy organs of desire are named *pudenda*). I wonder if the singular *pudendum*, compared with multiply heterogeneous *jouissances*, in French, repeats the single seat of desire known by men. I wonder if the women born from the domination of the categories of man and woman are their remainder; if they remain dominated and dominating, not because we cannot escape from domination, in language or whatever. (I am not at all sure that we can.) But, rather, because language, writing, philosophy, and literature contribute profoundly to domination without in themselves knowing oppression, pain and suffering, materiality, joy.

To state the question more strongly: does the call of the good—the excessive responsibility I bear in my exposure toward the other, in this case, as a man toward the veiling of women, the masking of their and my *pudenda*—meet this responsibility for the domination of women in the written form of philosophy? Or is this very thought of philosophy, whether only literature or never literature, a refusal of that responsibility, a spiritualization of a responsibility toward a material struggle? Levinas tells us that the worship of truth, as unveiling, belongs to philosophy’s domination, to the assembling of beings, knowing nothing of the good, nothing of exposure to the erotic flesh of others.

I find something so alien from the good here that I would trace it as a repetition of the oblivion Lacoue-Labarthe asks us to face between philosophy and literature, men and women. Yet I am sure that to trace it here would obliterate the point I would recall—that we cannot reach toward the good that calls us, immeasurably exposed, within another binary opposition. The ethical that echoes in oppositions of good and evil, which is easily offended, which struggles for liberation by condemning oppression—here women against men, and “we” enlightened post-philosophers against speculative philosophy—repeats the form of

the dominations it would resist. That is the ethical difficulty at the heart of the idea of the end of philosophy, the end of the subjection of women. We are responsible without end for ending domination and oppression; however, this is a responsibility we cannot undertake without another binary categorization, or another form of domination.

And so, when Lacoue-Labarthe ends his essay on “The Unpresentable,” we find another binary of sensualization and spiritualization in the name of philosophy. And of woman: “That the ‘sensuous’ figure may give itself as an ‘end in itself’ is, from the point of view of the speculative, something intolerable. That is to say, *unbearable*. The speculative cannot bear that anything nonspiritual be considered an ‘end in itself’—be, if you will, *cut-off* from the spiritual. The *abscission* is intolerable” (*LL-SP*, 157). I leave aside, for the moment, the figure of Venus, who “no doubt, is the name of the abscission” (*LL-SP*, 157). I leave it (but not her) aside in noting that woman again becomes the name of something for man, without a doubt. My more immediate concern is with the “sensuous.” I wonder if this nonspirituality is spirit’s other, within the rule of spirit, and beyond this whether sensuousness is materiality, flesh, or writing’s form, replaying Aristotelian categories by inversion. Moreover, I wonder if anywhere in Lacoue-Labarthe something escapes philosophy in the name of the sensuous, nonspiritual, embodied woman. And man. And animal.

4. All this spiritualization comes to a head in the name and the gender of the sensuous, the body, with its *pudenda* which remains, I fear, no body at all, without a gender, even with its *pudendum*. The name of the sensuous remains female: Venus. The de-spiritualization of homosexual spirituality retains its name—not Venus, but *homosexuality*. We should write, Lacoue-Labarthe says, *homosexual* desire. My final question, gathering up the others, is what it might mean to write *homosexual desire* for us, for men—do we silence women, silence lesbian women, once more? Do we silence or rehabilitate homosexual men? Does Lacoue-Labarthe hesitate at occupying a heterosexual economy, or does he at best demand that we, within our speculative economy, resist the masculine economy of philosophy with the feminine figure of literature by raising Venus to the mount, and standing her as an equal with Dionysus, Zeus, or Apollo? Or perhaps, not quite equal, nevertheless, even as the literary figure of philosophy?

I do not mean to abandon the subject of philosophy, certainly not to abandon literature, which seems to be intimate with the subject of philosophy in tracing the economy of the feminine. I am tempted to imagine that literature relates to philosophy as the subject—insofar as the subject threatens speculation—relates to speculation; this is to say that just as madness places reason at risk, or as Dionysus threatens Apollo, literature too threatens philosophy with its madness. Indeed, literature is Dionysian, unphilosophical at its very core, because it is sensuous and material. We must finally admit that literature has a *pudenda*. I am tracing the gender of the subject of philosophy along two intersecting lines, following four questions. One line states that the subject who risks philosophy is

named and gendered *woman*, while the other states that living people who suffer the dominations and oppressions of gender, the mark of gender, have no voice, no place, in this discourse of the literariness, the sensuous form, of philosophy. It is as if women get it both ways, coming and going, up and down, get it no matter which steps are taken to liberate them, no matter who takes the steps.

Analogously, does the subject of and in philosophy, who threatens its rationality, get it both ways, no matter what? Does literature get it both ways, no matter what, even in victory? Or is there something unique about women in relation to philosophy and philosophers, not to mention men philosophers, and women? This question pursues something in the mark of gender that philosophy may be unable to address, or even exclude. It is a mark that surrounds life everywhere, throughout nature, that philosophy has never marked and cannot mark, even as we might say, as Wittig says, that it has never marked anything else. But I am still in a mode of deferral.

For I have not done with my four questions, have not traversed them to the point where the mark of gender appears and disappears at the heart of philosophy. This re-traversal will bring me to my harshest point of violence.

1. The first question concerned the veiling of truth in relation to Dionysian masks and unveiling. It is concerned with the possibility that philosophy's truth replays the domination of women. Historically, from the standpoint of unveiling, we may resist the classifications in which, it seems, we desire to know the world through categories in order to dominate it, and them. Aristotle speaks of masters and slaves: "Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals . . . the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master" (*Politics*, 1254b). Then he writes: "In like manner we may infer that, after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man . . . Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man" (*Politics*, 1256b). The structure of binary pairs is dominant-subordinate. The lower exist for the sake of the higher; every pair of categories orders from high to low. A taxonomic, representational, correspondence truth belongs to a system of categories of domination. And this is true even, or especially, where we distinguish facts from values, where we suppose that scientific knowledge might be free from domination. The ideas of objectivity, neutrality, and universality at the heart of valuelessness belong to systems of domination, which are driven by a will to power and a will to truth.

Against this image of domination through truth, of subjection through categorization, Heidegger reminds us of *alêtheia*, of an unveiling that owes a debt both to the forgetting of being and to the systems of domination that compose modern thought. He does not, perhaps, consider that the thought of *alêtheia* may be another domination. In this way, perhaps, he fails to hear what I think of as Nietzsche's secret and telling thought, that the thought of masks is masked, that

masks proceed from domination to domination. Nietzsche is not excepted. Nor is Heidegger. Nor are we, or Lacoue-Labarthe. The veiling and the unveiling occupy systems of domination, and it occupies them in relation to the binary oppositions they would resist.

And women get it both ways, coming and going. Women's *pudendum* remains the *parergon* for men and philosophy, and thus it pervades writing. If truth is veiled, she wears female clothing and cosmetics. All simulations. I mean dissimulations.

Women get it both ways because the responsibility of which Levinas speaks, infinite exposure toward the Other as other, as heterogeneous, refuses heterogeneity except within the force of domination. Levinas himself is not excepted. When Irigaray asks Levinas, "is there otherness outside of sexual difference?" (*IR*, 178), she answers: "The function of the other sex as an alterity irreducible to myself eludes Levinas for at least two reasons: He knows nothing of communion in pleasure . . . he substitutes the son for the feminine" (*IR*, 180-1). He knows nothing of a communion in pleasure between the one and the other, reduces the dangerous, erotic heterogeneity of the other gender/sex to a neuter other. Women get it both ways because they vanish in the neuter, and are named only in categories of domination, being situated as the one and only *pudendum*.

2. What do veils veil, what do masks mask, except sexual difference, violence and domination? When Lacoue-Labarthe asks, in reading Hegel, "what exactly does the veil veil?," he answers for Hegel that clothing covers human shame, refusing animality, signifying Man's spirituality. I have quoted Aristotle, who understands nature's relation to human spirit to have made all animals for the sake of man. I find this quite an abominable thought, abominable ethically, reaching culmination in Spinoza, from whom we expect better.

Regard for our own profit does not demand that we should preserve anything which exists in nature except men, but instead it teaches us to preserve it or destroy it in accordance with its varied uses, or to adapt it to our own service in any way whatever (*S-E*, 4 App 26).

Anything in nature, including every animal and plant, every living thing, we may use in any way whatever. That is nature's and God's way. If there are categorial differences, they pertain to use absolutely. The Spinoza for whom nature bears an infinite depth, expressed in infinite numbers of attributes and kinds, divides the world into human beings and everything else, where everything else may be used by men in any way whatever. And I say men because, in Kristeva's words, Spinoza excludes women from his ethics.

This is to say that we cannot say what veils veil, what masks mask, cannot give it a name without domination, and cannot refuse it a name without another domination. Getting women coming and going. And others. For I must remind you that animals get it every way, get it in virtue of their kind and blood. As do all the others who differ from us by blood. And all of this in the name of neutrality.

3. Is the (one and only) (female) *pudendum* flesh? Or rather, because this

question divides in three, is the seat of (man's) desire, which must be veiled in order for man to speculate, first, woman, second, flesh, and, third, does she in her one *pudendum* replay the duality of mind and body, where the only body present belongs to the mind, to the masculine subject? Does the seating of desire between the legs, under the law, fall upon women in spiritualized form, in the form of writing, language, thought, and spirit, but never inscribed on the body in flesh? Is the sensuality of art its embodiment, our fleshiness, or another aestheticization, another oblivion?

I begin with the last, the sensuousness of art which remains spiritual in Lacoue-Labarthe and Kant, and especially Cassirer, who makes this point of Kant repeatedly: the sensuousness of art, which in Hegel makes it fallen, still belongs to spirit. To reinstate the sensuousness of art and writing, thereby of philosophy, continues to circle around spirit and spirituality. I describe this circling as our falling repeatedly into the mind/body abyss so deeply that even as we might hope to rehabilitate the body against the spiritualization of mind, of thought, of humanism, we think of a spiritualized body, a masculinized, *homosexual* body. We remain in the mind's grip upon the body.

I do not offer this as a question. I am convinced that Americans, Europeans, humans are unable to set spirit aside when we press the flesh of the body. If we ever do so. I cite three passages circling around the body to enforce this point. First, I imagine threshold as an intermediary figure, between earth and sky, without sexuality, materiality, embodiment, linking sky and earth, mortals and divinities, under the call of language, without sexual difference. I am speaking of Heidegger's reading of Trakl's poem, *A Winter Evening*, containing the extraordinary line: "[p]ain has turned the threshold to stone" (*PLT*, 203).

Threshold links the fourfold, coming right up to sexual difference, and recoils.

The speaking of the first two stanzas speaks by bidding things to come to world, and world to things. The two modes of bidding are different but not separated . . . The intimacy of world and thing is not a fusion. Intimacy obtains only where the intimate—world and thing—divides itself cleanly and remains separated. In the midst of the two, in the between of world and thing, in their *inter*, division prevails: a *dif-ference* (*PLT*, 202).

World and thing inhabit a fourfold ruled by a dyad, linking, mediating, dividing: dif-ference. Why not sexual difference, gender, erotic materiality? Why resist sexual difference, animal difference, sexual and animal bodies?

Irigaray gives us in her place a material, embodied threshold, an intermediary region that is as far from the sensuous in art as that sensuousness is from the spiritual:

Perhaps we are passing through an era when *time must re-deploy space*.

A new morning of and for the world? A remaking of immanence and transcendence, notably through this *threshold* which has never been examined as such: the female sex. The threshold that gives access to the *mucous*. Beyond classical oppositions of love and hate, liquid and ice—a threshold that is always *half-open*. The threshold of the *lips*, which are strangers to dichotomy and oppositions (I-ESD 18).

We find an unmistakably engendered, sexual figure, the redeployment of space, threshold, mucosity, lips, all (perhaps?) vaginal. To the sexlessness of the fourfold Irigaray adds an undeniably sexual figure. Here the *pudenda* are female in a way no longer, perhaps, owned by men.

A very different possibility, second, can be found in Foucault, as far as possible from spirit. For Foucault speaks of bodies and their doubling, one the represented, disciplined body, the body as object and target of power, the emergence of the art of the body, the other the always-present body to which descent attaches and around which genealogy circles.

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self . . . and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.

Here the body exposed by genealogy is both totally imprinted by history and language and a fleshy, material site where bodies suffer and are destroyed. I remind you of natural juices, of mucus, of bodily membranes, where sexual desire does its work, and where we experience pain and death. I remind you, third, of Wittig, who speaks of lesbianization, this time in a different voice:

Not one will be able to bear seeing you with eyes turned up lids cut off your yellow smoking intestines spread in the hollow of your hands your tongue spat from your mouth long green strings of your bile flowing over your breasts, not one will be able to bear your low frenetic insistent laughter . . . your organs your nerves their rupture their spurting forth death slow decomposition stench being devoured by worms your open skull, all will be equally unbearable to her (*W-LB*, 15).

This is the very first paragraph of *The Lesbian Body*. It opens in several directions.

(a) The unnamed narrator, the *J/e* (who cannot appear in English, who cannot be heard in French, who disappears in English into the undivided *I*, while in French reflexives divides again and again, profusely, for example, in “*j//arrive; j//atteins; j//arrache*” [*Corps Lesbien*, 9]) repeatedly names the parts of her unnamed lover's body,² opens the erotic body in its profusion and plenitude, by naming.³ This nominal profusion of bodily parts, French and English parts, inwards, organs, materials, tissues, shares a heterogenous space between languages and embodiment, an erotic, fleshy space. Anatomical science is one of the forms

by which nature's profusion may be known erotically. Nature's plenitude opens to us through the opening of language and work, of representation beyond itself.

(b) The profusion and plenitude of nature enter the flesh, the body, penetrate its crevices, organs, tissues, and materiality, in the form of love. Human beings love each other, know (if they are lesbians, lesbianized) a love incarnate, embodied, that does not impose a transcendental signifier, that does not glorify a single organ or site, but pervades, permeates, suffuses, sometimes in terrible, awful ways, the lover's body, everywhere in nature, refusing to stop at the skin. Penetration takes on another meaning, not the entering of one privileged organ into another, but a profusion of penetrations and permeations, along every fold of flesh, including folds we cannot know, do not know, may never know, including lines of biology and anatomy that romantic lovers disdain.

(c) The inward fleshiness of the lover that the unnamed narrator portrays, describes, inhabits spaces that lovers cannot inhabit without language and without violence. This is not men's violence against women, but it is no less shocking, or unnerving. The permeation everywhere in the body is described in destructive, violent terms, and resolved into intimacy, proximity, love.

(d) The language of *The Lesbian Body* is violent, but it is especially and repeatedly violent in animal form. In the materiality of embodiment, in the lesbianization of humanity, Wittig bridges a close affinity with animal flesh and animal soul.

You stand upright on your paws one of them intermittently scratching the ground. Your head weighs on the nape of m/y neck, your canines gash m/y flesh where it is most sensitive, you hold m/e between your paws, you constrain m/e to lean on m/y elbows, . . . you rip off m/y skin with the claws of your four paws, a great sweat comes over m/e hot then soon cold, a white foam spreads the length of your black chops (*W-LB*, 22).

I add a partial list of animals and other corporeal places in nature that materialize in *The Lesbian Body*: worms, amoebas, spores, butterflies, monkeys, turtle-doves, swans, flowers, bitches, water, wings, bats, birds, spiders, fish, mares, sharks, vegetables, snakes, finches, felines, Gorgons.

(e) Wittig speaks of something that has no existence, cannot even be forbidden. "*Le Corps Lesbien* has lesbianism as its theme, that is, a theme which cannot even be described as taboo, for it has no real existence in the history of literature" (*W-LB*, 9). We may wonder at the forgetting of women who love women, who live together with women, who have done so throughout Western history and throughout other places in the history and world. If they did not write, if they did not say "I am lesbian," did they exist? Homosexuality, Wittig claims, was named and written, but lesbians had no name. And still, in many countries of the world, women still live alone or together, but do not practice something called (in any language) *lesbianism*. The kind asks for a name.⁴

4. The final question, the question I have suggested includes the others, is that of *homosexuality*, a word that cannot appear in English. And perhaps we must ask again what it means for it to appear in Lacoue-Labarthe. Does he resist a heterosexual economy with what Wittig calls *lesbianization*? Or does he repeat that economy in the figure of Aphrodite, who remains man's desire even when unveiled?

Put another way, does philosophy remain within the economy described as the ancient quarrel even when it becomes literature?

But first, lesbianization:

The bar in the *j/e* of *The Lesbian Body* is a sign of excess. A sign that helps to imagine an excess of "I," an "I" exalted. "I" has become so powerful in *The Lesbian Body* that it can attack the order of heterosexuality in texts and assault the so-called love, the heroes of love, and lesbianize them, lesbianize the symbols, lesbianize the gods and the goddesses, lesbianize the men and the women (*W-LB*, 87).

Judith Butler criticizes Wittig for such a lesbianization, at least for her language of universality. She criticizes Wittig's suggestion that to overcome the mark of gender demands two things: first, the possibility in language as a whole, of reinscribing heterogeneity against the oppositions of heterosexuality, and second, (in Butler's words) "an ontological presumption of the unity of speaking beings in a Being that is prior to sexed being. Gender, she argues, 'tries to accomplish the division of Being,' but 'Being as being is not divided'" (*Gender Trouble*, 117, quoted in *W-SME*, 81).

I read the undividedness of being as its impurity and heterogeneity, perhaps its univocity. Wittig speaks of reappropriating the universal against its appropriation by men, perhaps of reappropriating the universal or univocal against any appropriation. Most of all, she speaks against the way "[s]ex, under the name of gender, permeates the whole body of language and forces every locutor, if she belongs to the oppressed sex. to proclaim it in her speech" (*W-SME*, 79). Her concern is with the possibility of releasing the hold of gender on everyone who falls under it, on how it is possible for women, including lesbians, to be released from gender. She describes this as a release to the universal, to what Butler calls the unity of being rather than the dividedness (into two, by gender and sexual difference) of being. In this space, between the unity and dividedness of being, heterogeneity appears, in this moment as the gender of the other, face to face with the erotic other. I join Butler in hesitating before the universality of gender and at the possibility of release to universality. I hesitate before another category of domination. Yet I would heed the univocity of gender.

The undividedness of being speaks against the binary divisions of categories in which women are subordinated to men and animals to human beings, in which every neutral, objective, scientific and metaphysical category holds some in oppression. I take this binary division to permeate thought, even the thought of

the oblivion of being. I take this permeation to extend further than Wittig appears to allow when she speaks of Aristotle's table of opposites (*W-SME*, 50):

limited-unlimited
 odd-even
 one-many
 straight-curved
 square-oblong
 rest-motion
 right-left
 male-female
 light-dark
 good-bad

For she says that only the last four are ethical, where I think of all categorical pairs as ethical, insofar as they are exclusive, throwing it down one category, with the subject, under domination.

The subject of the good is the subject—human and otherwise—thrown down, abjectly, into subjection in the inscription of exclusion. In this analysis, it does not matter whether the subject dominates or is dominated because the subject here is a subject of subjection in either case. This subjection far exceeds origins and representations, for it represents itself as inclusive. The dialectic, Hegel says, includes all differences in the identity and difference of identity and difference. Yet this identity and the dialectic continue the play of opposition and exclusion. Nothing can be excluded from the dialectic, but inclusion is subordination of women to men and of art to philosophy.

The good—if there be such—includes everything (and nothing) in an ethical movement without domination, a movement Wittig calls “lesbianization.” This is a movement that is impossible in a heterosexual economy, impossible in an ethical|political economy, impossible for men and women and others who would be ethical by choosing between good and bad, philosophy and literature; but impossible also for those who would pursue the good together with the bad, philosophy together with literature, masculinity joined with femininity. All these junctures replay binary exclusion under inversion.

Wittig speaks of being as undivided, calling forth Butler's resistance to totality. Where philosophy joins literature, undivided, we have a totality, calling for resistance in the name of the good. Where philosophy sets itself apart from literature, we have another totality instituted as exclusion.

But Wittig also speaks of an exalted *I*, exalted by the bar in *j/e*, the *I* that does not impose masculine gender on the *elles*, on the woman who can be woman only by passing through masculine gender, or who may escape from masculine gender only as what Wittig calls “an escapee, a fugitive slave, a lesbian” (*W-SME*, xiii). Lesbians are fugitive slaves, better off perhaps than slaves, but not exalted. What then is the exaltation of the subject to which we might be brought

by lesbianization, an exaltation of the subject in philosophy? This subject bears what Levinas calls a responsibility to the good, an exaltation of the *I* that might be powerful enough to accept a responsibility that no one can accept under conditions of gender inequality.

We are all fugitives, escapees from gender and other inequalities, wounded in our bodies and souls, unable to be ethical, forced by life and experience and within ourselves to be nothing but ethical, responsible to and for the good, to and for the other, where that other as other is thrown down into our subjection.

But in our fugitiveness, in our resistance, the possibility of another “I” emerges, an exalted, universal *I*. Not an unveiled *I* but universal without totality. Infinite and infinitely veiled: simulated and dissimulated. In the critique of domination lies an exalted universality; we are difference—in affirmation and joy. Beyond humanity. Beyond categoriality.

This pursuit—I mean escape—of the universal appears in Cixous and Irigaray as well as Wittig, not without confusions:

I’m speaking of . . . woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history.⁵

Sexual difference probably represents the most universal question we can address. . . . because, across the whole world, there are, there are only, men and women (*I-ILTY*, 47-8).

Is this not the double return of categories of domination, men and women without exaltation? Yet the exalted *I* is not the subject of philosophy. It is not a neutral, universal *I* that knows nothing of exaltation because it passes itself off as everything. The exalted *I* is universal but never total. Here, in our time, exaltation may be denied to men, denied to humanity as human. If women are human, they may be human otherwise, opening the human universal to exaltation. This exaltation—beyond humanity and beyond categories—collapses the distinction between philosophy and literature. Indeed, it collapses every categorial measure into univocity, but not identity. Literature is philosophy’s exaltation; it represents gender, human nature’s equality—not an equality before the law. It is an exaltation without measure, impossible without an other, without other *jouissances*. And philosophy is literature’s exaltation; it expresses the desire in literature to expose itself infinitely to the call of the good and to one’s own body, to recite the body of the other, to recite the words of which the book is made up. The fascination for writing the previously unwritten and the fascination for the unattained body proceed from the same desire: the desire to bring the real body violently to life in the words of the book (*W-LB*, 10).

PART TWO

THE ART OF

REPRESENTATION

Introduction to

Part Two

The Art of Representation

Anne O'Byrne

The realm of art has long been understood as a world with a complex but clearly privileged relation to ends: to *end* understood as Aristotelian *telos*, certainly, and also to *end* understood in terms of the Kantian end-in-itself, but those are not the senses of *end* most in question here. What is at issue here is deceptively simply: the ending as something's coming to a close. Thus, when Friedrich Schlegel published his *Lucinde* in 1799, an era came to an end. When Nietzsche wrote that the real world had become a myth, it was the signal that representation had come to its end. Then, at the end of the twentieth century, Baudrillard uses Luis Borges' *Of Exactitude in Science* to bring another era to its end. And while Jean-François Lyotard and Barnett Newman seemed to draw modernity to its end with their analyses—and, in the case of Newman, with his artistic practices—of sublimity, it is argued here that the end of modernity, or at least the advent of post-modernity, instead comes in another form of the sublime.

This is not just a matter of dealing with those several occasions upon which art itself has been declared to have reached its end. The privilege of art works itself out according to a more intricate pattern and what we see here are the key elements of that pattern. Art ends, in Hegelian history, in an *Aufhebung* into religion, but it was Hegel who in 1799 saw in a particular work—*Lucinde*—the end of a world historical epoch. While Nietzsche could announce late in the nineteenth century that the age of representation was past, it was nevertheless the case in the late twentieth century that philosophy and literature were both still working out their relation to it and to each other. Meanwhile, Baudrillard would seem to insist that, since the onset of hyperreality—also in the mid- to late-twentieth century—there is no longer any relation to work out, leaving us with the question of what is at stake, then, in his own relation to or deployment of a Borges story. And even if we now understand representation as inevitably doomed to failure, is there not a whole, fascinating life in store for art as it fails in an ever greater variety of ways, and might this not be the most thoroughly *post*-modern meaning of the sublime?

Why should Hegel point to this work of literature—*Lucinde*—as a work with the capacity to end an era? He does so in no admiring way, and never tires of de-

nouncing Schlegel's depraved novel, on one hand, while praising Schiller's philosophical poems, on the other. The one ends an era, the other merely lacks one. The one attacks the very possibility of speculative philosophy, while the other, by going beyond Kantian subjectivity and developing a concept of the beautiful that seems to lead art to its furthest point in the realization of Spirit, allows literature to touch philosophy. The one is, for Hegel, an assault on philosophy from outside, the other an artistic continuation of a philosophical movement. For Massimo Verdicchio, as for Lacoue-Labarthe, the puzzle of *Lucinde* begins to find its resolution here; the novel is an attack on marriage, that firmly circumscribed and safe site of female sexuality. Unless femininity is confined within the bounds of matrimony, confined in a space that is within the state but nevertheless firmly removed from the state, it threatens Spirit itself. Hegel suggests that the Greeks seemed to know as much, choosing to clothe in veils all the female figures in their *statuary* while the male figures went naked. Schlegel's sin was to challenge the dictum that women are sexual beings only insofar as they are wives, which is in turn the social expression of the aesthetic insistence that the female figure, the representative of the sensuous, remain beyond representation.

Yet is this the whole story? Is what is unrepresentable in art coextensive with the sensual? Or is it the case, as Verdicchio argues, that the unrepresentable lies at a deeper level, the level of what makes both sensuousness and speculation possible? Is it what binds them both in a master-slave struggle, thus pitting literature and philosophy against and with each other in the same way that the master and the slave remain locked together? Indeed, Lacoue-Labarthe leads us in this direction, but only to domesticate the struggle in his turn, making it available to us and making it bearable precisely under the name of *Lucinde*, the one who refuses veiling, refuses sublation, and denies shame.

Meanwhile, there are those who would argue that this talk of struggle is, at best, overblown. Richard Rorty, for example, credits Plato with inventing philosophy as a *literary genre*; thus, when we approach philosophy with the Parmenidean question of the unity of thought and being, we can get no satisfactory answer because we are asking the wrong question. For a pragmatist like Rorty, the only appropriate question for a philosophical text is the same as the question for any other sort of literary text: does it help us *get what we want*? Philosophy tries to do so by argument; novels try it with narrative redescription. In neither case is interpretation governed by a necessity internal to the text; in neither case is there any rigour independent of the need to achieve our goal. When Gary Aylesworth presents this position here, he shows it running up against Nietzsche's announcement of the real world's having become a myth. Rorty has already dismissed idealism as a failed attempt to replace science as an absolute system, but Aylesworth points out that in Nietzsche we see idealism instead struggling to cope with the idea that appearances, and not thought, may be all there is. Rorty ignores this very possibility, and his argument moves on to displace ontology in favour of democracy as the real subject of the philosophical story. Thus, Nietzsche is valuable to

Rorty, but only insofar as he provides tools for individual development, and the question of the apparentness of the world is relegated to a private sphere. Here is the weakness in his political reading of philosophy's literariness; as Lacoue-Labarthe would point out, this public-private distinction may not be warranted, and it is certainly too much to assume individual identity while claiming to eschew metaphysics. What is needed is a genuine investigation of the possibility of a thoroughly non-metaphysical politics, a politics without identity, a new politics for a new subject.

Meanwhile, perhaps Baudrillard's own work is itself best approached as a sort of philosophical poetry, a Dionysian Socratism on the style of Nietzsche that opens a space for—but at the same time precisely denies access to—what lies behind the dizzying images of hyperreality. According to Basil O'Neill, this relation to the really real is distinctly post-modern (of course) but, more particularly, shows the distinctive character of the postmodern Sublime. His argument breaks new ground with the claim that this Sublime resonates most deeply with the Sublime as it was understood by Edmund Burke. For him, as for Kant, the Sublime involves something terrible, but this terror is always presented in a necessarily obscure way, making poetry, and not visual arts, yield the experience or intimation of sublimity. The Sublime, then, is a ghostly presence haunting poetic experience; in Baudrillard's terms, the really real is what hovers, terrible and unrepresentable, on the edge of our vision. The hyperreal in no way *presents* the really real, but all those simulacra do invoke some thought, however obscure, of what a non-simulated world might be like; something does seem to squint out from the other side of the mirror and leer at us in its ghastly way from just beyond the edge of what we know. Thus Baudrillard remains on the edge of the Sublime, practising his musical philosophy but without promising us the joy of plunging into the Dionysian or finding our real, true selves. Instead, he forces our gaze on the frustrating and unsatisfactory world of images that evokes—poetically, sublimely—the impossible idea of the real real.

After all, if Rorty does not take the vanishing of the real world seriously enough, Baudrillard takes it utterly seriously. Perhaps too much so, because if all we have are appearances, and if those most adept at using appearances turn out to be precisely those who continue to present the lost real, Baudrillard will have to find a position from which to launch his critique of such nostalgia merchants. What is surprising here, as Thomas Brockelman writes, is that the ground for that critique can be located precisely in Baudrillard's use of a work of fiction, namely, Borges' *Of Exactitude in Science*. To be exact, the story is sacrificed. It is used, cast aside, but nevertheless lives on. So too with critique. It oscillates between recent death and utter oblivion, and what Baudrillard does is build a memorial to the sacrifice. So while it is true that he does not offer us a plan for action in the face of the hyperreal, it is not true that he has available to him only the role of the fascinated, transfixed but helpless intellectual. Rather, by showing us the death of

critique—always disappearing, never gone—he comes close to offering a space where something—perhaps politics, perhaps art—can indeed happen.

Chapter 5

Fiction, Allegory, Irony: The Unveiling of Lacoue-Labarthe

Massimo Verdicchio

The question of the subject is a central issue in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's later work, as the title of a collection of his essays in English, edited by Thomas Trezise, *The Subject of Philosophy*, clearly indicates.¹ Of course, just the stating of the question of the subject is itself not without its problems. In fact, it would appear that it may not even be a question for philosophy at all. In an earlier essay, "The Response of Ulysses," Lacoue-Labarthe argues this point, when to the question "Who is the subject?" he replies that this is probably not even a question for philosophy, since the question of "Who is the subject?" can easily be foiled by an answer similar to the one Ulysses gave to Polyphemus, "No One."² For Lacoue-Labarthe, it would seem that the question is better left for literature. "Perhaps, then, one should leave to 'literature' (I would willingly say: to writing) the effort of sounding that call: 'who?'" (*Ulysses*, 160).

To the degree that literature proceeds from (or by) questions, this clearly becomes a question of literature, if not the question of literature. It even defines most particularly, though not exclusively, what one calls lyricism (*Ulysses*, 157).

Lacoue-Labarthe's presentation and discussion of the problem—by way of Blanchot's reading of Hegel's *Aesthetics*³—consist of an examination of Hegel's relation to romanticism, and specifically to Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*, since this is the locus where the question of the survival of philosophy, or its demise by literature, arises. *Lucinde* is mentioned at a decisive moment of the historical, specifically, in the systematic articulation between classical and romantic art, at the juncture of the transition from classical to Christian religious art, when Greek classical art disappears, giving way to revealed religion. This is the moment of the sublation of art, *Aufhebung*, when art ceases to appear as the highest manifestation of the life of the Spirit, but "still manages to survive itself," in the guise of Christian, or romantic art, as Hegel understands it (*LL-SP*, 121). But the sublation of art, for Lacoue-Labarthe, is not to taken for what erroneously passes for the "death of art." "How could anyone imagine that anything could *die* in such a system?" (*LL-SP*, 121). The dissolution of art in general parallels the dissolution of classical art, which has already attained its limits.

The reference to *Lucinde* appears just before the analysis of Roman satire, which is the place where Hegel locates the dissolution of art, the destruction of everything which is “genuinely true and living” in art. At this point Hegel explains the dissolution of classical art, as the dissolution of the Greek Pantheon, and, in particular, of its statuary which stands as the highest ideal of classical art, or “the highest possible adequation between the spiritual and sensuous form” (*LL-SP*, 122).

The mode of the dissolution of classical art is what is at issue, since it is accomplished without “brutal dislocation,” “without tragedy” (*LL-SP*, 122). In fact, this dissolution is brought about by its inherent contradictions, which stem from the submission of the gods to the superior substantiality of fate, the gods’ lack of inner necessity, and the “correlative anthropomorphic desubstantialization” that is self-evident in their very multiplicity (*LL-SP*, 122). The dissolution of the Pantheon is due to a lack of spirituality, the “substantial or the spiritual as subject,” which Christianity alone possesses. In this case, the sublation of classical art occurs outside art, and occurs without tragedy. The reference to *Lucinde* occurs at the precise moment when Hegel characterizes the transition from Greek to Christian art, as having occurred outside of art and *not* brought about by art. This could not have been otherwise for Hegel, because a struggle between Greek gods—gods who were utterly grounded in the imagination—and the “truly actual God” of Christianity could not have been portrayed with “true seriousness” (*LL-SP*, 122). On the other hand, the war between the old and new gods of Classical art, which marked the passage from symbolic art to classical art, was characterized by “a brutal dislocation,” since both were grounded within the imagination, which also was a serious matter. The reference to Schiller’s “The Gods of Greece,” therefore, is an example of a work that in its portrayal of the heroes and gods of Greece does not “fall into the ridiculous or frivolous trap” (*LL-SP*, 122).

Lucinde is mentioned *apropos* of Parny’s epic, *La guerre des Dieux*. This is a work which, according to Hegel, makes fun of Christian ideas “with an obvious frivolity of wit” in addition to “good humor and spirit,” while also showing, in the end, how the Greek world was defeated and its subsequent retreat in the wake of Christianity. Although Parny makes fun of monks who are seduced by wine and Bacchantes, and nuns by fauns, his work never reaches the levels of bad taste of, for example, Schlegel’s *Lucinde*.

But these pleasantries [those found in Parny’s *La guerre des Dieux*] were not made into something sacred and of the highest excellence as it was at the time of Friedrich von Schlegel’s *Lucinde* (*LL-SP*, 123, my emphasis).

In *Lucinde*, we find the opposite process to Parny’s epic, because here frivolous things, i.e., moral depravity and eroticism, are elevated in importance and made into something sacred. *Lucinde* is an example of art usurping and depraving what is essentially not art, but something, rather, that belongs to the realm of the Spirit. The novel *Lucinde* stands for this transgression where the realms of art and the Ideal (or literature and philosophy) are no longer kept distinct and separate, but a realm

within which one flows freely into the other without qualms.

Lacoue-Labarthe has in mind a completely different discourse (*LL-SP*, 123), based on three motifs that can be derived from the first reference to *Lucinde*. The first reason has to do with the potential in *Lucinde* to have “marked an era,” which explains Hegel’s attempts to vilify it, and to set it up as an “example of the worst” (*LL-SP*, 124). In contrast, Schiller’s “The Gods of Greece,” does not mark an era, but, rather, the absence of one—a characteristic, with their unseasonable nostalgia for the past (*LL-SP*, 123). While *Lucinde* is vilified, the figure of Schiller is exalted in most of Hegel’s works. Indeed, it appears at the most crucial moments in the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic* and the *Aesthetics* (*LL-SP*, 124). The reasons for this exemplarity are explained by the fact that for Hegel, Schiller can be credited for having gone beyond Kantian subjectivity and abstract thinking, and for having led the concept of the beautiful and of art to the very threshold of its speculative return to the Idea (*LL-SP*, 124). Hegel derives his own concept of the beautiful and of art from this Ideal, which is in fact based on “the union or inner—and thus objective, actual—fusion of the rational and the sensuous, the spiritual and the natural, the Idea and the individual appearance, etc.” (*LL-SP*, 124).

The second motif concerns the contradictions at the heart of Schiller’s philosophical art, because for Lacoue-Labarthe he corresponds somewhat (*LL-SP*, 125) in the modern age to what for Hegel was the “dissolution of classical art in its own sphere” (*LL-SP*, 125). In contrast, Parny, romanticism, the Schlegels, and *Lucinde* all “represent the insignificant, superficial, frivolous, sneering (and debauched) side of this ‘moment’” (*LL-SP*, 126). Lacoue-Labarthe refers to the relevant section in *Aesthetics*, namely to “Irony,” and the dissolution of romantic art, where Hegel draws a parallel between Roman satire and instances of Romantic irony. There he also discusses the carnivalesque and comic novel, exemplified by *Don Quixote*, “as the determining moment of the final dissolution of art” (*LL-SP*, 126). This second reference is even more tenuous, or discreet (*LL-SP*, 130) than the first, as it is only a note written by Hegel and contains a marginal notation next to paragraph #164 in the *Philosophy of Right*, and belongs to the first section, “Ethical Life,” (The Family), and the first development—“Marriage.” The passage deals with the sacred bond of marriage which, as any genuine transfer of property, recognized and confirmed by the family and community, “constitutes the formal *conclusion* and *actuality* of marriage” (*LL-SP*, 130).

This amounts to saying that this bond, or this sensuous, natural (affective, sexual) union, which marriage (also) is—is “ethically constituted . . . only after the ceremony has *first taken place*, as the completion of the *substantial* [aspect of marriage] by means of the *sign*—i.e., by means of language as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual (*LL-SP*, 130).

“Only a sanctioned, legitimate, or civilly consecrated, union alone is ethical and hence actual love.” Thus, Hegel objects not only to the licentious, amoral, indecent, perverse character of *Lucinde*, but his objection is also ethical since the novel not only champions the accomplishments of love outside marriage,

but also elevates unethical conduct to the level of “something sacred and of the highest excellence” (*LL-SP*, 132). Lacoue-Labarthe plays down the fact that the reference to *Lucinde*, and his attack, is simply a sign of Hegel’s conservatism, and of his prudish nature. Notwithstanding these prejudices which are certainly there, he sees the repetition of the reference to *Lucinde* as more than a simple illustration:

The scandal in this case is rather, if not the novel itself in general, then at the very least the configuration, the function, and the finality that *Lucinde* aimed to attribute to this “genre,” which must remain the genre of a certain very precise and very precisely oriented dissolution (*LL-SP*, 132).

We are back to the question of the relation of art to philosophy, which Lacoue-Labarthe has ignored earlier in favour of determining the reasons of the preferential status accorded to Schiller in Hegel’s text. Now, however, the issue of Hegel’s distaste for romanticism and *Lucinde* can be restated in ethical terms, bypassing the threat of romantic irony, which seems to be conveniently displaced. The scandal of *Lucinde*, writes Lacoue-Labarthe, consists in its unwillingness (“incapable impertinence”) to grasp “the speculative nature of the substantial relationship of marriage” (*LL-SP*, 132), which allows for the sensuous and natural union of the sexes as spiritual difference. Beyond this matrimonial sanction no such unity of difference is possible. Furthermore, the possibility for the transition from classical to aesthetic religion, as well as the movement from revealed religion and to the absolute knowledge of Science, rests upon this differentiation. “*For what is at stake in this very differentiation is no less than the possibility of the philosophical as such*” (*LL-SP*, 134, my emphasis). In this context, where the matrix is the tragedy of *Antigone*, which figures the triumph of the speculative (*LL-SP*, 134), *Lucinde*’s rebelliousness against marriage is at the same time a scandal for the speculative. But the aesthetic implications of this ethical determination do not pertain directly to the entity of marriage as such—as one can easily construe by drawing a symbolic link between marriage and the work of art.

The aesthetic link does not have a direct connection to the marriage union as such, but with the feminine. It is woman who represents the aesthetic part that is sublated by the ethical (male). “Between woman and art, the ‘symbolic’ equivalence, or analogy, is rigorous and strong” (*LL-SP*, 136). Within this perspective, the accusation moved to *Lucinde* does not concern directly the issue of marriage, but rather the possibility of woman’s emancipation, whom marriage is supposed to domesticate. As marriage contains and sublimates the feminine threat, the aesthetic must be equally contained and sublated in order for the speculative, or philosophy, to emerge. The scandal of *Lucinde* is understandable within these parameters, since it allows for the displacement of woman, away from the confines to which she was destined by Law or nature. Lacoue-Labarthe writes:

The whole scandal about *Lucinde* lies here: in the *position . . . of*

woman. In other words, in the “displacement” of woman, in a certain tearing away of woman from the reserve that the law, if not nature, prescribes for her. In indecency, therefore. Like any breach of conduct, *Lucinde* is an *offence against decency* (*LL-SP*, 137).

In the final analysis, *Lucinde* is of interest not so much because of the question of marriage, as because of the fact that from the speculative point of view, it represents a double threat. It not only constitutes, “a disturbance, even a reversal, in the distribution of male and female roles” (*LL-SP*, 137), but also “a bad dissolution,” a regression, a downward dissolution in “the affirmation of feminine autonomy,” which in fact encourages what marriage is meant to inhibit in accordance with the Law of Man.

In this analogy with art, the essence of art lies rather in shame (*pudeur*). Hegel explores shame as an aesthetic question in his discussion of Greek statuary, and in relation to the ideal destination of classical art (*LL-SP*, 138). There the notion of nudity in relation to the ideal destination of classical art is discussed, with surprising results. Indeed, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, one would think that the nude is more appropriate to the ideal of sculpture and that drapery is a disadvantage. Not for Hegel. While the nude form is more appropriate for the expression of sensuous beauty, this does not constitute the ideal of classical art. “The Greeks,” says Hegel, “did not fall into error by [re]presenting most of their male figures nude but by far the majority of the female ones clothed” (*LL-SP*, 138).

Lacoue-Labarthe has no quarrel with Hegel on this point, since he too agrees that the beautiful is “the manifestation or the (re)presentation, the sensuous *Darstellung* of the spiritual and of inwardness” (*LL-SP*, 138). Thus, clothes in Greek statuary, while veiling sensuous beauty, better reveal the spiritual itself. The problem arises for Lacoue-Labarthe when the division between nude and clothes turns out to be also a difference between masculinity and femininity. Veiling the female, and not the male figures probably means that male nudity is not really sensuous and that only female nudity falls within the province of the sensuous. Or, which is the same, that femininity is spiritual only when it is clothed (*LL-SP*, 139). This means that the female body—a body that maintains a certain level of distinction from the human form itself—does not quite represent the reciprocal relation between body and spirit, since the body has to be clothed to represent the spirit.

Something in the female body eludes or does not yet attain to *humanity* as such, which it seems only the male body (re)presents . . . Woman must, then, “take the veil,” in order to enter art proper (*LL-SP*, 139).

Woman has to take the veil in a sign of shame, in refusal for her animality, since clothing is the very sign of the humanity of man. But the question now arises: why does this shame belong only to woman? Why must modesty affect the feminine body alone? Lacoue-Labarthe argues that this distinction is decided on the basis of desire. “If woman alone needs to be veiled, it is because she alone ex-

presses—and arouses?—*sensual desire*” (*LL-SP*, 140-41). The naked male body, for the Greeks, expresses “indifference to desire—to sensuous and sensual desire” (*LL-SP*, 140). Male desire, or homosexual desire, is just spiritual desire, “the phallus is the ‘organ’ of the Spirit” (*LL-SP*, 141). Sensual desire belongs only to woman, and, therefore, woman alone. Since woman alone expresses and arouses sensual desire, she must be veiled. For this reason female form becomes the manifestation of art. “It is in female modesty, in the ‘aletheic’ play of woman that the beautiful is defined and the work of art—the figure—figured” (*LL-SP*, 141-42).

Modesty figures the figure: a sensuous veil thrown over the sensuous, a negation of the negation of the spiritual, through which the spiritual begins to appear—Art itself (*LL-SP*, 142).

For this reason, too, Lacoue-Labarthe concludes, the masculine cannot be considered a figure. “Masculinity is difficult to figure, or, ultimately, is figured only in being feminized” (*LL-SP*, 140). This is because, when the male figure expresses the spiritual or the spiritual predominates, it “(re)presents rather the very boundary of the figural, the moment when the spiritual already sublates the figure: the figure being sublated in the spiritual” (*LL-SP*, 140). The unveiling of masculinity does not reveal the sensuous, but lifts up the veil of the sensuous and unveils the spiritual. In this unveiling of the figure, Lacoue-Labarthe concludes, “lies, of course, the whole history of truth” (*LL-SP*, 142).

Lacoue-Labarthe’s discussion of Hegel’s rejection of romanticism—*Lucinde* in particular—raises questions concerning representation, the problematic of *Darstellung*, in addition to the “properly philosophical (re)presentation of philosophy” (*LL-SP*, 143). On the other hand, representation is never in question. Truth—in order to be truth—must show itself and appear. Representation of what is to be thought, therefore, is not only possible but necessary. This is a necessity that is the very necessity of appearance or manifestation. “Without manifestation, there is nothing—to think” (*LL-SP*, 144). However, this is not an admission without anxiety.

Of course, the principle of transfiguration is never contested in itself. *But here and there, something resists transfiguration enough to force the discourse that desires it and works toward its actualization*, not only ceaselessly to reaffirm its possibility but also to engage in long procedural operations in order to circumvent what must indeed be understood as difficulties (*if not, more brutally and obscurely, to ward off its impossibility*) (*LL-SP*, 145, my emphasis).

One of these places is in “The Poetic Work of Art as Distinguished from a Prose Work of Art,” where poetry is viewed as the sublation of the plastic arts and music, as the expression, as Hegel puts it, of the “spiritual inner life” (*LL-SP*, 145). As such, poetry is the art that dissolves and makes way for religious pictorial thinking, as well as for the prose of scientific thought (*LL-SP*, 145). This concep-

tion of poetry, which Hegel characterizes as coinciding with art in general, raises the question of the difference between poetry and prose as well as between poetry and philosophy. Here the essence of poetry is said to be “*figurative representation*,” that is to say, a representation separated from the concept, just as the proper is separated from the improper (*LL-SP*, 149). The issue of figurality of the figure, however, is problematic since it raises the question of Hegel’s treatment of figurative discourse. One wonders why Hegel does not identify the figure with the veil, or phenomenality as such with veiling, or, moreover, why the process of unveiling is not summoned to ensure the onto-theo-logical (*LL-SP*, 150). The question raises a suspicion, a desire to conceal that goes back to Kant and concerns the issue of the threat of the figure.

We shall simply ask *what, in figure or in fiction, is so threatening that it must always, so to speak, be reduced to the veil, hidden under the veil, considered only as veiled* (*LL-SP*, 150, my emphasis).

Simply stated, the figure is threatening because it is powerful enough to enact a certain displacement of the truth—a displacement that results in truth itself becoming both difficult to measure and perceive—but it is, at the same time, not serious enough to fully undermine the bond between the fictional and the theoretical. The latter is due to the fact that the system is both indestructible and unbreakable (*LL-SP*, 151). The displacement occurs in what today we call *aesthetics*, wherein “the fictional in general becomes worthy of theory.” Hegel in fact inherits this displacement from the eighteenth century and Baumgarten. His attempt to redress this issue can be found in his own *Aesthetics*, wherein it is characterized as a “gigantic ‘war-machine’ directed against aesthetics in general” (*LL-SP*, 151).

At first it would seem that there is nothing threatening in the figure which has the function of dressing, veiling, and arranging thought and making it presentable. As ornamentation to thought, the figure has the power of animating it and thus, making it come alive. In additions to this, and most importantly, it makes up for “the deficiency of bare thought, for ‘cold,’ ‘dry,’ or ‘dead’ abstraction, for the bare rigidity of the concept” (*LL-SP*, 153). The figure makes thinking beautiful by poetizing and fictionalizing theoretical discourse. It is, however, precisely this very function that displaces truth and, therefore, undermines the relationship between philosophy and truth” (*LL-SP*, 153). Although the presence of the figure in philosophical discourse remains acceptable within the confines of a preoccupation with speaking well, or writing well (*LL-SP*, 154), it becomes increasingly obvious that the emphasis on the fictionalizing of truth, on its veiling, begins to undermine this very logic of unveiling. Indeed, it creates a rift between the figure and truth.

The point is rather that a certain emphasis on the necessity of veiling truth . . . a certain *verification*, as it were, of the poetic, the figural, the fictional, etc., begins . . . slowly to pervert the “logic of truth,” that is, the logic of (un)veiling, dissociating (at least in part) the figural from “aletheic” play, displacing the play itself and so preparing the paradoxical

locus where truth could be *revealed* as undiscoverable, unrepresentable (*LL-SP*, 155).

The discrepancy that is created at the heart of Hegel's system between the figure and the theoretical system which encompasses it, is characterized by the emblematic figure of Venus (Aphrodite). There the logic of figuration, analogy, or the symbolic, seems to overflow beyond the Hegelian discourse of the figure. It must be noted that the fate of woman is also at stake in the figure's struggle. This is not only due to the fact that she figures, "the sensuous in *its* 'truth' which is the 'truth' of figure and the fictional" (*LL-SP*, 155). In other words, the figure of woman is the reason that there is such a thing as the truth of the sensuous, which neither transcends the sensuous, nor is represented in absolute representation. "But, rather, in *fiction*, in (re)presentation as fiction" (*LL-SP*, 155).

Aphrodite is the figure of this fiction, but *not* the Aphrodite which is displaced to exhibit the purely sensuous, or to arouse pure carnal desire. Nor is she the Aphrodite that must be veiled in order that she may prefigure the spiritual destination of art—a figure that is destined to be transformed into a Pallas, or the virgin Athena, or even a Venus who is the promise of the Spirit to come. This is *another*, a different, Aphrodite which escapes the trappings of the commonplaces of the figure, "who no longer speaks the language of the Spirit" (*LL-SP*, 156).

A figure figuring only the figure or its own plasticity and thereby, in fact, the tutelary goddess of aesthetics (LL-SP, 156, my emphasis).

This "other" Aphrodite explains Hegel's silence on *Lucinde*, as well as on Baumgarten, whom he never names, and whom Lacoue-Labarthe credits with having been the first to postulate the "*ingenium venustum*, the genius or gift of Venus" (*LL-SP*, 156). Hegel's silence is a silencing of everything that does not work for the interest of Spirit, and in fact threatens its absolute power. This is what Hegel calls "the impudence of the understanding":

What held true for *Lucinde* holds true *a fortiori* for aesthetics, which will never be forgiven for allowing *Venustas* to be exhibited, even under "cover" of "elegance" and of thinking beautifully. Hence the violence of the accusation of shamelessness. Hence the ethical distortion or drifting of the aesthetic objection (*LL-SP*, 156).

The scandal of *Lucinde*, or the scandal of aesthetics, "consists in having revealed that *there is nothing to unveil*," or that there might be nothing to reveal (*LL-SP*, 156). That is to say that the figure has nothing to hide, that it is self-sufficient, that it is quite simply what it is. Therefore, Venus—the figure of beauty itself—can do nothing more than simply show herself simply as herself. Thus, the shamelessness of Venus, of woman, or the figure, can be defined as "the *refusal* to lend oneself or to give oneself to sublation" (*LL-SP*, 155, my emphasis). Just as woman who refuses to be appropriated is accused of shamelessness, or of being a

whore, because of male paranoia, so the figure, or *Lucinde*, resist being appropriated by speculative absolutism. Furthermore, everything that exhibits this abscission—figure, metaphor, irony—must be veiled. Indeed, this veil must cover literature first and foremost if it is true that literature is compelled to (re)present itself in the figure of “female instinctive nature,” as in the case of *Lucinde* (*LL-SP*, 156).

Lacoue-Labarthe’s brilliant—if somewhat tortuous—analysis of the unrepresentable in Hegel leaves one perplexed with the conclusions that it draws. How is his presentation of the unrepresentable supposed to save philosophy? And why, indeed, does philosophy need saving? And for what and from whom? Philosophers? And finally, what is really the unrepresentable in Lacoue-Labarthe?

Let us ask whether irony for instance—even though metaphor and humor (*Witz*) would do just as well—is just such an abscission that must be *veiled*? Is the threat of romantic irony, of a *permanent parabasis*, as Friedrich Schlegel’s defines it, of the same order as the abscission of the figure that resists the appropriation of the speculative? Perhaps not, since irony (at least romantic irony) cannot be veiled, cannot be resisted by the speculative, as Hegel, writing about Parny and *Lucinde*, made clear. Irony and humor result in either the debasement of the sacred to the lowly, or in the elevation of the lowly to the sacred; both movements indeed make a mockery of the sacred. In this case the parabasis is permanent.⁴

Or one can ask, why is the sensuous figure—insofar as it has been cut off from the speculative and thus exists as an end in itself—unbearable? If it is unbearable because it undermines the truth of the speculative, because it cannot be sublated, then, Lacoue-Labarthe has not kept his initial promise of saving philosophy. But he obviously believes he has, since by naming the abscission Venus, *Lucinde*, or even literature Lacoue-Labarthe means mainly to salvage literature from Hegel’s *war machine*. In doing so, he seeks to uphold the truth of literature, alongside the truth of philosophy. But is this the truth that was unbearable for Hegel, and is it still for Lacoue-Labarthe, and for us? Or is the conclusion reached by Lacoue-Labarthe yet another veil over what is really unrepresentable in Hegel, or in aesthetics? Is the unrepresentable solely limited to the sensuous figure, or is the sensuous only an aspect of a much greater issue which never gets discussed in the essay? Is it something that it is never presented? Moreover, is it something that could point to yet *another* unrepresentable, perhaps the one real threat to Hegel’s system and to philosophy?

As Lacoue-Labarthe writes—but his text from now on will have to be read between the lines, or veils, as one prefers—the real threat is not the figure of ornamentation, and/or embellishment and style, which serves the conceptual faithfully and slavishly in a master/slave relationship. It is, rather, the headstrong, independent, and iconoclastic woman who has a mind of her own—a woman who will not allow herself to be seduced by, let alone listen to, (male) reason. It is the *other* Aphrodite: Venus. But the name of Venus is misleading, because Venus can still be associated with the sensuous, and the *other* of Aphrodite is anything but sensuous. This is all despite the fact that Lacoue-Labarthe’s own story of woman, as that one who necessarily refuses appropriation by male rationality, certainly makes one believe that this

is the case. Whereas sensuous figure is the mystified, apparent, phenomenal, veiled form of the speculative, the concept, the other of the figure resists the speculative because it is completely different, completely *other*, from sensuous figure. Whereas the sensuous figure is mystified—insofar as it continuously takes up the guise of the apparent, or the phenomenal, and shows itself as a veiled form of the speculative—the other of the figure resists the speculative in its distinction from, or, rather, in its complete otherness, to the sensuous figure. Whereas the former is presentable, the *other* is unrepresentable. Whereas the former is an object of desire, and must be clothed, the other is not, at least *not* in the sensuous sense, and is at best/or at worst unrepresentable. If the other figure is an object of desire, then this is a desire that is comprised solely of the speculative's longing to appropriate what it cannot appropriate, what cannot be appropriated.

The figure at issue is unrepresentable because this is the condition which allows the sensuous and the speculative to appear. This figure is locked with the sensuous and the speculative in a master-slave relation, since the sensuous and the speculative are presentable on condition of its being unrepresentable. As Hegel knew well, the scandal and what is unbearable is precisely this condition without which even his own war machine cannot exist.⁵

This figure is neither woman, nor Aphrodite, nor Venus, but that which makes them all possible. Indeed, this figure makes it possible to talk about them, but must itself remain that which can be presented only insofar as it remains hidden by the veil. We can call this figure, figural language, or simply language; we can call it prose, nonpoetic, or simply allegory. Or, as Lacoue-Labarthe suggests in the Ulysses essay, we can call this unrepresentable figure literature, or simply writing. Whatever we choose to call it, it is clear that it is not the other of the male, as Lacoue-Labarthe wants us to believe. The duality in the Aphrodite/Venus figure, furthermore, is indicative of more than just a cultural difference between Greece and Rome. Venus is really the name for an allegorical conception of aesthetics. Indeed, it is the very name of the veil that makes both the aesthetic and the conceptual possible. But for Hegel allegory is never sensuous, and can never be mistaken for Venus, since allegory is always the nonaesthetic, and is rather, “barren and ugly (*kahl*).”⁶ Lacoue-Labarthe implies as much when he defines Venus in opposition to Aphrodite as the goddess “who no longer speaks the language of the Spirit,” and defines it as, “A figure figuring only the figure or its own plasticity and thereby, in fact, the tutelary goddess of aesthetics” (*LL-SP*, 156).

Venus is the veiled, apparent name of allegory, which Lacoue-Labarthe never presents as allegory, because as allegory the real nature of the intolerability of the abscission becomes clear. What is intolerable, in fact, is not so much that women like Venus and Lucinde have a mind of their own; instead, it is for the reason that while the speculative and the spiritual rely upon the figure to represent their truth, they are necessarily and inevitably tied to the figure—the veil of allegory—from which they can never be dissociated. What is intolerable to Hegel and the speculative is this knowledge and this situation of being caught by the figure, which the

speculative can never trans-figure. Any attempt to either divorce or dissociate the speculative from the figure is done at “the risk of exhibiting the abscission,” of being subject to irony, humor, or a mixture of both. The potential danger for the speculative inherent in allegory is perhaps best described in the novel *Lucinde*, from which Lacoue-Labarthe never quotes:

Allegory has crept even into what seems pure description and fact, and has mixed meaningful lies with beautiful truths (*Lucinde*, 104).

This is because allegory is all-pervasive and informs all things alike such as its other complementary element: irony or wit.

But only as a spiritual breath does allegory hover over the whole mass of things, like Wit who plays invisibly with his creation, only a trace of a smile playing on his lips (*Lucinde*, 104).

Allegory and Irony, or Wit, are the ever present invisible or unrepresentable gods that underlie all representation. This is the unrepresentable truth, which Lacoue-Labarthe veils, in unveiling, or veiling, Hegel’s motives. He veils the threat that allegory is to the speculative—the threat that the presence of allegory will not simply resist the speculative but turn it into the figure, or allegory, of the speculative. In fact, the veil over the figure of allegory is not at all the veil over the sensuous figure that gets sublated in the truth of the speculative; instead, this veil of which Lacoue-Labarthe speaks, is the veil over allegory which displaces the figural origins of the speculative, the marital drama between sensuous woman and rational male, between sensuous figure and the speculative. *Lucinde*, too, points to the misappropriation, not because we are dealing with a woman who resists appropriation by the speculative male, but because the novel itself is an allegory of philosophy. It is an allegory of Fichte’s philosophy of the self, where *Lucinde*, indeed, is the “male feminized,” as Lacoue-Labarthe characterizes it, the allegory of the self desecrated and mocked.⁷ Literature, writing, the romantic novel, therefore, are a threat not only because they mark an age, but because they denounce the figurative, allegorical origins of the speculative.

Lacoue-Labarthe states in his essay “The Response of Ulysses,” that the question of the subject of philosophy cannot be asked, since the answer would be similar to the one Ulysses gives to Polyphemus: “No one.” The answer, in other words, never gives the name of the subject one is asking about. But as Lacoue-Labarthe adds, it could be taken nonetheless as the proper answer since “No one,” in Greek is in fact the name Odysseus, that is, the other name of Ulysses: “When Ulysses responds “no one” (in Greek *oudeis*), doesn’t he answer with his proper name (*Odusseus*) which he only slightly deforms” (*Ulysses*, 155)?

Lacoue-Labarthe gives a somewhat similar double answer in “The Unrepresentable” (*LL-SP*). To the question, “What is the unrepresentable?” he first calls it the truth of philosophy, and later, Venus, which is the Roman name of Aphrodite,

the more presentable name of allegory. In both cases, the answer hides the real name of allegory, since the truth of philosophy is allegory, and Venus is the presentable name of allegory. This process characterizes Lacoue-Labarthe's own reading since in concealing the real nature of the problem, he names it nonetheless, which he does repeatedly throughout his analysis. In this way, he in fact demonstrates the multiple and inevitable guises that allegory itself, takes within his text.

By deconstructing Hegel, Lacoue-Labarthe displaces the real threat of allegory. He does this by positing the issue of the unrepresentable in terms of dichotomies. For example, he pairs male and female, husband and wife, speculative to sensuous figure and philosophy to literature. These dichotomies alleviate the threat to the speculative, because they ushered in under the name of *Lucinde* and romanticism—an era that could have been, but no longer is, and is no longer a concern for us. The threat, therefore, is a thing of the past—a past for which Hegel alone must be responsible. Just as the threat of woman who refuses appropriation can be said to be less subject today to male paranoia than in Hegel's time, or just as marriage is no longer such a repressive bond as it was for Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right*, so our views of the relation between philosophy and literature have changed. At least, the speculative is no longer an issue for us, as it was for Hegel and his system. This, at least, is what seems to be inferred in Lacoue-Labarthe's conclusions, but is this really the case, for him or for us?

The example of Ulysses makes us aware of another important aspect behind the concealment of the name. Ulysses, as we know, does not reveal his name because Athena, the goddess of Wisdom and Reason, has warned him against revealing his own name to Polyphemus, who has been told of Ulysses's fatal coming and of his blinding. Like Ulysses, Lacoue-Labarthe conceals—under the title the unrepresentable—a similar threat for the truth of philosophy. He does this in order to save philosophy, or, more appropriately, the marriage of philosophy and literature. But as Homer teaches, and Ulysses's case makes clear, the threat cannot be averted for long. Once Polyphemus discovers Ulysses's real name, which he reveals in a burst of arrogance and pride when he believes he has finally made it to safety, the Cyclops curse condemns his companions to death, and Ulysses to wander for ten years in foreign lands before arriving alone and destitute to his beloved Ithaca. Maybe Lacoue-Labarthe's *wondering* after the subject of philosophy is the price to be paid for concealing allegory, the unrepresentable of philosophy, the real subject of philosophy. We would not want to wish Ulysses's fate on Lacoue-Labarthe.

But the last word should go to Friedrich Schlegel and *Lucinde*, which have marked the stages of Lacoue-Labarthe's wanderings through the map of Hegel's system in the attempt to unveil the speculative from the clutches of the figure. The philosophical satire which is *Lucinde* concludes on a final ironic note by praising Love as the ultimate universal principle, but also characterizing it as a love which separates rather than binds.

Not hate, as the wise men say, but love, separates living creatures, and shapes the world;

and only *in love's light* can you find this and observe it (*Lucinde*, 106, my italics).

Of course, the part I have italicised, “in love’s light,” is a pun on *Lucinde*, which from the Latin *lux* means light.⁸ Schlegel, therefore, is calling attention to his novel where, in *Lucinde*’s love, we can observe the separating power of love. This is the separation at the heart of *Lucinde* itself—the mark of a permanent parabasis—which characterizes this philosophical novel as an allegory of irony. But the irony is also aimed at the subject, at its presence, which irony also separates. Schlegel writes: “Only in the answer of its ‘you’ can every ‘I’ wholly feel its boundless unity” (*Lucinde*, 106).

The unity of the subject is forever displaced by its other, and only in this displacement there is unity. The answer to Lacoue-Labarthe’s question of “Who is the subject” of philosophy cannot be “No One”; it must, instead, be “You,” the Other. This answer is in fact one that must remain a gesture that names the unrepresentable, while also naming allegory.

Chapter 6

The Power of the Text: Lacoue-Labarthe, Rorty, and the Literariness of Philosophy

Gary E. Aylesworth

What if, after all, philosophy were nothing but literature?—Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe

. . . that literary genre we call “philosophy”—Richard Rorty

The fact that two such disparate thinkers as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Richard Rorty would suggest that philosophy is (nothing but) literature raises, once again, the question of the relationship between philosophy and writing. Indeed, it encourages us to ask the question: How must we, or should we, read or write philosophical texts? However, despite their apparent agreement that philosophy is literature, Lacoue-Labarthe and Rorty differ sharply on the modality of this apparent identification. Their crucial difference, as I see it, is found in their characterization of writing and the text, which is exemplified in the following passages:

Nominalists see language as just human beings using marks and noises to get what they want—Richard Rorty¹

There is a powerlessness to knowledge, which lets itself be taken in by writing . . . —
Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe²

As brief as these statements are, they nevertheless convey the irreconcilable divergence in their approach to the question of writing and its relation to philosophy. For Rorty, writing is a powerful means. In fact writing is *the* means, for *getting what we want* in philosophy. Lacoue-Labarthe, on the other hand, believes that writing is, at bottom, a *dis-empowerment* of thought which imposes its own rigor and necessity in any philosophical text. And so the question above may be restated as follows: Is the relationship between philosophy and the text one of *internal* necessity, or is it a matter of *shaping* the text to achieve pragmatic ends? Is there an internal rigor that governs what we do with texts (including what texts do with us), or is it a matter of getting texts to do what *we* want? The rest of the

discussion will follow from this.

The status of the aesthetic dimension of the text is at stake in any *Auseinandersetzung* between Lacoue-Labarthe and Rorty. In its development, the question of this dimension is drawn between mimesis and *diegesis*, or presentation and narrative. Lacoue-Labarthe's focus upon mimesis carries a very different sense of *literature*, and of *philosophy*, than Rorty's focus upon narrative, although both bring with them a correlative focus upon the historicity of philosophy and the text. Indeed, both understand philosophy to be the historical unfolding of Parmenides' thesis on the oneness (or identity) of thought and being, and both work from the supposition of an epochal turn in this tradition. However, the modality of this turn will be sharply different, as the one understands the Parmenidean thesis in terms of mimesis and the other in terms of narrative. As Lacoue-Labarthe insists, the mimetic function of the philosophical text is its adherence to Parmenides and also its dis-empowerment, while for Rorty, pushing the identity thesis to its limit results in the pragmatic use of narrative "to get what we want."

In *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, Lacoue-Labarthe speaks of "the modesty of the age." This modesty concerns the fact that philosophy's continued existence appears only in the form of a traditon—a tradition that is fact closed.

It is from a necessity inscribed in the age—which does not mean a necessity recognized by the age—that the word philosophy now only designates the commentary on philosophy, or where it claims to free itself of this, merely a more or less brilliant and coherent form of epigonal variation.³

This is Lacoue-Labarthe's rendering of Heidegger's notion of the closure of philosophy as metaphysics (*LL-HAP*, 3). In the present age, the closure of philosophy has been accomplished as an exhaustion of its possibilities. This amounts to an exhaustion of Parmenidean truth—a truth that concerns the oneness of thought and being—which inaugurated philosophy as a thesis on being, and made possible the development of knowledge as techno-science. That is to say, the Parmenidean thesis on being is limited by the very possibility of stating being *as* a thesis, a positing, an asserting. This limitation has in fact led to the emancipation of techno-science from philosophy as a reversal of its essence. Thus Lacoue-Labarthe writes: "philosophy has been left with nothing, no domain of beings, that has not already been taken in charge by techno-science on the basis of a position on being that has already arisen within philosophy itself" (*LL-HAP*, 4). And so philosophy, as a thesis on being, is finished; its reversal has been accomplished as the fulfillment of its most extreme possibility: the positing of being as a positing. All subsequent thought can only be a commentary on, or a re-enactment of, the history of this event.

For Lacoue-Labarthe, this entails crisis for philosophical writing—a form of writing whose dynamic possibilities of presentation have also become exhausted. As he declares:

At least since Romanticism, it is in the possibility of presentation that philosophy has been dealt a serious blow . . . There is certainly no ‘literary’ possibility, since this is patently overdetermined by philosophy. There is no other possibility except that possibility without possibility that is interruption, suspension, fragmentation or extenuation. Hence work-lessness (*LL-HAP*, 6).

This sense of work-lessness, the impossibility of philosophical presentation, is, despite appearances, not a modern phenomenon. Its necessity and inevitability have been “at work” since the beginning of philosophy, when, as Nietzsche points out, Plato uses a fictional genre to condemn fiction in the name of truth. Furthermore, Plato and subsequent philosophical writers must resort to a mixture of literary genres. This mixing itself, however, speaks against the philosophical ideal of perfection, understood as complete agreement, or *homoiosis*, between thought’s matter (the oneness of thought and being) and its form of presentation. For Lacoue-Labarthe, the powerlessness of knowledge is, therefore, a matter of mimesis. Indeed, philosophy is characterized by its inability to adequately present that which it asserts. Hence, the closure of the metaphysical tradition is not only the exhaustion of metaphysics in the technological will to power, as Heidegger would have it, but its also an inevitable limit that governs textual presentation. This is where Lacoue-Labarthe departs from Heidegger in order to radicalize the question of the relationship between philosophy and literature, and to insist upon the necessity of their intricacy.

For Richard Rorty, by contrast, the modality of the question is not one of necessity, but of contingency. While he also insists that philosophy is a literary genre, “invented by Plato,”²⁴ he speaks not of an exhaustion of this genre, but of traditional, Platonic philosophy—a doctrine of *homoiosis*, that has outlived its usefulness. That is to say, the metaphysical tradition has simply failed to accomplish its goal, insofar as it has failed to demonstrate the oneness of thought and being, and this goal itself, not just the means, is no longer useful and ought to be discarded. This is not a matter of internal necessity, nor any kind of theoretical or critical *raisonnement*, but a pragmatic and utilitarian assessment of the role of philosophy in the past and in the present.

In the Introduction to *The Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty states:

Pragmatists see the Platonic tradition as having outlived its usefulness. This does not mean that they have a new, non-Platonic set of answers to Platonic question to offer, but rather that they do not think we should as those questions anymore . . . They would simply like to change the subject (*R-CP*, xiv).

Changing the subject rather than arguing or demonstrating, rather than appealing to a *homoiosis* between thought and being, is Rorty’s answer to the current demand placed upon philosophical writing, and precisely this makes such writing literary. Thus, Rorty’s sense of the history of the philosophical tradition differs

from Lacoue-Labarthe's on at least two counts: he sees no necessity at work in the tradition—in extension to this, he thinks the *subject* of philosophy ought to be changed, which in fact presupposes that it *can* be changed—nor does he acknowledge that the function of presentation imposes an internal limit upon philosophy, or that presentation, *per se*, constitutes the literariness of philosophical writing.

Rorty agrees with Lacoue-Labarthe that philosophy has always been a literary enterprise, even when traditional philosophers have ignored, evaded, or denied the fact. However, unlike Lacoue-Labarthe, Rorty's notion of literariness is distinct from the problem of mimesis—that is, from the problem of agreement between matter and form in philosophical presentation. Instead, the literariness of philosophy is understood in terms of philosophy's ability to narrate its own history. In the essay "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing," Rorty is clear on this point when he remarks:

Philosophy is best seen as a kind of writing. It is delimited, as a literary tradition, not by form or matter, but by tradition—a family romance involving, e.g., Father Parmenides, honest old uncle Kant, and bad brother Derrida (*R-CP*, 92).

This indicates, again, that the tradition is not governed by an internal limit or necessity, but is considered tradition *by* tradition, that is, convention. It is a narrative whose form and matter are contingent and subject to re-telling in order to suit our needs. The mimetic function is thus decided by its relation to an intended use, and this relation is established by the narrative function. Hence, the form or matter of philosophical writing can be changed by re-writing the narrative to serve another purpose. The only question of truth, therefore, is whether the narrative works to achieve the desired result.

In making this claim, Rorty appeals to a pragmatist reading of Hegel in which Hegelian logic, with its dialectical necessity, is jettisoned and replaced with a voluntaristic and agonistic notion of historicity. Hegel's attempt to demonstrate the *homoiosis* between thought and being then becomes a redefinition of truth as "the culminating reinterpretation of our predecessor's reinterpretation of their predecessor's reinterpretation" (*R-CP*, 92). To understand the significance of Rorty's literary version of truth (re-description instead of agreement between form and matter), as well as his subordination of mimesis to narrative, we must consider his characterization of the tradition against which he claims to differentiate himself. Here, the differences between Lacoue-Labarthe and Rorty can be cast in terms of differences between continental and analytic philosophy.

The turning point in Rorty's career was the publication of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* in 1979.⁵ While the title indeed suggests a concern for mimesis as a mirroring of nature, the text reduces this concern to the standard epistemological problematic of analysis: the correspondence between a mental or linguistic representation and an external reality. The external reality in question is nature as an object of investigation according to the methods of modern science. This reduces the Parmenidean oneness of thought and being to the Correspondence

Theory of truth, and Rorty's text is an updated pragmatist attack against it.

Where John Dewey had attacked positivist epistemology in the first half of the century by pointing out that a correspondence between a mental representation and a non-mental reality could not be represented, Rorty aims this critique at the more recent attempts to resolve the paradox of self-reference by appealing to language, instead of representations in the mind. The more contemporary versions of the Correspondence Theory assume a formal, truth-functional, agreement between language and the real, whether reality can be *mentally* represented or not. On this basis, it is supposed that the paradoxes of *phenomenalism* and *subjectivism* can be avoided by substituting a theory of reference for theories of representation.

However, as Rorty indicates in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Donald Davidson's breakdown of the scheme-content distinction calls for a contextual-holistic view of language, such that the function of reference is relative to a given language and to specific purposes reference is supposed to serve. The question, then, is not: "Can we come up with a theory of reference to show that it is a constant, non-equivocal relation in all cases?" The question is instead: "Does the appeal to reference in any particular case serve its purpose?" Rorty concludes from this that *truth* and *meaning* are, pragmatically speaking, inseparable, and that the analytic project (grounding semantics upon a theory of reference) is no longer worth pursuing.

This conclusion goes beyond Davidson, who still maintains argumentation as a standard for rationality. But Rorty believes argumentation is itself a contingent, culturally relative technique for getting agreement between human interlocutors. In other words, once the Correspondence Theory of truth is abandoned all persuasive practices are intra-linguistic—a matter of *vocabularies*,—and argumentation is just one such practice, relative to one set of purposes and predicated upon a shared vocabulary. There are other, non-argumentative types of persuasion, and these are rhetorical or literary in the sense that they do not claim to mirror or represent a non-linguistic reality. In addition to being rhetorical these types of persuasion do not adhere to a universal logic, or even a common vocabulary. Rorty claims that philosophy must adopt these other, literary, techniques if it is going to continue to perform its cultural role: "to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together, in the broadest possible sense of the term" (*R-CP*, xiv). This would entail experimentation with various theoretically unlimited paradigms or vocabularies for re-describing the descriptions that make up our historical tradition.

In the essay "Nineteenth Century Idealism and Twentieth Century Textualism," Rorty underscores this point by defining as *literary* any cultural practice that foregoes agreement on a given paradigm and thus dispenses with argument:

By 'literature,' then, I shall mean the areas of culture which, quite self-consciously, forego agreement on an encompassing critical vocabulary, and thus forego argumentation (*R-CP*, 142).

Thus, literariness has little to do with the *text*, as this term is understood in continental circles, but is a matter of non-argumentative rhetoric and descriptive (narrative) experimentation. Furthermore, Rorty denies there is any sense of philosophical rigor outside of argumentation, and so there can be no rigor, no sense of internal necessity, that governs the kind of reading and writing he advocates in the absence of epistemological verification.⁶ He makes this clear in the essay on Idealism and Textualism.

In this essay, Rorty describes the difference between “weak textualism” and “strong textualism” in the following terms. Both, he says, “start from the pragmatist refusal to think of truth as corresponding to reality” (*R-CP*, 151). However, the weak textualist “claims to have gotten the secret of the text, to have broken its code,” and, therefore, “believes that criticism is discovery rather than creation” (*R-CP*, 151-52). The strong textualist, on the other hand, “asks neither the author nor the text about their intentions but simply beats the text into a shape which will serve his own purpose” (*R-CP*, 151). This is the textualism advocated and practiced by Rorty. To a continental theorist such as Lacoue-Labarthe, however, Rorty’s use of the term would be unrecognizable.

Indeed, the work of Lacoue-Labarthe is particularly suited to revealing the differences between Rorty and the continental tradition on issues such as writing and the text. These are differences that seem to have escaped Rorty at the time he published *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, where he claims Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida belong to the same pragmatist movement as himself. But of course, such a claim reflects the same lack of concern for textual rigor that he seeks to cultivate as a pragmatic virtue. In any case, Lacoue-Labarthe’s emphasis upon textual mimesis, as well as mimesis, as presentation in its distinction from representation,—*Darstellung* rather than *Vorstellung*—indicates the critical point of difference between Rorty and his continental counterparts. In Rorty, there is no consideration of presentation *as such*, that is to say, of presentation in a non-epistemological, mimetic sense.

This exclusion of the aesthetic is seen, for example, in the statement that:

The pragmatist recognizes relations of *justification* holding between beliefs and desires, and relations of *causation* holding between those beliefs and desires and other items in the universe, but no relations of *representation*.⁷

Nowhere does Rorty show an interest in, or even acknowledge the possibility of a presentation that is not an epistemological representation or a pragmatic means to an end. His disavowal of epistemological representation passes over, without a word, the aesthetic nature of presentation as an appearance governed by its own necessity, in addition to forms of appearance that are bound to a *thing in itself*, or appropriated as a means for *getting what we want*. This reflects a continuing legacy of the analytic tradition in Rorty’s later work, and specifically its lack of interest in, even contempt for, a central issue raised in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*

and struggled over in German Idealism.

Rorty draws a parallel between idealism and textualism, where both aspire to supplant natural science as a cultural model. However, idealism does not go far enough. He states:

Whereas nineteenth-century idealism wanted to substitute one sort of science (philosophy) for another (natural science) as the center of culture, twentieth-century textualism wants to place literature in the center, and to treat both science and philosophy as, at best, literary genres (*R-CP*, 141).

Idealism's defect, then, is its claim to be scientific and its use of argument or demonstration to make its case, even though it does not succumb to positivist epistemology. But this does not address the subject of aesthetic presentation at issue, for example, in Schiller and Hegel, and most pertinently, in Nietzsche. Instead, Rorty sees the legacy of idealism as an attempt to assert philosophy as an absolute system of thought—a super-science that substitutes the unconditioned necessity of the system (i.e., of connections among representations)—for a correspondence between representations and an extra-representational reality.

On Rorty's thesis, idealism failed as a project because the connections among representations turned out to be historical only in a contingent sense. Romanticism then emerged as idealism's legacy in the tradition, where a proliferation of literary genres, especially the modern novel, undertook to work out the inner life of spirit without any pretense to supplanting natural science in the sphere of objective truth. This made possible the secular, literary culture that came to co-exist with scientific culture. However, another step, taken by Nietzsche and James, resulted in the pragmatist reformulation of romanticism that Rorty embraces as his own view: "Their contribution was to replace romanticism by pragmatism. Instead of saying that the discovery of new vocabularies could bring hidden secrets to light, they said that new ways of speaking could help us get what we want" (*R-CP*, 150). Herein lies a key difference between Rorty and his continental counterparts. In presenting Nietzsche as a pragmatist, Rorty passes over what is perhaps *the* issue for continental theorists: Nietzsche's reflections upon *appearance as appearance*.

His account also passes over the struggle that idealism undergoes with appearance: the threat, not that appearance may fail to coincide with a non-apparent thing-in-itself, or that appearances may fail to coincide with one another, but that appearance may be *all there is*. Where idealism undertakes to exhibit the Parmenidean oneness of thought and being by demonstrating that appearances are real only as thoughts, it is under the constant threat of reversal. Indeed, thoughts may turn out to be appearances. Such a reversal is at work in Nietzsche, and, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy have pointed out, in Jena romanticism as well.

The reversal in question must be other than dialectical, for as long as the difference between *thought* and *appearance* is negated in favor of an identity between them, the Hegelian *Aufhebung* would still be in operation. The identity

between thought and appearance would still be thought. But what if the difference between thought and appearance were erased or forgotten, instead of sublated into an identity? What if appearance could mean something other than its otherness to thought? In his essay “The Fable,” Lacoue-Labarthe cites the famous passage from Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols*, where this possibility, and its consequences, are broached:

The true world—we have abolished. What has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one* (LL-SP, 5).

And in parallel fashion, Lacoue-Labarthe asks: “What if, after all, philosophy were nothing but literature” (LL-SP, 1)? This would mean the erasure of the difference between philosophy and literature, a difference that is itself philosophical. But what could “literature” mean without this difference? And what is the parallel between this question and the question of *appearance*?

For Lacoue-Labarthe, the answer in both cases is *fiction*. In “The Fable,” he distinguishes his own treatment of literariness from that of Derrida, and although he agrees it must be a matter of writing, he insists, nevertheless:

Everything depends, in fact, on what we mean by *literature*. Do we mean the letter (*gramma*, trace, mark, inscription . . . writing), or do we mean *only* literature, in the most conventional, the most decried sense . . . ? In this banal and somewhat pejorative but nonetheless revealing sense, *literature* signifies . . . *fiction* (LL-SP, 2).

That is, literature signifies what is just made up, as opposed to any discourse that claims to be true and is verifiable. It would thus stand outside the relation of *homoiosis* between thought and being, interpreted as a doctrine of truth. Fiction would be untrue in a being neither true nor false. It would have to mean *fabrication*, or *configuration*, but without any recourse to distinctions like apparent/real, or *mythos/logos*.

This is the meaning of fiction that Lacoue-Labarthe attributes to Nietzsche, who uses the term in reference to Parmenides in *The Will to Power*. There, Nietzsche states:

Parmenides said, ‘one cannot think of what is not’;—we are at the other extreme, and say ‘what can be thought of must certainly be a fiction. (LL-SP, 3)’

Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that this amounts to an interpretation of the history of metaphysics as a commentary upon the text of Parmenides—a history that has now been taken to its other extreme by Nietzsche. However, if this other extreme refers to an origin of metaphysics (or the discourse of truth) such that fiction is simply the remotest extent and consequence of this origin, then, as Heidegger maintains, Nietzsche himself remains within the history of metaphysics as its most extreme result. But Lacoue-Labarthe reads this passage as an attempt to

abolish the difference between truth and appearance, or true discourse and fiction, such that appearance and fiction no longer refer to a metaphysical origin, and are not merely rehabilitated in their opposition to the real and the true. This would be the meaning of fiction as a *fable*. As he remarks:

To abolish appearance, that is, to let appearance abolish itself, and to risk this vertigo, to thus renounce presence and refuse to repatriate it as an appearance promoted to the level of appearing or epiphany—this is doubtless the decisive “leap” attempted by Nietzsche (*LL-SP*, 7).

What, then, could be meant by the self-abolition of appearance? In opposition to Heidegger, who valorizes appearance as a revelation or presencing of what does not appear (being), Lacoue-Labarthe insists that the better, literary, interpretation of appearance would be that of a doubling—a mirroring from within, appearance reflecting appearance—wherein the difference between original and copy would be erased, or rendered un-decidable. In this case, appearance would be mimesis in the sense of fiction: a presentation without presence, origin, truth, or identity. This is mimesis as *simulacrum*, as appearance of appearance. As he says in “Typography”:

Mimesis is always from like to same . . . there is “presented” in it what does not present itself and cannot present itself, that is, there is represented in it what has always already represented itself.⁸

Nietzsche’s attempt to leap into the abyss of mimesis would, therefore, not be an event in the history of metaphysics, and certainly not a terminal event. It could never be *written* as such, which is to say could never be narrated, because the philosophical text must be mimetic in the non-narrative sense just given. If the language of fable is indeed a language in which metaphysical differences no longer obtain, where there is no origin and no result, Lacoue-Labarthe asks: “Is such a language thinkable except as a kind of ‘eternal repetition’ . . . in the course of which the same play of the same desire and of the same disappointment would indefinitely repeat itself” (*LL-SP*, 9)? In other words, the abolition of metaphysics would have to occur from *within*, as a rewriting or doubling of the metaphysical text. It could never be a matter of forgetting the history of metaphysics altogether, or retelling it in order to get a different result.

As Lacoue-Labarthe suggests, we can only experience the erasure of the bar between philosophy and literature as a sense of loss and dispossession when we write. He writes:

We have therefore to experience a certain powerlessness that is the paradoxical effect of an excess of power: Logos is absolute mastery and there is nothing outside of it, not even literature, to which it has given a “meaning.” Unless perhaps, not writing exactly what we wanted to write, we experience a weakness, a powerlessness that is no longer the effect of

an excess of power but rather like the obscure work of a force that is foreign to what we say, to the consciousness we have of it, to the will to say it, a hidden, incessant resistance that is absolutely impossible to control and on which we can barely gain ground at the price of great efforts. (*LL-SP*, 11-12).

This sense of powerlessness is the rigor of the text that is missed by Rorty. It is also, paradoxically, a strength, as Lacoue-Labarthe hints in “The Fable,” when he asks: “Can one think a strength of weakness, a strength born of its own exhaustion, of its own difference? A strength that is by virtue of having no strength” (*LL-SP*, 12)? Elsewhere, he characterizes this powerless power as a mirroring that has nothing to do with representing, or coherence based upon logical identity. It is, in fact, a deterioration of coherence and identity—like unto madness—and a resistance to this deterioration at the same time:

There is always, whether it is referred to or not, whether or not it is “shown,” a mirror in a text . . . for this is the only conceivable means of overcoming the inevitable delay of the “subject” in relation to “itself” and of stemming, at least to some extent, that inexorable lapse or failing in which something is said, stated, written, etc. (*LL-T*, 138).

The subject of philosophy, as a written subject, cannot be changed by re-narrating its history. Indeed, the notion of such a history must be dissolved in favor of an abyssal repetition and resistance, or *desistance*, as Lacoue-Labarthe would say. Desistance is a necessity that cannot be reduced to the logic of argument and verification, nor is it open to narrative re-description. It is, instead, the “becoming letter of thought,” which Lacoue-Labarthe takes to be philosophy itself (*LL-SP*, 93).

Rorty, of course, does not understand the literariness of philosophy in terms of the letter, but in terms of the power of narrative as a non-argumentative mode of persuasion. Furthermore, as long as the history of the West can be re-told, and re-told to project new possibilities for pragmatic advancement, he rejects the premise of exhaustion that Lacoue-Labarthe takes from Heidegger. As he says in the essay “Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens”:

I want to protest the tendency to take Heidegger’s account of the West for granted . . . This message consists largely of the claim that the West has . . . “exhausted its possibilities” (*R-P2*, 67).

Clearly, however, what Rorty means by *possibilities* is not the same as Heidegger or Lacoue-Labarthe. For where Lacoue-Labarthe follows Heidegger in interpreting the West to mean the tradition of commentary on Parmenides’ affirmation of the oneness of thought and being, Rorty wishes to re-tell the history of the West such that ontology gives way to democracy as the *true* subject of the story. In other words, for Rorty the message of the tradition is political, not theoretical. The Parmenidean affirmation of the oneness of thought and being—a unity that is traditionally understood as a theoretical relation of *homoiosis*—must

give way once the Correspondence Theory of truth is shown to be pragmatically out-dated. Instead, the empowerment of human beings—through the fulfillment of Parmenides' statement in terms of technological and political know-how—emerges as the meaning of the narrative. On this re-telling, the history of the West is the story of the expansion of technology and democracy on a global scale. Insofar as he sees no *a priori* limit to this expansion, Rorty does not entertain a notion of limitation other than pragmatic fallibility or the finitude of narrative imagination.

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, he presents the ideal of a post-metaphysical culture, in which human freedom is valorized and speculated upon instead of truth. Such a culture would, he says:

regard the realization of utopias, and the envisaging of still further utopias, as an endless process—an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom, rather than a convergence toward an already existing Truth.⁹

Literature, particularly the utopian or reformist novel, is the pragmatic dissolution of metaphysics, and the continuation of political liberalism. Novels, such as those by Dickens and Orwell, expand our capacity to imaginatively identify with a wider range of others—to see these others as *us* instead of *them*. Social and political solidarity, then, are imaginative constructs fashioned by narrative rather than argument or demonstration, but *as imaginative* they are predicated upon an identity. This is the identity of the narrative itself (*ergon*). Therefore, it is a matter of poetics or *diegesis*, not *mimesis*. In this respect, Rorty carries forward the pragmatist tradition of social expressivism in art, as articulated by John Dewey in *Art as Experience*, where the function of art is “a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity.”¹⁰ Rorty's own narratives are attempts at just this sort of remaking in a more contemporary vein.

As he insists, the texts of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Proust are suitable for self-creation and self-expansion on the individual level only. These texts are in fact suitable here precisely because they teach us that individual identity is contingent and idiosyncratic, or, in other words, a matter of chance and fantasy (*R-CIS*, 36-7). Indeed, they demonstrate that the self is a “center-less web” of beliefs and desires—a web that can be re-woven by re-narrating our lives (*R-PI*, 192). However, since these texts take a *merely* aesthetic and idiosyncratic approach to identity instead of a social-political approach, Rorty declares them to be antithetical to the formation of human solidarity. Individual idiosyncracies, and by implication, *aesthetic appearance*, become divisive and terroristic when translated directly into the political sphere. Thus, Rorty's passing over of the Nietzschean *fable of appearance* is revealed to have a political motive, which requires a division between the public and the private that renders appearance—in the aesthetic sense of appearance *as* appearance—without political force. In this dis-empowering of appearance, he is directly at odds with the main trajectory of continental (French) theory, and reveals, in passing, the resistance to pragmatism

that continental readings of Nietzsche would mount as a matter of course.

In particular, Lacoue-Labarthe, and continental theory generally, would challenge not only Rorty's enforcement of a division between the public and the private, but would bring a critical focus to bear upon Rorty's view of identity. To be sure, he asserts that identity is made rather than discovered; as he says in *The Consequences of Pragmatism*, "there is nothing inside us except what we have put there ourselves" (*R-CP*, xliii). However, this is precisely what is at issue in the deconstructive readings of Lacoue-Labarthe, where appearance as mimesis forever dis-empowers—by rendering un-decidable, the public-private division that is so necessary for Rorty's project. Indeed, the aesthetic is precisely the place of the political, because appearance *as* appearance is where all divisions and all identities are suspended in endless repetition (or as Nietzsche might say, eternal recurrence) of the same.

Despite Rorty's claim to have thrown over metaphysics in favor of narrative, his insistence on the createdness of identity does not problematize identity itself. That there is identity, however contingent and imaginatively fashioned, is still a metaphysical assumption. Indeed, his assertion that "there is nothing inside us except what we have put there ourselves" is an assertion of the technological will to power that Heidegger thematizes as the most radical extent of metaphysical nihilism: the self-assertion of self-assertion. Or, as Lacoue-Labarthe renders it: it is the accomplishment of "the subjective process, the process of self-formation and self-production" (*LL-HAP*, 70). Nevertheless, Rorty's attempt to combine narrative identity with a commitment to democracy will be attractive to those who, like him, are troubled by political associations that cling to names such as Heidegger and Nietzsche.

Showing that his reading of these philosophers is a mis-reading would not be difficult. However, since Rorty does not acknowledge anything like a textual intention, appealing to the text would have no internal hold on his position and neither would it indicate that his own view does not escape metaphysics. Rorty would simply attempt to "change the subject," and justify his light-mindedness toward these matters by appealing to the pragmatic good that will result. A continental theorist such as Lacoue-Labarthe would have to meet Rorty head-on by directly addressing issues such as pragmatic good and democracy, while also showing that the mimetic and textual intrication of identity imposes its own necessity upon politics and practice. In face of the power of self-assertion and self-expansion, the dis-empowerment of the self-becoming-letter would have to open the possibility of a non-metaphysical politics—a politics without identity or identification.

Lacoue-Labarthe points out that the drive for self-identity, as self-creation is in fact the truth of technology—a technology whose "lethal essence" is to bring about, "if not the impossible, then at least the unthinkable (Extermination or genetic manipulation—and the latter is still on the agenda today) (*LL-HAP*, 69)." It is not by chance, he believes, that the victims of annihilation at Auschwitz were witnesses to an alterity that could not be appropriated into an identity by the West.

As an “other origin,” Judaism “stood in the way of the program of accomplishment” (*LL-HAP*, 37). For Lacoue-Labarthe, the possibility of the “other origin” is the lesson of the written subject—a subject whose non-identity is constitutive, and who has, in fact, no history.

Is there, then, a politics of *this* subject? If so, it would have to be predicated upon a sameness of an other whose alterity is non-sublatable and yet internal to ourselves. It would not be a matter of identifying with the other, but of allowing the other—the other understood as an “other origin”—to destabilize our self-formation, and to call into question our power of self-assertion. Such a question would in fact be one of the oldest in philosophy: Is the success of power its own justification? In the powerlessness of letting ourselves be taken in by writing, there is, perhaps, a greater knowledge than getting what we want. There is, perhaps, a greater politics than the one in which *they* are identical to *us*.

Chapter 7

Edging the Sublime: Baudrillard on the Inaccessible Real

Basil O'Neill

If, as Nietzsche says, a true philosopher is a philosopher/artist—a creator of concepts who generates new ways of understanding the world and our own lives—then Baudrillard has a good claim to be a paradigmatic philosopher. His conceptual structures exhibit an indifference to the possibility of contrary argument(s)—because they are *creation* rather than argued *response* to the ideas of other thinkers. These ideas generate an extraordinarily powerful set of tools for a critical anatomy of modern culture, which his texts carry out in short, vivid pictures of the desolation of our times. These pictures are not calm and neutral pieces of argumentation; they are passionate denunciations of the death-in-life within which (he claims) we live.¹ In this light, it seems appropriate to treat them, in one aspect, as poetry, as poetic visions, though of an unusually rigorously articulated kind.

As I shall argue, the picture they express contains elements of the Sublime. Now a philosopher, like Kant, who offers an analysis of the Sublime is not thereby expressing it or presenting it, and it would be a misunderstanding of his use of language to suppose that he did.² But Baudrillard does not use language in Kant's carefully prosaic way, and his evocations (not explanations) of a certain beyond, a something possible, a something impending, shadow our corrupt simulacral lives raising the possibility that they might impinge on us as sublime. His language is of course the language of philosophy and cultural analysis, quite unlike the poetry of the Greek tragedians. But Nietzsche was surely right to dismiss as impossible the idea of a rebirth of Greek tragedy, which, he said, had long ago committed suicide.³ He did, however, envisage a new birth of tragic art as a manifestation of the Dionysian, in which the writing of philosophy, which had been so closely involved in the Greek death of tragedy, might take a new path on the basis of Kant's and Schopenhauer's destruction of "scientific Socraticism's complacent delight in existence by establishing its boundaries" (*BT*, 19, 120). This path could generate the paradoxical fruit of a "Socrates who practises music" (*BT*, 15, 98). Nietzsche no doubt saw his own writing as an attempt to express what such a Socrates would do. What I am suggesting is that we read Baudrillard's texts as another such attempt.

Whether this suggestion is sound or not, the *question* has a chance to prove

illuminating, both for Baudrillard and for the slippery and questionable notion of the Sublime. It might also help us to get another grip on the puzzling question, raised by Lyotard's work in particular, of the relation between the Modern Sublime and the Postmodern Sublime (if these are indeed distinct).⁴ The aim of this essay is, then, to pursue this question. For the reason sketched above, and for other reasons which will appear later, I shall regard it as a kind of edging round the Sublime.

The character of Baudrillard's texts as creative but not well-argued philosophic visions, which I have sketched above, needs further explanation. His view of the desolation of our times is centred on the idea of the simulacrum, the sign which fails to refer to anything real because its sense has become entirely absorbed into echoing other signs. If all our signs—linguistic and otherwise—have this character, as Baudrillard claims, then it will never be possible for us to designate, or even encounter in thought, anything real. The result will be a life and a society with no *stakes*, no investment, no history, no speech.⁵ In the ordinary sense, of course, our signs refer to real things, and real events of a kind happen, but they lack genuine meaning for us because their significance has been drained out of them by their character as echoes and repetitions. So Baudrillard can write that "the [Vietnam] war is no less atrocious for being only a simulacrum—the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead and former combatants are worth the same as in other wars . . . What no longer exists is the adversity of the adversaries, the reality of antagonistic causes, the ideological seriousness of war. And also the reality of victory or defeat, war being a process that triumphs well beyond these appearances" (*B-SS*, 37–8). But the ordinary sense of *real*, which Baudrillard acknowledges in the first part of this passage, in which wounded people really suffered and died in the Vietnam War, is for Baudrillard a bastard sense, an artificial product of the simulacral system of interchange of signs. In the following passage, however, the words *real* and *referentials* are used in Baudrillard's strong sense: "The era of simulation is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials—worse: with their artificial resurrection in the systems of signs—an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs [*here: illusory signs*] of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes" (*B-SS*, 2). Thus the real as we in our culture may think we encounter it is only an artificial product of signs in a system (as Nietzsche thought that the world of everyday phenomena was). For it to be really real, we should need to be able to contrast it with an imaginary. But we have lost our imaginary; the simulacral world of pseudo-reality encompasses even our thoughts and our lives, and we are as if dead. Thus throughout Baudrillard's writings we have to be alert for (at least one) persistent ambiguity in the word "real": it can mean the artificial pseudo-real of our culture, or it can mean the inaccessible really real (as I shall call it) which we have lost but whose possibility/impossibility still perhaps nags at us.

But this picture of desolation (so reminiscent of Kierkegaard's picture of the

Present Age, of Nietzsche's of the nihilism of our time, of Heidegger's of the state of fallen *Dasein*) is given far greater purchase on our imagination by Baudrillard's insertion of it into a schema of history in which it figures as the end-point of a precipitous decline of culture from a preceding Golden Age, in which signs really did have all their proper force and life had all its proper significance. He presents this historical schema in several different, and chronologically irreconcilable ways, and I don't think they should be taken seriously as histories. They are extremely sketchy, they lack any adequate basis in historical evidence, and they are in any case inconsistent with each other.⁶ Rather, they should be understood as myth, to clarify the construction of our meanings by describing their presumed pre-constructed character,⁷ to dramatise our present situation as one of *loss*,⁸ and to invoke the nostalgic dream of a culmination of history in the Marxian revolutionary utopia "the euphoric or catastrophic expectation of a revolution"—in most of his writings only nostalgic, because "history has retreated, leaving behind it an indifferent nebula, traversed by currents, but emptied of references" (*B-SS*, 43). Thus, the function of this historical schematisation is to increase the rhetorical impact of Baudrillard's critical concept-structure. Moreover, that structure as critique relies on a metaphysical notion of a properly referring sign as one which refers without any mediation by other signs—in fact, without any semantic role for *sense*, though no sign within any actual culture has ever done this.⁹ (He is of course fully aware of this: "There is no real, there never was a real").¹⁰ Thus Baudrillard brings into his armoury of critical attack a purely designatory denotational semantics reminiscent of J. S. Mill, not because he is a Millian, but because this picture serves by vivid contrast to generate a rhetorical tool for exposing the emptiness of our culture. He is fully aware that by all ordinary standards this requirement on semantics is crazy; signs claiming to satisfy this requirement would have a "pretension to being the real, the immediate, the unsignified, which is the craziest of undertakings" (*B-SS*, 46–7).

At least, it is tempting to describe it as a rhetorical tool. But as you read Baudrillard's texts it is impossible to regard him as *calculating* his effects in that way. Rather, like a poet-artist, he is deeply engaged with his critique. He writes in a cold contempt, anatomizing our culture with clear-headed disgust verging constantly on despair. He is more like a Blake, a Baudelaire, a Rilke, or a Célan than a Mill, a Saussure, a Quine, or a Kripke. This poetry-philosophy, this creation of concepts with a bite, has its seat in Baudrillard's emotional response as philosopher-artist as much as in his powers of philosophical argument, though it then determines a form of judgement. It recalls Nietzsche's demand that a culture (perhaps led in modern times by a Socrates who practises music, a rational thinker but one who creates concepts as expression of living response to the world) must live by a *myth* as a "concentrated image of the world" without which a culture would lose "the healthy natural power of its creativity" (*BT* 23, 135). Nietzsche thought that such a myth must have as its images "the unnoticed omnipresent demonic guardians" of the Dionysian world. It is not a long step from this thought

to Baudrillard's philosophically mediated images of the unreality and corruption of our culture as a myth aimed precisely at the preservation or reinvigoration of creativity, or as Baudrillard more often calls it, the imaginary. (Though Nietzsche envisages images of the Dionysian world,—transferred to appearance by the Apollinian leads to grandiose images, whereas Baudrillard uses images of the simulacral world, tawdry images. I shall return to this difference between them.)

However, no poet, however bleak his view of our world, can write with no kind of sense of conceivable truth or positivity. Baudrillard is no exception, though his view is certainly always on the edge of a kind of despair. His historical-mythical dream of a Golden Age is not merely a device to make blacker by contrast with its brightness his interpretations of our age. It is also a marker of what we might grasp or sense as a possibility underlying the desolation, just as Nietzsche understood the Dionysian as underlying the world of appearances (even the idealized Apollinian ones). The really real, Baudrillard implies, has not departed altogether, for its "vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours" (*B-SS*, 1). Indeed, in accordance with the historical schematisation of his thought, and in spite of his animadversions about Marxism, Baudrillard does at times entertain the idea of an apocalyptic transformation of our desolation, in which the really real might return in the future in some way we cannot at present imagine. The hidden being of the really real would then burst forth from its inaccessible fastness, and transform our corrupt culture in a great revolution:

It will one day rebel, and then our whole system of representation and values is destined to perish in that revolt. This slavery of the same, the slavery of resemblance, will one day be smashed by the violent resurgence of otherness . . . So, everywhere, objects, children, the dead, images, women, everything which serves to provide a passive reflection in a world based on identity, is ready to go on to the counter-offensive. Already they resemble us less and less . . .¹¹

But for the most part Baudrillard does not allow historical vision to have a future tense. Instead the conception of the hidden being—he often thinks of it as *behind* the mirror of our identifying view of the world which in fact reflects back our own signs—constantly *shadows* his critical diagnoses as a truth which must be somewhere although we can never find it.

This conception of the hidden reality cannot be spoken or understood. It suggests the reading of Baudrillard as edging the Sublime in his poetical exorations of our time. The Sublime is invoked by Nietzsche as the character of the reconciliation of man with the terror of the Dionysian world brought about by the Apollinian (*BT*, #3, 44). It has been the focus of a great deal of critical discussion recently, but not much in relation to Nietzsche,¹² and mostly in connection with the visual arts rather than poetry. Burke, however, preferred to locate the Sublime in poetry, and as Lyotard notes (*L-LR*, 245), we should take this thought seriously, even though Kant's more penetrating treatment of it is aimed at the visual, where the distinction between the presentable and the unrepresentable *seems to be* more readily established. Burke thought that the Sublime had to relate to something terrible—perhaps in virtue of

its infinity—which was *not* clearly presented (for if it were, it would occasion only ordinary fear). Thus, obscurity was for him a necessary condition of the Sublime. Since he treated all visual arts as simply representational, he thought they could not be sublime; but poetry could, because of the power of words to evoke ideas of what was not thereby presented,¹³ and perhaps (though here we need to modulate Burke into a Kantian mode) *could not* be presented. Baudrillard's evocations of a really real, of the other side of the mirror, etc., are certainly obscure in Burke's sense; indeed, in Baudrillard's understanding of language as available to us now it would be impossible to characterize this really real except by indirection. The indirection arises very readily within his critical diagnoses of our culture from the way his historical schema organizes the critique as a contrast with what is lost. The lurid picture of a dreadful present world of simulacra calls forth some conception, however obscure, of what a reality not confined to this distorting world would be like. But Baudrillard is careful (for the most part) to frame this possibility as a shadow which haunts our present world anyway, apart from any historical projection of it. Thus he insists that:

There will be no end to this world because there will always be something of this radical otherness lying in wait for us. But it's no longer an active, political, rational negativity, grappling with history . . . This power—of which we are all a part, even without knowing it—squints out from the other side of the mirror, and its ghost haunts the realized world (*B-Mirror*, 100–101).

History reinforces the myth, but it is not the locus of the central and essential thought which drives Baudrillard's critique. The central thought is of a reality behind the mirror of our ordinary understanding, an ordinary understanding which is totally corrupted by the simulacral exchanges of signs and which leads to our grasping reality only as a reflection of our own socially constructed selves, a social construction which excludes radical otherness. Thus the language in which we think is unable to present the really real, so that any indication of it would *have* to be obscure. The reality behind the mirror remains ghostly; but it is not *nothing*; its ghostly impact on and potential for our response to our simulacral world is Baudrillard's obsession.

“But if the language of our thinking is *totally* confined to seeing the world only in the simulacral mirror,” we may wonder, “how could we even think the possibility of a world behind the mirror, a really real? How could we read Baudrillard with any understanding at all, and how could he himself think and write of the possibility of this beyond-the-mirror? Clearly something in our thinking has to point to this ghost squinting out at us, even though we can never bring it into proper focus. Indeed, Baudrillard implies that something in our thinking, supposedly confined within the mirror, enables us to *grasp that* really everything in the mirror is illusion; we can grasp somehow “how everything escapes representation, escapes its own double and its resemblance.” Baudrillard labels this “the evil spirit of incredulity that inhabits us, more evil still than the evil spirit of simulation” (*B-SS*,

107).

What exactly is *evil* about this incredulity, which a Christian might instead regard as a precious insight into the Kingdom of Heaven, a glimpse of the Idea of the Good which points us to heaven from within this sinful world? Baudrillard is sceptical about moral categories, treating them as mere classifications within the illusory world of the simulacra. But in that case should he not have regarded the spirit of incredulity as independent of all moral categories, neither good nor evil? Partly, no doubt, he wanted to mark out the fact that scepticism about social values may be seen as evil by those who promote them. But there is more involved in the evil of incredulity than this. He emphasizes in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* that the society of the signs in the imagined Golden Age was:

a brutal hierarchy, since the sign's transparency is indissociably also its cruelty. In feudal or archaic societies, in *cruel* societies, signs are limited in number and their circulation is restricted. Each retains its full value as a prohibition, and carries with it a reciprocal obligation between castes, clans or persons, so signs are not arbitrary (*B-SED*, 50).

So if we were able to transfer our lives to this real real we should not find it like Beato Angelico's paradise; cruelty would be essential to it. Moreover, terrorism would either feature within it or would be an essential transition into it. "Terrorism," he says, "is always that of the real" (*SS*, 46-7); or anyway, it is a violent movement, as it were, *through* the mirror: "Terrorism is the act that restores an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange."¹⁴

(We have to add to this that, as in the case of *real*, the term *terrorism* has also a transposed, simulacral meaning, where it designates what the simulacral system does to preserve its dominance: "Liberal globalization," says Baudrillard, "is coming about in precisely the opposite form [*sc.* to freedom]—a police-state globalization, a total control, a terror based on 'law-and order' measures" (*B-ST*, 32). I shall return to the question of the relation of this simulacral meaning to the real real).

Thus Baudrillard's sense of the presence/absence of this real real is not a sense of a paradise lying behind this vale of tears. Its character is violent, terrifying. It may be in one aspect an echo of what was imagined in Byzantium and in the Middle Ages as an absolute God lying behind religious symbolism, such that the iconolaters who worshipped images were symbolically murdering representations which, they knew, could not present God (*B-SS*, 5), but their consolatory sense of the goodness of the hidden God is absent in Baudrillard, and only the murdering violence of the transition toward the real real is left. In this light, it is not surprising that the sceptical incredulity which points us toward it is, for him, an evil one.

Now let us consider how far this sense of a hidden presence/absence underlying or behind this unreal world might express, or give rise to, the Sublime.

For Burke it was essential that what the Sublime indicated was terrifying, though terrifying from within an obscurity which masked its appearance. Though

this gives expression to perhaps the most important feature of Longinus's original conception of the Sublime, and indeed to Kant's conception of the Sublime (at least of the dynamical Sublime), it is not at all clear that it survives into twentieth century discussions. Nothing in Barnett Newman's writings suggests that what he took to be sublime was terrifying; if anything, it was the enclosure of mundane life (and of artists who failed to break out of it) in the objective world which frightened him or at least disgusted him. And though Lyotard quotes Burke with approval he does not retain this central element of his thought—the obscure-terrifying. Should we follow Lyotard or Burke here?

This matter is complicated by the question whether the Sublime necessarily involves an *overcoming* of terror, or some kind of reconciliation with it which would be accompanied by Joy. For Nietzsche joy achieved by an abandonment, or bracketing in a kind of ecstasy, of all the concerns of everyday living (most notably that of individual survival) is the essential character of the Sublime. The experience of unadulterated terror at the Dionysian truth of existence (e.g., in the wisdom of Silenus) does occur in human life as a realization of the (hidden) truth. But it only becomes sublime when it is transmuted into a shining Apollinian illusion, which enables men to bear it, and to experience a joy in that understanding. For Nietzsche (as for Kant before him) the truth of existence in so far as we can understand it in art, when understood *aesthetically*, is not predominantly terrifying; it is joyous, even though that joy preserves an echo of the individual's terror. For the Sublime, the terrible should be only the illusory appearance of the Truth when glimpsed from the mind-set of worldly illusion; it is not its true essential character. It seems unlikely that Baudrillard thinks this. Rather, he seems to promote two reactions: disgust at the simulacral world and contempt for its falsity; and a sort of hope which he declares to be impossible—hence, more like a dream—for a true world which would be terrible even if it were to come to pass. I can see nothing like joy in his writing, only bitterness. Consider his reaction to Nicholas Zurbrugg's question whether he is saying that our own collective condition in 1994 is "akin to the experience of the concentration camps in the 1940s." He responds that perhaps the concentration camps were an inaugural event, whereas our condition is a historical condition, but "I do think that the problem is the same. We might compare the concentration camps and the atomic bomb in this regard. Both irradiate this extermination with a virality that is also a virtuality." Zurbrugg responds with an invitation to Baudrillard to envisage a political route of salvation from this living death: "Does this make you a sort of Schindler wanting to help your readers escape the exterminating angel of viral virtuality?" And Baudrillard responds with what must be a bitter joke: "Yes! I'll put you all on my list!"¹⁵

One might think that this interpretation is unsatisfactory because it seems to assume that Baudrillard thought that the real real world could actually be directly characterized in some way, and from there that he thinks it has a terrible or violent character—truly in itself; but in fact (as explained above) he doesn't think that any direct characterization of the real real in itself is possible. I think that there is

much truth in this (with qualifications to be considered), and I shall shortly show how this view is essential to his position, but that it does not refute the suggestion that he thinks that no break-through to joy is involved. His bitterness is quite unlike Nietzsche's rapture.

Let us consider more closely Baudrillard's use of a sense of *terror* internal to the simulacral system. This might seem to be a completely different meaning of *terror* and *terrorism* from that which "restores an irreducible singularity." In fact the distinction is precarious, unstable. The system's terrorism of global police-state control is itself a response to the impact of the real. The passage about it quoted above immediately follows this passage: "It is this uncontrollable unleashing of reversibility that is terrorism's true victory . . . in the slump in the value system, in the whole ideology of freedom, of free circulation, and so on, on which the Western world prided itself, and on which it drew to exert its hold over the rest of the world" (*B-ST*, 32). Here it is the (potential or actual) terrorism of the real that unleashes the simulacral terrorism of global police-state control, in a movement in which its force is reversed but which still carries the destructive potential of the real real hidden within the system. All through the simulacral system's dominance, its ghostly enemy was hidden within it, and at a certain crisis-point this enemy "emerged, infiltrating itself through the whole planet, slipping in everywhere like a virus, welling up from all the interstices of power" (*B-ST*, 15), expressing itself as terrorism of one sort or another. The simulacral terror is thus really an effect of the real terror, and to some extent a manifestation of it. But on the other hand the real terror is not fully real; Baudrillard is explicit on this question.

"How do things stand with the real event, then, if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images, virtuality and fiction? In the present case, we thought we had seen (perhaps with a certain relief) a resurgence of the real, and of the violence of the real, in an allegedly virtual universe . . . But does reality actually outstrip fiction? If it seems to do so, this is because it has absorbed fiction's energy, and has itself become fiction" (*B-ST*, 28).

Thus even the terrorist acts (of the 2001 attack on the Twin Towers, for example) which overtly attack the system are not really real, they are not the *advent* of the real-behind-the-mirror. He says:

An excess of violence is not enough to open onto reality. For reality is a principle, and it is the principle that is lost. Reality and fiction are inextricable, and the fascination with the attack is primarily a fascination with the image (both its exultatory and its catastrophic consequences are themselves largely imaginary)" (*B-ST*, 28-9).

Thus the real real is as it were an *active* ghost, which impinges sharply on our simulacral real; but even these undermining effects do not amount to undoing its ghostly status for us. Both the simulacral terror and the apparently real terror are in the in-between, though in different ways.

Baudrillard's accounts of death similarly divide into two: *apparently* one is death as part of the simulacral world, the other is death as part of the *real* real one; a division which he acknowledges in *Paroxysm* as a distinction between "the culture of death, a true death" (by which he means the living death of everyday simulacral existence), and "death taken in the symbolic sense" (*B-Paroxysm*, 39). The second of these may at first appear to be a real real death, carrying the individuating significance of Heidegger's "my own death," horizon of my individual temporality in my *Jemeinigkeit*. Thus, Baudrillard remarks that death absorbed under the sign of the general equivalent (Heidegger's "Anyone," "das Man") may give rise to a nameless despair: "Everyone is alone before the general equivalent" (*B-SED*, 146)—a second kind of death, perhaps (one might think) an authentic, individual death. And indeed the second kind of death does undermine in some way the smooth working of the general economy, as a remainder not unlike that of Bataille's system-disrupting death and the erotic. "Something remains," says Baudrillard, which "provides the opportunity to disturb every economy . . . Beyond all mirrors, something appears for us today: a fantastic dispersal of the body, of being and wealth. Bataille's figure of death is the closest premonition of this" (*B-SED*, 158).

But Baudrillard's second kind of death is not that of Heidegger's existential authentic temporality, nor even that of Bataille, but a "symbolic" death. It is determined by "singularity," not authenticity. And singularity, he says, is:

no longer individual, nor the creation of a determinate subject, but the product of a bursting-in, a breaking-in. It can come from a person, a group, an accident in the system itself. It's an anomaly which acquires its force within the indistinct ensemble of the system (*B-Mirror*, 51).

The symbolic death is, then, indeed a force which damages and undermines the system of generalized exchange, a bursting-in; but it is not a bursting-in *of* the real, of any real authentic death which we might imagine. Though it is anomalous, it is within the system, an *internal* disturbance. Hence its label: symbolic.

So even though the real real is essential to his interpretation of our world, Baudrillard does not think that any direct presentation of it is possible. Every apparent reference or allusion to it in his texts is really a reference either to a fiction or to some aspect of our ordinary, simulacral world, behind which we are somehow to see this ghost squinting out at us. We can distinguish in these texts, I think, three modes of such doubled and indirect reference or allusion to the real real, which we can label the mythical, the categorial, and the ecstatic. The mythical mode makes (fictional) use of modernist conceptions of the real as an attainable utopia, either located in a possible future, or in an envisaged historical past. (Thus these historical myths are not merely a device for increasing the impact on his readers of his negative vision of the world; they play an essential role in its presentation in writing.) The categorial mode makes use of abstract terms of metaphysics or semantics—terms such as "real," "referential," "singular," "other." These give the strongest impression, to a philosophically-informed but unsus-

picious reader, that they say something direct—though abstract—about the hidden reality. But Baudrillard makes clear that they could not have that power, and underlines this by using these same terms in a sense which he explains is merely a projection of the simulacral. The ecstatic mode is exemplified by his account of terror, discussed above. “Terrorism is the ecstatic form of violence,” he claimed in 1983, a violence within the simulacral which aims at its overthrow; thus it “wishes to call on things to regain their meaning again.” and it is in this way a manifestation of the inaccessible *real* real in its subversion of the world. But it inevitably fails in this project of meaning as revolution.

The only revolution in things is today no longer in their dialectical transcendence (*Aufhebung*), but in their potentialization, in their elevation to the second power, in their elevation to the *n*th power, whether that of terrorism, irony, or simulation. It is no longer dialectics, but ecstasy that is in process (*B-FS*, 41).

Ecstasy: being driven out of oneself, or as Burke put it “hurried out of itself” by (he thought) “a croud of great and confused images” (*Burke*, 57). But for Baudrillard there is no locus outside oneself in which to dwell, so the movement *towards* meaning—towards the real real—never achieves its goal. Instead, it repeats and intensifies this movement in a repeated and indefinite transformation through simulacral forms: “unconditional metamorphosis,” leading ultimately to indifference (*B-FS*, 41, 8).

Can such a view be sublime? It seems that the Sublime must involve some kind of contrasting tension between two presentations or anyway two kinds of experience: one of what is represented, the other of what is not represented but somehow indicated, and which shows itself to be of such a nature that it could not be represented. Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* locates these in distinct parts of Attic tragedy (the protagonists and the chorus), and in any case seems to assume that the Dionysian does break in on ordinary experience as a despair at the truth of existence, even without the mediation of art. But this would require that the sublime work of art contains a “double mimesis,” as John Sallis puts it (*Sallis*, 88, 92); two separable mimeses, although the Dionysian one has the wild character of leading us to the edge of an abyss. But how could such a presentation of the abyssal, of what cannot be presented, be possible? Once the idea of the Sublime is hyperbolized beyond Burke’s conception of the obscure to Kant’s idea of the unrepresentable, it seems to require the work of art to encompass a contradiction. Sallis’s reference to “the metaphysical determinations from which Nietzsche’s text has begun to twist free” (*Sallis*, 91)—and from which it *must* twist free in order to avoid the metaphysical rigidity of Schopenhauer’s “thing-in-itself”—by no means shows us how such a twisting is accomplished in *The Birth of Tragedy*, nor even how it is possible at all. Similarly, Trottein, commenting on Lyotard, thinks that the modern sublime “is about presenting something unrepresentable” (*PPS*, 197). (Lyotard himself disguises the contradiction here only slightly by writing: “putting forward” the unrepresentable (*L-PMC*, 81), either as the missing contents (modern) or in presentation itself (postmodern). Not that either of them think that this can be

achieved; the sublime consists in the event of failing to do this. But how can it even appear that just that is what the work of art was *attempting* to achieve? If it could not be received by its viewer or reader as attempting this, how could anyone understand it or respond to it as sublime? Otherwise, if a work did in some way show itself as failing to present the unrepresentable (rather than merely *not* presenting it, like “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep”), how could this failure be sublime and marvellous rather than merely uninteresting and unsuccessful? One is tempted to answer: only if its failure *shows* in some way that which it failed to *present*. But that seems to return us to Sallis’s questionable double mimesis; or at best to some unclear distinction between *presenting* (which as a translation of Kant’s *Darstellung* was itself originally intended by Kant as a more open-ended relation than *representation*, *Vorstellung*) and *showing*, or *putting forward*. This difficulty—perhaps, this incoherence—seems to be built in to the very idea of the Sublime as it has been thought since Kant.¹⁶

Thus Baudrillard’s caution in eschewing any possible presentation of the real real (of real terror, etc.) may be justified and necessary, even though it produces extraordinary ambiguities in his texts and leads him into a strategy of constant allusion to fragmentary myths. Perhaps we should regard him as carrying out in his own way Wittgenstein’s claim that he “draws limits to the sphere of the ethical [*the part of his book—the more important part—that he had not written, he says*] from the inside, as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing these limits . . . by being silent about it.”¹⁷ But it leaves the question whether his work is in any sense sublime in a kind of limbo.

No more than Wittgenstein does Baudrillard really keep silent about that which the only language available to us (according to him) prevents him from speaking about. His poetic use of historical myths, his doubled and self-undermining use of philosophical categories, and his analyses of ecstatic events and actions within our world, succeed in a peculiar way in evoking a sense of the real real, the ghostly, at the same time as they explode it. But the effect is very different from that envisaged by Nietzsche or Kant. Since there can be no experience of being within the Dionysian or the *real* real, there can be no joy in its transformation of our lives or of our sense of our being as noumenal (non-everyday, ecstatic) selves. So the essential of the Sublime as Nietzsche and Kant saw it is inaccessible. Baudrillard remains on the edge of the Sublime. Yet the music he practises—evocation of the ghostly real—not only sings to us of the misery and inadequacy of this phenomenal world in a way which might be taken as a preparation for the Sublime, it does so in a sublime way, as it were, evoking in many different forms the impossible idea of the *real* real as a contrast with this world. Unlike Lyotard (who focused much of his brilliant interpretation of the Sublime on the modernist artist Barnett Newman¹⁸), I believe that this disillusioned caution edging the Sublime but not attaining it, remaining within the orbit of the “croud of great and confused images,” is what is characteristic of the Postmodern. A defense of this view would require at least another essay, but I should like to put forward an example of the form of postmodern art I have in mind.

Sherrie Levine's "Newborns" consisted of six glass copies of Brancusi's bronze "Newborn," placed on grand pianos. The signs are juxtaposed in ways which undermine any sublime presentation of hidden depths which they might have had (notably, that of Brancusi's original bronze), and which in their multiplicity recall their availability as part of a system of generalized exchange. Yet the resonance of the individual signs recalls that modernist meaning even while it is blocked. Levine says about it:

Like Brancusi, I am interested in originality . . . I wanted to maximise the historical references and the metaphorical possibilities. The signs resonate with such quasi-Kantian notions as originality and creativity, and the grandeur of Nietzsche's spirit of music which could evoke the Dionysian. Her comments on the work also refer to the ancient Greek belief in the perfect inaudible music of the cosmos. But she calls these, not sublime, but "privileged moments of aesthetic negation."¹⁹

And their ironic placement explodes the sublime meanings at the same time as it alludes to them. Though these signs edge round the Sublime, she sees them as negations. And although Baudrillard does not use this phrase, it fits very well with his conception of how such signs work

Chapter 8

In the Wake of Critique: Notes from the Inside Cover of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*

Thomas P. Brockelman

To his credit, Jean Baudrillard is not an academic philosopher. His elliptical and poetic texts include a kind of observation of the historical development of the contemporary world that the epistemological and hermeneutic concerns of the academy eclipse. Above all, Baudrillard's work since the 1960s closes ever more closely with the great event of our times—the emergence of a cybernetic techno-economic apparatus on a global scale. Whether in reading J. G. Ballard's *Crash* as indicating the merging of machine and organic,¹ in suggesting the collapse of meaning in contemporary media (*B-S*, 82), or in indicating the emergence of a contemporary perverse and ecstatic alternative to reality itself² Baudrillard is able to put a finger on phenomena that academic philosophy seems specifically constituted so as to miss. More, Baudrillard's independence from the (philosophical) academy wins him a perspective that is closed to even those few academic philosophers (Heidegger, Adorno, Marcuse) who tread the ground of his concerns. Above all, it's a matter for Baudrillard of avoiding the almost inevitable Romanticism or nostalgia that surrounds every effort to raise the question concerning technology. While, as we'll see, the source of questioning in Baudrillard's work is problematically obscure, we may at least be certain that it is not a moral imperative to re-establish meaning or overcome alienation. Thus, in Baudrillard we find a refreshing effort to raise questions about what is new in our world and to raise those questions in a genuinely novel way.

Still, I remain sympathetic with the general chorus of philosophical voices objecting to much in Baudrillard's work—a sign, no doubt, that I myself remain fatally enmeshed in the academy. To begin with, it's important to note that it's an over-simplification to simply divide off Baudrillard's thought from the problems of representation, subjectivity and knowledge that are endlessly re-worked within the academy. Indeed, the death or end (and thus, alas, the continuation) of these concerns forms a kind of leitmotif of Baudrillard's writing—to such an extent that we would be more accurate to write of a pseudo-liberation of his work from the conceptual framework burdening us academics. If it's about simulation, then doesn't that, at some level, imply a reality for it to simulate? Such an unhappy

dialectical implication marks one obvious problem with Baudrillard's work, and a loadstone for frequent academic criticism.

To this problem must be added a related confusion about how to answer the basic philosophical question: "On what basis, or from what perspective is it possible to criticize the world in which we live?" Above all, the Baudrillard of recent years, the Baudrillard since *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) seems paralyzed by the problem of philosophical critique. Indeed, his only answer to the question of critique seems to be that critique is dead.

Every serious reader of Baudrillard must come to grips with this problem that confronts the status of philosophical critique: the very novelty of Baudrillard's approach contrasts successfully with Heidegger, Adorno and Marcuse. However, only if Baudrillard himself is able to locate and theorize a ground for criticism of cybernetic techno-capitalism can he really displace the nostalgic critics who preceded him.

We might also put the challenge facing us in reading Baudrillard in terms of a peculiar shift in voice that is noticeable throughout his writing: on the one hand, Baudrillard's peculiar talent seems to lie in his ability to represent a certain kind of theoretical knowledge, and the text does seem to speak with precisely that philosophical project in mind. By reading it we come to understand the world in which we live better, whether he chooses to articulate this truth in terms of a transition from a capitalism of production to one of consumption,³ as an increase in the incoherence of the real and the emergence of the hyper-real, or as the victory of cybernetics and the disappearance of the panoptic and perspectival model of knowledge—a model of knowledge that has in fact dominated since the renaissance. Regardless, in each and every instance it is clear that our task as readers of his texts remains philosophical in nature.

On the other hand, at key points, both in *Simulacra and Simulation* and in other texts, Baudrillard's writing takes on another guise, one in which the writer is agent provocateur rather than philosopher. His ultimate intention in such passages is to forbid rather than produce philosophical understanding, aiming, instead, somehow to directly create or inspire action. In those passages, it's a question of *strategies* like *implosion* or *rotting the university* or *melancholic fascination*, not of an introduction of knowledge.

The following comments move toward this indecision of voice in Baudrillard, an indecision that, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, emerges from the very beginning—in Baudrillard's paraphrase and reading of Borges's famous allegory of representation: "Of Exactitude in Science" in *A Universal History of Infamy*.⁴ In a passage of unusual density, we find compressed both the effort to represent the nature of the historical present (as the transition from history to hyperreal) and the imperative to cast aside all nostalgia for representation as something entirely foreign to the hyperreal. The following comments are predicated upon the hypothesis that such a beginning is, to quote the old Marxist saw, "not an accident"—either with regard to the 1981 text, or in relationship to Baudrillard's work as a whole.

To understand precisely how the presence of Borges might help us to understand Baudrillard, let me offer the following brief map of Baudrillard's use of "Of Exactitude in Science" in "The Precession of Simulacra," the opening essay in *Simulacra and Simulation*:

1st: Baudrillard suggests that Borges' fable was "once" "the most beautiful allegory of simulation" but has now lost this priority (*B-SS*, 1).

2nd: Baudrillard reverses the Borgesian trope, insisting that, contrary to every metaphysics, it is now the map which produces the real and not vice-versa. Thus, precisely the first essay's title, "Precession of the Simulacra." In other words, "Of Exactitude in Science" demonstrates that the very language of representation (and with it of history, perspective and truth) becomes indefensible.

3rd: Baudrillard informs us that "in fact, even inverted, Borges's fable is unusable" (*B-SS*, 1). Such is the case because the "sovereign difference" between the world of appearance and the "reality" supposedly underlying it has disappeared. In other words, "all metaphysics . . . is lost" (*B-SS*, 2). This transformation is considered to be complete and irreversible, though we are now aware that it is only possible insofar as the first and second "states" precede it.

Baudrillard begins by invoking Borges, albeit in the mode of recollection, making his story present within the pages of *Simulacra and Simulation*; he ends the text, however, by indicating the complete irrelevance (today) of "Of Exactitude in Science." My concern will be the labyrinthine logic connecting the antipodes of this reading: how can everything concern representation, mapping, and truth, while, at the same time, continue to remain completely alien to those issues? How can we really get from simulation to the hyperreal?

In the following pages I suggest that Baudrillard offers the reader two re-writes of Borges's story, using the implicit unity of the fictional narrative to hold together projects of the greatest possible heterogeneity. Still, fictional or not, unity is unity: in Borges, then, lies a clue to Baudrillard's—implicit, even unconscious answer to his philosophical critics in the academy.

Of Exactitude in Science

It's important to understand just what Baudrillard intends by invoking Borges's fable. Let me emphasize that it is a paraphrase of that story with which *Simulacra and Simulation* begins. "Of Exactitude in Science" never appears in Baudrillard's book, but only in a kind of thumbnail account (if one can write of such a thing in the case of a story that is a single paragraph in length). I might even go so far as to say that the opening of Baudrillard's text calls attention to or invokes the absence of Borges's text. At a certain level, what will be seen to count

is that the Borges fable not only does not but cannot appear within the context of Baudrillard's announcement of the hyperreal's dawn. We could even write, the hyper-real is what happens when the story of the limits of representation disappears.

Baudrillard himself presents "Of Exactitude in Science" as a text from which the hyperreal has drained its very life-blood. The myth of a real entirely covered by representation allows us to conceive an erasure of what I might call the erotics of the real, that metaphysical force belonging to the real which directs all discourse and all practice toward it as toward an origin that is also end or goal. Previously, every signifying gesture aimed at a real for which any signifiers wielded seemed inadequate. To know, as Plato already told us in *The Symposium*, is to complete a process of desire, a process aiming at the real itself. Without the space of difference between representation and real produced by the incompleteness of every map, the practices of discourse, of culture—all moving unidirectionally from the former to the latter—cannot be.

Thus, Baudrillard's paraphrase of Borges might be considered a kind of re-write, or, better yet, an effacement of his allegory—one that challenges the existence of the very ruin that both the fable and the map within it claim to be.⁵ If the sovereign difference between the world of appearance and the reality supposedly underlying it disappears, then the very representational/spatial metaphor upon which Borges has built his story dissolves. No more maps. And with the loss of maps comes the loss of memory. In this re-write, there never was a real independent of the hyperreal. The *use* of cartography is the erasure of the real. Borges's story erases itself.⁶

Which is as much as to say that this re-write of the Borges is, in fact, no different from Baudrillard's gesture at the opening of *Simulacra and Simulation*, his rejection of the very usefulness of "The Exactitude of Science" for advancing our understanding of our situation today. "Forget Borges!" he seems to urge us. The hyperreal has nothing to do with Borges's story.⁷

We might link such an effacement of Borges by Baudrillard with a second theme dominant in both *Simulacra and Simulation*—the death of critique. Actually, *Simulacra and Simulation* follows a series of writings by Baudrillard in which the author suggests that the current state of capitalism must be understood as the ultimate disappearance of the exceptional viewpoint constitutive of modern space and knowledge. We may conceive this disappearance either negatively (the end of perspectival and panoptic space), or positively (the victory of the cybernetic and the model); in either case, the implication is the end of the perspectival visual model underlying critique (*B-SS*, 29).

Implicitly, the critic, the modernist thinker, gains insight into the social totality by occupying a unique point of view, one that is both outside (and thus able to survey the social whole) and continuous with it. Critique amounts to a perspectival reflection upon the preconditions for this perspectival knowledge. Now, by Baudrillard's own testimony, one of the places where this critical/perspectiv-

al construct has played its most central role within modernity is in our understanding of history. The text I'll cite here comes from *The Mirror of Production*, Baudrillard's own systematic critique of the Marxist science of history.

The culmination produced by Marxist analysis, in which it illuminates the demise of all contradictions, is simply the emergence of history, that is, a process in which everything is always said to be resolved at a later date by an accumulated truth, a determinant instance, an irreversible history. Thus, history can only be, at bottom, the equivalent of the ideal point of reference that, in the classical and rational perspective of the Renaissance, allows the spatial imposition of an arbitrary, unitary structure. And historical materialism could only be the Euclidean geometry of this history.⁸

Of course, the question that must be raised when critique and critical knowledge disappear is just what project remains to the theorist who is announcing this death? Clearly, she can no longer conceive herself as articulating social realities ignored in dominant discourse. In fact, we no longer really have a theory whose purpose is to deliver knowledge. Nor can theory depict the rational point where representation corresponds with reality in picturing a healed or just social totality.

In addressing the epistemological status of Baudrillard's own text in the wake of critique's demise, it's worthwhile to follow a bit more the argument in *The Mirror of Production*. There, a radical critique of Marxism leads Baudrillard to question the very binary logic of production that underlies Marxism as science of history. That is, the opposition between exchange value and use value is exposed as, in fact, a collusion—one that establishes the universality of production itself. At its most radical level, this critique questions the representational structure assumed by critique—the adequation of a representation to a reality. Above all, Baudrillard's argument calls into question, as we've already seen, the historical version of such realism, a version that we might equate with teleology itself. Perhaps, so goes the argument in *The Mirror of Production*, there simply is no reality (base as opposed to superstructure) upon which to found an objective analysis.

Baudrillard registers the result of this Nietzschean insight in several passages that both name his own method as (*for lack of a better term*) a "critique of the political economy of the sign" and tells us that his discovery problematizes critique itself. *Critique*, he rightly informs us, is "the quintessence of Enlightenment rationality," and, as such "is perhaps only the subtle, long-term expression of the system's expanded reproduction" (*B-Mirror*; 50). Indeed, "at this level" "the situation is no longer that of a critique." Critique, both embraced as Baudrillard's own method, and rejected as the method implicit in everything exposed by Baudrillard's own critique, becomes a classical object of ambivalence.

Most fruitful for exploring this ambivalence, the passage about history that I cited earlier provides the impetus for a methodological reflection. How must theory respond to the situation created by the obsolescence of Marxism's own science of history? Baudrillard sees two choices: one can continue to speak scientifi-

cally but, in so doing, reduce Marxism itself to the status of ideology, recognizing that “Marx (himself) was not in a historical position to speak scientifically, to speak the truth” (*B-Mirror*, 117). Here one “preserves the fundamental form of the Marxist critique of political economy” but challenges its content. Alternatively, however, one can reject the very perspectival structure of critique imposed by Marxism, eschewing the form along with the content: here “one challenges completely the validity of Marxist concepts (history, dialectic, mode of production, etc.) as an arbitrary model that verifies itself, like any self-respecting model, by its own circularity” (*B-Mirror*, 117).

It’s interesting that, having presented this choice as choice—having brought the reader right to the undecidable moment of critique’s death—Baudrillard immediately pulls back, presenting a clear priority between the alternatives. The more conservative option, the preservation of critique’s form in the face of a content challenging it, is discarded as untenable since the radicalization it demands is so great that Marxism “itself would have to go” (*B-Mirror*, 118).

In the case of *The Mirror of Production*, as opposed to *Simulacra and Simulation*, the reason for this erasure of ambivalence about critique is clear: the choice of the *Mirror of Production* over the *radicalized critique* alone makes possible the restitution of Baudrillard’s text to the traditional status of prolegomenon to political action. The pages following Baudrillard’s presentation of the crisis of critique, the final pages in *The Mirror of Production*, present a program of action sufficient to the situation produced by the disappearance of the very possibility of critique. Ironically, Baudrillard locates this action in complete passivity, the refusal of participation common to those who dropped out of society in the 1970s. Nonetheless, the argument of *The Mirror Production* leads directly from the rejection of critique to this endorsement of resistant practice.

The basis for this favoring of action appears in Baudrillard’s attempt to rescue (through what can only be called an immanent critique, but that aside) the utopian/revolutionary moment in Marxism by prying it apart from the *productivist* historicity of scientific socialism. Productivism structures time itself teleologically (*B-Mirror*, 160). For Marxism, he writes:

the revolution becomes an end, not in any sense the radical exigency that presumes, instead of counting on a final totalization, that man is already totally there in his revolt. Such is the meaning of utopia, if one distinguishes it from the dreaming idealism to which the “scientific ones” take pleasure in reducing it, only to better bury it (*B-Mirror*, 162).

Baudrillard’s debt to May ‘68 becomes clear here, when he attempts, against this productivist time, to revive a millenarian immanence implicit in Marx’s politics. In contrast to the bad utopianism of Marxism, *The Mirror of Production* celebrates an open present, a present that abolishes the “separation between present and future” (*B-Mirror*, 164).

What is the precondition for this discovery of the genuine, immanent utopia and the rejection of the teleology of Marxism? Baudrillard himself tells us that it is his realization that the “theorization of the mode of production” results from the “imposition . . . of a perspectival convergence” upon historical time (*B-Mirror*, 160). The negation of such historicity allows immanent practice to emerge. The theorist breaks open the illusions of the present in order to release the revolutionary/utopian sparks of the present held captive by teleology itself in its systemic definition of everyday life. First of all, the work of the theorist, thus, becomes a kind of act, something whose value is not measured in terms of a knowledge produced but an effect delivered. Second, such an act aims to encourage mimicry, mimesis, the multiplication of transgressive actions for the open present.⁹ In other words, it is only when the very space of critique, the space of perspective, disappears that the possibility of the new practice—a practice unconstrained by the Enlightenment traditions of rationalism—is realized.

In the context of *The Mirror of Production*, which is, after all, the context of Paris in '68 and its aftermath, it's easy enough to accept such a view of a critical practice beyond critique; for here the revolutionary act of the writer promises genuine political change. Baudrillard's opposition to the French Communist Party is clearly intended to re-awaken a genuinely revolutionary spirit and with it the possibility of radical social change.

But between 1973 and 1981 a lot of water flows under the bridge—to the extent that, while Baudrillard consciously maintains the choice that allows the possibility of transformed practice by conceiving simulation to be complete, the political justification for this choice seems to disappear. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, political resistance is still prioritized over any analytical position, as evidenced by Baudrillard's declaration at the very end of the book that “theoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource left to us” (*B-SS*, 163). Nonetheless, this choice is confirmed only at the same time that it is conceived as more or less politically futile. Indeed, Baudrillard characterizes the age of the hyperreal, at one point, precisely by the disappearance of the political form of nihilism typical of the twentieth century (*B-SS*, 160). In this new age, there is very little that anyone can do at a political level (*B-SS*, 153).

The cause of this new pessimism becomes clear in analyses toward the end of *Simulacra and Simulation*, which includes discussions that emphasize the poly-absorbent quality of the hyperreal. The hope held out at the end of *The Mirror of Production*, the hope of a utopia of the open present, now appears to be but one more ruse of the system itself. Thus, for example, Baudrillard discusses J.G. Ballard's *Crash* in order to expose the way that today functionalism has been radicalized to include dysfunctionality (the crash, death) within itself. The openness of human temporal experience becomes part of the operational system, a system which, in this way, transcends the merely mechanical to blend flesh and machine, married in the violence of the crash (*B-SS*, 118). More generally, Baudrillard explains the end of the political nihilism of terrorism by means of the system's ex-

pansion to include what seems most radically at variance with it: “The system is itself also nihilistic, in the sense that it has the power to pour everything, including what denies it, into indifference” (*B-SS*, 163).

The system survives beyond its own purpose, its own end. Indeed, in the light of the hyperreal, the utopian opposition to techno-capitalism based upon its foundation in teleology seems naïve. It seems, indeed, like a last visage of ideology. Utopian openness fails to lead us to any beyond because, for Baudrillard, there is no such space. While the open present thus provides a kind of alternative to the functionalist operationalism of commodities in today’s capitalism—while it provides a resistant ethos that we might connect with the historical avant-gardes in the arts—it remains within the space of the system itself. That is to say, there may be a kind of ethical resistance (still today!) in the refusal of production, but this resistance has no political effect. The system as a whole is only reinforced by it. Indeed, it needs our play, our delirium, even our expenditure.

Thus, on the one hand, Baudrillard delivers one of the most powerful insights of his mature work: the very utopia to which, in various forms, an entire generation (the “post-’68 generation”) of European thinkers swears allegiance. Indeed, he offers the insight that the poetic utopia of a meaning system—a system freed from the functionalist binding of history and telos—has in fact become untenable today.¹⁰ But, on the other hand, Baudrillard’s work demonstrates a sort of loyalty to the very liberation whose bankruptcy his own conceptual apparatus indicates. One wonders if Baudrillard’s continued self-identification in more recent work as a kind of “terrorist in theory as others are with their weapons” deserves to be taken seriously (*B-SS*, 163). Yes, such terror can suspend the illusions of purpose or rationality sedating us in our everyday lives, but the antidote changes nothing important. The hyperreal hums on for all that. Impotent terror seems a mere fright.

Thus, if Baudrillard’s imperative does deserve consideration, then it must be as a symptom: for that is how I would now read the action plan at the end of *Simulacra and Simulation*, the proposal of “melancholic fascination” as response to the age of “transparency” (*B-SS*, 160). If ever a figure seemed to fit the model of theory over practice this one—visual, passive, non-productive of any change—would have to be it.

Now fascination (in contrast to seduction, which was attached to appearances, and to dialectical reason, which was attached to meaning) is a nihilistic passion par excellence, it is the passion proper to the mode of disappearance. We are fascinated by all forms of disappearance, of our disappearance. Melancholic and fascinated, such is our general situation in an era of involuntary transparency (*B-SS*, 160).

But Baudrillard’s univocal insistence upon the simple end of perspective, and with it the death of critique leaves him with no category to understand this fascination except for practice; for, as he states on the next page, the condition demanding this fascination makes theory itself impossible.

If the idea of melancholic fascination as practice marks a symptomatic absurdity, then what does that indicate? Two things: first, that critique is not only dead and buried as Baudrillard would have us think. We must consider it also just dead. We must consider our time as (in) the wake of its passing. And, as Heidegger says of Metaphysics, its end lasts a long time. Second, that this truth if—the truth of what I will call the sacrifice of critique—composes the central structure of *Simulacra and Simulation*, returning over and over in the form of a spatial model of simulation's spread—representation engulfing the real—which is then dialectically supplanted.

Borges Rewritten

One cannot fail to notice the rather transparent claims to knowledge with which every one of Baudrillard's terrorist acts, whether in *The Mirror of Production* or later, is framed. Here we must notice that, throughout his work, Baudrillard presents us with a philosophy of history of precisely the kind to which he objects in Marx: only here the end of history is the truth of truth's demise rather than the proletarian revolution and the withering of property and the state. All of history is now conceived as the preparation for the loss of truth, the end of metaphysics which gains ascendancy with victory of the *hyperreal*. History remains a subject, albeit a subject intent upon self-immolation. No doubt the paradox here (the truth of the death of truth!) must be troubling, but it's to precisely such ends that Baudrillard's historicism repeatedly drives us.

To understand how such residual historicism can emerge, let's return to the beginning of *Simulacra and Simulation*, to "The Precession of the Simulacra" and Baudrillard's treatment of Borges's fable there. Recall that *Simulacra and Simulation* opens with the replacement of the model of the present suggested by Borges's fable of the imperial map coextensive with the empire that it represents. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard's original invocation of the story of the map tells us that its former privilege came from a world in transition to the *hyperreal*—a world whose representational technology is in the process of consuming the real. Indeed, as the story goes, once this tale sufficed for understanding simulation, but no more. And so Baudrillard assures us of the irrelevance of Borges's story. But notice that this very discourse of Baudrillard's both treats the hyperreal as a new real (we are discovering the historical truth about it!) and does so by implicitly engaging in philosophical reflection. That is, the *hyperreal* only becomes itself a meaningful object of discourse based upon a process by which Baudrillard suggests it as the necessary implication of that covering in Borges. Without such a reflection, to say "we're in the hyperreal now" is essentially meaningless, boring. It only becomes compelling as the implication of extending representation to completely eclipse the real. We mean by *hyperreal* just the situation when the real no longer does, or simply does not, continue beyond representation.

Thus, Baudrillard does not simply use the fable of Borges, the story of the

map, (as he would have us believe) to overcome the naive position represented by Borges. He also sacrifices the fable of the perfect map. The victim of every sacrifice occupies a strange position: this victim is both set aside as a recipient of scorn, a nothing, a tainted object (the scapegoat, etc.) and treasured as holding, through its death, the key to society's redemption. With this ambivalence, additionally, comes a strange debt: the very future life of the community will be re-cast in the image of the death that has won it at the same time that this victory is also a new independence from the despised sacrificial object. Just so, the Borges's fable, apparently cast aside as mere historical detritus, ambiguously lives on in the society that has apparently reduced it to irrelevance. And it lives on in Baudrillard's account of such a *hyperreal* situation.

The *hyperreal* is signification that you cannot get out of. But this *cannot get out of* reinscribes the space of the real within the hyperreal. The hyperreal needs the real, the memory of the real's death, to be itself. That is, the *hyperreal* is described precisely in the cartographic terms of the real—as the totality of possible space. The *hyperreal* takes on the fundamental characteristic of that which it replaces through mapping—as that which extends precisely as far as the real used to . . .

But, if the memory of this tale belongs to the *hyperreal* itself, then Baudrillard implicitly suggests a second re-write of the Borges fable. Borges's invocation of the empire of the map leaves its extent unclear. If the empire were as glorious as its tradition of cartography makes it out to be—if its boundaries were in fact continuous with the real itself—then representation as historical process could only approach adequation with it. Thus, Borges's report of a completed map of the empire would have to be suspect. The age of simulation could only dawn; it could never reach the point of completion at which the very distinction between representation and represented disappears. The hyperreal can only exist on the assumption that the real exists, or did exist. But in this way, the space of the real's existence (as the space of its time, of its memory) is, in fact, indefinite, even eternal. For the idea of the real is the real, and it is preserved.

In this re-write of "Of Exactitude in Science," representation is, in theory, never complete. Critique becomes impractical rather than incoherent—though, as will be seen, this impracticality extracts a heavy price. As far as we can see—in this region—the real seems entirely occupied by its map. This is not, however, to say that there aren't empty spaces open elsewhere. There might remain—and this might be the modality of its existence—a space of/for the subject. In the Baudrillard corresponding to this version, Borges's story remains readable even as its premise becomes absurd.

Waking Critique

There's certainly nothing original in finding something unworkable in Baudrillard's epistemological preference for a simple erasure of history or truth.

Nor is there any shortage of philosophical treatments of Baudrillard that point out the debt of his discourse to a rather traditional Hegelian/Marxist historicism. But it is the unusual virtue of Baudrillard's debt to Borges—the path I've followed here—to suggest that both the value and the crisis of Baudrillard's work may lie in the intersection of these problematics. At its most fruitful, Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* places the anti-perspectival and historicist propositions into an irresolvable knot rather than a self-contradictory syllogism.

Implicit, then, in Baudrillard's brief discussion of the Borges fable, implicit in his ambivalence about the story and in the story's own double ambiguity, is a kind of memorial to the death of critique; instead of the simple non-existence of perspective and critique, we have an oscillation between a death just recorded and an erasure so complete as to evade all memory. It is as though we were held, impossibly, at the moment of critique's death, when two incommensurable situations presented themselves—both a consciousness of the impending end of consciousness and a window onto the world after death, after consciousness. Or, alternatively, it is as though we stood at the moment when—having discovered, as its content the impossibility of perspective/critique—critique began to transfer this impossibility to its own form, its own activity. We are just casting aside the ladder.

There is a truth, then, in Baudrillard's endless farewells to history and representation, though it is not quite the truth that he wants to embrace. But, if such is the meaning of Baudrillard's view of the present, then in its name we must criticize the social/political stance that he prefers. Indeed, the whole imperative of a death of critique and, with it, of critical practice depends upon a false self-interpretation—one which owes a great deal to his outdated Romantic self-image as intellectual terrorist. In truth, however, Baudrillard's thought leads us neither to the unfathomable action, nor to the fascinated intellectual passivity that he consistently favors.

To what, then? I suggest we turn to a model of a disappearing, but ever-viable, critique that is much closer to the post-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory of recent years than Baudrillard's bomb-throwing metaphors would suggest. Above all, what Baudrillard lacks, but senses the need for, is a critical lever able to take on the present without nostalgia for the good old reality of historicism and representation. To put it in the terms of our parable from Borges (though reversing the order of its exposition), we must both acknowledge the continued inherence (in memory!) of a perspective critical of the system and disallow any reality to it. Here I would point particularly to the work of Slavoj Žižek and the Slovenian school, intended precisely to preserve critique at its most dangerous moment by conceiving it in relationship to a fundamental fantasy constitutive of social reality itself. Above all, what differentiates such a view from Baudrillard's is the preservation within it of a Real, irreducible to the fantasy constructing reality but also rigorously bound up with it. The specific nature and history of such fantasy allows us to make sense of the omnivorous ecstasy and perversion that Baudrillard uses to characterize the world of techno-capitalism, but to do so in a way that preserves

the possibility of a critical, even revolutionary knowledge/act. Such work allows us to distinguish, as Baudrillard's writing never does, between the end of any outside to the system of representation and the end of representation—an ever-critical force—itself.

But the specific contours of such a critical theory appropriate to the age of the hyperreal, eluding Baudrillard as it does, is another story, one that—to leave Borges behind at last—has everything to do with “Of Exactitude in Science.”

PART THREE

UNREPRESENTABLE

COMMUNITIES

Introduction to Part Three

Unrepresentable Communities

Anne O’Byrne

When Descartes fathered modern philosophy he, like any parent, equipped his offspring with its distinctive share of problems. Like any dutiful child, it devoted itself to working them through—the problem of other minds, the mind-body problem—and grew up to make them its own under new headings: intersubjectivity, embodiment, sociality, otherness, community. And while Descartes was not a moral philosopher—at least, he did not live to complete his system with a modern ethics, as he had anticipated—the problems took on significance for ethical and political thinking. Indeed, modern ethics and political philosophy had been so firmly tied to the Cartesian and then Kantian conceptions of subjectivity that threats to those conceptions immediately became threats to ethics and political philosophy, and even to ethical and political life as such. Put another way, how could the question of understanding the suffering of others, or making a just society, or forming communities, or allocating moral responsibility, or accounting for our material existence, how could questions that had all proved so difficult for modern philosophy even be broached without the structures that had made modern thought on these topics possible? How could we possibly deal with them without the autonomous subject as our starting point? Surely if we undermine that we start down the slippery slope to relativism and nihilism, fatalism and inaction? Perhaps we do; many readers of Baudrillard would think so. Perhaps we do not: many readers of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (and, as we will see, of the early Baudrillard) would think not. But just as we still say *I* as though it means something, we are more attached than ever to *we* and more determined than Descartes ever was to get clear about what work it does and to what it might possibly refer.

As Robin May Schott’s contribution later shows, the subject is only part of the story: there must be not only an actor but also sufferer of the action and, as Kant reminded us early on, a spectator who may or may not comply with the requirement to be quiet and just look on. On the one hand, Baudrillard now argues that none of these roles are relevant since what we used to call acts have now become no more than simulacra, shadows of nothing, of no reality. Yet this analysis does itself assume the social and, on the other hand there are those who argue that Baudrillard can come to this point only by adopting, despite everything, a dis-

tinctly modern and metaphysical understanding of subjectivity and objectivity. To get beyond such an understanding we must go behind it to a primitive order that preceded (in a philosophical as well as a historical sense) the modern and capitalist order. Anne O'Byrne reminds us, however, that we should beware of how we use a proper name, since the name "Baudrillard" also attaches to this point of view. His early work, *The Mirror of Production* (1971) draws the contrast not between simulacrum and reality but simulacrum and symbolic order, that system of circulation where value comes to be between us and continuously circulates among us. This is Jean-Luc Nancy's post-Heideggerian ontology, the ontology that leads him to say that not only value but language and meaning are what thus circulate to the point that we are the between, we are meaning. With such a circular (not to say revolving) model in mind, the possibility of politics is the constant possibility of revolution and Baudrillard can end *The Mirror of Production* with an unironic assertion (anticipating Nancy) that revolutionaries are the revolution.

At every moment in the subject's struggle to contain its fragmented being, there is also the matter of the socialibility that is implicated at every level of its being: I am finite, so there is something, some other—some Other—beyond; for the term *I* to refer to anything, there must also be others to whom it could refer, which is to say, there must also be (the possibility of) a *we* the *I* is natal, and as such, is always, inevitably in relation. Just as the *I* of psychoanalysis is always on the verge of breaking apart, the *I* understood as social is always in the process of dissolving into its relations. Identity, the representation of the self to itself, is a struggle on two fronts.

Although they would never speak in these terms, the authors of the Book of Genesis knew about some such struggle, according to Martin Buber in "Biblical Humanism." When they tell of the creating god's determination to make men "like us" they establish the problem of identification. "Like" means non-identical so, in Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's interpretation, this forecloses identification with God, with the father, and this is what creates the requirement for and the possibility of community precisely without identification. As Bettina Bergo shows, the foreclosure of dreaming in Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's "The Jewish People Do Not Dream" is the foreclosure of any fantasmic identification with the Other, the grasping of human finitude and thus the inauguration of sociability. The knowledge that Adam and Eve come to when they eat the fruit in the Garden is the fact of their mortality and therefore their finitude. This is their distance from God and their exposure to one another, and thus the work of finitude—generation after generation—is set under way. And the subject? It has become difficult to understand it in terms of self and world and even to represent the pressures that come to bear on that understanding as pressures from within and without. Inside and out, interior and exterior fold over and in to one another so that subjectivity, like our embodiment, is a matter of both. Inside becomes outside when we are born out of our mothers' bodies or when we breathe air into our lungs; the subject becomes graspable not as a thing but as a between, both interiority and exteriority.

We are, by now, far from empty abstractions, and Robin May Schott holds us close to earth when she asks what is at stake when I use *we* to signify myself and my friend who is ill or suffering. Specifically, she asks, does my experience of identifying with his suffering and being with him through it have anything to do with the description Freud gives of our experience as spectators of a dramatic tragedy? After all, whatever our undergraduate English professors may have told us about tragically flawed characters and heroes stricken by fate, tragedies do also happen off stage. What is more tragic than the ordinary, unstaged—dare we say real?—tragedy of a young friend's having to face a painful death from cancer? But when we watch a character suffer on stage, our experience is tinged with a certain pleasure, a pleasure that, according to Freud, comes from being able to identify with the character but all the while preserving ourselves from the danger that overcomes him. Certainly, Schott discovers, some of the same elements are involved in the case of the suffering friend: we identify with him; his illness, provided it does not make thinking quite impossible, may be a spur to psychical activity, and we might find ourselves sharing his impulse to re-think and re-assess; we understand his conflicts and the play between will and resistance. There is play in this, and it does have an aesthetic element but there is something bodily that provides another, insurmountable resistance. This is the source of her warning. If we allow our experiences to remain on the level of narrative, which is to say, for instance, if we treat the non-dramatic tragedies on TV (though who can distinguish the real from the staged in that medium, and in the era of reality TV?), that is, the news stories of war and torture and starvation in aesthetic terms alone, we become complicit in the politics by which those images are interpreted for us.

Does any of this, then, help us figure out who we are, specifically? When I indulge here in the authorial *we*—does what has been written help me shed light on the community I lay claim to? Indeed, what can be said about the community of those who write and read volumes like this one? James Watson puts the question in the context of reading Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's, *The Subjects of Philosophy*: we are now philosophy's subjects, but is that a state of domestication, and/or a privileged position as the chosen few of a world historical people who despite everything manage to be a *we*, and/or a shattered but still pious *we*? Or are we indeed nothing other than Heidegger's undifferentiated mass, *das Man*? Or, finally, may we think of ourselves as those who, through writing, respond to what is otherwise a world of repression and overdetermination? Is it still possible for us—whoever we are—to remain non-integral, which is to say, inoperative as a community and unrepresentable as a *we*? This is Watson's utopian strain, a straining towards hope that ignores Baudrillardian pessimism but specifically challenges suspect Heideggerianism. Schott insists that aesthetic responses must at some point run up against the recalcitrant material world and Watson likewise asserts that Heidegger's commitment to the question of the meaning of Being, however sophisticated, however philosophical, must be brought face to face with beings—human beings—and their ugly, ordinary, non-tragic fates. Specifically,

Heidegger's treatments of the questions of peoples, languages and religions and his thinking through of the problem of language as such—all of which Lacoue-Labarthe describes as vastly superior to anything in the past century—will always be suspect if it is not made to encounter Auschwitz. So, while O'Byrne brings Baudrillard to task for not being sufficiently (post-) Heideggerian, Watson criticizes Lacoue-Labarthe for being too piously Heideggerian; while Bergo appeals to Buber and to Heidegger in an effort to think the exposure and nakedness at the origins of our being together, Watson seeks a local origin for the practice of philosophizing, finding it in Nietzsche and the thought of philosophy as the effect of compulsive intensities; and just as Schott finds in our suffering with others the possibility of community, Watson works to make clear the threats—whether Hegelian or Heideggerian—to what remains of non-totalizing, ontologically undetermined, inoperative communities.

Chapter 9
Utopia is Here:
Revolutionary Communities in
Baudrillard and Nancy

Anne O'Byrne

Both Jean Baudrillard and Jean-Luc Nancy are inheritors of a Marxist revolutionary tradition, and both have taken to task those contemporary political theories which remain too firmly bound to Cartesian understandings of subjectivity and autonomy and, indeed, Kantian understandings of intersubjectivity. Both have generated new accounts of the social but, where Baudrillard's recent work on representation and simulacra seems deeply radical it is, instead, quite entangled in a long-established metaphysical tradition and, in fact, it is his particular commitment to that tradition that generates the work's notorious nihilistic tendencies. In contrast, Nancy's work on presentation and symbol seems nostalgic, engaging a set of issues which, for Baudrillard, were matters for the earlier, surpassed age of symbolic exchange: the work seems more entrenched than ever in the tradition Baudrillard struggles to go beyond. Yet Nancy's return to the origin of *symbol* in the Greek *symbolon* yields an altogether more radical (in all senses of the word) account of the social, and one which does not proceed under the shadow of nihilism.

The subjectivist and intersubjectivist political philosophies against which both Baudrillard and Nancy argue will be represented here by Habermas' early piece, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" but I have no wish to present Habermas as a straw man or indeed a thinker opposed to what I here call revolutionary thinking. Rather, I treat the work of Habermas, Baudrillard and Nancy as moments in a philosophical procession. All three share a concern with technology and culture, with the fate of classical Marxist theory in a world run according to a substantially different form of late capitalism, with the problem of language and also therefore with the matter of social practice, but I will concentrate here on the particular issue of their respective work in developing our understanding of subject, representation and object. It is not a question of a simply systematic development, which explains my preference for the term "philosophical *procession*" rather than "*progression*." For, though I do see Nancy's treatment of the symbol and social being as preferable to Baudrillard's work on the simulacrum and mass society, it is a step behind rather than beyond that work; in fact, the treatment has a great deal in common with Baudrillard's own early analysis of social being in *The Mirror of Production*.¹ By the same token, the problem in Marx's theory ad-

dressed in that work was also the problem for which Habermas sought a solution in his work of the same period, that is, the problem of reducing an analysis of society and the whole of human relations to the relation to the means of production alone. This problem is my point of departure.

Beyond Marx

Habermas began the work of overcoming this distinctively Marxist reduction in his 1968 essay "Technology and Science as 'Ideology.'" What the reduction had done was place at the centre of Marxism the relation between labor and capital (or, at most, workers and capital) rather than the relations between humans. Missing, according to Habermas, was an account of communication, of language as the means by which we identify one another as subjects (*H-TRS*, 72). To that extent his remains a fundamentally Cartesian analysis:³ one's own subjectivity is taken for granted, and the interesting problem is figuring out how one can identify others as subjects rather than, as Descartes put it in the *Meditations*, automatons moving about in hats and coats.⁴ As Mark Poster has pointed out, doing this in the context of Marxism meant adding to the category "technical action" the category "symbolic interaction" which is to say, it meant adding to the designation "worker" the designation "social being."⁵ However, the difficulty came in simply adding this category (adapted from Weber) rather than restructuring the theory, which eventually had to be done by means of the ideal speech situation, complete with its ideal truth-telling, self-aware, comprehensible subject.

This is the Cartesian subject with a distinctive Kantian twist. In Descartes, the *I* was a personal pronoun, referring to Descartes himself. He conducted the *Meditations*, but the *I* he uses most importantly designates himself as an exemplar; any one of his readers could (and indeed each is invited to) do the same. The *I* in Kant rarely refers to the author's person and when it does it is a matter of merely his person.⁶ Rather, the *I* is significant as the signifier of the rational, transcendental, wholly impersonal *I*. Yet, though this may ring true for the first Critique, the picture is made far more complex in the *Critique of Judgment*.⁷ Kant's formulations vary, but using the language of Section 40 of the *Critique of Judgment*, "Taste as a Sort of Sensus Communis," the rational *I* is construed as also the judging *I*, and as such must be arrived at through a social context. One judges fairly only by developing a practice of stepping out of one's own subject position and occupying, imaginatively, the positions of (all possible) others, and so participating in an enlarged mentality. The good judge judges consistently, and judges for himself, but also takes into account the possible judgments of others. This is not so much a prescription for personal relations or for social practice as it is the invocation of a transcendental subject, a subject that is the condition for the possibility of social action. So, though Habermas is often—and I would say rightly—criticized for his subjectivism (*Poster-CTT*, 75), I would like to make the narrower point that he relies on Kant's invocation of a transcendental intersubject

as the condition for the possibility of social *interaction*. That is to say, he is to be criticized for his *intersubjectivism*.

Let me be explicit about the difference between these two. To take Habermas to task for his subjectivism is to point to the fact that his theory is based on an assumption of the fundamental position of the coherent, self-contained individual already capable of desiring, reasoning and acting. The fact that it is introduced as a regulative ideal is no counter-argument; such an ideal remains fundamental as the condition for the possibility of speech and interaction. As Baudrillard might put it, it is the problem of putting the subject into orbit, removing it from the world. The problem of others, then, is the problem of other minds and the spectre of solipsism stalks any ensuing theory. If anything, others are utterly and irretrievably alien. On one level, this simply infects the issue of intersubjectivity; the initial image is still one of monadic individuals occupying an empty, undifferentiated space who must set out in search of fellow subjects with whom to establish intersubjective relations, and therefore to criticize on the grounds of intersubjectivism is simply to extend the critique on the grounds of subjectivism. Yet this is not how intersubjectivist theories claim to operate. Rather, the subject is understood as coming to be (in this case, as a judging subject) in the company of others; judgment could not happen without the existence of those others. Yet what does being with these others involve? It involves using our imaginations to occupy the positions of others, which is to say it involves assuming that others are simply foreign, their positions subject to colonization, their views of the world subject to domestication. What is more, the practice of judgment imposes such colonization on us as necessity.

A Baudrillardian Critique

Baudrillard is a welcome critic of such social theories. While his work runs parallel to Habermas' in terms of a shift within and finally beyond Marxist theory to the matter of social relations as constituted by factors other than the relation to the means of production, their paths diverge at an early stage. While Habermas was taking as his starting point "the fundamental distinction between work and interaction" (quoted in *Poster-CTT*, 73), Baudrillard was working, in *The Mirror of Production*, to demonstrate this to be a false distinction generated by Marx's historical materialism. The problem with that understanding of the world is that all of history is seen reflected in the eponymous mirror of production, whereas, Baudrillard argues, the concept of production, or, more precisely and more importantly, the assumption that production is natural to us, is an artifact of the eighteenth century. Only in capitalism does a distinction between work and interaction emerge but, since historical materialism insists that the latest stage of history provides the best way to understand all earlier stages, the distinction is taken as fundamental and used to explain not only the present but also the past and the projected future (*B-Mirror*, 86).

In response, Baudrillard suggests a re-reading of the past that seeks to retrieve an account of pre-capitalist societies that is not utterly determined by the categories of political economy. The category he applies, rather, is that of the symbol and symbolic exchange. Marxist anthropology, he claims, is based on the assumption that in human societies, the struggle for survival comes first and only then, once subsistence is secured, do the members of these societies begin to exist socially (*B-Mirror*, 78). At this first stage they all engage in producing use value, and if exchange happens, it is the exchange of a surplus (stage 1). This supposed, natural situation is later destroyed by the advent of industry and the alienation of all labor in the production of exchange value (stage 2), which finally distorts all of society and puts even love, virtue and knowledge into the realm of exchange (stage 3). Yet this leads anthropologists to ask such questions as: "Why did primitive societies not produce a surplus, even when they were capable of doing so?" According to Baudrillard, such questions have no answer because they make no sense; the model is quite wrong.

More precisely, the model is inverted. Rather than subsistence making social life, and eventually exchange, possible, exchange is what comes first. Baudrillard writes:

Primitive "society" does not exist as an instance apart from symbolic exchange . . . Symbolic circulation is primordial . . . For the primitives, eating, drinking, and living are first of all acts that are exchanged: if they are not exchanged, they do not occur (*B-Mirror*, 78-79).

Such societies are based on reciprocity and this is why everything is set in terms of exchange value; what cannot be exchanged accumulates, which is to say forms a break in the circulation, a break where power could be instituted. Such scarcity as was established in primitive societies was the scarcity necessary to keep this circulation in motion and, by the same token, the production of value was excluded. After all, if value could simply be produced there would be a constant threat of accumulation: instead, Baudrillard writes, "exchange itself is based on non-production, eventual destruction and a process of continuous *unlimited* reciprocity between *persons*" (*B-Mirror*, 79).

Understanding the past in these terms rather than according to the linear patterns of political economy also requires a different approach to the future, an approach Baudrillard specifies as utopian. The early nineteenth-century socialists which Marx dismissed as utopian still operated in terms of the symbolic order and sought a new symbolic configuration of life and all social relations (*B-Mirror*, 154). Marxism, in contrast, confines its revolutionary efforts to one realm of social life, and pictures the future simply in terms of natural, fulfilled labor. What's more, given the laws of historical materialism, this fulfillment cannot happen now, depending as it does on the inevitable ripening of capitalism's contradictions in advance of the final revolution. What this means for any given present is that while utopian socialists can devote themselves to immediate revolution, Marxism

must give itself over to deferral, sacrificing the present to an “always renewed future” (*B-Mirror*, 161). But this is utopian in the worst possible sense; it is a project of totalization. Utopia, properly speaking, has nothing to do with totalization and alienation: rather, Baudrillard writes, “it regards every man and every society as already totally there, at each social moment, in its symbolic exigency” (*B-Mirror*, 165). It is not that we must neglect the future in favour of the present reality of our own desires. What it entails, rather, is that “the content of liberated man is, at bottom, of less importance than the abolition of the separation of the present and the future” (*B-Mirror*, 164).

Marxism, and indeed liberalism, manifest their adherence to the subject by presenting us with the image of liberated man either in terms of the pre-Industrial Age craftsman producing use value, or of the free, fulfilled worker/social being of the communist or liberal utopia. That is to say, whether in liberalism or Marxism, and whether we cast our eyes to the past or to the future, commitment to thinking in terms of the subject leaves us only with images. We have only utopian images to look ahead to, and only museum items to look back upon. This is important, although impossible: it means that we must not only abolish the separation between present and future, but also between present and past. When, in the eighteenth century, western culture began to subject itself to critique, it opted to do so as a universal culture, with all earlier and different cultures subjected to its schema. More aptly put, “all other cultures [were] entered into its museum as vestiges of its own image” (*B-Mirror*, 88).

Baudrillard presents all of this in *The Mirror of Production*. Only later, in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, *Seduction*, and, eventually, *Simulacra and Simulations*, does he extend the reign of images through the present with dramatic, even fatal, results for any Baudrillardian political theory. This extension is firmly in place when he announces, in ‘The Precession of Simulacra’ in *Simulacra and Simulation*, that “[w]e are all Tasaday.” The Tasaday were a primitive tribe “discovered” in the Phillipines by anthropologists and then “undiscovered,” returned to their isolated habitat and their old way of life. Yet that way of life was now no longer properly theirs, since it could only be sustained by energetic dissimulation, a dissimulation conducted in order to preserve not the Tasaday but anthropology and the body of knowledge or the institution that we know as western science. The Tasaday became images of themselves, and we are Tasaday because we exist as images determined by that same institution. The simulacrum takes precedence but, more significantly, the simulacrum’s distinguishing feature is that it takes precedence over nothing. It entails no reality, it is not engaged in any strategy of representation or misrepresentation. Where there once was a symbolic order, a world where signs had meaning, there is now simulation and simulacra disguising the truth: that there is no reality, that there is no truth, that there is no relation other than to the sign.

In other words, like the mummy of Ramses II, exhibited in a contemporary museum, we have all been museumified. That is to say, interiority has collapsed, that we are mere spectacles valuable only as technological products or reassur-

ing—never dissenting, never challenging—vestiges of our culture's image. (One wonders what meaning this *our* can now have). In no sense can we make a contribution to, and still less a critique of, the world in which we find ourselves. We are all embalmed, but not in the sense in which the dead king was embalmed by the Egyptians, that is, as an essential element in a symbolic order. Instead, we are embalmed in the sense of what happens in the funeral industry today (at least in the United States) where the product is a corpse “more smiling, more authentic” than in life.⁸ There is no secret meaning to the face amidst the silk-like lining of the coffin, and no question of interiority. (After all, the corpse's eyes, the windows to the soul, are invariably closed; to leave them open, staring, would be too uncomfortable a reminder that there *is* nothing within). We have each been emptied out, flattened into a surface, an image. Necessarily, fulfilling human relations have suffered the same fate: all we have are their images as presented in the visualizations and the so-called science of the self-help industry, complete with formulae, prescriptions and a determination that there be no secrets that cannot be made common knowledge in some little volume entitled *All You Ever Wanted to Know About Personal Relations* or, maybe, *The Idiot's Guide to Fulfillment*.

From a Baudrillardian point of view, this state of affairs is merely facilitated by subjectivist critical theory. To be led by ideals of my fulfillment is to look forward to a totalized utopia and/or backward to an era of symbolic order and symbolic circulation on the assumption that both past and future are quite distinct from this present where all symbolic orders have been erased or emptied out and replaced by the mere play of signs. It is to maintain a commitment to the Cartesian/Kantian subject not only as an empirical phenomenon but also as the transcendental condition for the possibility of communication. It is to fail to take account of the radically different media of communication which now serve to hide from us the fact they are communicating nothing. It is, finally, a version of false consciousness, a simulacrum covering over the absence of meaning.

Critiquing Baudrillard

However, despite its striking similarities to Nancy's revolutionary thought (as I will show below) and the politically radical nature of at least the earlier work, Baudrillard's critique is itself susceptible to the claim that it too remains committed if not exactly to the Cartesian subject, then to other shades of Cartesianism. While Baudrillard takes up the possibilities offered by structural linguistics to examine images and their relations without explicit recourse to a subject (*Poster-CTT*, 76), Anthony King has argued that by privileging sign, mirror and image, Baudrillard nevertheless preserves a Cartesian prejudice in favour of sight and the eye. King writes:

The ocular sensation of external material objects is the starting point for both [Descartes' and Baudrillard's] theories. Significantly, the ocular starting-point

facilitates the descent into the epistemological void because the concentration on the ocular immediately suggests that the central problem of human knowledge is one of representation.⁹

In Descartes, the problem becomes acute as soon as (any)one considers how one might overcome the untrustworthiness of one's eyes and set about verifying the representations they provide. For Baudrillard, it is a problem not for *anyone* in meditative mood, but for *everyone* in this historical era, the era which follows that moment some time in the 1970s when television became a dominant cultural force. It was the crucial moment because then "the relationship between object and representation is called into doubt" (*CBH*, 54). This is the advent of hyperreality and this is where the relation between object and representation is so thoroughly severed.

Yet it is hardly a radical critique if the model of objects being represented to subjects has already been shown to no longer hold. King goes on to elaborate his criticism in this way: even if Baudrillard is regarded as post-modern, he is not yet post-Heideggerian. Heidegger energetically rejected the Cartesian notion that language represents the objects in the world to the subject, construing it instead (to quote King) as "a texture which is itself constitutive of . . . reality and which is understood interpretatively" (*CBH*, 57). Despite his radical linguistic theory, it remains the case that, for Baudrillard, language supplements the ocular experience rather than being constitutive of that experience, as it must be for Heidegger. The claim is not, of course, a physiological or psychological claim that we talk before we see, but rather the claim that it is language that makes the world meaningful for us; it is language that makes our world a world at all, which is to say, our being thrown into the world is our being thrown into language. In this case, talk of subject-representation-object no longer makes sense and, in fact, the word *representation* must be dropped altogether. Instead it is a matter of presentation, since presentations require no determined relation to what they present, and, to again quote King, "they do not have a separate ontological existence from what they [re]present" (*CBH*, 58).

My final criticism of Baudrillard is of a different order; it is the common criticism that his is a nihilist account of the social world, and one that can produce only an arid fatalism. It is of no assistance when it comes to confronting the injustices of the world because, having been reduced to receivers of images, we can have no capacity for action. Mass passivity is our only option. Yet such a criticism is quite unjustified if we consider only *The Mirror of Production*. The work ends with a passage—"The Radicality of Utopia"—replete with revolutionary fervor, the fervor of the nineteenth-century socialists, the cursed poet, non-official art, the sexual revolution, the fervor of the unmediated revolutions of the Luddites, the Communards, the students of May 1968. In such utopian moments there is no question of representation, alienation or deferral. Rather, Baudrillard writes, "[t]he revolution does not speak indirectly; they [the revolutionaries] are the revolu-

tion" (*B-Mirror*, 166). It is only later, and certainly by the time of *Simulacra and Simulations*, that it becomes clear that such enthusiasm has evaporated, so that work is devoted instead to pursuing the implications of the claim—first hinted at in *The Mirror of Production*—that the sign now takes precedence. If it takes precedence over nothing, then revolutionary signs remain on the level of the sign and can only be absorbed by the system that they struggle to overthrow.

The root of this fatalism lies in Baudrillard's failure to allow his insight into the immediacy of revolution and into the symbolic, non-representational character of revolutionary speech to temper the totalizing tendency of his analysis of the sign. As Nancy points out, such an analysis does not get to the bottom of the social; it must, rather, assume the social. As a result, while Baudrillard gives himself over to political nihilism, Nancy pursues a social ontology that works to hold open the space in which political action might still happen. In what follows I will examine Nancy's recent work in this light, and under three headings: the radical treatment of the symbol, his concern with touch rather than (or in addition to) Baudrillard's attention to sight, and his understanding of meaning in a world which, according to Baudrillard, has lost all meaning.

We are Symbol

In a footnote to *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy draws our attention the origin of our word *symbol*:

[T]he Greek *symbolon* was a piece of pottery broken in two pieces when a pair of friends or a guest and host parted; joining the two pieces together again would later be a sign of recognition.¹⁰

The Greek *sun*, he points out, is the equivalent of the Latin *cum* (and of the English *con*), which reminds us that symbolism is all about a relation. A Baudrillardian might agree, pointing out that the relation in question is the one between object and representation, or reality and image. Nancy disagrees. Neither the Habermasian theory of communication based on the supposition of a rational subject, *nor* the Baudrillardian theory of hyperreality, based on the supposition of a real (albeit now lost) presence go far enough. Neither supposition can found a theory of the social, because each already presupposes being social or social being. The *sum* of *symbolon* refers to this; it refers not to the specific relation of reality and the image but to the relation between beings. Nancy writes:

[T]he "spectacle," "communication," the "commodity," "technology" are no more than figures (albeit perverse figures) . . . of social reality—the *real* of social being (*l'être-social*)—laid bare in, through and as the symbolicity which constitutes it (*ESP*, 79).

Nancy here makes the distinction between a concept of the real-as-such on

the one hand, which, despite the sophisticated analysis of symbolic exchange in *The Mirror of Production*, lurks behind the assumption of past, meaningful, lost symbolic orders which is essential to the argument of *Simulacra and Simulation*, and a concept of reality as social on the other, pointing out, in Heideggerian fashion, that social reality is always already symbolic. To paraphrase King paraphrasing Heidegger, symbols form the texture which is itself constitutive of social reality. According to Nancy, the symbol *is* the relation. He writes:

[I]t is the job of the symbolic to create *symbole*, that is, link, connection, and to provide a figure for this linking or to make an *image* in this sense. The symbolic is the real of relation as it represents itself, because relation as such is, in fact, nothing other than its own representation . . . [T]he relation is the real of a representation, its effectiveness and its efficacy. (The paradigm is “I love you,” or perhaps more originally still, “I’m talking to you”) (*ESP*, 79).

The word *sumbolon* means “to put with.” The friend puts her shard of pottery with her friend’s shard; doing so symbolizes their relationship; it is not something distinct from their relationship; it *is* their relationship. Furthermore, bringing home the critique of the hyperrealists, it is not a question of this being a symbol *rather than* an image. Symbolization does not require the banishment of the (mere)image; it only requires that the image/symbol be in play with connect- edness and distance, in the space *between*. As he puts it:

The “symbolic” is not an aspect of social being: on the one hand, it is this being itself and, on the other, the symbolic does not take place without (re)presentation: it is (re)presenta- tion to one another according to which they are with one another (*ESP*, 80).

Nancy executes an important shift away not from the ocular metaphor entirely but from the assumption of the singular seeing eye/I seeing an object which is understood as not itself seeing. It has already been pointed out that, when it comes to spectacle, the plurality of seers (in this case spectators) is vital. He then adds another element by attending to the experience of touch. In ‘Gaining Access to the Origin’ (in *Being Singular Plural*), the concept of touch gains an ontological significance, emerging as it does from a discussion of the concept of reaching the origin. (In French, *toucher á* is to reach, while *toucher* is to touch.)

To reach [*toucher á*] the origin is not to miss it; it is to be properly exposed to it. Since it is not something other . . . , the origin cannot be missed nor can it be appropriated (penetrated, absorbed). It does not obey this logic. It is the plural singularity of the being of [any] being. We reach it [*nous y touchons*] to the extent that we reach [or touch] each other, and where we reach [or touch] other beings. We touch each other insofar as we exist. Touching each other is what makes us ‘us,’ and there is no other secret to be discovered or hidden behind this touch itself, behind the “with” of co-existence (*ESP*, 32).

Yet this would seem to introduce another problem. If the emphasis is shifted

to or shared with touch, does this not return us to the matter of skin touching skin, or, if the set of beings regarded as relevant is appropriately increased, of surface touching surface? That is to say, does it not demand an understanding of the world and specifically the others who populate it in terms of accessible exteriors hiding inscrutable interiors? Does it not return us to the most troublesome aspect of modern subjectivity? Not in Nancy's hands. In much of his work of the past twenty years, he has been bringing about a *gestalt* shift in how being-with-one-another is understood. Rather than beginning with the subject and going on to build up an intersubjectivity by building relations between them, he studies these relations first, since it is these relations, the trajectories (touches, glances, movements) across a space that go to constitute the *I* at all. Interiority and exteriority are always in play, whether we mean the interiority and exteriority of the *I* or of the community, the *we*. For instance, in *The Experience of Freedom*, freedom is characterized as the "interior exteriority of the community."¹¹ This is how he proposes the social be understood.

This play of interiority and exteriority can also be understood in terms of the discussion of the symbol. In an earlier piece, 'Art, a Fragment' in *The Sense of the World*, he engages again the original meaning of *symbola* as: the potsherds of recognition, fragments of pottery broken in the promise of assistance and hospitality. The fragment carries the promise that its fractal line will not disappear into a gathered whole but, rather, will rediscover itself elsewhere, lip against lip of the other piece.¹²

The surfaces where the pottery was broken are the external surfaces of the pieces, but are internal to the reassembled pot. Claiming its surfaces as exterior, the shard remains a fragment, a part of something lost; yet its incorporation into the reassembled pot, the transformation of those surfaces into internal surfaces is not enough to stop it continuing to be a fragment.

The final challenge Nancy makes to Baudrillard comes in the form of his reassessment of sense or meaning. At issue, once again, is the implication of Baudrillard's critique that there is or was a real presence which is now lost (in time) and/or dissimulated, replaced by empty images which disguise the loss (*ESP*, 78). It is in introducing his analysis in this area that he comes closest to Baudrillard's assessment of the state of the world here and now; he is painfully aware of the contemporary tendency to nonsense. Like Baudrillard, he sees all "messages" as being exhausted or evacuated; unlike Baudrillard, however, he does not see this as necessitating nihilism. Rather, with the emptying out of all messages comes the reemergence of the demand of sense, a demand "that is nothing other than existence insofar as it *has* no sense. And this demand alone is already sense, with all of its force of insurrection (*SW*, 9)." The problem, he suggests, is in understanding the world as something that ought to *have* meaning, in perpetuating an understanding of the world as either (mere) signifier or (hidden/nonexistent) signified. More specifically, it is in the implication that signifying and being signified are static states involving a single, static relationship. What he proposes instead is a

“*praxis* of signification” (*SW*, 79), a thought that relies not on what is the case at a particular time along a single axis, but the movement that happens in and through and around an open space.

In the language of his renewed fundamental ontology, it is a fresh understanding of sense that emphasizes the aspect of *being-toward*. The French *sens* operates in two ways; one would allow translation as *sense* or *meaning*, while the other has to do with *way* or *direction*. Dwelling on the former encourages thought along the lines of “A means B,” or “A stands for B”; shifting to the latter renders sense as *being-in-the-direction-of*, being in un- or under-determined relation to. It is a *way* of being. What’s more, this understanding must usurp any understanding of signification as primary or primordial (or even necessary). Instead, Nancy writes, reminding ourselves of this other sense of *sense*:

would recall us to sense as relation *to* or as *being-towards*-something, this something evidently always being “something *other*” or “something *else*.” Thus, “being-toward-the-world,” if it takes place (and it does take place), is caught up in sense *well before* all signification. It makes, demands or proposes sense this side of or beyond all signification (*SW*, 7).

Meanwhile, *world* shares that same structure. It too (and, as with his comments on Heidegger’s *touch*, this is Nancy’s broadening and deepening of a Heideggerian insight) is being-towards, relation, address, presentation *to*. Indeed, he adds, *world* is structured as *sense* and *sense* is structured as *world*. “‘The sense of the world’ is a tautological expression” (*SW*, 8).

Yet what does this entail? The answer to this question determines whether or not we are condemned to nihilism. Nancy writes:

The whole question is whether this tautology reduces to the repetition of the same lack of signification in two distinct signifiers (which would amount to nihilism) or whether, instead, the tautology states the difference of the same, through which sense would make world and world would make sense, but quite otherwise than by the returning of signification (*SW*, 8).

His own conviction is quite clear. It *is* the case that the world can no longer *have* meaning. Talk of *having* meaning made sense only so long as the world was understood as being in relation to some other, whether that other was its creator, as in Christianity, or another world, as in Plato. Now, with the collapse of essence and existence, there is no longer essentially—which is to say existentially—anything else. “Thus, the world *no longer has* a sense, but it *is* sense” (*SW*, 8).

A Baudrillardian might remain unconvinced. What, after all, is the difference between *having* meaning and *being* meaning if it all remains beyond us, hidden from us? Perhaps the world *is* meaning, but if so, it is just a question of translating Baudrillard’s theory of the simulacrum into Heidegger’s terms where it becomes the claim that the spectacular society has left us as poor in world as Heidegger’s lizard or his stone. Nancy has, as reply, the reassurance quoted above: “Being-

towards-the-world" does indeed take place." Yet that, in itself, is hardly enough and, in *Being Singular Plural*, he provides what's missing, making explicit the place of this claim in his ontology. It is an insight reminiscent of Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*.¹³ "Nothing, and nobody, can be born without being born to and with others" (*ESP*, 83). That is to say, what is primordial is not so much Dasein as *Mitsein*, being-with. More to the point, it is a matter of being-with other beings in the most general sense: nails, cats, stones, gods, plants, humans. After all, when we say *we*, what is to stand in the way of our thereby referring to all beings? What warrants our referring to anything less? We only have a world because we are bound up in the *we*, and meaning or sense is nothing other than the name for our being-with-one-another. As Nancy writes: "We no longer 'have' meaning because we ourselves are meaning, wholly, without reserve, infinitely, with no other meaning than 'us'" (*ESP*, 19). There is no meaning without the *with*. There is no meaning that is not shared and meaning circulates constantly between *us*. Perhaps we have all been museumified, like Ramses, in that our exteriors no longer clothe inaccessible interiors; perhaps we are all spectacles for one another. Yet we are not *mere* spectacles but participants in the society of the spectacle; we are exteriors that are also interiors; we are active receivers of imagery as well as images.¹⁴

Conclusion

Baudrillard's analysis of contemporary spectacular society cannot but deliver us over to nihilism, because, for all the radicalness of his earlier work, he remains bound by an old metaphysics of subjectivity that determines the functioning of representation, signification, vision and meaning. Nancy's work in ontology manages to be more radical and to avoid nihilism and political fatalism as its necessary conclusion. Indeed, it avoids conclusion. It projects no utopia and never attempts to prescribe. What it does point to, at least, is the fact that figuring out what is to be done (and the reference to Lenin is deliberate) is a task, and it must be undertaken without ever losing sight of what has gone before. As he writes in *The Sense of the World*:

[It is] neither a problem to be solved nor a solution, it is simply a matter of accompanying a clarification that already precedes us in our obscurity, much younger and much older than that obscurity: how our world makes sense. (This implies neither that the clarification is simply luminous nor that it is simply successful or happy. But—some *Enlightenment*, yes, why not? As long as it is not preromantic but truly postromantic) (*SW*, 8).

Chapter 10

Eden Foreclosed: Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy on Dreaming and Identification

Bettina Bergo

Introductory Remarks¹

This paper takes up an argument advanced by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy to the effect that “the Jewish people does not dream.”² Coming from two non-Jewish philosophers and immediately implying a psychological intuition, we would be justified in wondering what such a claim could mean. Is not much of Jewish literature, from the miraculous feats of the Marahal of Prague to the Bal Shem Tov, a literature of dreams? Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy would likely acknowledge this; however, they are working at a different level. They are examining a characteristic of Jewish religious life from the point of view of the creation of a we and the implications it has for the life and psyche of the Jewish person. Thus, if dreaming and phantasy exemplify what psychoanalysis called identification—an individual and social phenomenon ingredient in the formation of the self, and one that bedeviled Freud as he traced its origins in culture—and if the first identification requires a true other (that Freud identified with the Father), then the argument follows that Jews do not dream.³ That is, they do not dream—identify, because the with whom they would identify is unfigurable (*PJNRP*, 194, 59).

I propose to explore the meaning of identification in light of foundation myths and with regard to what could be called the Jewish innovation, i.e., the foreclosure on representation. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy understand foreclosure informally, as an act of symbolic exclusion. Unlike Lacan’s famous forclusion, they do not insist that what is shut out never reaches consciousness.⁴ Instead, they emphasize that foreclosure reorganizes what is imaginable for a given community and that this in turn influences both ritual and memory. Moreover, the foreclosure of representation has surprising effects on the way we envision our identity, as I will show by reading Martin Buber on *Genesis 3* (the tree of knowledge).⁵ Throughout, I will be comparing Buber’s reading with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s arguments concerning mythic identifications. As a part of their larger project, which rethinks the unconscious as affectivity independently

of positive or formal representations, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy explore the conjoined origins of psychic and social structures in their work *L'inconscient est déstructuré comme un affect*, [*The Unconscious is de-structured like an Affect*].

Why would a culture foreclose identifications? What is it about religious life that engages identification in ways potentially dangerous to individuals and the community itself? Freud argued that proto-laws like taboos mirror psychic functions like foreclosures, whether these bear on representations, bodies or on symbolic territories.⁶ As Lévi-Strauss discovered, what holds these exclusions together under a common concept is that they operate like the taboo on incest. That is, a negative normativity always goes together with a positive performativity. Negatively, the so-called foreclosure of representation prevents identification with fathers understood as powers personified in oneiric images or ritual practices entailing ecstatic fusion. Of course, such identifications extend from cults of the ancestors to animism, and hero-god myths.

Paradoxically, foreclosures on representation may actually motivate attempts at alternate forms of representation.⁷ That is, in response to the pressure of foreclosure, alternative representations may actually escape mimetic gestures, such as those that imitate or incarnate the ancestor or the god, etc. These would then be situated at a different level, that of metaphors or laws (cf. *Exodus 3*, 4-6 since, arguably, in the impossibility of imitation of the God, something like his law or his teaching becomes the central existential concern). There would thus be mimetic and differential representations. The latter does the work of what Jacques Derrida called the trace and I am here calling differential representation those narrative operations by which a trace (recounted or drawn) opens up any metaphoric surface on which it is set, by introducing a simple difference (*Genesis 1*, 4-7). Once introduced, this difference alters the surface or the narrative context, and with it the subject perceiving it understands that the context and the author of the trace cannot be reduced to each other. As we will see, the foreclosure on dreaming, explored by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, is wonderfully illustrated by Buber's reading of *Genesis 3*, wherein eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil—and with it Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden—exemplifies both the foreclosure of identification and the introduction of a differentiating trace. Buber's reading bears out Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's claim that the Jewish innovation was to introduce a hermeneutic doubling (e.g., with the voice of the narrator and its occasional irony) into the narratives of its myths, creating a religion largely devoid of ancestor cults, animism, ecstatic fusion, and semi-divine heroes (*OB*, 15; *BGB*, 611).

Viewed from without, Judaism forecloses identification with fathers in the mode of phantasy, which is identification's primary mode. This means that, in the culture and thinking structured by the Torah and the Talmud, a limit inaugurates a self-consciously human dimension. The limit separates humanity as a whole from divinity, despite eventual communication, trials or gifts. Moreover, this limit, sketched clearly in the myth of the Garden, establishes mortality—as de facto death and as separa-

tion from God at the heart of Judaism as its symbolic institution of the community.

While this limit may not be unique to Jewish monotheism, it runs through the rabbinic reception of the Torah. Some historical interpretations have argued that this separation made Jewish cultural and religious survival possible.⁸ Be that as it may, the limit breaks with religions (whether polytheistic or henotheistic) in which gods are conceived on a human model, where ancestors influence community decisions, and humans accede to divinity by rites, deeds, or upon the death of heroes. In the Jewish beginning, then, is a limit. The limit sets the activity of separation in motion and opens to an ordered creation of new combinations. From this emerge a sociality and a politics of a different sort, structured neither by mythic nor totemic social identifications.

Buber's Biblical Humanism

Martin Buber defined the rebirth of the Jewish community textually, as a Biblical humanism (1933, 1941). This rebirth is expressed in a tone redolent of Nietzsche (whom Buber read), as “the rebirth of its normative primal forces.” These forces are located in the capacity to hear the paradoxical word of the Jewish Bible, which is paradoxical because it encompasses universality (as the possibility of identification for the nations) and particularity (which draws on the resources sustained by the separation and the religious-cultural wealth of historic enactment through ritual). What Buber called the paradoxical word is at once transcription, trace, and voice; a speaking-to that is always repetition, which is why one midrash argues the Torah had to exist prior the creation of the world. Biblical humanism is for Buber a calling for Jews. But while Greek humanism has roots in religious and mythical thought, Jewish humanism introduces the additional foreclosure of a transcendence based on the “immediate adhesion to the figure” of a great Other. This anti-fetishistic strategy makes it appear as if anti-religious.

Buber illustrates what it means to hear the paradoxical word in his reading of *Genesis 3* in an essay entitled “The Tree of Knowledge,” dating from 1953 (*OB*, 14–21; *BGB*, 610–617). There, he rethinks what he called “life forces” in the 1930’s but in an exegetical context. In the Garden narrative of *Genesis 3*, the original force that is the will-to-know finds itself definitively limited without in turn engendering reactive forces. Alert to its predictable ability to expand, Buber calls the will-to-know a “human demonism.”⁹ The great challenge is to disable that will without disabling a love of knowledge or engendering new forces in a reactive will.

For Buber, the core intuition of the Garden narrative lies in thinking mortality prior to sexuality.¹⁰ The Tree of Knowledge stages the meaning of the will-to-know for a finite, created being. Even in our Garden humans, this will-to-know aims at omniscience, a crucial aspect of our will-to-power. Without urging that we disabuse ourselves of the idea of truth as monolithic, Buber recalls that for created beings, truth in its highest instantiation is knowledge of the opposed poles of the world’s being. Although translations of the Bible have expressed

this as knowledge of good and evil, we should initially avoid reading normativity into this. For Buber, omniscience means knowledge of worldly binaries like fullness and lack, hope and despair, fusion and dissociation—those mobile elements that form the grammar of myths and a frame for cultural identities.

Buber unfolds his conception of finite truth on the premise that human experience is disjunctive. Forces we unleash, and forces that act upon us, can set us into a position of yes-saying or into one of no-saying, whereby we are either open to transcendence-in-separation or distance ourselves from it: “Namely the immutable difference and distance that exists between God and man, irrespective of the primal fact of the latter’s ‘likeness’ to God” (*BGB*, 613; *OB*, 18). Buber is not interested in the question of the ontology of sin, or in the fall of man. Yes-saying “can present itself to the experience and perception of man, while [he is] in the no-position.” This would mean to feel and to know oneself separated from the good or from God. But “not [so,] the no in the yes-position” (*BGB*, 614; *OB*, 19). Humans realize this “when [man] recognizes a condition in which he finds himself whenever he has transgressed the command of God, as the ‘evil’ and the one he has thereby lost and which . . . is inaccessible to him, as the good” (*BGB*, 614; *OB*, 19). The so-called no and the yes positions are existential and moral, individual and collective. In themselves, they are not exclusive to Judaism.

Knowledge of and movement between the two positions may be historical states, but they are preeminently existential and sapiential, as illustrated by the narrative of Adam and Eve. Following their expulsion from the Garden, the narrative continues unfolding, only now, as “a process in the world,” in human existence (*BGB*, 614; *OB*, 19).

Now, the knowledge Adam and Eve gained about the binaries that structure existence, understood as processual, is a human knowledge determined by finite time and space, and shaped by the actions we take in regard to our value judgments. In God, Buber argues, these opposites stand together, which shows us their ontological status in light of the divine: “He encompasses them, as He is absolutely superior to them” (*BGB*, 614; *OB*, 18). This is because so-called God is not a being in the sense of a creation; perhaps not a being at all. There is no purposive unfolding or becoming in Buber’s reading of the Other here, though it is possible to speculate about a dialectic of forces in creation. Humans are the agents and sites of this dialectic of created being.

The decisive separation between humans and God lies in the mode by which the opposed forces and positions in existence comes into view. For Buber, when the narrator of *Genesis 3* has God say that man “is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (*OB*, 20), the narrator ironizes that man now knows existence as such, yet, because he is finite, cannot help but unleash a dynamic of new reactive forces (*BGB*, 615). This knowledge is not creative, because it is that of a creature situated in space and time; the language “become as one of us” thus combines irony with a rueful compassion.¹¹ For, the ambitious creature could not grasp its new unlike-likeness, any more than it could hold fast to the “yes” and the “no” positions

at the same time. This unlike-likeness expresses a hiatus between the creator and the created, finitude and infinity. In the Garden narrative lies the discovery of the meaning of finitude, the human historical condition that admits only unlike repetitions, fabulation, and myths of identity. What it cannot do is to leap over the hiatus.

Cyclical and linear according to its modes, mortality engages humans in a history and a care for the succession of generations. The fact of mortality—and notably the fact that Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden before they can eat from the Tree of Life (*Genesis* 3, 22)—argues that it is a good thing for a creature in pursuit of omniscience to remain mortal, since nothing else can stop it from willing to leap over its limitations.

Humans thus ate from only one of the two trees in the Garden. Adam and Eve were driven out before they could consume the fruit of the Tree of Life; for, a finite creature that eats its way to eternal life is demonry, Buber argues. Demonry expresses the idea of a being that could live out its conatus and drives eternally, remaining in the no-position, denying its lack of control over its birth and death, and never able to hold together the opposed forces unleashed, in mortal terms, by will to power.

According to this logic, while human mortality is tragic (notably in the form of the death of the other), it is also redemptive through human history, and there are things to do on Earth, from building society to deepening our understanding of the Law. Hence, the gentle irony of the expulsion from Eden: “For [man], as the being driven round amid opposites, [death] may become a haven, the knowledge of which brings comfort” (*BGB*, 616; *OB*, 21).

In the transmutation of humans’ status from static to dynamic, death becomes the source of time’s value and inaugurates the reckoning of a hitherto absurd notion called history. No thinking, philosophical or religious, that fails to address death as limit and institution, can grasp, in a way that is free from phantasmatic identification (with God or the immortals), the significance of human sociality, and the necessity of a pragmatic limitation of the drives.¹²

Buber argues that the sources of *Genesis* 3 come from other religions—including the Avestic stories of the jealousy of the gods. But the innovation of *Genesis* 3 becomes obvious within the logic of monotheism: How could the one God be jealous of his creation, when that god is not conceived on the model of mortal humanity? This god thus would escape human understanding in the movement of textual inscription, and later, in the sociality deployed through the expulsion into history. A further dimension of sociality is unfolded in the prophetic call to justice in the name of god. By contrast, anthropomorphic conceptions of gods entail human-like responses on their part (jealousy, anger, repentance). But this modeling of identification—wherein the gods look and act like us, send our contemplation back to us and thereby celebrate a collective self-sacralization that vitiates the existential limits set by our death and that of the other person. If there is no knowledge either of death or of the other as such, then the endless repetition of rebirths, ancestor or totemic worship, and anthropomorphic divinities suggests that this limit called death is not so serious. Life is reborn out of life, cyclically; through the

hero or the semi-divine figures, humans pass between here below and the heavens above with assurance. Nevertheless, there appears to be a profound anxiety in the Dionysian passage of limits, physical and metaphysical, and this has implications for the work done by monotheism in relation to other practices of the sacred. The inscription of a limit, enacted in and as a given community set under foreclosure (from the Garden and in mortality), takes the place of phantasy identifications, Dionysian dreaming, and practices of sacred fusion. In *Genesis*, the separation implicit in the narrator's irony: "man is become as one of us"—an irony that arises from the implicit negation that this suggests—reiterates the oppositions of existence, understood from the perspective of mortal beings. What is finite cannot become infinite without monstrosity. The infinite (God, as trace or voice) knows, but is not subject to the forces that structure finite life itself: space-time, historicity, and the demonry or drive quality of willing-to-know and to-be-infinite.

Identification as Incorporation and the Transformation of the Voice

When Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy claim that the Jewish people does not dream, they are carrying Buber's meditation on finitude and the dialectic of forces a step further. Buber understood that a thoroughgoing identification with the God (or mythic Father) could only be phantasmatic. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy explore the implications of the foreclosure of such identifications in light of cultural sublimation. With the containment of phantasmatic identification, a different law becomes possible. Like all laws, this law brings about differences (minimally, the legal and the illegal). Culturally and historically, it gives the repetition of events a different quality, an ethico-gestural quality in which no one stands above the law because no one, be they shaman or seer, ascends to or otherwise incarnates the transcendental object. I do not mean that there is no ethical normativity in cultures whose religious practices ritually enact phantasmatic identifications. However, this enactment has implications for their conceptions of time and the cosmos. It is enough to say, for now, that following the new or different law is not the same as identifying phantasmatically with the Father, because the limitation set on identification gives us a law that is now open to human completion in history. It therefore becomes open to the community, as every member of that community brings a new interpretation of it to the group. The complete comprehension of the law becomes a regulative, and social, ideal. But this infinite is neither fusional (i.e., I incarnate the law) nor vertical (i.e., I rise to the God). It ramifies.

The second consequence of not dreaming is the limitation set on imaginary elaborations on the immortality of the soul and the survival of the dead. Nothing eradicates the memory and desire that immortalize an ancestor, but his fetishization may be subverted if it is subject to questioning, or worse to irony. This entails the symbolic limitation of repetitions that, in mythic logics like that of the totemic father, become tragic because they enact an enduring malaise tied to agonizing loss, like a ghost whose law or words insist, determining the destiny of the group.

The formal abandonment of ancestor cults, spectral forces taken as presences—together with the non-figurability of God—forces the work of finitude to take place. It does so by way of three factors: (1) the task of continuous interpretation; (2) the configuration of a full if dia-chronous time as repeating holy days that inflect the past into the future, without destroying everyday time; and finally, (3) through a messianic temporality of generations to come, in which a promise of justice persists as it changes (along with the conditions of pardon and return), though never taking form as parousia or fulfilled presence. These result from the foreclosure that Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe present in shorthand as “Jews not dreaming.” There is a dialectic between these factors.

In “The Tree of Knowledge” Buber insists that it was no punishment to be banished from the Garden of Eden. Yet his claim seems strange. In the Garden, did Adam not walk with God? Was Adam not both creature and adult (only to find himself relegated to a kind of infancy and serfdom after his expulsion)? Of course, his peculiar temporality remains an open question. Be that as it may, Adam is initially more than human and less than human—like a phantasy. In fact, he is there, in this figuration of pre-human time, curiously less a being, less existent than when he becomes finite. Garden humans are at once inbreathed dust (אדם; אדמה) and immortals (provided they do not sin). Other immortals or semi-mortals show up in *Genesis*, and their commerce with humans is also catastrophic (the Nephilim, *Genesis* 6, 1-5). However, if to be human is to be possessed of a finite temporality without being wholly condemned by it, and if the beginnings of one’s humanity are accompanied by a logos that is reason and communication, then how could the Garden Creature—though he had names for animals—grasp that existence is in the mode of finite becoming? It could not mean much to Adam and Even to envision eating something forbidden, something that would make them like God. However, clearly, becoming like God was desirable, just as the fruits of the Tree were appetizing. Now, psychoanalysis teaches that incorporation or object cathexis is the material ground of any identification, but Adam and Eve understood neither finitude nor identification and its dangers. The Garden beings knew neither the desire that characterizes creatures with sexuate bodies, nor the difference between them and that voice called Elohim, and certainly not the separation that identification denies.

Perhaps expulsion was better than an act of mercy (since mortality, which became the property of humans when they could not eat of the Tree of Life, was a boon, given their contradictory divine knowledge). It was a better than mercy, because the narrative expulsion forced the creation of a fledgling community that took shape through a dialectic of identification and dis-identification which, as we indicated, permitted an alternative (and less meta-physical) conception of social existence. The foreclosure of identification, as the first premise of negative theology, is co-extensive with a social logos of human interrelations, coming to pass in the presence of an unfigurable transformer: the present-absent Third party (Elohim/Yahweh).

This third party is exemplified both in the unknowable One and in the Law

itself. What is exemplified are two types of diremption: that between humans and their creator; that between humans and the (interpretable) structures of value and preference (Law). But the Third party has a third sense as well. It is exemplified by the absent mythical narrator of *Genesis*, about whom Buber argues that he was aware of the irony implicit in the origin that was the expulsion from the Garden.¹³ The human genesis is thus not the creation of Adam, but the coming-into-humanity-as-finite of the two proto-humans, thanks to the magical increase in their knowledge, brought about by the crudest mode of assimilation-identification: eating. This magical increase of knowledge is the beginning of the knowledge of becoming—which lies both within and without human powers. As magic, this will be foreclosed; hence, the expulsion. Now, the knowledge of becoming is that of coming into and passing out of being, birth and death. So it was hardly tragic that the pair could not eat of the tree of Eternal Life, because possessing the knowledge of death is the only way through which humans grasp non-becoming, stasis, and correlatively, eternity as privation (life lost) and promise (hope of a life afterward). Without this ethical knowledge (since knowledge of death is always that of the other person), the Garden Adam is more infinite than finite, undecidably mortal and immortal. For human beings, who are born rather than created, there is more value in knowing that one dies than in possessing immortality with no understanding of becoming or mortality. Thus the narrative voice of *Genesis* stands in the position of the Third party: “In this lamentable effect of the great magic of becoming like God, the narrator’s irony becomes apparent; an irony whose source was obviously great suffering through the nature of man,” Buber observes (*BGB* 615; *OB*, 19).

Nakedness and Becoming

The immediate, perceptible consequence for Adam and Eve of their eating the fruit of knowledge was a paltry discovery: their reciprocal nakedness. Buber writes that the “recognition of this fact, the only recorded consequence of the magical partaking, cannot be adequately explained on the basis of sexuality, although without the latter it is, of course, inconceivable” (*BGB*, 615; *OB*, 19). His arguments in this text imply that the expulsion was a divine second thought—not the direct consequence of eating the fruit—as though God sought to protect them from the deadly combination of shame, and the hubris of knowledge, not to mention the expansion of this combination into eternity. At the moment when their eyes are opened, it is not clear what the consequences of their act will be. The serpent promised god-likeness. But Eve, Buber tells us, first “intensified [*verschärfte*] God’s prohibition” with her surprising response to the serpent, “touch it not, else you must die” (*BGB*, 610; *OB*, 15). Since it was not clear what god-likeness or death might be, what could it mean that Eve intensified the prohibition? Interestingly, she did not simply mimic the injunction since, when Adam received it, Eve had not yet been created. And again, if to die means to disappear or to cease to be, then this too remains only an abstract possibility for creatures whose bodies are

suspended in the nunc stans of the Garden. The vertiginous play of perspectives here between the demonic, the divine, and the Adamic opens conundrums that can be worked out only after the introduction of a foreclosure. That is, following the separation that is figured simultaneously as a decision of the absent Father (the voice, see *Genesis* 3, 19), and as the expulsion from paradise into finite space-time.

The immediate outcome is nakedness. The first nakedness, however, was that of the serpent itself, “the serpent was naked, more [naked] than any living thing of the field that YHWH/Adonai/Elohim had created” (*Genesis* 3,1). But Adam and Eve’s nakedness is less that of a state that excites desire than an unnatural uncoveredness that elicits shame. Of course, the all-too-human exposure, in nakedness and shame, is unthinkable in a non-domesticated animal, even one that speaks and walks around the Garden. Still, shame is neither guilt nor sin. It is closer to phenomenological descriptions of those affective moments in which “we are unable to make others forget our basic nudity.”¹⁴ Fundamental nudity belongs to the finitude of human flesh and this deepens the irony Buber attributed to the narrative voice. Having become as gods, our new, divinized (or de-divinized?) beings have become more human, shamefaced, and exposed to each other, as well as to the absent One who always saw them naked—at least until the moment he lost sight of Adam’s whereabouts! If it is divine to suffer in one’s exposure, then Adam and Eve have become more divine. If it is not divine to suffer in this way, then their knowledge has brought them only into the demonic state that more readily typifies the human (and serpentine) condition. The act of consumption, understood as *Verkörperung* or incorporation, is in mythic logic a mimetic act that repeats a sacrificial rite that devours and perpetuates an ancestor or totem animal as the divinity. Here, incorporation through consumption leads to knowledge and, had Adam and Eve eaten of the Tree of Life, this would have led to their incarnation—really, to the parodic mimesis—of the Father himself.

The sad irony is that this God not only must now evict his creatures, he must institute a symbol of foreclosure. That is the function of the “fiery ever-turning sword,” which guards the Tree of Life from the creatures’ eventual return (*Genesis* 3, 24). Henceforth, Adam and Eve will see the third precisely as a Third: as separated, whole, the source of a law revealed to them in reason and shame. By virtue of separation-foreclosure, they also see in each other a third party, i.e., a being outside the I-thou binary. Thus we read in *Genesis*: “and I will put enmity between thee and the woman” (*Genesis* 3, 15). To be the other, in the sense of I and thou, a human being must be a naked face, a gaze, and an interruption of the same forces of which he has become aware. But to be the Other is also to be a Third; one perhaps like-me, yet who is not like-me—and above all who judges me and my other. At this point, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s reflection points us in a direction that runs directly parallel with Buber’s thought.

The Psychoanalytic Counter-Narrative

For Freud, anxiety was “the paradigm of affect” (*PJNRP*). This is true despite the important changes he introduced into his arguments about its meaning. Thus, by 1926, the mature Freud conceived the subject of psychoanalysis by integrating his first topic (primary and secondary processes) into the second one (i.e., the *Ich*, *Es*, and *Über-ich*). In so doing, he inverted his early conception of anxiety as a sign of repression having encountered a plethora of cases where anxiety signaled no discernible *Verdrängung*. Freud then argued that anxiety was more than the affective symptom of a host of developmental processes and pathology. Anxiety preceded repression in its origin, and it could exist independently of it. As the neuro-physiological turmoil of the neonate, anxiety even preceded the formation of the Ego. It arose as the physiological reaction to the danger of suffocation. Freud’s 1933 “New Introductory Lectures,” which present psychoanalysis in its final form, define anxiety as a reaction to traumata, the first of which was birth itself.¹⁵ Trauma anxiety will repeat over the course of the emergence of the Ego, and continue afterward, thanks to the retroactive intensification of earlier incidents that carry on into the present.

In humans’ prehistory—which is also the history figured in Buber’s study of the myth of expulsion—the primary symbolic anxiety (permanent traces) arose from the trauma experienced by the sons following their transgression, putatively, the violent elimination of the dominant male (Freud called him the *Urvater*). Cultural recurrence thus parallels the repetition-intensification of trauma, as found in individual neuroses. This logic also contains an inextinguishable nostalgia for the strange innocence in which the Third party (God) is near but does not judge us. This is an innocence destroyed by the will to know and by the realization of mortality, which the Garden allegory figures as the expulsion.

We can interpret Freud’s permanent traces as ingrained developmental memories or as the transmission of acculturated affects. Yet more important is the ongoing return of a repressed trace. Despite Freud’s embrace of recapitulation theory (ontogenesis reproduces phylogenesis) and his occasional Lamarckianism, it is historic transmission that is at stake. This is the passing on of cultural history, concentrated in parables and myths, as well as the transmission brought about by the repetition of behaviors engendered by a malaise in a family or a society. The remarkable thing here is that the people who would ultimately become Jews embodied the force and the desire that instituted the law of the Third in a monotheistic form. By Freud’s account (working from archeological material), it was the Jews who revived the religion of the Father-God and with it, the foreclosures figured by the Garden and normalized in the Mosaic proscriptions. In this respect, they had an original claim to the status of not dreaming. Monotheism forecloses with unique power identifications with God and heroes, such as those we see in polytheism. According to the psychoanalytical account, the early Hebrews enacted what had become their cultural unconscious, by confronting the reforms proposed by their

own priests, who were anxious to modify the absolute monotheism and embrace a more natural, almost imperial volcano-God called Yahweh. Anxiety would thus have persisted among the people like a demand that the unattainable Third be revived in all his distance (distance is an effect of foreclosure). Whether this anxiety was due primarily to Freud's return of the repressed—reenacted in the intent to murder Moses (Exodus 4: 24)—or to the loss of the privilege of election by the one God, is unclear. What is clear is that the foreclosure of acts of anthropomorphic instating (e.g., a plurality of gods, divinized ancestors, sacred entities and forces that figure human passions) characterizes the monotheism that Moses supposedly taught to a people who then preserved, unconsciously, his founding intuition.

If we follow Freud's speculation about the Egyptian Moses and those nomads who perpetuated his abstract god, we confront a circle of origins: was it a psycho-social repetition that motivated the demand to reinstitute this monotheism? If so, we should accept the hypothesis of Moses's own murder (and the persistence of guilt attaching to his memory). Or was it some anxiety, embedded in the popular imagination, that motivated the restitution of an all-powerful, absent One who, despite his distance from humans, elected one people from among the nations? If election-in-distance does diminish Angst—about mortality, or facing political and cultural threats—then why was this option not more prominent among the mythic choices made by early peoples? Was this rarity due to unconscious dissatisfaction with foreclosures on identification? Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy abbreviate this foreclosure as being placed simply on dreaming. But it seems to apply to every form of fetishization and hypostatization. If we follow the parallelism Freud drew between the rites and narratives of religions, the practices of reenactment, partial remembering, and the transference characteristic of neuroses, we encounter yet another perplexity. This is the circle of anxiety itself. If anxiety is a privileged bridge between sensation and affectivity (mechanistic sensation and spiritual emotion), then anxiety holds the body-mind parallelism in place, in what amounts to a discontinuous proximity (sensation is not affect, and conversely; but affect often accompanies sensation). Of course, anxiety also evinces cultural aspects: an entire cultural group can be beset with, and transmit, anxiety.

In Freud's second topic, the primacy of this sensation-affect expresses the impossibility of positing an archē for the Ego, since there is at least one pre-egoic affect that evolves with the emerging Ego and only later appears to belong to the Ego. But the difficulty of stating when precisely *I* am there, when the Ego that inhabits its name takes form, was not Freud's intuition alone. Even if it was not thematized clinically, the narrative of the Garden and the expulsion also concerns the difficult archē of the human. Moreover, the perplexing, archetypal murder of the powerful male—who, in perishing, returns to haunt the sons and elicit from them a rejection of violence and inauguration of legal foreclosures—presents a comparable anxiety structure, albeit at a different level. This discontinuous repetition, like the repetitions of anxiety in the individual, seems to be the only affective structure thinkable in the absence of identifiable origins. If the earliest stages of social ex-

istence emerge thanks to the expulsion from paradise into mortality, foreclosure, and nakedness, then this sociability must be enhanced by an additional gesture—purely human this time—whereby the sons (of Adam) recognize that they are also brothers. That is, they come with difficulty to realize that they are not simply individuals elected by the father, but can also form a pact amongst each other.

Freud and Buber: The Work of Foreclosure

Buber's reading of Genesis illustrates an initial foreclosure that will be repeated over the history of the Jewish people. Freud's Moses sketches the psychological history of a God, or Father, occupying a unique structure of the Third party (sole legislator, unknowable, alone in electing his chosen), by virtue of foreclosures recorded in the people's narrative and carried by that people like a permanent mnemonic trace. The point of intersection of the two readings, Buber and Freud's (and with Freud, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy), lies precisely in the work performed by foreclosure. Of course, the Genesis narrative and the story of Moses belong to two different layers of Jewish history. And the proscriptions on magic, representation, and polytheism stand in a certain tension to Freud's reading of *Verkörperung*, the primitive identification consisting of incorporations that pass from eating the apple all the way to totemic meals and the Christian Eucharist. For Adam and Eve, eating the proscribed fruit is closer to magical consumption than it is to murder. In Freud's reconstruction, the two are connected through survivals of ancient cannibalism (*MAM*, 103). To my mind, the connection has more to do with the incomprehensible but sensed outcome (by Adam and Eve) of this consumption. To become as one of us is, for a creature, to supplant its creator. Nevertheless, following the logic of foreclosure, the incorporation that elicited expulsion puts an end to such dreaming (the Garden is as much a dream as is the divinization of beings, garden or worldly ones).

If we consider the two levels of drives, in a self and in a culture—something Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's work encourages—then we understand their claim for the work of foreclosure. At an individual level, Freud pushes Buber's arguments by insisting that anxiety is the affect in which inside and outside, secular and divine, paradise and society, blur. Such indistinctions evoke further anxiety and must be limited (*MAM*, 42–49). On the other hand, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue that the sociality of ethnic and political identifications is actually superposed on a more originary sociality through the logic of repetition. Again, murder can be compared with the taboo on the Tree of Life, because murder—of the paradigmatic strong male and as a deliberate act—entails “the social comprehension (or ‘incomprehension’) of death. It is itself the ambivalence of dissociation: the appearance of an Ego in its disappearance, the relation that arises from the lack of a relation” (*PJNRP*, 70, 205). According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, the deliberate sacrifice or murder of this Father turns on the knowledge that death is final, and it is what happens to others, leaving behind it the

survivors whose act and new status forge the new pact uniting those who reassemble under a nascent social contract. Eating of the Tree of Knowledge is also decided in the affective indeterminacy of anxiety (i.e., Eve knew neither what knowledge of all things would mean nor what death was), with a peculiarly social outcome: the succession of generations, or human history. The sociality of the brothers forged by murder is ambiguous and unforeseen. However, it must rest on some earlier social life thanks to which a choice can actually be made to forego election by the strongest male for the sake of a more horizontal organization.

Murder (and perhaps expulsion) thus bespeaks something like a will to sociability, which congeals in the refusal of tyranny, ‘natural’ or political. This will and this act restore what the expulsion from the Garden made possible, a primitive horde (*MAM*, 114). Both murder and expulsion evince the *aporia* of origins, with the primitive horde standing in a circular relationship to the ancient Father. And it is curious that, in all but a brief essay he sent to Ferenczi, Freud maintained (in *Totem and Taboo* [1912] and in *Moses and Monotheism* [1939]) that in the beginning was the strong male—who nevertheless lorded it over the whole horde, itself already in existence, albeit unreflectively (*MAM*, 102).

Freud’s published works de-emphasized the original horde in favor of the community under a strong male. He did not reckon with something like the group consciousness of a social identity, because the proverbial sons are defined in light of one who was not really their biological father (paternity being a causality they did not know), but simply their tyrant. Whatever the circumstances of their survival, however, Freud does argue that it was the expulsion of the sons that introduced them to a new, and unstable, state of nature: “they [the parricides] were forced to live in small communities” (*MAM*, 103). These small communities were presumably without strong males, for a time. Yet that was insufficient to transform what Freud refers to as *sons* into brothers. Only the overcoming of the father and the partaking of his body assured that further evolution. “The cannibalistic act thus becomes comprehensible as an attempt to assure one’s identification with the father by incorporating a part of him” (*MAM*, 103).

Chiasmatic, the two levels of sociality—that of the tyrant and that of the brothers—take shape through a decisive act of vengeance following the initial expulsion by the Father. If the sociality of the brothers, post-sacrifice, in no way protects them against the returns of the Father, a vague consciousness of the threat of judgment and murder persists; and when a father-substitute returns, as he will, it may well be as a father-son, i.e., as a mortal, already marked by the possibility of murder. The innovation of Jesus—really, that of Paul—carries a trace of the foreclosure of the position of absolute Father. If this innovation revives a “phantasy of salvation” (*MAM*, 110), it carries with it henotheistic ambiguities (Jesus, man-God next to the Father) that the expulsion from the Garden had foreclosed. To be sure, the messianic supplement is found first in the Hebrew prophets, but it is transformed in the Nicean Father-Son synthesis, which Freud suspected was the only remaining mode of return for the Father. If this is the

unique return of the erstwhile Father (*MAM*, 111), then it is such because it is the effect of a mnemonic trace, something like a cultural impensé that has no need to be transmitted in a Lamarckian fashion. As a blurring of divine and human, the new-old Father, now also a son, reopens the possibility of fetishistic identifications. These are identifications similar to those we find in myths and epics peopled by semi-divine heroes. And there begins the worst conundrum.

Oedipus and Moses: Paradoxes of Paternity

When Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue that Oedipus might replace Moses as “history’s only real Father, a father who accepts himself as such” (*PJNRP*, 70; 205), they are resisting Freud’s vector-like logic of repetition, whose paradox is to have posited an origin (archaic murder), despite its dating from a time immemorial. Instead, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy emphasize that one becomes a father only in becoming conscious that one has sacrificed or murdered one’s own father, their claim being that Moses was an unconscious father. One becomes conscious only through the repetition of the similar, through whose social traces a certain awareness congeals, initially as a shared affect, then through actions. Through the work of repetition (and resistance in psychoanalytic theory), they argue that only the recognition of repressed violence opens to a sociality able to identify itself as ethnicity or as a micro-polis. This parallels Freud’s theme of *Durcharbeitung*, working through a neurotic condition. Yet the mature Freud saw something different in the return of the father-son avatar. He speculated that the source of Christian anti-Semitism lay precisely in a certain Christian notion of recognition: Christians had “murdered God; as against the Jews who, at least according to a standard version of the story of Moses, would not admit that they murdered God (as the archetype of God, the primeval father, and his reincarnations)” (*MAM*, 115).

Thus, either one forecloses access to God *ab initio*, and unravels the structure of identification (i.e., as occupying the place of the other, which implies murder, latency, revivification of a memory), or one reenacts the process, thereby reopening the ancient dilemmas. That is the choice, unless recognition of the murder also forecloses identification. Perhaps it does this—selectively. The case of Oedipus is interesting as a hero who, inhabiting the monstrosity of his flaw (to defy *Ἀνάγκη* or natural necessity, and fail at it), pre-saged the end of the repetitions by his disappearance en route to Colonus.

Tragedy and Irony

Is the return of the son the condition sine qua non of socio-ethnic paternity? Or does the son represent a supplementary acquisition, which makes fatherhood simultaneously social and temporal through the continuity and stabilization of generations? Clearly, for Freud, the depth, which “in the Jewish religion resulted from the murder of its founder” (*MAM*, 118), is not shared by Islam (and pre-

sumably not by Paul's Christianity of resurrection, either). That sets Freud apart from Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's claims for Oedipus' superiority to, or equality with Moses. Does not the essential force of catharsis, which the representation of Oedipus enables, turn on identification with him, however tormented? It would seem that this identification is not fetishistic. But if Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy are right in suggesting that Freud glimpsed a model of deferred identification in "the Jewish story" (*PJNRP*, 194), this is because the Jewish story he had in mind, as the model of Jewish social identification, carried irony.

The ironic tone of the narrative voice in *Genesis 3* brought about a comparable distance. There is no way to identify fetishistically with the Father when confronting the Third party who is Elohim/Adonai. For Buber, the expulsion from the Garden opens to a history that is human first, and becoming-a-people, second; that is, the first murder (by incorporation), followed by foreclosure (by expulsion), recapitulates an original sociality (unmediated identification with an indeterminate entity: a divine voice), only to open to the new social structures of kin and tribe (of brothers). All too human, we suppose. However, as Freud adds in regard to Moses—and the Gospels—these are stories told about Jews among Jews (*MAM*, 117).

Unmediated fusional identification was not the lot, or the will, of the Jews, who returned to the monotheism of Moses, after the sacerdotal compromise in their religious practices (1350 and 1215 BCE) (*MAM*, 75, 85). Forces among the people presumably impelled this return, which was the revival of their original "obscure and incomplete tradition" of radical monotheism (*MAM*, 89). For Freud, this is the return of the repressed, but it clearly differs from such returns in Greek tragedy. Something more is underway, as this repressed contains a stimulus toward ethical norms and self-respect. At the heart of the return-restoration of the primeval Father is a temporal lag that Freud compares to latency in individuals' psychosexual development. This latency separates subjects from the thrall of the drives as from their initial identifications (*MAM*, 100–1).

In Buber's reading of *Genesis 3*, the loss of the father is figured spatially first, as it occurs thanks to the expulsion, which orders space into sacred and profane sites while instituting the repeating and self-differentiating time of generations. This temporality must be understood on two levels. First, because it is anything but the all at once time Buber attributes to divine knowledge, diachronic time is social and biological. It echoes the time of the narrative itself. In an ironic sense—made possible by the repetition imperative characteristic of the narrative (to be told and retold)—it is always the time of the Garden, always the time of foreclosure. Here, the foreclosure is the narrative (moment) that recounts (and incorporates) its incipience as a narrative ("I am telling you this story because I am, like you, a part of the generations begun thanks to the expulsion"). Second, if the temporality of ethnic sociality is unleashed by a traumatic loss, we have learned, through Freud, that trauma may be exogenic or endogenic in origin, but it will persist as though it were each time exogenic—like the incursion or imprinting of an external force.

Whether we consider the trauma of the murder of the Father or that of the

expulsion and foreclosure of immortality, the anxiety that characterizes the return of the repressed inaugurates an urge for self-identification. For, anxiety is similarly characterized by a repeating time that has no origin. After mistaking anxiety for a mere symptom, Freud acknowledged that anxiety precedes the consolidation of the Ego, and its recurrence isolates the Ego, as though its identifications could never fully ground it. Anxiety repeats the trauma of an origin at which the Ego had not yet developed. With each repetition, anxiety changes by virtue of its attachment to different objects. As Freud argued in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), through the repetitions of anxiety “a danger-situation” is “a recognized, remembered, expected situation of helplessness.” But the shock it repeats proves immemorial, because indefinitely retraceable. “It is unrecognizable because it consists of ever-changing cathexes (*Besetzung*) that can be ‘recognized’ only by being displaced . . . disfigured (*ent-stellt*). And it is immemorial, because the ‘actual’ situation of helplessness resists the bifurcation into past and future that is the condition of memory and anticipation” (Freud-SE: 20, 92). Identification flowing from anxiety might prove fetishistic or ironic; in its origin and its repetitions, however, it reflects a striving to stabilize the anxious Ego.

Why the Jewish People Do Not Dream

The complex of repetition and displacement with no determinate archē characterizes the latency and recurrence found in Freud’s hypothesis of the *Vatermord*. The displacement that encourages recognition corresponds to a prohibition that excludes mimetic attributions (becoming as gods). The circle of origin, replaying itself and lacking a fixed starting point, is thus preserved. Almost despite himself, Freud discerned a circle of origin in anxiety and in the murder of the father. He would have appreciated Buber’s glimpsing it in the situation of presence-absence and transgression, which occasioned the (ironic) expulsion. More important than a *de facto* murder of a powerful male, which, Freud insisted, occurs in every culture, is the social and contractual impetus (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call it a social drive) that motivates the weaker males to associate in opposition to the proto-father. No accident, then, that Freud pursued his study of Moses and of the phenomena of identification together, even as he protested his ineptitude in the dubious domain of nineteenth-century mass psychology (*MAM*, 87).¹⁶ In all three cases, the anarchy of the narrative origin comes to light. But this circle and these displacements in repetition are significant. The danger (of loss and traumatism) to which anxiety reacts is real, even if irrecoverable. But it cannot be self-identical. So, too, the danger that the return of the repressed implies for individual and social psyches. Eating from the Tree of eternal life would have destroyed this time of repetition, which is the time of mortality—there is no time of eternity that is narratively meaningful. Sense requires the self-structuring of narrative acts. The first principle, spatialized as the Garden, serves as the site of humans’ unconscious proximity to divinity, which Buber

called the “yes position.” But here this principle is a null site without traces.

Value judgments are incomprehensible to beings that live beyond good and evil in undifferentiated communion with Buber’s yes. Yet the irony of a beginning that is not really a beginning, precisely here, is unmistakable. Our first humans are physical adults who, when they lose their spiritual status as children (with no need for adulthood, so long as they are in God), enter into an adulthood without fullness, in which desire is fragmented (i.e., they are exposed, naked; the earth from which they are made is cursed). That is why the expulsion—which Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call the stuff of maternal identification—inaugurates a history. And this history narratively recapitulates a pre-history that was pre-narrative without presence, dialogical and semiotic (Adam’s naming animals) without reflective judgment or evaluations. This later development supposes a more substantive, figurative alterity to which an Ego could oppose itself.

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy present their own version of this insight. “That the subject might be born (rather than being constituted or posited for itself) means that it is deferred indefinitely. Moreover, the anxiety of this birth is also the phylogenetic event, or element, par excellence: if anxiety repeats, it is not through heredity . . . The community of [human] birth is the anxiety of the dissociation of identity” (*PJNRP*, 65, 200). This deferral at the heart of the birth of the subject corresponds to a kind of social unfolding in which tribal identity stands under a double question. In Moses’s case, the question is that of identification. For the Mosaic monotheistic tradition, identity is won through the return of repressed (latent and forgotten) material, in which election (ethical identification) and its refusal (in the murder of Moses) assure social identification and a distance from fusional identity. In the case of Buber’s Adam and Eve, the initial supplement of knowledge from the Tree changes little about their condition. They do not come to know all things, because they cannot know as gods do, in the eternal now. That said, this supplement forces them and their progeny to reenact the condition (will to knowledge) as well as the nostalgia for an unconsciousness of it. All of this with more or less anxiety and awareness.

Buber’s interpretation of *Genesis 3* was motivated by his vision of the renewal of Judaism. Freud’s reading of Moses both defends Jewish specificity and sets it into an open-ended phylogenesis of trauma, whose densest instance is the Jewish one. This is because, without promising salvation, it labors under the contradictory strains of a community of brothers, the struggle against the return of the primeval Father, and the ongoing discussion of what it means to set justice in the space left open by his disappearance (*MAM*, 116). Perhaps renewal is not a vindication, but both require a decisively historic sensibility. Consonant with the drive to incorporate knowledge of good and evil and to abjure mortality is the profound anxiety that accompanies the passage from dreaming to non-dreaming. Sometimes this anxiety engenders strategies for surpassing the trauma of an origin deferred. Although Christianity resurrected the Father by transforming the Son into a son-father, messianic tendencies in Judaism have

opened onto other apostasies. Buber's concern to harness the forces for renewal (*MAM*, 118), which embrace ethical election while refusing identifications that include mimesis and incorporation (including the phantasy of incorporating the maternal breast, which precedes identification with the father), depend on narrative transmission (including a narrative unconscious that repeats). Yet this carries no historical assurance with it. The challenge lies in the recognition of the paradoxes of identity, and a symbolic order able to make possible the re-enactment, without fetishism, of social ties rooted in (deferred) identification.

Chapter 11

The (Ir)resistible Suffering of Others: Tragedy, Death, and the Spectator

Robin May Schott

Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical "truth" has led to a radical rethinking of epistemology and ethics in the contemporary world. Issues concerning knowledge and values become viewed as interpretive plays with no metaphilosophical justification. A certain "aestheticization" has swept both intellectual and popular discourse. Philosophically, the recent recuperation of Nietzsche has contributed to the vocabulary of the aesthetic and of theatricality. The appearance of the language of postmodernity in *New York Times Magazine* advertisements, and in articles in the *Village Voice*, and *Utne Reader* (e.g., as in a recent article about why it is "chic" for straights to pass as gay, because of the postmodern deconstruction of gender), is in part an appropriation of current philosophical discourse (philosophy can also be chic). This cultural vogue of postmodernity is also a response to the patent texture of *postmodern* life, where the explosion of the technology of computers, video camcorders, and 24 hour television news has transformed modern Western modes of working, communicating, recreating, judging, and fighting.

In this postmodern condition, what happens to the boundaries that were recognizable earlier in this century between play and non-play, e.g., between "play" and work, illness, suffering, and violence—all of which are recognizable features of human existence? If we must affirm, as writers such as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe claim, the failure of philosophy to provide truth, if we thus affirm a return to myth, a recognition of the literariness of philosophy, and the existence of an *abyss*, then under what aegis do the supposedly outdated categories of *life* and *experience* come into play in philosophical reflection on everyday existence? My specific concerns here are of the relation between the tragedies that are played *on-stage* and the tragedies that occur *off-stage*. To what extent, for example, do Freud's analyses of the spectator's relation to dramatic tragedy and to death come into play for someone who is a spectator to tragedies in *life*—a friend's mortal illness, the rape and murder of women in the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, the beating of Rodney King and the first acquittal of the police officers in Simi Valley?

In "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" (1905/6), Freud addresses explic-

itly how viewing tragedy can be a source of pleasure for the spectators, and answers it, as Nietzsche did, in terms of masochistic pleasure. He writes that being present as an interested spectator at a play (*Schauspiel*) does for adults what play does for children: it gratifies hopes that otherwise cannot be filled in the present. According to Freud:

The spectator is a person who experiences too little, who feels that he is a 'poor wretch to whom nothing of importance can happen,' who has long been obliged to damp down, or rather displace, his ambition to stand in his own person at the hub of world affairs; he longs to feel and to act and to arrange things according to his desires—in short to be a hero. And the playwright and actor enable him to do this by allowing him *to identify himself* with a hero.¹

(I will retain Freud's masculine pronoun because I take his discussion to assume a masculine spectator.) Moreover, the spectator can carry out this identification with the comfort of knowing that the perils that jeopardize the life of the hero will leave him, the spectator, untouched, that it is someone other than himself who is acting and suffering on the stage. Drama appeases "a rising rebellion against the divine regulation of the universe, which is responsible for the existence of suffering" (*Freud-SE*, VII, 306). And it provides a masochistic pleasure in seeing the "affliction of a weaker being in the face of divine might" (*Freud-SE*, VII, 306). Freud adds that although suffering of every kind is the subject-matter of drama, it soon becomes restricted to mental suffering, for "no one wants *physical* suffering who knows how quickly all mental enjoyment is brought to an end by the changes in somatic feeling that physical suffering brings about" (*Freud-SE*, VII: 307). Consequently, a person who is physically ill can only have dramatic significance if some "peculiar physical aspects of his illness make psychical activity possible" (*Freud-SE*, VII, 307).

What is key in Freud's account of dramatic pleasure is that the spectator is enabled "to identify himself" with the heroic figure, who battles the gods but whose battles pose no threat to the spectator himself. Freud elaborates the concept of identification in his essay, "Why War?" (1932), where he considers it to be a manifestation of Eros. When he was asked by Albert Einstein to address the question, what can be done to protect mankind from the curse of war, Freud responded that part of the answer was to bring Eros into play against the destructive instincts. He writes here of two kinds of emotional ties, those of love and those of identification (i.e., sharing important interests which produces a community of feeling).² Thus, identification is a means of creating a community of feeling despite other differences that exist between nationalities and peoples.

And yet in a political context there seem to be limits to how Freud thinks that identification can occur across difference. In "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915), Freud writes of the disillusionment spread by war between the "white nations." I allow myself to quote at length:

we were prepared to find that wars between the primitive and the civilized peoples, between those races whom a colour-line divides, nay wars with and among the undeveloped nationalities of Europe . . . would occupy mankind. But we permitted ourselves to have other hopes. We had expected the great ruling powers among the white nations upon whom the leadership of the human species has fallen . . . to succeed in discovering another way of settling misunderstandings and conflicts of interest . . . To be sure, it was evident that within these civilized states were mingled remnants of certain other races who were universally unpopular and had therefore been only reluctantly, and even so not to the fullest extent, admitted to participation in the common task of civilization, for which they had shown themselves suitable enough.”³

Nonetheless, he continues, one would expect civilized countries to have been able to solve conflicts differently. And in his letter to Einstein in 1932, Freud writes that the evolution of culture may lead to the extinction of the human race, because it impairs the sexual function, and “uncultivated races and backward strata of the population are already multiplying more rapidly than highly cultivated ones” (*Freud-CP*, V, 286). Of course, as Lacoue-Labarthe notes, the “regressive (not to say reactionary) ambiguity of his ‘politics’” is not reason to dismiss Freud as a “prisoner of the Western system or mechanism of representation” and identify him with its constraining power.⁴ Nonetheless, it does raise questions about the nature of identification at play in Freud’s analysis of the spectator’s relation to tragedy. If Freud is not able to cross the boundaries between *white* and *coloured* nations, between *civilized* and *primitive* or *undeveloped* nationalities, one wonders to what extent these cultural codes abet or impede identification in a spectator’s viewing of tragedy. To what extent does Freud’s theory of dramatic pleasure implicitly assume a *universal* spectator, that has the features of a white, male member of the Viennese middle class? What was the constitution of the audiences in the Viennese theaters during the early years of the twentieth century? To what extent more generally do bodily facets of identity such as *gender* and *race* play a role in a spectator’s ability to identify with the *hero* on stage? And if identification does occur across gender or racial lines, what conflicts or confusions within the spectator are generated? (I am thinking now of a different context, dramatic in another way: in a study in the 1950s in the United States, Black children were shown a black doll and a white one and asked to choose the one that looked most like them, and they repeatedly chose the white one. If this projected identification could occur towards a doll, surely it also could occur towards the hero or heroine on stage.)

Freud’s discussion of identification in the spectator’s viewing of tragedy is interesting, in part, because of the way identification mediates death—death as that which can never be present and is always staged. In “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” Freud writes, “Our own death is indeed unimaginable, and whenever we make the attempt to imagine it we can perceive that we really survive as spectators . . . in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his

own immortality” (*Freud-CP*, IV, 305). Although we are convinced of our own immortality, Freud continues, we collapse completely when death has fallen on someone we love. Because we are paralyzed at the thought of such possible loss, there are a number of undertakings which we renounce (e.g., flights, expeditions, experiments). Freud writes:

It is an inevitable result of all this that we should seek in the world of fiction, of general literature and of the theatre compensation for the impoverishment of life. There we still find people who know how to die, indeed, who are even capable of killing someone else. There alone too we can enjoy the condition which makes it possible for us to reconcile ourselves with death—namely, that behind all the vicissitudes of life we preserve our existence intact. For it is indeed too sad that in life it should be as it is in chess, when one false move may lose us the game, but with the difference that we can have no second game, no return-match. In the realm of fiction we discover that plurality of lives for which we crave. We die in the person of a given hero, yet we survive him, and are ready to die again with the next hero just as safely (*Freud-CP*, IV, 306–7).

Freud goes on to say that the war has swept away the conventional treatment of death; that death will no longer be denied. We cannot maintain our former attitude to death, but have not yet discovered a new one.

In trying to assist us in discovering a new attitude towards death, Freud considers the difference between *primitive man's* relation to death and that of *civilized man*. *Primitive man* had no objection to the death of an enemy or stranger, and was no doubt just as convinced of his immortality as the modern individual. But when someone who *belonged to him* died (wife, child, friend), then he had to learn that one can indeed die oneself, since each of these loved ones were part of his ego. But on the other hand, each of these loved persons had something of the hostile stranger in them. Thus, such deaths aroused a conflict of feeling and ambivalence, which was what “disengaged the spirit of inquiry in man” (*Freud-CP*, IV, 309-10). Freud argues that these primitive conflicts about deaths still occur in our unconscious, and we should give them their due, since war strips us of the ability to treat death as an accident instead of as a necessity.

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe analyzes Freud's discussion of death in his essay, “The Scene is Primal,” included in the English translation of his work, *The Subject of Philosophy*. Lacoue-Labarthe is particularly interested in how Freud alludes to death as *ob-scene*. Death is *opposed* to the scene, in that death itself can never be present as such (any more than the woman's or the mother's sex, adds Lacoue-Labarthe) (*LL-SP*, 111). But the other meaning of the prefix *ob* is present as well—it is *toward* the scene, in that it points to the necessity of the re-presenting, the staging of death (since death can never be present *in person*). Lacoue-Labarthe notes that Freud, in his 1916 essay cited above, directly makes this point, that the representational break comes between desire and death. Lacoue-Labarthe writes, “Death never appears as such; it is strictly *unpresentable*—it is the unpresentable itself, if that expression can have any meaning . . . it disturbs manifestation, but it does not manifest itself . . .” (*LL-SP*, 112). The *ob-scenity* of death is also an

obscenity (in our ordinary understanding of the term). Recall the early Greeks' view of death as a pollution which must be washed away by women (a pollution which women become symbolically identified with via the strategy of the scape-goat). Moreover, the un-presentability of death is obscene, in violating the purity and closure of traditional systems of representation. Thus, to sensibilities shaped by these systems, both death and more abstractly that-which-cannot-be-present appears as indecent and disgusting. Freud suggests that it is the encounter with death that gives birth to speculation, philosophy, and religion. This unrepresentability of death marks both classical and modern philosophy, e.g., philosophies' claims for the immortality of its ideas signify a refusal of the temporal and mortal nature of thinking. Lacoue-Labarthe argues that Freud's thought is tragic not only in his treatment of death, but more generally because it reveals "that the *necessity of representation* goes beyond just art or religion; 'thinking' itself is condemned to representation—which furthermore explains . . . why philosophy and science are themselves to be understood (for Freud as for Nietzsche, though for different reasons) as 'works of art,' indeed as myths or rational fictions" (*LL-SP*, 112). In other words, "thinking" in general and philosophy in particular face the unhappy fate of seeking to represent that which can never be present, and thus their attempts are doomed to fail as "representations," though they may achieve another fate as fictions.

What Lacoue-Labarthe does not add here, though he might, is that the thinking which is tragic because of the frustrations of representation inhere in a system which is both rooted in the individual ego, and coded as male in opposition to female. Freud's point is not that death as such can never be present, but that one's own individual death can never be present. In the unconscious we all believe in our own immortality, though we do face the necessity of death as a fate for others, and this recognition is explicit under conditions of war. So it is representation, insofar as it is a projection of the individual ego, that runs up against the limits that are posed by death to the embodied ego. Moreover, this ego and its unconscious in Freud's writing have masculine adjectives. (Freud discusses the reaction of the "primitive man" when he saw "someone who belonged to him die—his wife, his child, his friend . . ." (*Freud-CP*, IV, 309) and argues that these primitive feelings remain in the unconscious). And Lacoue-Labarthe, referring to Freud's essay, "Medusa's Head" (1922) on the male fear of the threat of castration which is precipitated by the sight of the female genitals, links the obscenity of death with that of the woman's or mother's sex (*LL-SP*, 111). Like death, the woman's or mother's sex cannot be present. Thus, both death and women are the unrepresentable to these masculine systems of representation. One might speculate that thinking that takes its starting point in non-individualistic, non-masculinist positions would treat death, women, and the question of unrepresentability differently.

While Lacoue-Labarthe's concerns here are the implications of death for the logic of philosophy and the fate of thinking in general, my concerns are more concrete. As Freud himself notes, thinking is generated by emotional conflicts in the

face of the vicissitudes of life. Thus, I am interested in raising the questions: To what extent can Freud's analysis of tragedy and death be translated to encounters with suffering "behind the scene?" To what extent does such a translation meet with resistance because of factors such as embodiment, and economic, political, and racial structures and ideologies? To what extent do these materialist factors reveal the limits of Nietzschean aestheticization?

In ordinary language, tragedy refers both to unhappy endings faced by characters in drama because of fate, moral weakness, psychological maladjustment, or social pressures. But tragedy also refers to very sad events, disasters, calamities, afflictions, and grief.⁵ When a man, in the youthful vigor of life, faces his physical disintegration because of AIDS or cancer, we refer to this also as a tragedy. Moreover, such a situation brings with it some of the conflicts Freud ascribes to dramatic tragedy. Although in this situation we speak of physical illness, one must say, in Freud's language, that this illness "makes psychical activity possible."⁶ The illness can be an occasion, for example, to manifest a strength of spirit to survive against all odds. Illness is an event that might create radically different priorities in life, in terms of the respective values of work and friendship, and that forces a distinction between what is important and what is petty. At least such an event might bring the intermittent recognition that the illness could lead to one's death—if only in the sense that one seeks to stage the ceremonies of death in advance of one's death. Moreover, this tragedy is (again using Freud's words), "an event involving conflict and it must include an effort of will together with resistance" (*Freud-SE*, VII, 307). This situation also has some of the features present in Freud's analysis of tragic conflict. It may in part be a conflict with divinity, or with one's fate (the terrible injustice of this fate); it may involve a conflict with human institutions (refusal to reveal the nature of one's illness or of one's sexual orientation because of homophobia in society); it may involve a conflict between individuals (e.g., when a friendship is jeopardized because of an individual's panic of contamination or contagion); it may point to a struggle between two different impulses within the man who is ill (e.g., the desire to be independent and continue to live as if he were healthy vs. the desire to receive help and treatment as "special"); and it may even involve conflict between a conscious impulse and an unconscious one (e.g., the conscious recognition of one's mortal illness and the unconscious belief, as Freud argues, in one's immortality).

To what extent does an individual, a friend, a witness to this tragedy, respond to it in the way Freud argues the spectator responds to dramatic tragedy? Freud himself would object to this question, since his analysis of tragedy is based on the distinction between *dramatic tragedy* and *life*, i.e., in terms of the compensations dramatic tragedy provides to the spectator for things not achieved in her/his personal life, and in terms of the way dramatic performances can mediate our fear of death. But if we pursue Nietzsche's turn to fiction, to a world that has become a fable again and a language that is no longer the language of truth (*LL-SP*, 6), the borders marking the dramatic scene and the scene of suffering may appear more

fluid. Let us assume, then, Freud's analysis of tragedy in order to consider just how fluid these borders become.

As a witness to the tragedy of an illness, does a "spectator" get pleasure, as Freud claims of one watching a hero on stage fight valiantly and hopelessly against divine might? There may be a sense of admiration and pride for the strength of one's friend in struggling against this fate. But this satisfaction is then surely mixed with other feelings that accompany the daily struggle against pain and despair—anger, refusal, heartbreak. There may also be a sense in which hopes are gratified for the spectator that otherwise may not be fulfilled, e.g., witnessing these events brings about an intensity of life in the face of death not only for him who is suffering directly, but for those whose lives he touches. (If his life can be cut short at such a young age, why not mine? If my life were suddenly to end, what life would I wish to have lived?) But here gratification is mixed with pain and fear, for one's daily habits and rituals with this friend are also threatened by his illness. Moreover, like the spectator to dramatic tragedy, one may be precipitated into identification (it could happen to me), and one confronts another's death without risk to oneself (it is after all not me; I will survive). But not everyone witnessing this tragedy will be able to identify with this person suffering from mortal illness. Some may be more apt to do so because of features of sexual "identity"; some, through the identification that occurs with love and common interests. But for others, identification is precisely that which must be refused (the event is too foreign and threatening and must be held at a distance). In other words, not all witnesses are positioned similarly in terms of identification; one must distinguish between those with common cultural identities or shared love and interests, and those who refuse understanding. Moreover, though witnessing personal tragedy may pose no danger to one's personal security, nonetheless this witnessing may have life-transforming consequences, problematizing any attempt to remain a distanced *spectator* of tragedy.

Thus, in returning to the question whether Freud's analysis of tragic pleasure applies to personal scenes of tragedy, the answer is complex. There do seem to be aesthetic elements at play (and one could discuss at length the performing and theatricality of roles in such a situation, as well as the interplay between dramatic performances about AIDS and cancer and those performances played out in daily life). But when such tragedies are corporeal, and touch the bodies and emotions of friends and lovers, there is something that resists this aesthetic interpretation of tragedy. In other words, although one may create fictions occasioned by the most dramatic moments of material existence—physical illness, torture, rape, or the birth of new life—as well as occasioned by more everyday events (e.g., children's play, familial conflicts)—the materialization of life remains an irreducible limit to these discourses.

The *modern subject* has proved to be highly problematic in dealing with materiality. One can cite the mind-body dualism, the instrumentalization of bodies, the subordination of the *feminine* to a *masculine* master subject. Nonetheless, in

thinking how subjectivities live in a postmodern condition, one needs to attend not only to the multiple stories of *subjects* but to their material frames. Sometimes narratives obliterate the materiality that they fictionalize (as in the story that the Holocaust never existed). Therefore, in theorizing postmodern subjectivities one needs to examine how narratives are constructed in terms of their materially limiting conditions and to take a stand epistemologically and politically *vis-à-vis* conflicting stories.

Moreover, one needs to attend to how identifications exist amongst multiple subjectivities. Identification is crucial in emotional and political responses to crises, e.g., in providing support during debilitating illness, in fighting discrimination against HIV positive individuals, in working for better care in hospitals and hospices. But identification is not strictly voluntaristic. Rather, the possibility of identification is embedded in particular corporeal histories. As a heterosexual woman, I may have love and shared interests with a gay man, but I do not identify in a fuller sense with his life-possibilities.

We become spectators to tragedy not only through our personal relations, but through videos and television news that are saturated with images of tragedy for the viewer who stays tuned in. This technological explosion of images in daily life contributes to what so many writers call the conditions of flipping postmodernity. The viewers of television receive one image after another, flipping between stations at intervals of seconds or minutes, to create their own media collage. No longer can the world be assumed to be a coherent whole, the knowledge of which provides understanding and mastery to the subject. This barrage of images makes the Nietzschean emphasis on a purely aesthetic interpretation particularly convincing.⁷ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche quotes Goethe's question:

Can it have been one of the virtues of the ancients that, for them, the highest pathos was but a form of esthetic play, while for us there is need of verisimilitude in the production of such a work?" We may now answer this profound question in the affirmative . . . the highest pathos was, indeed, but a sublime esthetic play. Only in these terms can the radical tragic phenomenon be described with some degree of success. Whoever, after this, goes on talking about those vicarious pathological and moral effects may as well despair altogether of his esthetic sensibility (*N-BT*, 134).

And yet, if a viewer of these electronic images responds with Nietzsche in purely aesthetic terms, they are oblivious of the material frames (e.g., of racism and economic interests) which shape their aesthetic perception.

For example, the beating of Rodney King on March 3, 1991 was video-taped by George Holliday, a white plumbing company manager trying out his new video camcorder, and this visual image of the King beating instantly became national and international currency.⁸ The video was shown repeatedly on evening news, in a context of theatricality which obscures the relation between these events and the ordinary situations out of which they grow. As Robert Gooding-Williams

writes in his introduction to *Reading Rodney King; Reading Urban Uprising*, “The drama of the news constructs social events as transient curiosities that have accidentally supervened on the circumstances of day-to-day life.”⁹ These images were repeated compulsively on what Houston Baker dubs “teleabolitionist” news networks, which reduced King to silence just as much as the “scenes of violence” in slave narratives reduced the slaves to silence and de-subjectification (*RRK*, 43). Moreover, as several authors in this collection point out, the images of the video-taped were repeatedly isolated, de-contextualized, and re-contextualized by defense attorneys in the courtroom, who provided the apparently obvious scene of police brutality with a new narrative in which Rodney King’s behavior was shown to be “uncorrected” and thus police violence was argued to be justified (*RRK*, 44). In other words, the meaning of these images were constantly contested by groups of individuals with opposing interests and narratives. In such a contested field, where it was possible for the defense attorneys for the police officers to convince the ten white, one Asian, and one Hispanic juror to return a verdict of “not guilty,” it is imperative to provide a critical analysis of how the background narratives are socially constructed. In other words, this dislocation of image from context may be part of the aesthetic impact of technology in a postmodern age. But if one treats these images in purely aesthetic terms, one becomes complicitous with the political frames by which these images are always already interpreted.

Thus, the “spectators” who witness tragedies on the dramatic scene, in personal relations, or through the technology of video and television do not all have an identical relationship to the scene of tragedy. Their view is constituted to a great extent by their position in the matrix of class, gender, racial, sexual, and geographical formations of power, though both Freud’s account of tragedy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s account of the un-presentability of death sweep over these factors. Therefore, it is imperative for individuals—or *postmodern subjectivities*—to understand how their narratives and sensibilities are formed by these other factors. Although Nietzsche argued that those who are concerned with moral effects should despair of their aesthetic sensibility, it may be that those concerned solely with their aesthetic sensibility may become bystanders to tragedy that they could alleviate or prevent, rather than complicitly witness.¹⁰

Chapter 12

The Subjects of Philosophy: “The We” and Us

James R. Watson

High Culture’s Primal Scene: Vater Heidegger

Pulsional intensities have histories that tell stories otherwise than their would-be masters’ confessions. Pretenses and disavowals aside, penitent libidinists understand that their pulsions are never pure, never innocent before the High Court.¹ Thrown/birthed into the world—*Guilty! Wir haben geworfen!* This fling into the world of referential totalities, which we could also *mit französischen Brochen um sich werfen*, has come to be understood as a necessary warping, an originary sin, turning us away from what is right and good. Heidegger, for example, says our everyday Dasein is its *Da* in idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity.² Proximally and for the most part, we are lost in this absorption, this falling: *Wir haben geworfen/gefallen*. Never mind that pulsions play with appropriators under the spell of propriety and its proper names. Nietzsche tried to untangle some of this, but Heidegger misconstrued it as Nietzsche’s historicizing psychologism. My subject here—Lacoue-Labarthe and the subject of philosophy—notes this approvingly while, almost surreptitiously, mostly seductively, referring to Heidegger’s evolving symptomology during his face-to-face with Nietzsche.³ To which perhaps we subjects of philosophy should append Heidegger’s remark—“*Nietzsche hat mich kaputt gemacht.*”⁴ We must (re)turn to this anti-psychologistic Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* strategy of Lacoue-Labarthe.

Looking backward, the fall, always ours, recalls, silently and anonymously, echoing off the walls of everydayness, *ours*. Who calls? Possibilities. Not to the likes of whom non-integral monstrosities have become after Auschwitz amidst the always returning dead.⁵ No, it is rather the call of authenticity, the call of what truly belongs to the proper individual of the never-ending days of silent and unchallenged complicity. Such possibilities are not for us lowly subjects of dogshit culture⁶ and its remainders. No indeed, they are only for the proper ones—the chosen members of a world-historical people who, to be sure, are shattered but still a *we*—the subjects of philosophy who have learned from Heidegger and oth-

ers, from the unification of theory and praxis, what it means in this bloodiest of all centuries to become individuated in the face of both appropriate and inappropriate death. So, the subjects of philosophy have learned, as Kafka said they would in the administration of penal colonies, that nothing, absolutely *Nichts*, outstrips the possibilities of the proper individual. Heidegger, to add another note, broke down, several times, over different but related matters, but he never publicly confessed. Face-to-face with it all, Heidegger never lost his philosophic resolve, his *Entschlossenheit*. Which is why fundamental ontology and his always nuanced *Seinsfrage* had to be opposed to real *Menschen*—to the motley ensemble of ugly and non-tragic ones with both Hegelian and non-Hegelian histories.

Das Man (Heidegger's impersonal name for us) is not innocent; we who are not a we are yet inseparable from those in that posture who are in the dogshit. But let it never be said that we conspire with those judges proclaiming our guilt in the carceral courts of propriety. Refusing to lose touch with the returning dead, we also refuse to hand-over our dogshit culture to the refined barbarisms of the proper ones. Rebellious connections across and within the fortified zones of complicity are too few, too precious and precarious to allow me to speak properly under cover of the requisite academic *we*, not even with the guise of the shattered yet still pious *we*. Lost and low soul that I am, I must begin with a reaction to Lacoue-Labarthe's recent texts, especially the one that asserts that Heidegger "never ceased to connect the possibility of History (historiality) with the possibility of a people or of the people" and that "simply by not reading his [Heidegger's] *Nietzsche*, one can obtain a fascist Heidegger." Is this to say that a careful reading of Heidegger's *Nietzsche* reveals a non-fascist Heidegger? (You *and* I will return to this question.) My initial misgivings concern the text between these two insertions:

... in spite of all his 'nostalgic' or even genuinely 'reactionary' weaknesses, for which his protestations of non-hostility towards (modern) technology do not really compensate, Heidegger reopened philosophically, in the wake of Nietzsche and Romanticism, questions which the Marxist *vulgate* that prevailed in Europe during the first twenty years after the war (the years of the anti-fascist 'consensus') regarded as completely obsolete, but which we can today see to be unavoidable: these are the questions of peoples (or nations), languages and religions. The way Heidegger worked these through, particularly on the basis of the problem of language, is vastly superior to anything the past century—or in the first half of this one the conflict between nationalism and internationalism (between "Right" and 'Left' romanticisms)—might have contributed to the topic; moreover, this is one reason why we must not abandon these questions to a new *vulgate* (neo-this or neo-that) that is eager to revive the past century or the one before—to restore the Europe of *Kultur* or of the Enlightenment—and totally incapable of rising to the level of Heidegger's questioning. One hardly needed to be clairvoyant to ask oneself between 1956 and 1968 whether Marx or Nietzsche had been right, just a little more than a hundred years before, about the future of the world. One has felt equal cause for concern, since then, at seeing Marxism—used in the interim to justify any and every kind of third-worldism—quite simply 'dropped' (without examination, and, as they say, without a second thought), at a time when the analysis

of the 'commodity-form'—now the *only* form in our 'world'—is increasingly pertinent. It was not merely sufficient in either case to allow oneself to be guided by Heidegger's questions—this is never enough—but one did have to take those questions seriously and try to understand what had led such a thinking as his—not only, once again, the greatest of our time, but also the most powerful—to move from the fascist positions of 1933 to the problematizing of technology.⁷

Questions of peoples, languages and religions are indeed as urgent today as they have been since the rise of European nationalisms. The great chain of Being lashes away as propriety holds sway in the seemingly endless slaughter-suicide of kinfolks. The other direction⁸ is not yet here. For the sake of the metaphysics which is called *Europe*, millions will be added to those already sacrificed. Yes, the center still holds—if not Germany, perhaps France, the land where Heidegger's problematizing of technology now holds sway.

The way Heidegger worked through the complex plurality of these questions, however, was, by his own admission, within the greatness of the National Socialist movement. The specific and distinctive German-Swabian character and mission that permeates Heidegger's texts from *Sein und Zeit* to *Unterwegs zur Sprache* and *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* first orients and then finally reduces the complexity of these questions to the one great question of global technicity and its threat—the projected Other and threat to the spiritual center. If this was and remains for Lacoue-Labarthe the greatest and most powerful thought of our time, does his resultant faithfulness to Heidegger's texts remain caught within the disaster of Heidegger's failed "move from the fascist positions of 1933 to the problematizing of technology?" Does the shoddy sensationalism of journalistic non-readings of philosophic texts and its all-too-easy consignments of Heidegger to Nazism make his texts greater than they perhaps are? Complicity sometimes works in unexpected ways.

I say the disaster of Heidegger's failed move because had Heidegger successfully made such a move away from fascism, there would have been, after the war, no reason for his unpardonable silence on the mass murder of European Jews. I have argued elsewhere that Heidegger's silence on murdered Jews was and remains necessary for the continuation of both his conception of the *Seinsfrage* and the kind of thinking appropriate for this kind of questioning.⁹ Heidegger's thought, from beginning to end, is directed by an ideal fascism,¹⁰ sharing with Nazism if not the physical extermination of Jews, the same Nazi goal of eradicating the very memory of Judaism. *Zum Andenken an Heidegger* shares this with and in the faithful memory of what directs his thought. The thinker on stage: Heidegger and his appropriated *Nietzsche*.¹¹

I begin with these remarks from mid-1987, eight years after the publication of *Le Sujet de la philosophie* and one year after *L'imitation des modernes (Typographies II)*, because if, as Lacoue-Labarthe attempts to show, philosophy ends in literature, the *fictioning* of the absolute is no less deadly than previous representational-aesthetic attempts at appropriation in the Nazi and Stalinist states

of terror. It is not enough to simply remark the failure of philosophy—the desire for the identity of thought and being—as Lyotard does in 1988, arguing that the Heidegger affair is a *French* affair because more so than other national literary writers, French writers have understood that:

the real objective of literature . . . has always been to reveal, represent in words, what every representation misses, what is forgotten there: this “presence,” whatever name it is given it is given by one author or another, which persists not so much at the limits but rather at the heart of representation; this unnameable in the secret of names, a forgotten that is not the result of the forgetting of a reality—nothing having been stored in memory—and which one can only remember as forgotten “before” memory and forgetting, and by repeating it.¹²

The disturbing questions raised by these assertions concern not only the deeply problematic nature of Lyotard’s 1988 text *Heidegger et “les juifs,”* but also the uninterrupted continuity of Lacoue-Labarthe’s thought from the six texts that compose *Le Sujet de la philosophie* to the short book not initially intended for publication. *La fiction du politique* was published, however, after questions and objections raised to the first version of the text were taken into account and Lacoue-Labarthe was satisfied that he had given a reasonable account of his experience of the *Stoss* of Heidegger’s thinking (which, Lacoue-Labarthe tells us, prompted his entry into philosophy) and his subsequent discovery of Heidegger’s politics. Clearly, then, what is at stake in all of this is the disengagement of Lacoue-Labarthe’s *andenken* from Heidegger’s commitment to National Socialism, a disengagement that he finds at work in Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*.

Contra Granier’s critique of Heidegger’s *Nietzsche* and similar liquidating claims of academic philosophy, “there is today no access to Nietzsche that does not oblige one to follow the itinerary of Heidegger’s interpretation (*LL-SP*, 62)” because the way of the *Seinsfrage* is not philosophical. But why must this supposed post-philosophical itinerary have the upper hand if the primary question is that of reading? If we cannot “purely and simply ‘ratify’ [Heidegger’s] interpretation,” Heidegger’s positioning of Nietzsche within the trajectory of neo-Platonic metaphysics must be read not in the stratagem of *É-loignement/Ent-fernung*, i.e., not in the manner of a hierarchically staged tele-scoping, but rather as moving to-and-fro, undoing the very structure of transcendence Heidegger’s itinerary is supposedly other than. *Mutatis mutandis* (note that Lacoue-Labarthe does not make this low brow move): if there is no access to Nietzsche other than *Nietzsche*, there is no access to Heidegger other than *Der Antichrist*. If *Heidegger* is the name for the matter of post-metaphysical thinking, then to that name we must append its improper property—*Nietzsche*, the *Antichrist*. For Heidegger, *Der Antichrist* was a terrible book, perhaps because its title, like Nietzsche’s (proper, or post-metaphysically given) name, is also the name of metaphysical thought. Nietzsche, on the other hand, called himself by many names, one of which was *der Antichrist*. Did Heidegger call himself this Nietzsche, i.e., the Antichrist? Or, did the apostate Heidegger know and love Luther much better than the many Nietzsches he baptis-

mally reduced to his *Nietzsche*?

A certain intensification of *The Subject of Philosophy*'s chapter 2 detour, but still connected to its theme of the failure of the sequel to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's fragmentation, and his unremitting note writing, risks upping the ante of the entire evasive strategy of Lacoue-Labarthe's texts while simultaneously working to expose the nasty playing field of Heidegger's appropriation of Nietzsche and its deconstructive repetition by Lacoue-Labarthe. Nietzsche's "terrible book," written three years after Elizabeth's marriage to Bernhard Förster, terrified Heidegger. The second volume of Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, which begins with a listing of the five major titles of Nietzsche's thought, makes no mention of the pivotal sections (24 through 55) of *Der Antichrist* in its desperate attempt to displace the thrust of Nietzsche's attempt at revaluation in and through his analysis of modern metaphysics as a type of *résentiment* proceeding from Christian anti-semitic self-hatred. The two working propositions set forth in Section 24 of the *Der Antichrist* concern the origin of Christianity and focus Nietzsche's subsequent unfolding of their ramifications vis-à-vis the history of metaphysics-nihilism. That Nietzsche's analysis of nihilism's ramifications would today require entry into the abyss of Auschwitz does not go without saying, especially if, in Lacoue-Labarthe's words, "Heidegger's reading is unavoidable."

The basic themes of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche are well-known. Nietzsche's thought is metaphysical inasmuch as the will to power posits new values and thus interprets Being as value or value-positing. But, for Heidegger, this value-positing cannot overcome nihilism precisely because the essence of nihilism belongs within the essence of the history of Being itself: "To want to overcome Being itself would mean unhinging the essence of man."¹³ Thus, only beings, not Being, have been thought thus far. Being as that which makes appearance possible cannot appear. Being is nothing. What then is at stake for Heidegger in 1940? He writes:

To think to encounter Being itself in its default means to become aware of the promise, as which promise Being itself "is." It is, however, in staying away; that is to say, insofar as there is nothing to it. This history—that is, the essence of nihilism—is the destiny of Being itself. Thought in its essence and authenticity, nihilism is the promise of Being in its unconcealment in such a way that it conceals itself precisely as the promise, and in staying away simultaneously provides the occasion for its own omission.¹⁴

Compare Heidegger's (deferred) 1940 promise of Being in its self-protective withdrawal with these two 1888 observations by Nietzsche:

[1] Christianity can be understood only by referring to the soil out of which it grew—it is not a counter-movement against the Jewish instinct, it is actually its logical consequence, one further conclusion of its fear-inspiring logic . . .

[2] the psychological type of the Galilean is still recognizable—but only in a completely degenerate form (which is at once a mutilation and an overloading with foreign traits) could it serve the end to which it was put, that of being the type of a redeemer of mankind.¹⁵

Neo-Platonic metaphysics requires precisely this completely degenerate form of the Jesus psychological type, the very type that, as Nietzsche makes clear, was first manufactured in the Gospels. Here permit me a point made elsewhere.¹⁶ In his 1935 lectures on metaphysics, contra the American cult of intelligence and that which can be learned by everybody, Heidegger unequivocally identified his attempt to revive the spirit of German idealism with Christian anti-Judaic identificational recruitment by connecting Philo's spiritualizing midrash with the Gospel's interpretation of logos as "the word of the cross,"¹⁷ thereby annihilating Philo as a Jewish thinker. In 1935, for Heidegger the redeemer of Swabian-kind, *Philo* was a name for one of those who disconnect the possibility of history from a people.

Does the cryptogram "nihilism is the promise of Being in its unconcealment" stir among the ashes? Or should we (along with Heidegger) pre-date it as a premonition to the *knowing few* emerging from a willful displacement of the trajectory of Nietzsche's thought? Precisely here we can begin to speak of, hear and see, *theoretical failures*, primal scenes, echoes, the speculative apparatus, and the subjects of philosophy. To speak otherwise, here we can see the *we* which echoes us. The dead Heidegger returns, stronger than the living one, to silence the returning and haunting others who, unlike Vater Heidegger, could not be *properly* buried. To which ones do we listen most attentively? What is being said from the site of Vater Heidegger's proper burial, from the situs (Church property) from which the mother (Judaism) has been removed to facilitate the *père-version* that directs us to and in accordance with the fantastic (i.e., self-destructive) desire of the latter for the Vater's *fulfillment*?¹⁸ Was the Church simply tolerant when it gave the wayward son a proper burial? Heidegger's *Stele, Ereignis* 1977, marks the reign of the law after the paradigmatic annihilation of mothers barring children passage to the Proper Name.

Interruptus

Nietzsche's diagnosis: philosophic writing is an effect of compulsive intensities attempting to draw the unforeseeable effects of writing into the prefigurational field of repressive-reactive forces. The philosophical text is the figure of pulsional intensities driven into a field of reactive forces resurfacing as a general urge to express itself confessionally.¹⁹ The vampiric strength of philosophical thought is focused, therefore, on the confessional purification of its subjects. The symptomatic desire for philosophical purity, writing/speaking without style, signifies beneath the bar separating signifier and signified, underhandedly, so to speak, as an excess of repressive energy.

The subjects of philosophy are overdetermined character-types formed by a discipline in the service of reactive forces and their infantile but deadly cultural apparatus. Philosophers, the Elect(ed) of philosophical discipline, speak underhandedly, beneath the bar, against the effects of writing and its material *puissance*. The subjects of philosophy, always secretly excessive, purify the ef-

fects of worldly contagion with the sempiternal symposium that Levinas calls “the anarchy of the Good.”²⁰ Philosophical purification, always a ready extension of totalitarian practice, withdraws at the same time it negates the enigmatic nature of all worldly manifestation. The sacrament of penance, cleansing the soul by confessing one’s sins, is indebted to the philosophical symposium of lovers and beloveds. Prefigured, at least in part, in Plato’s symposium tale of controlled drinking and the concomitant removal of female entertainers from the circle of conversants,²¹ the abolition of public confession after the scandal of the confession of a woman in Constantinople²² led to the under the bar secret confession of one man to another. Closed off from the public by the seal of private confession, sinners disclose their inner most thoughts, desires, as well as their wayward deeds during the male sacrament of privatized penance.

Though the seal of the confessional prohibits priests from disclosing what the sacrament of penance brings forth, Penitentials are published beginning in the eighth century. The bar of the confessional seals private confessions within the congregation of sinners and their privy leaders, constituting, on the one hand, the idiosyncrasy of sin while, on the other, the Penitentials draw the public figures of sins and their appropriate penances. This shift from Levinas’s Platonic anarchy of the Good to the hierarchical administration of the Good marks the triumph of the technical interpretation of thought initiated by Aristotle’s esoteric writings and then enlisted by the Christianized cultural apparatus for the purpose of producing the truth of inner life in opposition to the waywardness of the worldly body. Christianity is not Platonism for the masses, as Nietzsche claimed, but rather a one-sided technical Aristotelianism alloyed with neo-Platonism—a legitimatization instrument of the New Church’s task of administering the purgation and succor of sinners. Such a task requires something quite different from the playful and deconstructive narratives of Plato. Moving from the Greek polis to the anti-world of sin and souls, to the confessing society and its onto-theo-logic purifiers, requires, in Foucault’s words, “a literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering image.”²³ It requires a fiction of ascent achieved by turning inward, away from the world, politics, and sense—a philosophy caught up in the old Socrates’ tale of his soul’s imprisonment. Not Plato, whom the New Church has never trusted, but Plotinus, whose style was, in the pregnant expression of his disciple Porphyry, richer in thoughts than in words. A cultural apparatus turned to the production of purified souls and inward truths needs something other than Plato—a doctrine.

Tracing the disfiguring effect of writing, we can draw upon Lacoue-Labarthe and others superimposed on pale, pure white surfaces, thus further disfiguring the overdetermined, invisible figures of philosophical purification. We subjects of philosophy become visible only through an abusive drawing-upon our background invisibility and repressive foundation. Writing, to speak otherwise, bears witness and responds to the anguish of repressive overdetermi-

nation. The disfigured figure, the monster we have been drawn and that we now draw (upon) again, will never be complete, never integral, but always a mutant mutating with and in response to the shifting strategies of *our* repressions and compulsive confessions. The hands that draw, if not the voices screaming, draw as they are drawn in that intertwining which Merleau-Ponty called the *flesh*. It is not the unconscious that makes the anti-aesthetic of representational surfaces necessary, but rather the repressive philosophical forces of purification attempting to cleanse the world of everything that reminds *us* of pre- and post-penitent possibilities. *Wild being* is the palimpsest emergence of what classical ontology attempts to obscure and defeat by deep withdrawals.²⁴ The failures of philosophy are “our” liberations from philosophical captivity. Many will recoil from this liberation since it occurs only within the monstrous disfigurements of materialized, de-aestheticized surfaces. Adorno, we should recall, stayed within the disillusioning illusion of aesthetics.²⁵

Site and parasite, always interchangeable, always bound together, take their nourishment with, beside, and of one another; that is, their relationship is itself parasitic. Such is the contemporary philosophical relationship of s/c(ited) subjects and their parasitic dependence upon abusive hosts breaking into the parsimonious economy of repression, as if under some compulsion to consumptively deflect these energies and thus, if only momentarily, successfully unfixing cultural imperatives by expelling these repressive energies through the holes of monstrous, fractal bodies. This situation, by no means a thing of beauty, precludes propriety and its requisite unicity, an effect of effective repression. The doers of such criminal deeds have already, always, been done to. Still, the monstrous outside and the pure inside do not belong together; they are not of a kind. But neither do they belong apart. The failures of philosophy make and have always made philosophy possible and incompleteable.

Site and parasite, always interchangeable, always bound together, take their nourishment with, beside, and of one another; that is, relationship is parasitic. Witness the contemporary philosophical relationship of s/c(ited) subjects and their parasitic dependence upon abusive master hosts who break into the parsimonious economy of repression as if under some compulsion to consumptively deflect these energies and thus, if only momentarily, unfix cultural imperatives by expelling intensified energies through the holes of monstrous, fractal bodies. This situation, by no means a thing of beauty, forecloses propriety and its requisite repressing effect—unicity. The doers of such deeds have (always) already been done to. Yet the monstrous outside and the pure inside do not naturally belong together, they are not of a kind. But neither do they belong apart from one another. The failures of philosophy make and have always made philosophy possible and incompleteable. Undecidability reigns when the we yields to the non-integral us.

The site of citing is the parasitoid of a communal feast of non-kind inseparables—improper, miscegenating couples. It is a disventing of appropriation, a criminal out-break and caesura in the dialectics of punishment, a cyborgian orgy

of mixings and mutations which, with the return of the repressed, will be sorted out beneath these disfigurements—the invisible orders beneath chaotic disfigurements.

Yesterday's Primal Scene: Urvater Hegel

Polemical totality is, to be sure, a necessary consequence of assuming and demanding unlimited communicability and communication, and it can no doubt destroy one's opponents completely. Still, it does not suffice to legitimize the philosophy of its possessor so long as that philosophy is directed only at externals. Only when applied to the inner world, when a philosophy criticizes its own spirit and creates its own letter on the whetstone and with the file of polemics, only then can it lead to logical correctness.²⁶

What troubles the speculative? Free love and sexual equality—*unrechtlich Geschlechtsreiz*? The Schlegel boys got to Urvater Hegel when they told him that the art critic must first understand and appreciate art before she judges it. So, Urvater took up, up-rightly of course, with Schiller, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (1801) and *Wilhelm Tell* (1804). The cunning of reason, which “cannot stop to consider the injuries sustained by single individuals,”²⁷ would have its way with the nonsubstantial Schlegel's. Spirit is actively present in the world, in intelligent men, active men who understand the intentions of eternal wisdom and lead nations (and women) “in accordance with the dictates of the universal spirit” (*H-LPWH*, 52). For Urvater Hegel the question is “the ultimate end of mankind, the end which the spirit sets itself in the world, and which it is driven to realize incessantly and with irresistible power” (*H-LPWH*, 63). Yesterday's primal scene, the gathering of patriarchy's great men, becomes, cunningly, the final scene of irresistible power against all of God's “narrow-minded and empty-headed children.” The final scene: Christians center . . . Jews, Africans, Chinese, and unmarried, libidinous women cast off-stage. Pornography, cannibalism, dirty individual commercialism, and free love finally eradicated from the stage of world history—this is reason's most creative achievement, a veritable *Gesamtkunstwerke* now waiting for its New World Order conductor.

The major point of difference between Hegel and Kant is the question whether or not the unrepresentable, the moral law, can be appropriated. For Kant no one can or ought to try to determine the gulf between the idea (of reason) and its realization. This gulf cannot be determined since it is an issue that depends on freedom, a power of passing beyond, without however contradicting or denying material limits.²⁸ Kantian freedom is neither immanently nor transcendently directed. Kant is thus unequivocal regarding the influence of what Hegel calls “revealed religion”: “we shall believe that we can serve that [divine] will only by furthering what is best in the world, alike in ourselves and in others.”²⁹ For Hegel, on the other hand, the absolute spirit has become substantial, i.e., has become flesh and subjectivity *in masculine form and personality*. Freedom is transmogrified into an unstoppable means.

In “The Unpresentable” Lacoue-Labarthe begins with “Let us say: literature and philosophy . . .” (*LL-SP*, 116) and then quickly moves from Hegel’s substantialization of absolute spirit in the *Phenomenology* to Hegel’s few allusions to *Lucinde* in the *Aesthetics*. The *Aufhebung* of Greek classical art is accomplished with the formation of true religion:

“faith as the consciousness and certainty of truth—and which, consequently, as it is originally independent and free of any link with any *aesthetic* representation (which does not mean with any *representation*), already insures the sublation, the *Aufhebung* of art—even though it must also necessarily produce, in its historical wake, the unfolding of a Christian art (romantic art, as Hegel understands it), in which, although it has ceased to appear as the highest and most essential manifestation of the life of the Spirit, art still manages to *survive itself*. The transition to Christianity thus does not mean what is usually called, erroneously, the “death of art.” How could anyone imagine that anything could die in such a system? (*LL-SP*, 120-21).

This analysis is almost flawless. Yet, we subjects with *both* Hegelian *and* non-Hegelian histories are dumbfounded by Lacoue-Labarthe’s “How could anyone imagine that anything could die in such a system?” Is it still necessary to quote Hegel’s own words on the Jews, the Africans, the Chinese, and the unbound women he killed off with his system and idea of world history? Have we once again come upon, returned to, another moment of *deferred action* (*Nachträglichkeit*)³⁰ in Lacoue-Labarthe’s strategy?

Why precisely at this point of an interpretative disruption of the Hegelian system is a recuperation necessary? Have the forgotten been remembered? What mechanism is being served by this move? Is this move similar to or preparatory for Lyotard’s double castration of Jews in 1988—chopping off their *J* and excising real Jews from his cursory and relativizing treatment of the Holocaust *vis-à-vis* Heidegger’s silence?³¹ Is Lacoue-Labarthe resuscitating the *Urvater* for the sake of remaining *treu* to the *Vater*? So, here we return to the deferral strategy and to what is at stake.

But a certain slippage under the signifier-signified bar is necessary and expected of intractable philosophical subjects. Lacoue-Labarthe tells us:

Woman is at stake because she represents, not as Hegel through Schiller would have liked, the sensuous itself in its opposition to the spiritual, or—which amounts to the same once it has been rigged with a veil—the “inner fusion of the sensuous and the spiritual,” but the sensuous in *its* “truth,” which is the “truth” of figure and the fictional. Because, in other words, she represents or signifies that there is a “truth of the sensuous” which is not beyond the sensuous, which is not *verified* in trans-figuration and is not (re)presented in absolute (re)presentation. But, rather, in *fiction*, in (re)presentation as fiction (*LL-SP*, 155).

Woman is the *truth* of figure and the fictional.³² What then is man? The “truth” of the “‘truth’ of the sensuous?” How do these genitives work. Women, along with

other Hegelian exclusions, have almost always been at (the) stake. If women are the inner fusion of the sensuous and the spiritual, what is left for men? Does this fusion safeguard men's precious and mysterious (fantastic) body fluids from the dirty tricking of *Weibisch* dissimulation? Is the proper name of speculative absolutism *man contra the whores*?

If we still fall short of atheism (*LL-SP*, 13), if we are still disappointed by books such as *The Subject of Philosophy* and its lies, then, says Lacoue-Labarthe, veils are still necessary for the sake of our hopes and other illusions. Anything short of atheism, Nietzsche said, can't love the earth enough to eternally affirm it alone. But isn't religious belief, the hope of redemption, even speculative absolutism, of the earth and of the sensuous? Aren't words that carry us beyond themselves, if only to other words, of the earth and the sensuous as well? Christianity has always been neo-pagan and has the same relation to paganism that Plato has to neo-Platonism. But all of this is the earth and its polymorphic drawings and foldings. Wherein, therefore, the difference, differing, or disturbance which gives rise to the quest for the true, the One, beauty, the good, and even the *atheistic* fictioning of the absolute?

Remembering the Subjects of Philosophy

When Karl Jaspers asked Martin Heidegger how anyone could seriously endorse the nonsense contained in the so-called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," Heidegger replied "*Es gibt eine gefährliche internationale Verbindung der Juden.*"³³ This was May 1933, before, if we follow Lacoue-Labarthe's reading, Heidegger had worked his way out of fascism with his *Nietzsche*. If anything connects the many motley factions of National Socialism, including the ideal fascism of Heidegger, it is the overevaluation of Jews as the racial embodiment of the negative principle. From Chamberlain to Farrakhan, this exculpatory, self-projective, and quasi-Hegelian overevaluation remains the constant amidst shifting and often otherwise inconsistent configurations of anti-semitic self-hatred. Jews—the Anti-Christ: Nietzsche's name and the matter of thought.

It should be well-known today that the Nazis modeled their program for world domination on the myth of the Zionist world conspiracy. Here is what Horkheimer and Adorno said in 1944:

The portrait of the Jews that the nationalists offer to the world is in fact their own self-portrait. They long for total possession and unlimited power, at any price. They transfer their guilt for this to the Jews, whom as masters they despise and crucify, repeating *ad infinitum* a sacrifice which they cannot believe to be effective.³⁴

And within this mirror-play of myth and reverse identificational recruitment we see the powerless, properly named of bourgeois society.

If, as Horkheimer and Adorno profess, "Jewish religion allows no word that

would alleviate the despair of all that is mortal” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 23), despair is not, as Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* would lead us to believe, an *a priori* given with the human condition. The play of differences in the work of thought can never appropriate the infinite responsibility of one for the other that constitutes signification itself. What one can hear in Nietzsche’s affirmation of eternal recurrence is not the attempt to impress Being upon Becoming, but more precisely and thus otherwise than Being, the positive in responsibility that conveys the infinite. Thus the riddle, because the infinite is non-thematizable.³⁵ *Der Antichrist*: the name of the thinker whose name is the matter of thought. Thus, Horkheimer and Adorno continue:

It [Jewish religion] associates hope only with the prohibition against calling on what is false as God, against invoking the finite as the infinite, lies as truth. The guarantee of salvation lies in the rejection of any belief that would replace it: it is knowledge obtained in the denunciation of illusion (Horkheimer and Adorno, 23).

If I began with misgivings concerning Lacoue-Labarthe’s defense of Heidegger’s *Nietzsche* as a move away from his earlier fascist positions while retaining the central importance of the *Seinsfrage*, I will conclude with even stronger reservations about his deconstructive deferral of the Hegelian absolute, i.e., with his specific focus upon figure, representation as fiction, and the woman at stake. Is all of this a deferral of the speculative tradition and its end at Auschwitz, and/or another displacement of what was put to the stake in Hegel’s and Heidegger’s texts? If so (either/or-both/and), the subjects of philosophy drawn into the prefigurational field of this repressive-reactive force will indeed come to experience, *post festum*, the *compulsion to confess*. There is a haunting melody in Lacoue-Labarthe’s *The Subject of Philosophy*. It seems only appropriate to close this discussion with a citation of a citation (Freud) in Lacoue-Labarthe’s subsequent *Typographies II*:

. . . behind the form in which the thought is expressed a glimpse may be had of a deeper meaning—often one that is not intended. The images and turns of phrase to which a person is particularly given are rarely without significance when one is forming a judgment of him; and others often turn out to be allusions to a theme which is being kept in the background at the time, but which has powerfully affected the speaker.³⁶

I confess: regarding the allusions to the theme in the background of Lacoue-Labarthe’s images and turns of phrase, I suspect the worse. I prefer to remain haunted by the returning dead without proper names and burial. The version of the Father, *père-version*, like all Church Fathers, kills too easily when philosophy sides with the site of the Law—a capital idea. Maintaining the piety of thought in the posture of the post-philosophical requires the eventual eradication of non-integral monstrosities. Which means that not only must we of “the inoperative

community” of non-kind(s) go, it also demands the self-cancellation of the “we” as well.³⁷ Everyone is at stake.

PART FOUR

POLITICAL

MEDIATIONS

Introduction to

Part Four

Political Mediations

Anne O'Byrne

Mediation happens between two: two adversaries in a dispute, two institutions, two beings, two concepts, two levels of discourse, two realities (or irrationalities). However, this should not suggest that it happens only in the space that already exists between the members of a given pair, that the medium is always just what is between. After all, *medium* also carries the sense of means, and thus *mediation* also refers to the means by which one element of the pair generates the other. Or is it a matter of one being generated out of the other? Or could the mediation bring them each to be? For example, in the case of the media, that is, the contemporary means of mass communication, particularly television, there can be few now who take seriously the media's self-presentation as simply the means by which a ready public is presented with the facts about the world. What the essays here show, however, is that alternative analyses are many, and the choice is not between this naïve positivism, on the one hand, and assertions—whether cynical or earnest or playful—of the triumph of simulation and hyperreality, on the other. That is to say, while Baudrillard provides the context for this discussion, his voice is joined by those of Walter Benjamin, Gianni Vattimo, and Marshall McLuhan. And this is also one source of our title: the between, the means, mass media, and the fact that mediations happen in the plural.

First, for Damian Hey, the media/tion of concern is the mass mediation of social space, the sort of event Baudrillard long ago prepared us to identify but that had its most stunning expression yet in the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. On that day a specific, overdetermined set of material, social and ideological processes set about communicating a specific meaning to a public and simultaneously suppressing—or, at least, not representing—an array of intimately related phenomena. How are we to understand this mediation? Drawing on ancient cosmology and eighteenth-century geographies on the one hand and a mind-bending Borgesian device on the other, Hey triangulates mediation with the Chora and the Aleph, the receptive region that becomes oriented and shaped not by law but by bodies in social relations, and the strange place that Borges places in the cellar of a mad poet, “the only place on earth where all places are.” The first, understood in the terms Kristeva uses, shows the World

Trade Center as a nexus in a network of relations, all of which are shattered on September 11 only to reconstitute themselves in a new configuration with Ground Zero as their crossing point. The second yields the Center as a site of convergence on every level, an Aleph of all there was to hate about the United States. On the one hand, the Chora might teach us the ephemeral nature of all institutions, and, on the other, the Aleph might show that what is static and purports to concentrate all meaning in itself is open to suspicion as limited and false. Yet media/tion emerges at that moment as what should represent the unrepresented to the public in a way that alters and challenges that public.

Then there's Las Vegas (which, in Baudrillard's lexicon, is shorthand for America). Is there any hope for the culture that generated and sustains Vegas? Does Baudrillard's *America* leave room for optimism, or does America function for him as a sort of pessimist's I-told-you-so? Katherine Rudolph develops a strategy for answering this question by first setting America (seen through Baudrillard's eyes) alongside the Amerika we glimpse in Franz Kafka's *Amerika*. There are not many comparisons where we can imagine Kafka emerging as the optimist. It happens here because this novel lacks the Kafkaesque gloom familiar from *The Trial* and *The Castle*, but also because of the very fact that it is a novel and thus a simulacrum that is fictional, founded on the "image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic and that aim for the restitution of or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image" (SS, 121). Thus Kafka's fictional Amerika (highly fictional, since he never went there) is utopian, presenting an abstracted, European utopia. Yet Rudolph's strategy is twofold, and she also sets Baudrillard's claims about the loss of the distance of representation in the simulated world as well as his subsequent claims about mass passification alongside Walter Benjamin's insistence that modern media—film in particular—can be a means of mass resistance. In this comparison, what appears as Baudrillard's pessimism-to-the-point-of-nihilism yields instead a vision of alienation as a strategy against the system much as Brecht and Benjamin and (intriguingly, arguably) even Kafka used it. Thus, media are no longer reduced to mediation across physical distance, but instead we have an analysis that recognizes proximity—of the camera to its subject, of us each to one another in the closeness of the technological city—and the great distances across which the image is transmitted, as well as the very tactility of our experience of such images. Even in hyperreality we, the masses, are capable of experience. However alienated, passified, simulated, we have not gone away.

Indeed, Baudrillard insists in the later work that hyperreality is a condition in which the only possible political action is mass passivity, mass inaction. As Martin Weiss points out, the claim is that mass media serve only passify the masses. Yet these same media, insofar as they remain committed to a correspondence theory of truth and see themselves as faithfully representing reality, share the power that reality always seeks to claim, that is, the power to put an end to questioning. Reality just is. Reality understood as information just is. However—and

this is the argument of Weiss's contribution—these claims about power are not in themselves enough to deliver Baudrillard to his famously nihilistic conclusions. After all, Vattimo begins from a very similar position, but, in contrast, sees the media and their mediations as genuinely plural, a weakening of the ontology of the Heideggerian tradition that founds itself in structure and presence, ushering in a new ontology that weakens even the bold assertions of certainty on behalf reality. This dissolution of one truth into many interpretations, the addition of the Internet as a mass medium, the increasing possibilities for involvement in and proliferation of mediations all promise to be positive and emancipatory. The only appropriate position might be nihilism, but let it be a positive, Nietzschean nihilism, Weiss argues, one that affirms the disappearance of all other worlds as the source of our values and flings itself into the task of creating new values. Baudrillard asserts the dread, past power of the real but also the unbearable nature of the reality of simulation (*SS*, 18), identifying himself as a negative nihilist, one who remains caught in Nietzsche's spirit of revenge, despairing of rather than rejoicing in the precession of simulacra.

In the concluding contribution to the volume, Henk Oosterling, offers another response to the events of 9/11, one more pessimistic regarding the possibility of a public with its intimation of a capacity for thought or action. Engaged, at a certain point, in tracing the fate of metaphor in Baudrillard's work, he points to the Baudrillardian assessment of world events from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the year 2000 as the affirmation of appearance as appearance, the abandoning of metaphor in favor of metamorphosis and his final rejection of revolution. Yet, when Baudrillard writes about 9/11 he seems to revive, briefly, the possibility of symbolic exchange that he had earlier rejected, re-defining *event* (and presumably the event of 9/11) as what creates a region of impossible exchange within a system of general, if not total, exchange. The broad move Oosterling traces between the earlier and later work, however, is a definitive shift away from metaphor with the aim of thereby finally placing distance between himself and metaphysics. The place it held cannot remain empty, however, and he turns to metamorphosis to fill the gap. Is it a turn forward or a turn back? Oosterling argues that it is the only option once metaphors lose their connection with beings, that is, when they stop standing for anything, once they no longer do the work of mediation and become simulacra. Then the series of simulacra can only be understood as metamorphosis, the change of one signifier into another; the mediating role of meaning is erased. Revolution now has nothing utopian about it and is certainly no longer possible as a political phenomenon. In other words, a change that could once have been understood as a change-over, a translation, a metaphor is now a metastasis, a going-to-extremes that follows no rule. If this is the end of an argument, then the conclusion is indeed that politics is possible only as a meaningless flickering of images on our television screens, one image following on another without reference to any thing. But if this is the beginning of the argument, there is still room

to make claims about ontology, since saying that we can no longer represent ourselves to ourselves is not yet to say that we no longer are, together.

Chapter 13

9/11 and the Representation of the Unrepresentable: Chora, Aleph, and Media/tion

Damian Ward Hey

Since its formation in 1973, the World Trade Center has presented represented the workings of a global economy. In the Baudrillardian sense, the center of the World Trade Center was a simulation of everything that America was and wanted to be, economically, politically, socially, and nationally.

It is difficult to imagine that anyone who witnessed the tragedy of September 11th, directly or indirectly, would dispute that the destruction of the World Trade Center was an unspeakable, tragic and transformative instance of the mass mediation of societal space. *Mass mediation*, as the term is used in this essay, refers to a complex, overdetermined set of material, social and ideological processes the resulting meanings of which are given context within a particular cultural framework. Every instance of mass mediation is articulated by simulation, presentation, and re-presentation, for the purpose of communicating a certain meaning or meanings to an audience or a *public*. Further, for every phenomenon that undergoes re-presentation, there are a host of related phenomena that, for hegemonic, analytical or discursive reasons, go *un*-represented in the public sphere. These phenomena, in their unrepresentability, may or may not be considered unspeakable. Designations of *unrepresentability* and *unspeakability* originate from a delicate and often rather fickle relationship of media discourse and public sentiment.

The obliteration of the Center by a terrorist attack induced the formation of a discourse of unrepresentability and unspeakability within U.S. culture. U.S. inhabitants became concerned with the unspeakable to a degree that they have not been for decades, since the Vietnam conflict or the World Wars. The concept of re-building or re-placing became a philosophical imperative that was motivated by a collective need to answer a specific question: How might it be appropriate and possible to present, and to re-present, the (un) (re) presentable presence of that which was the World Trade Center and which became, among other designations, Ground Zero?

This essay examines the phenomenology of the World Trade Center attacks by exploring the interrelation of three modalities—three patterned processes—chora, aleph, and what is here referred to as *media/tion*. The interrelation of chora, aleph, and *media/tion* is analogous to the figure known to geographers and topologists alike as the Barroean Ring Configuration. Three rings are joined to one another such that although none are interlinked, should one break, the connectedness of all three would dissolve. Each ring, however, is defined in terms of its collective totality, its positioning, with regard to the other two rings. Thus, although chora, aleph and *media/tion* can each exist separately, at the site of the World Trade Center they become both co-existent and co-definitional.

In what follows I give each of the three modalities its own section. In the first section, I take the concept of chora from Julia Kristeva's essay "The Semiotic Chora Ordering the Drives" and use it to describe the geographic location of the World Trade Center as an "essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases."¹ In the second section, I use Jorge Luis Borges' short story "The Aleph" to analyze Ground Zero as "a point in which all points exist" and I argue that the site is a point of convergence for multiple geographies that exist on a number of physically and theoretically representative levels. The third section posits the existence of an agonistic, rather Derridean modality: *media/tion*.

Formed by the dynamic and unstable interaction of material media and the process of mediation, *media/tion* is a modality that is interconnected with modalities of chora and aleph to become the third phenomenological ring in the Barroean Ring configuration analogy. *Media/tion* historicizes and provides meaning and order for the interaction of chora and aleph, both of which are outside of either historical or symbolic representation. The third section treats a specific event in the media—the ceremonies at Ground Zero on May 30, 2002—and defines the event as a symbolically positioned, mass-mediated point of socio-geographical in-between-ness that marks a new relationship between chora and aleph, where the process of recovery comes to an end and the process of rebuilding begins.

All three sections analyze modality in the context of geography, here very broadly defined as the mediation of (or writing, processing, or perhaps even *graphing*) of earthly space. The term *geography* is meant to encompass all categorizations and mediations of space, both theoretical and physical.

Chora

It is difficult to treat the chora historically, to choose an origin for the chora and to apply to it a timeline replete with the symbolic characteristics and judgments of history. The chora, in the sense Julia Kristeva gives it, is without origin, without symbolic attribute, and without history. The closest that it is possible to get to an origin of the chora is to gain an examined awareness of what Kristeva refers to as drives. She writes:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body—always already involved in a semiotic process—by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are ‘energy’ charges as well as ‘psychical’ marks, articulate what we call a *chora* (*K-RPL*, 25).

My aim here is to reappropriate Kristeva’s use of the words *body*, *subject*, and *drives* from the context of pre-Oedipal semiotic function to the context of geography and geographic positioning. *Body* becomes the physical, geographic features of lower Manhattan. *Subject* becomes the results of always “not yet [fully] constituted” symbolic and semiotic processes—processes that eventually themselves are given label and positioning (identity) as the World Trade Center. Reappropriating Kristeva’s language from a psychoanalytic context to a geographic context means that the backdrop of Freud’s structural hypothesis is no longer applicable in the same way, if at all. The *chora* becomes the receptacle of an ordering of social drives. *Drives*, groups of ambiguously re-structuring energies antithetical to stases, now result from socially and culturally external dynamics rather than individual, internal (though socially guided) motivations.

The *chora*, in the current reappropriated context, is a geographic site of mediation—mediation in the sense of regulation and ordering. Although it is not entirely clear in Kristeva’s essay the extent to which she distinguishes *regulation* from *ordering* it can be assumed from her definitions of the two terms that *regulation* is a continuing activity of organization and adjustment. She writes:

Though deprived of unity, identity, or deity, the *chora* is nevertheless subject to a regulating process [*réglementation*], which is different from that of symbolic law but nevertheless effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again (*K-RPL*, 26).

The *chora* is regulated. It is given to an on-going process whereby contexts for patterns of order are continually being established and re-established. According to Kristeva:

[W]e emphasize the regulated aspect of the *chora*: its vocal and gestural organization is subject to what we shall call an objective *ordering* [*ordonnement*], which is dictated by natural or socio-historical constraints such as the biological difference between the sexes or family structure. We may therefore posit that social organization, always already symbolic, imprints its constraint in a mediated form which organizes the *chora* not according to a law (a term we reserve for the symbolic) but through an *ordering* (*K-RPL*, 27).

The *chora* would not exist, however, were regulation and ordering not able to connect the body with the subject. This connection is established through what Kristeva calls the “ordering of the drives.” Kristeva further describes the nature of drives: “[they] involve pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and energy discharges that

connect and orient the body to the mother. We must emphasize that “drives” are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive” (*K-RPL*, 27). These drives are ordered—mediated—by the body, organized through “social relations,” and result in the symbolic formation of the chora.

Historical narrative is constructed from the mediation of these ordering drives and their relation to the body (Manhattan, in the current, re-appropriated usage) and subject (the World Trade Center). Insofar as historical narrative seeks symbolic representation of an as yet (un)represented causal social order, history can describe the forces that lead to the formation of chora. History can also describe chora and that which rises from chora—the ascendants of chora, as it were. Yet because historical narrative is symbolic and representational, it is always in a position of simulation outside of, yet constructed upon, chora.

Examples abound of the historical narrative detailing the formation—the formations—of the geographic chora that has (and now, since the destruction of 9/11, *had*) become the World Trade Center. Eric Darton’s book *Divided We Stand: A Biography of the World Trade Center* was published in 1999.² He writes:

The southernmost tip of Manhattan, encompassing the World Trade Center, Century 21, and [J.P.] Morgan’s bank, was and remains a site for the dramatic convergence of elements: earth, air, water, and fire. With the beginning of European settlement in 1626, this play of elemental forces found parallels in the workings out of the city’s social development: immigration, slavery, trade, shipping, manufacturing, finance, insurance, real estate speculation. In the early twentieth century, a city of towers—architectural containers for financial institutions and industrial monopolies—grew up on this site, visited more than once by acts of horrific violence (Darton, 5).

Darton writes after the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. He describes the interplay of forces that overdetermine both the evolution of the city of New York in general and which led to the eventual construction of the World Trade Center as a particular “architectural container for financial institutions and industrial monopolies.”

Later in his book, he considers what seemed, at the time, impossible—the ruination of the towers:

Is it possible to imagine the World Trade Center as a ruin? In one sense, this would be very difficult, for even an enormous explosion failed to compromise the towers structurally . . . But a state of ruin cannot be measured in terms of physical failure alone. Its meaning goes far deeper, for even a leveled building may be brought up again and again from rubble. To avoid becoming a ruin, a structure must retain or be able to transform itself as a site of active social practice, as a repository of the imagination, and preferably both. It must remain an adaptable, integral agent of a living, mutable culture. Like planning and constructing a building, the process of creating a ruin is an accumulation of incremental social acts. A structure begins to fall into a state of ruin when it is no longer supported by the productive

relations that created it. But its transformation is complete when it is no longer physically viable *and* the social imagination that gave it purpose has fled or been banished. Once a building is abandoned at the level of meaning, it is only a matter of time before physical decay upholds its end of the bargain (Darton, 193-4).

Darton is describing the symbolic ordering of drives that posit meaning and identity upon a space or upon a building within a space. In order to become a ruin, according to Darton, a transformation has to take place wherein a structure “is no longer supported by the productive relations that created it.” These productive relations are symbolic. They establish, they form, they produce the possibility of judgment, they create a mediate-able forum that can relate, discursively or otherwise, to the society and culture that surrounds that structure.

The productive relations to which Darton eludes, however, as well as the meaning that they establish and the positioning within social context that their mediation represents, are all removed from the chora by virtue of their overdetermining quality. Kristeva writes: [t]he *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a *position* that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either) it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position (*K-RPL*, 26). Darton’s words reflect the “essentially mobile and extremely provisional” modality present in any positioning and articulation of the symbolic. The nature of the chora has not changed but the symbolic “writing”—in the mediated sense of an institutionalization of sign systems and meaning—of the particular chora that gave rise to the World Trade Center has been transformed. The chora itself remains, as Kristeva defines it, “a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated” (*K-RPL*, 25).

Perhaps the most radical transformation in the symbolic ordering of the chora to take place after 9/11 is that the geography of the World Trade Center has become labeled as Ground Zero, a term that has significantly different representational, symbolic, iconographic and tangential implications. The geography of Ground Zero emphasizes multiple convergences in history (synchronic/diachronic), theory (presence/absence), social process (recovery/rebuilding) and, perhaps most obviously, temporality (before/after).

Some time after his book’s publication, and after September 11, 2001, Darton wrote an essay in which he describes the physical structures of the WTC as being “in ruins.” Interestingly, he does not extend that characterization to the transformative site of the WTC (that which we have been calling the geographic chora) itself. He writes:

Yet the significance of the trade towers had not collapsed with them. If anything, the WTC’s sudden and spectacular unbuilding had given the process of assembling its cultural history both a heightened urgency and a deeper meaning. This argued powerfully on behalf of continuing to expand the archive . . . [by opening up] a new “room” within the archive: Afterwords/Afterimages, in order to accommodate text and pictures gathered (though not

necessarily created) subsequent to 9-11 . . . Here, in the presence of its absence, we may carry on with the open-ended task of constructing a World Trade Center of the mind.³

The transformational quality of the chora enables the possibility of rebuilding as it does of building. Each rebuilding upon the chora, or out of the chora, is informed by the sum of symbolic activity that precedes the transformation of that chora. That sum of symbolic activity exists in historical tangent to the motility of the chora, maintained by the symbiotic modality of mediation (as argued in the section “Media/tion”).

The chora is an unnamable, unpositioned, pre-geographic, unrepresentable non-space that makes possible the articulation of converging and tangential geographies, whether past, present, or future, whether physical or theoretical, whether iconographic or actual, in the sum total of how these descriptions are defined. In short, the chora exists in co-definitional and co-determining space alongside another symbiotic modality: the aleph.

Aleph

In the short story “The Aleph,”⁴ Jorge Luis Borges writes of a remarkable geographic configuration that, if fiction is to be believed, existed in the basement of a mad poet named Carlos Argentino Daneri. Daneri describes the configuration, the aleph, to the narrator—Borges—telling him that it is “the only place on earth where all places are—seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion or blending.” Daneri, who is working on an epic poem expansively entitled *The Earth* entices Borges to his basement to view the Aleph. He tells Borges that his ownership of the Aleph was a privilege “granted me so that I would later write the poem” (*Borges-Aleph*, 23).

Daneri is distraught over a dispute with his landlords, two men named Zunino and Zungri who wish to tear down his house under the pretext of remodeling the salon-bar. Destruction of the house, Daneri realizes, will mean not only the destruction of his ancestral home, but of the Aleph as well. During the story, it is revealed that Borges has fond, if ambiguously expressed, feelings for Daneri’s deceased first cousin, a woman named Beatriz Viterbo, who used to live in the house with Daneri, and photographs of whom are strewn about the house.

No small amount of resentment is felt between Daneri and Borges, on a number of levels, not only because of Borges’ barely concealed dislike of the poem and reticence in introducing Daneri to his literary circle, but also because of Borges’ fondness for Beatriz. Daneri serves Borges a glass of cognac before locking him in the basement—a situation eerily similar to that described in Poe’s “A Cask of Amontillado.” Shut in the basement, Borges has the following disturbing thought:

For the first time, I realized the danger I was in: I’d let myself be locked in the cellar by a lunatic, after gulping down a glassful of poison! I knew that back of

Carlos' transparent boasting lay a deep fear that I might not see the promised wonder. To keep his madness undetected, to keep from admitting he was mad, *Carlos had to kill me*. I felt a shock of panic, which I tried to pin to my uncomfortable position and not to the effect of a drug. I shut my eyes—I opened them. Then I saw the Aleph (*Borges-Aleph*, 25-26).

Leaving a recounting of the story at this crucial stage, it is important to note several similarities between the Aleph in Borge's story and the geographic Aleph proposed in this essay.

As Daneri sets about his project of writing *The Earth*, an odd analogy begins to unfold. Writing his epic is a geographic task that Daneri assumes can only be accomplished because of his ownership of the Aleph. Daneri places symbolic meaning onto the Aleph, while constructing a personal, subjective history around the Aleph that results in his own troubled and contentious experience of it. He fears its destruction because he fears the loss of his own muse. He fears Borges' reaction to the Aleph because if Borges does not experience the infinite convergence of the Aleph, Borges will speak of him as a madman to the literati and to society at large. The Aleph, however, exists under the stairs in his basement quite apart from any agency, will, or narration carried out by Daneri.

From the time Borges first hears of the Aleph from Daneri, until he is shut in the basement waiting to see it, to experience it, Borges constructs a similar kind of self-narrative. He recognizes that his curiosity in seeing the veracity of the Aleph has caused him to be rather foolishly dismissive of a number of points of antagonism between himself and Daneri. Only until after he has thought of these points, these contentions, does he open his eyes and sees the Aleph. Again, however, the Aleph exists regardless of either man's personal, narrated experience of it, or of the events that led up to and colored the perception of that experience.

Borges is able to see the Aleph, and speaks of the event as follows:

And here begins my despair as a writer. All language is a set of symbols whose use among its speakers assumes a shared past. How, then, can I translate into words the limitless Aleph, which my floundering mind can scarcely encompass? . . . Really, what I want to do is impossible, for any listing of an endless series is doomed to be infinitesimal. In that single gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful; not one of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I shall write down will be successive, because language is successive (*Borges-Aleph*, 26).

Borges then describes, in an extended paragraph, the barest recounting of the infinite, which he concludes by saying:

I saw the Aleph from every point and angle, and in the Aleph I saw the earth and in the earth the Aleph and in the Aleph the earth; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon—the unimaginable

universe.

I felt infinite wonder, infinite pity (*Borges-Aleph*, 28).

There has been a tendency to see the world trade center as a form of Aleph similar to the one in Borges' short story. Since its construction, the World Trade Center has been a site of international glamour and commerce. As one writer put it:

Most of the nearly 300 tenants were blue-chip firms enjoying the prestige of one of the world's most glamorous business addresses. Eight law firms, six banks, five stock brokerage houses, and three insurance companies had their headquarters in the twin towers. A number of foreign firms, such as the Bank of Yokohama, also had offices there. The complex had its own zip code, 10048.⁵

The World Trade Center signified convergence on as many different levels as can be imagined. It was a marker for every geography known to our planet, at least inasmuch as the socio-economic production, mediation, and identity of the world's geographies could be linked to world trade. In a practical and symbolic fashion, the WTC served as a marker not only for convergent geographies but also as material proof and confirmation of the existence of a posited simulation: the towers *were* the material and ideological center of American Late Capitalism. Just as Daneri regards the Aleph under his staircase as his personally owned muse, so citizens in the culture of Late Capitalism might have regarded their center of World Trade as an entity of national ownership indicating any number of levels of economic, cultural, and ultimately *Western* superiority. This is an unspeakable and largely unrepresented statement in the current U.S. political climate. Yet it is precisely this statement and the recognition of hegemonic ownership of Aleph that it implies that leads to any number of deeply rooted resentments on the international stage. The WTC, in all of its monumental symbolism, influence, and grandeur became an Aleph of everything there was to hate about the United States.

However, just as the Aleph in Daneri's basement existed outside of Daneri's control, so the World Trade Center, as international entity, existed as the product of many cultural narratives both inside and outside of the United States. Although the analogy is flawed because the political hegemony of the United States *did* both construct and own the World Trade Center, unlike Daneri and the Aleph in Borges' story, the analogy nonetheless draws attention to a not so subtle instance of indecidability: Does the construction of institutional architecture mean the authorship of the social hegemony housed therein and all of its attendant narratives, or is that architecture and its resultant iconography simply(!) relegated to the mass mediation of that hegemony and those narratives?

The acceptance of multiple simultaneous geographies depends upon an acceptance of geography as more than a physically occurring group of phenomena. It depends upon viewing geography as the sum of motile, theoretical, and physical occurrences, all of which pertain to the study of spatial relations or, which in the

current context is taken to mean the same thing, the writing of the earth. Ground Zero is an aleph of tangential geographies each of which is as physically present as any traditional notion of geography.

The WTC was a manifestation of the geo-graphics, the materially produced and logos-centered earth writing of innumerable converging narratives including but not necessarily limited to the social, the political, and the economic. American culture, and world culture as well, for that matter, is faced with a political contextualization of Derrida's famous deconstruction of the center in the essay "Structure, Sign, and Play":

At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements (which may of course be structures enclosed within a structure) is forbidden. Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality . . . The center is at the center of totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center.⁶

Where is the Center now? Where is the Aleph now? The bombing obliterated the material geography of the site, placing the focus upon tangential geographies. The catastrophic transformation of geography also drove forward the symbolic process of mediation. While the geography pre 9/11 symbolized Western prosperity and trade, the transformation into Ground Zero now represents both unspeakable tragedy and loss and also the indomitable spirit and patriotism of America. It brought out the will to show that the destructive forces of terrorism would not destroy the fabric of the nation. Clearly, the World Trade Center was a representational, mediated space in a number of ways to a wide range of social groups. What becomes of this representational space and the cultural ownership it implies when the center is destroyed?

At the story's conclusion, the character Borges wonders whether the Aleph he has seen was a false one. Daneri's Aleph, the WTC Aleph, and indeed every Aleph, is false because the very act of naming and ascribing ownership and agency is an act that limits the (un)limited. Alephs are without centrality and representation; they exist in tangent and potential to recognitions of symbol and metaphor. Alephs, therefore, are (un)representational constructs of space, social practice, language, and ideology. The act of discovering an Aleph is tantamount to discovering a simulation of the universal and the infinite.

Chora provides an unrepresentational context for the convergence of Aleph. The space upon which the buildings of the World Trade Center were constructed led to the induction of narrative and social practice that converged ideologically and geographically upon that space. This convergence transformed the meaning of that undefined, unrepresented, fluctuating space, that chora, into that defined, represented, and consistent identity known as the World Trade Center. The phe-

nomenon that enabled this formative interaction between chora and aleph is the modality of media/tion.

Media/tion

The relationship of chora to aleph is incomplete. The relationship between them is not describable within structuralist dialectic. The material destruction at the site of the World Trade Center, now known as Ground Zero, produces structural absence and lack of definitional certainty over the re-construction and re-presentation of forces that once caused structure to come into existence. Traditional dialectic is transformed into something else, with new laws and new expectations, yet devoid of canon and tradition.

This lack, this manifestation of chora, is the formative subject of a process of media/tion. Ground Zero is a public stage upon which material destruction is assessed, theorized, transformed into order, and disseminated to a mass, global audience of media consumers. *Media/tion* is the definable, symbolic, political social process that forms a representational historical narrative from that which is unrepresented, or unrepresentable, unspoken, or unspeakable. In a very practical sense, *media/tion* is the alchemical process that transforms material into history.

May 30, 2002 was the day that New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg had told the press would mark the end of clean up and recovery efforts at Ground Zero. The ceremonies there on that day also heralded the beginning of a rebuilding process for the site. Media coverage of the events, the production and dissemination to a mass audience that marked the media/tion of the ceremonies, defined the day as a point in between two very important, and two very different, orientations. The symbolic proclivities of media/tion, in the Kristevan sense of the word *symbolic* as a designation of historical judgment, articulated the fact that the chora, out of which the World Trade Center had been constructed and upon which it had been destroyed, was once again undergoing a transformation.

The discursive labeling that each of the televised news media gave to their broadcasts of the ceremonies indicated an awareness of Ground Zero as a zone of indeterminacy, an in-between-ness cordoning off one historical telos and pointing ahead to a potential re-emergence the telos of which is as yet both undefined and incomplete. Among some of these labels were MSNBC: *A New Beginning*; Fox News Channel: *A Final Tribute*; WB11: *A Day of Remembrance*; CBS2: *End of Recovery: Ground Zero*; CNN: *Ground Zero: The Last Day*; NBC4: *Ground Zero: A Day of Tribute*; Channel 9: *The World Trade Center: A New Day Dawning* and Fox Five News: *Ground Zero: Recovery to Rebuilding*. No matter the particular label, no matter the emphasis on end or on beginning, one message is obvious: The citizenry in the mass culture of the United States were being told and shown that closure is taking place alongside positive transformation. The content of any ceremony is communicated and represented through symbolic activity. The sym-

bolic activities of May 30th included the following:

(1) A bell was rung at 10:29 am—the time the second, North Tower collapsed—in memory of the 343 firefighters killed at the World Trade Center on September 11th. The bell was rung in four sets of five rings—the fire department’s code for a fallen firefighter.

(2) An empty stretcher draped with a U.S. flag and carried from the site by police, firefighters, and rescue workers symbolized the more than 1,720 victims of the terrorist attacks that were not found.

(3) Before the stretcher was taken from the site, there was a helicopter fly-over, while two trumpeters, one from the NYPD and one from the FDNY, played a canon rendition of *Taps*.

(4) A band of drummers and bagpipers—traditional instruments of both the police and firefighting forces—followed as the stretcher was placed in an ambulance.

(5) The drum and bagpipe core was followed by a flatbed truck that carrying the last steel beam to be removed from the site. The beam, Beam 1001B, also draped with a U.S. flag, was taken from the South Tower. It was a thirty-six foot, fifty-eight ton girder that had remained standing after both of the towers had collapsed.

(6) A service was held at the nearby historic St. Paul’s Chapel—a 236-year-old church that escaped damage even though it was only about a block from the World Trade Center. George Washington had worshipped there. Although the church had been closed to the public since 9/11, it has been used as a place of rest, solace, and medical treatment for the disaster workers. The mediated broadcast of the ceremonies aided the awareness that the sixteen-acre, seventy-foot-deep hole from which 1.8 million tons of rubble had been removed in eight and a half months of intensive labor by workers of all nationalities and economic backgrounds was, and continues to be, a mass medium for transformation and re-emergence. For that matter, the World Trade Center was itself a mass medium for the material and ideological production and simulation of a global economic system.

The attack on the World Trade Center is the biggest act of terrorist destruction that has yet occurred in the age of what John B. Goddard and others have called the Information Economy. Goddard, in his essay “The City in the Global Information Economy” writes that:

as a starting point four interrelated developments that underpin the information economy can be proposed. (1) Information is coming to occupy center stage as the key strategic resource on which the effective production and delivery of goods and services in all sectors of the world economy is dependent. (2) This economic transformation is being underpinned by a technical transformation in the way in which information can be processed and distributed. (3) The widespread use of information and communications technologies (ICT) is facilitating the growth of the so-called ‘tradable information sector’ in the economy. (4) The final proposition is that the growing ‘informatization’ of the economy is making possible the global integration of national and regional economies?⁷

The devastation of the attacks affected each of the four interrelated developments that Goddard describes. The 300 and more clients whose businesses were housed in the two towers, not to mention in the other buildings that made up the Center, were all involved in one aspect or another of “the production and delivery of goods and services” to a growing national and international market.

The transformational influence that computer technology and other forms of technological advancement has had on the processing and distribution, the mediation, of information since the opening of the towers in 1973 is nothing short of sublime. In the context of Goddard’s fourth proposition, the World Trade Center is redefined, interpellated by the economic milieu that both obviates and articulates its existence and function. One of the most powerful transformations that has taken place after 9/11 is that the site has changed from a place of production, exemplifying American economic strength and world prosperity, into a place of remembrance and representation, signifying both *continued* economic strength and a *re-enforced* sense of national unity and patriotism.

The dissemination of mass mediated message after 9/11 has directed its mass audience to think about issues that are central to the human condition—issues of loss, remembrance, destruction, rebuilding, love, hatred, compassion, and forgiveness, politics, war, and peace among them. Analysis of the event and its geographical ramifications provides an opportunity to explore the role of the theorist in society, as well. Theorizing is an integral part of *media/tion*. The challenge is to become aware of the intersection of social process and space such that whatever response theory produces will be informed by further understanding of overdetermining phenomena that pre-date theoretical activity.

The three interlocking modalities described in this essay point to three areas of growing awareness and potential. Awareness of chora motivates an examination of the ephemeral nature of institution and material. The recognition of Aleph leads to the realization that a static articulation and manifestation of geography is actually a false and limited concept since any particular geography has the potential for numerous tangential and actualized geographies both present and implied. The World Trade Center, as a physical group of buildings and social activity became ground zero for an unspeakable and unrepresentable tragedy. As an Aleph of world trade, however, the center is impossible to destroy because, as Derrida points out, “the totality has its center elsewhere” (*D-SSP*, 960).

Terrorists have not destroyed the narrative of world trade nor that which its existence implies. *Media/tion* is the attendant process whereby the transformations of chora and aleph, in light of the disaster, are brought out of unrepresentability and re-presented in rational, narrative fashion. Ideally, this rational narrative representation challenges the public audience to find appropriate answers to the question asked at the beginning of this essay. The media have the ability and the obligation to bring the unrepresentable to the public eye. Once the unrepresentable is presented, however, it falls to the public audience to respond to the nar-

rative that media/tion has constructed. In that it has not yet been fully articulated, the evolution of a final public response, or public responses, to rebuilding after 9/11 may be seen as the greatest not yet represented cultural phenomenon to result from the interaction of chora, aleph and media/tion as described on these pages.

Chapter 14

Amerika (Kafka)/America (Baudrillard): Modern Media and Tele-tactility

Katherine Rudolph

Baudrillard's radical thesis that today the real disappears completely behind the all present simulacrum seems to be diametrically opposed to the claim that modern media approximate reality and suggests rather the end of any encounter with the material world.

Is the intervention of media then what distorts our access to the material world? Marshall McLuhan, in his seminal work, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* argues that all technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems to increase power and speed. Baudrillard approves of this argument in *Simulacra and Simulation*, and following McLuhan, suggests that the medially technologized world penetrates reality in its very being. That is to say, Baudrillard along with McLuhan formulate a technically deterministic model of sense-perception, whose pictures are constructed by a medial *a priori*, i.e., the structuring of matter by modern media: "because heavenly fire no longer falls on corrupted cities, it is the camera lens that, like a laser, comes to pierce lived reality in order to put it to death."¹ The medium is the message, to quote McLuhan, because there is no external matter to be lost or distorted. Hence, Baudrillard writes:

The medium itself is no longer identifiable as such and the confusion of the medium and the message is the first great formula of this new era. There is no longer a medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffused, and diffracted in the real, and one can no longer even say that the medium is altered by it (*B-SS*, 31).

The distinction between reality and appearance is thereby lost and the end of the rule of appearances, which Baudrillard attributes to the nineteenth century, spells the end of representation and meaning in the twentieth century. That is, insofar as these latter terms are still dependent on the difference between reality (an external referent) and appearance, meaning is lost. The view of the world in the twenty-first century, then, is only possible through the mediation of the aperture/apparatus, and the world is accordingly constituted by the structure of the instrument that does not enhance natural sense perception, but penetrates reality in structuring it. This is why, for Baudrillard, there are no natural landscapes in America. For America is what most embodies Baudrillard's simulated reality.

According to Baudrillard, America is the realization of everything that others

have only dreamed of. In America therefore nothing remains outside dreaming. Europe, on the other hand, still caught in the dialectic of awakening and sleeping, can only grasp this dream as utopia. There are certainly plenty of examples of this idealization. But perhaps most famously, it is Franz Kafka's *Amerika* which best captures the European imaginary and its utopian longings. The novel fictionally identifies Americans with optimism, which seems to pervade the novel itself and thus sets it apart from Kafka's otherwise more gloomy stories as if the author were temporarily infectiously identified with the upbeat tone of the novel's characters. But a real identification represents the end of the imaginary—a realized utopia. Whereas, if one can extrapolate from what Baudrillard says about Kafka's "Penal Colony" in the essay on *Crash*, Kafka's *Amerika*, insofar as it still functions at the level of metaphor and phantasm, remains an ideal (*B-SS*, 113). In fact, according to Klaus Mann, in the years of his fatal disease, Kafka was deeply disappointed when he met in a sanatorium several *real* Americans who, contrary to his expectations, "quite often grumbled and complained."² Nevertheless, the American dream is, as Baudrillard insists, a dream without an imaginary or, rather, "the American life-style is spontaneously fictional, because it represents the excess of the imaginary in reality."³ What does this mean? Perhaps we can learn something of Baudrillard's medially technologized America by understanding its difference from Kafka's fictionalized account of *Amerika* (with a *k*).

First off, let us note with Klaus Mann, that the protagonists in Kafka's other two novels, *The Castle* and *The Trial* are not permitted a name of their own. This privilege is reserved for young *Karl Rossman*, whose name certainly contains the doomed *K* of Kafka's anti-hero, but Karl Rossman is a more robust and, indeed, cheerful relative of that nameless being, *K*, for whom there will be no escape from Europe and its cumbersome past always marked for Kafka by its fearful and gargantuan bureaucracies, which offer familiarity, but no comfort. Not that Karl Rossman's arrival in America is without obstacles. For whereas, at first he finds himself favored by his wealthy and beneficent uncle, a certain Senator Jacob, he is soon repudiated and abandoned to the highways of a vast and alien country.

And yet, though Kafka's American landscapes remain strange, since as Mann puts it "every detail of Kafka's description of American life is quite inaccurate . . . the picture as a whole has poetical truth: the hyper-modern desk which the generous uncle puts at his nephew's disposal looks like a grotesque piece of furniture in a Charlie Chaplin film: it is an alarming object with innumerable technical tricks—secret drawers that pop open when one touches a hidden button, little trapdoors, complicated locks" (*K-AK*, xv). What then distinguishes Kafka's *poetical* account of America from simulation, specifically, the simulated landscape—one in which the model precedes the real—described by Baudrillard in his *America*? One might argue that Baudrillard's account more so than Kafka's references the real. After all, aren't we dealt an autobiographical travelogue based perhaps more on Baudrillard's personal *Weltanschauung* (can *Weltanschauung* be personal?) than any sense that the real doesn't exist because the American

landscape is itself simulated? Baudrillard would no doubt resist the claim that his account is merely personal or subjective, since what is at stake here is a matter of the structuring of matter *a priori*, including even of natural landscapes. There is, moreover, a crucial difference, according to Baudrillard, between fiction and simulation. Indeed, simulacra that are fictional are utopian, they are founded on the “image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God’s image” (*B-SS*, 121). Here, representation or language is always trying to recapture the loss that perhaps comes with any word’s beginning. Simulacra of simulation on the other hand are “founded on information,” on representations without a referent. “There is no real . . . , no imaginary” here “except at a certain distance” (*B-SS*, 121). But this distance tends to abolish itself; when the medium is the message there is no more fiction. And since the imaginary tends to be projected in relation to the real as the transcendence of the real, its beyond or utopic other, there is no imaginary when the real is the virtual model. And since the imaginary tends to be projected in relation to the real as the transcendence of the real, its beyond or utopic other, there is no imaginary when the real is the virtual model.⁴

Fiction belongs precisely to the dimension of possibility, and as that which exceeds the factual, it names precisely that which, within language, frees sense from its particular instantiations, even as it binds it to empirical factuality in the form of language. A fable can have the exemplary significance of truth, because it is a narrative whose factual truth need not be verified. That is, fiction displaces the factio-empirical, thereby allowing truth (which has always been thought to be irreducible to the factio-empirical) to appear. According to the logic of this account, it is for precisely this reason that one cannot in fact reduce the promise of truth (again, in the sense that truth remains irreducible to a particular topos) to the institution of any particular truth that it enables. This is why utopias are always metaphysical and why there is a link between fiction and a transcendent sphere.

In the transcendent sphere, the dissociation from the real is always *maximized* whereas in the case of the simulacra of simulation, associated exemplarily with America, the distance of meaning is in fact closed. For Baudrillard, then, America is not utopian, but rather the United States in contrast to Europe is a realized utopia. Hence Baudrillard writes:

We, Europe, are a culture that has placed its bet on the universal, which is why Europe is always threatened by the danger of annihilation by means of the universal . . . We have to counter this idea of culture or this cultural ideal with skepticism. It is an idea that only became universal because, like the idea of revolution, it was formalized abstractly, and for this purpose it had to devour all particulars, much as the revolution devoured its children (*B-A*, 119).

Europe still suffers from the sense that its historical ideals cannot be realized except abstractly, whereas America embodies utopia concretely and therefore particularly. Kafka, then, suffers from being too European. Prague was all Kafka

knew. According to Max Brod, he yearned for other landscapes, but his excursion to the New World nevertheless remains an imaginary flight. Here they are again, Baudrillard might say with Mann, “the gloomy streets of Prague . . . , the baroque statues, the cathedrals, the libraries, the museums . . . This is Europe—your chain, your curse and your love” (*K-AK*, xvii). Europe is a museum. For Baudrillard, the idyllic conviction of Americans that America is the center of the universe, world power and absolute model for everything and everyone is therefore not entirely misplaced (*B-A*, 110). At least so long as the models in question, to quote Baudrillard from *Simulacra and Simulation*:

no longer constitute either transcendence or projection, they no longer constitute the imaginary in relation to the real, they are themselves an anticipation of the real, and thus leave no room for any sort of fictional anticipation—they are immanent, and thus leave no room of any kind of imaginary transcendence . . . there is no more fiction (*B-SS*, 122).

America is the end of metaphysics and of the language of fiction, and perhaps of the fiction of language, that is, the attempt to fictionalize language as a mere appearance in relation to the real. America, then, we might argue, is the most advanced, the most modern form of the development whereby, according to Baudrillard, “as Walter Benjamin described in cinema, photography, and contemporary mass media, the original no longer even exists, since things are conceived from the beginning as a function of their unlimited reproduction” (*B-SS*, 99). That is to say, it is no longer even a question of reproduction strictly speaking, since this still presupposes an original, but of serial renewal, which is what Baudrillard has in mind in relation to cloning, or more generally, of a model that constitutes the real but does not precede it. In the case of cloning, the causal relation between mother/father and child is lost. Similarly, in a simulated reality “the minimal distance between cause and effect” (*B-SS*, 31) indeed, of any relation is equally lost. Baudrillard thus speaks of the implosion of representation and meaning, i.e., their iconographic condensation. Again, what is at stake here is the leveling of the distance between appearances and the real. Put somewhat differently, “the distance that gives us perspectival space and depth vision” (*B-SS*, 28) is eliminated in favor of, for want of a better word, an immanent reality.

The film *The Matrix* provides a good example of what Baudrillard has in mind, for here the materiality of the outside world is a digitally created resistance, which, without any correlation to an *outside world*, is produced within the pathways of the central nervous system. Sense-perception, as Baudrillard points out, was arguably, of course, always mediated by technical apparatuses, or at least “by a mechanism of real objects but more often of phantasms—it always implied an intermediary manipulation of senses or gadgets” (*B-SS*, 116). But here, as in *Crash*, sense perception is confused with the technical apparatus, or better, is the same as the machine. Hence, for the inhabitants of the Matrix, the traditional anthropological trust in the senses (as a guarantor for the proximity of the surround-

ing world) finds its correspondence in their total removal from all *real* or actual perception of the world.

In any case, within the technological paradigm exemplified by *The Matrix*, if not by modern media, proximity to the real is achieved through a medial copy of all sensible access routes to the external world (McLuhan, for the sake of an example, talks here of the ideographic character of the filmic image, as does Eisenstein—as if the arbitrary character of the semiotics of media might be canceled out.). To the extent that we view the evolution of modern media in terms of the reduction of the boundaries of space and time, we might understand their motivating force in terms of the desire to bring the form of representation closer to the represented. Indeed, rather than the more traditional attempt to eliminate representation altogether in favor of an ideal (language), which cannot in fact exist, the overwhelming tendency of all media seems to be towards the production of technical proximity of the medial to the mediated whereby the arbitrary character of medial representation is relativized by approximation to sense perception (which, however, no longer requires a cognitive translation of signs).

Indeed, according to Walter Benjamin, to whom Baudrillard is clearly indebted and to whom I will now turn (both in an effort to better understand Baudrillard, but also in order to indicate some of his shortcomings), the medially technologized world moves in on the observer to the point of touching him/her and thus literally overwhelms him/her. According to Benjamin, the seemingly obvious phenomenological claim that the sense of touch necessarily defines itself—in contrast to the leading senses of hearing and sight, which always operate from a safe distance—in relation to the greatest possible proximity finds itself irritated by a sort of tele-tactility. Does the staging of touch, then, allow for an *in-between*, in the sense of a mediation of the sense of touch by modern media as is the case in *The Matrix*? Or is the relation between tactility and mediality nothing other than a repetition by other means of the insight that the skin is the medial surface, the cut between object and nerve-stimuli? How do we conceive of this *in-between*? Conversely, is it even possible to ascribe a tactile dimension to modern media, as not only Walter Benjamin and McLuhan do, but also, and crucially, Baudrillard? To cite Baudrillard again from *Simulacra and Simulation*:

The medium/message confusion is certainly a corollary of that between the sender and the receiver, thus sealing the disappearance of all dual, polar structures that formed the discursive organization of language. . . . That discourse circulates is to be taken literally: that is, it no longer goes from one point to another, but it traverses a cycle that without distinction includes the positions of transmitter and receiver, now unlocatable as such. Thus there is no instance of power, no instance of transmission—power is something that circulates and whose source can no longer be located. . . . Thus is expressed, . . . the passage from . . . passive to active, which simply describes the spiraling effect of the shifting of poles, the effect of circularity in which power is lost, is dissolved, is resolved in perfect manipulation (it is no longer of the order of directive power and of the gaze, but of the order of tactility and commutation) (*B-SS*, 41–42).

The question concerning the relation between tactility and representation could be understood as a question concerning the relation between tactility and proximity and/or distance. However, if Baudrillard's claim that the distance of representation as well as perspectival space and depth vision is lost in a simulated world, then the uncritical reduction of the tactile to physical proximity and of modern media to physical distance or remoteness must be rethought. Indeed, it could be argued that within the synaesthetic constellation of acoustic recording, images, motion-machines, communication technology, and cybervirtuality, tactile sensation presents the last frontier.

Moreover, the description of tactile mediacy need not be understood simply in terms of a wish to overcome the arbitrary relation between signs and things (which may also inform signification in the traditional sense although by use of a different strategy), but on the contrary may require raising the question concerning the *distance* of tactility itself at least within the context of modern media and a material aesthetics.

By now we are familiar with claims that, in the history of the West, the tactile sense has always been considered the lowliest sense, and, indeed, such arguments often purport to show (even as they lament) the disappearance of tactility. From Nietzsche to Merleau Ponty to Irigaray, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed something like a re-turn to the body. Is this turn simply a reaction to the alleged repression of the body by Western philosophy, particularly in the guise of Descartes's mind-body dualism and the concomitant modern scientific paradigm that reduces the body to a mere mechanism and body-parts to technological prostheses for body functions? Perhaps because the sense of touch is not yet capable of technological enhancement in the nineteenth century, it is often a welcome refuge for a discourse about the immediacy and wholeness of human being and an original authentic body.

But, again, can one even speak of tactility in relation to modern media? Walter Benjamin—one of the founders of modern media theory—was one of the first to theorize the tactility of media, specifically photographic perception.

The tactility with which human beings encounter the modern world and its physical proximity is what Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," names the "shock effect."⁵ For Benjamin, as for McLuhan and Baudrillard, all media result in an approximation of sense-perception to its objects and further produce a synaesthetic *tactile* space of perception. For the sake of simplicity, let me cite McLuhan here:

Since all media are extensions of our own bodies and sense, and since we habitually translate one sense into another experience, it need not surprise us that our extended senses or technologies should repeat the process of translation and assimilation of one form into another. This process may well be inseparable from the character of touch . . . The mysterious need of crowds to grow and to reach out—equally characteristic of large accumulations of wealth—can be understood

if money and numbers are, indeed, technologies that extend the power of touch and the hand.⁶

But what is the origin of the shocking character of modern perception, one that provokes a theory of tactile perception? Benjamin finds an original instance of tactile perception in relation to architecture. He writes: “Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather by touch and sight” (*Benjamin*, 240).

The tactile element is to be found in the register of habit. The bodily sensory reception of buildings has to do with an unconscious adaptation of the body to existing architectonics (one might think here in terms of Foucault’s disciplining of the body). Benjamin contrasts this tactile proximity of the body with the materiality of its life-world, specifically to the modern apprehension of the city, which takes place in the mode of distraction.

For Benjamin, as well as McLuhan, the center or capital of a tactile receptivity is the modern metropolis. As Baudrillard also notes in his discussions of Beaubourg, located in the city of Paris as a place for the masses, everything is condensed, moved closer together as a result of technical means and the new technologies of mass transportation. Baudrillard writes:

Never, as it did here, has culture lost its memory in the service of stockpiling and functional redistribution. And this translates a more general fact: that throughout the “civilized” world the construction of stockpiles of objects has brought with it the complementary process of stockpiles of people—the line, waiting, traffic jams, concentration, the camp. That is, “mass production,” not in the sense of a massive production or for use by the masses, but the production of the masses (*B-SS*, 68).

Why is stockpiling, the archive, correlative to memory loss for both Benjamin and Baudrillard? To answer other than superficially (e.g., by arguing that mnemonic devices foster *forgetting*), we need to look in detail at Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Short of acknowledging the importance of Benjamin’s essay, Baudrillard does not provide much explanation.

According to Benjamin, only when space is figured as actively responsive to time, marked and imbued with time, can it function as place, as *habitus*. By contrast, the *shock experience* permits no inferiority: its defensive function is to keep the outside *outside*. In “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Benjamin invokes Freud’s remark on how trauma affects the psychic apparatus in an attempt to explain why the shocks of modern world widen the gap between consciousness and memory. For Benjamin, following the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the explosion of stimuli in the modern world results in an increase of defensive consciousness along with a corresponding decrease in the unconscious receptivity necessary for memory. He writes:

The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the

less do these impressions enter experience (*Erfahrung*), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in ones life (*Erlebnis*). Perhaps the special achievement of shock defense may be seen in the function of assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents. This would be a peak achievement of the intellect; it would turn the incident into a moment that has been lived (*Erlebnis*). Without reflection there would be nothing but the sudden start, usually the sensation of fright which, according to Freud, confirms the failure of the shock defense (*Benjamin*, 163).

Benjamin establishes a temporal distinction between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*. *Erfahrung* is related to memory and temporal continuity. For Benjamin, the sense of temporal continuity requires that impressions be able to become stored in the psyche as unconscious memory traces. But when the external shocks increase, consciousness retains those impressions as immediate perceptions and prevents them from entering the psyche in the form of unconscious memory traces. This creates a paradoxical situation in which consciously perceived impressions become capable of fixing a specific moment in time while being simultaneously removed from the organizing temporal function of memory. The sheer force of photographic perception actually creates a shield that prevents the formation of memory traces. Hence, the percipient remains in a state of distraction. For Freud, our very sense of reality derives from our need to defend ourselves from it. Psychoanalytically speaking, the notion of an unmediated encounter with the external world—if such a thing were possible—would be both a sign and cause of illness. The relation to reality is thus already unavoidably compromised.

However, as Benjamin insists “on the tactile side,” that is, on the side of modern media and the proximity they achieve medially, “there seems to be no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side” (*Benjamin*, 239), that is, on the side of perspectival space and depth vision. In other words, tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention but solely by habit. The heightened perception that is produced by the tactile receptivity of modernity becomes detached from the realm of reflection.

For Benjamin, as Baudrillard points out, photography provides the most powerful incarnation of the process of heightened perception accompanied by memory loss (*B-SS*, 96). Photographs paradoxically reflect the impact of the shock experience because they produce precise, visual perceptions of a moment in time—but these visual perceptions cannot be transformed into the realm of memory, language, and thought. In “Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Benjamin writes:

Of the countless movements of switching, inserting pressing, and the like, the “snapping” of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were . . . haptic experiences of this kind were joined by optic ones, such as are supplied by the advertising pages of a newspaper or the traffic of a big city (*Benjamin*, 174–75).

Benjamin’s remark that the “camera gave the moment a posthumous shock”

suggests that the detached souvenir is “lifeless.” One consequence of the detachment of photographic perception from the realm of reflection, its haptic quality, is that the autonomy of the observer or spectator is increasingly under assault. The proximity of the objects of modern media, for which photography is emblematic, comes at the cost of a certain objectivity. Perception becomes increasingly contingent. Or, in Baudrillard’s terms, the perspectival hierarchized space in Western theory of perception beginning with the so called discovery of perspective in the Renaissance is increasingly subverted by a regression to tactility, resulting in a lack of critical distance. Hence, Baudrillard postulates the end of the panopticum (the space of surveillance) and substitutes in its stead *total control* by means of a system that no longer functions specularly.

While the eye—especially in photography and film—remains the paradigm of perception, modern media tend to draw the eye too near. The eye *touches* things since the observer is no longer capable of withdrawing from them. In this not so metaphorical sense, Benjamin speaks of a tactile dimension of sight. Tactile perception here has nothing to do with intentional interactions of the hands or some sort of touch conditioned by an authentic experience of the body. Instead tactile perception is determined by a loss of ability to withdraw from an encroaching world. The transformation of seeing into touching raises the question as to whether an increase in proximity in relation to photographic perception doesn’t in fact cause objects of perception to disappear altogether. Perhaps after all, and this is in line with Baudrillard’s thesis, medial prosthetic devices remove objects from our perceptual order as they get closer to the objects themselves.

What we have here is a kinesthetic model of tactility wherein motion conveys pure information. The subject/object relation can only be grasped as representation, hiding its mediate character by reducing the distance traveled from object to the senses. In this sense, Benjamin characterizes film as offering “an aspect of reality free of all equipment,” precisely “because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment” (*Benjamin*, 234).

Or again, “the enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject” (*Benjamin*, 236). The structural penetration of reality is its tactile element, which, moreover, displaces the ordinary inspection of surfaces. Benjamin presents us with the following analogy:

The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient’s body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient’s body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician—who is still hidden in the medical practitioner—the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him. Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains

in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web (*Benjamin*, 233).

This infraction of the skin *qua* physiological protective screen is a *shocking* experience, and it is precisely this moment of shock that provides the joint between physiological sense perception and aesthetic reception—one is reminded here of *Crash*.

Film, as Benjamin would have it, defines a new kinesthetic paradigm of sense-perception, which positions itself between the register of viewing and penetration. In this respect, film is both genuinely tactile and at the same time incorporates the effects of earlier technologies of vision (such as the microscope) in the fragmentation of the gaze and the dissection of its objects. Kinesthetic perception implies a mode of touching, but as a tactile knowing it has been removed from the apperception of the body. The materiality of the tactile corresponds to the experience of a fragmented way of seeing the world and of a body in parts (Benjamin finds an extreme example for this in the in the experience of shell-shock during WW I). Such fragmentation or remoteness has nothing to do with an unbridgeable gap between humans and technology, but, on the contrary, it is grounded in the extreme proximity, the techno-penetration of the body.

By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect. To quote Benjamin:

Filmic images present the world in such unmediated proximity and change so often and so fast that they neither allow for distance from the world, nor do they enable a reception that operates at a distance. For the Dadaists the work of art already functioned as an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator (*Benjamin*, 238).

This passage outlines the peculiar dialectic of the tactile: that which penetrates the spectator also produces the effect of distraction. Because of or despite of its unreflective proximity to things, film requires a receptivity of distraction. The term *distraction*, however, gets its defining contours only against the background of another decisive benjaminian term, that of the *aura*, whose destruction produces or corresponds to the aesthetic of film. As is well known, Benjamin reserves the term, *aura* for traditional works of art, which are characterized by their originality. The aura indicates the effect that corresponds to the contemplation of an original work. The loss of the aura is thus a function of the tactile proximity of technical media. The camera penetrates the very character of representation and thus prevents the auratic concentration in front of the work.

Benjamin's notion of the aura doesn't merely contain a dialectic of nearness and farness, but it in fact projects it: "We define the aura as the unique phenom-

enon of distance, however close it may be” (*Benjamin, 222*). That is to say, the contemplation of a non-mechanically reproduced work in the proximity of the original has the effect of incommensurability and inaccessibility, which are in fact its defining qualities. What is essentially distant is what cannot be approached. The mechanically reproduced work on the other hand destroys the distance that is constitutively linked to the auratic experience through its tactile dimension. According to Benjamin:

The desire of contemporary masses to bring things “closer” spatially and humanly, . . . is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction (*Benjamin, 223*).

Does the dichotomy between nearness and farness correspond to the one between tactility and optics? In the case of the aura, the approach on the part of the observer or recipient towards the work corresponds to a simultaneous remoteness of the object. If this chiasmic logic also holds for film, one would expect to find that the approach to objects (or approaching objects) corresponds in some sense to the detachment of the recipient. And, indeed, according to Benjamin’s description, an instrumentally produced reality does not by any means produce familiar pictures, rather, the effects of the instrumental perceptions of the world, such as are provided by the close-up and slow motion, for example, produce the impression of alienation in the observer precisely because of their novelty.

With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended . . . slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals them entirely unknown ones . . . Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person’s posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics [*vom optisch unbewussten erfahren wir erst durch sie*] as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses (*Benjamin, 237*).

If psychoanalysis discovered the terra incognita of the psyche, then the technology of film presents us with the corresponding unconscious of the senses. But here as there what emerges is not familiarity with something hitherto unseen or invisible, but rather the impression is one of an incomparable remoteness of

the newly discovered terrain in relation to what has hitherto been recognized. Hence, in "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin goes so far as to argue that "in film the shocking character of sense perception comes to be recognized as a formal principle" (*Benjamin*, 175). And it is precisely in this sense that the moment of remoteness or distance (associated with the aura) reemerges in the filmic space of proximity. Tactility and optics, distraction or dispersal and concentration or attention, nearness and farness are not to be strictly differentiated, but as dual terms they are connected with one another chiastically. Hence, magical practices produce immediacy as a result of distantiating: proximity is maintained in distantiating. Medial apparatuses on the contrary produce alienation through extreme proximity: distance through or in nearness. At the outermost point of proximity, the tactile moment of touching, nearness reverts into an impression of farness. Thus Benjamin writes:

the feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera, as Pirandello describes it, is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror. But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? Before the public (*Benjamin*, 230-31).

This reentry of distance on the other side of proximity results in a kind of second order aura, which persists in medial discursive constellations. Aura is therefore a paradoxical concept: it implies presence and absence at the same time and enables the return of the auratic distance within the technical tactile discursive order as a second order distance. In other words, whereas the remoteness of the work of art is its auratic presence or proximity, the proximity of the film is capable of reproducing the aura medially.

A powerful source of Benjamin's particular interest in film thus stems from the fact that film occupies a privileged relationship to modernity because of its engagement with transforming the *shock experience* into a *formal principle*. There is, then, after all, if you will, in tactile perception something like a counterpart to contemplation on the optical side, namely the externalization of an optical unconscious in film. When the shock experience of modern memory loss takes on a formal quality (as Benjamin also thought it did in Baudelaire's poetry), it becomes capable of describing the very process of heightened consciousness as a response to memory loss. Film thus becomes one of the privileged accesses to the impact of the shock experience because the intrinsic unconscious memory traces embedded in it render it capable of transforming the increased consciousness of perception into a heightened consciousness of reflection.

For Benjamin, much more explicitly than for Baudrillard, modern media, specifically film, thus has the potential to become a counter-strategy of the masses against the system, much in the same way, perhaps that Baudrillard dreams of the production of the masses as a counter-strategy, insofar as the

renunciation of the subject position, of meaning—precisely the practices of the masses—that we bury under the derisory terms of alienation and passivity resist the demand that one constitute oneself as a subject who liberates him/herself, expresses him/herself, votes, participates, plays the game (*B-SS*, 85).

Alienation, then, and somewhat surprisingly, still has a strategic value for Baudrillard, as it did for Brecht (whom Baudrillard, again somewhat surprisingly, cites in “Value’s Last Tango”) and Benjamin, and arguably Kafka—*Amerika*, after all ends with the Great Nature Theater of Oklahoma, organized and financed by invisible but extremely powerful benefactors. According to Klaus Mann, Kafka once declared with an enigmatic smile that his young hero, Karl Rossmann, might well find again, “in this almost boundless theater, his profession, his security and freedom, and perhaps even his homeland and parents as by celestial spell” (*K-AK*, xvi).

Perhaps Kafka’s *Amerika* is itself a defense of sorts against America, one that leaves the reader sufficiently distracted by its theater. Of course, the notion of distraction also owes a debt to the Marxist notion of alienation, hence Benjamin thinks that in the representation of man by instruments, his self-alienation has had a highly productive outcome, namely one in which everything is ordered according to relations of function.

Chapter 15

Dressing Like Hitler: Reality, Simulation and Hyperreality

Martin G. Weiss

In the year 2000, just after the new Austrian coalition government that included Jörg Haider's right-wing populist FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party) assumed power, the annual Vienna Opera Ball took place as usual.¹ Like the *Prima della Scala* of Milan, this glamorous event, where the wealthiest of the wealthy celebrate a media-intensive night out, attracts annual counter-demonstrations. Since several members of the new government had announced their intention to attend, the protests outside the Vienna State Opera House were especially large. While the demonstrators chanted "Never again!" behind police barricades, a white Rolls Royce with dark-tinted windows slowly drove up the main ramp. Upon reaching the opera's main entrance, the car stopped and—into a fury of flash photography—out stepped Adolf Hitler in full uniform and flashing a Roman salute. With the words "We're here again!" he strode through the reception hall where a stunned usher took his ticket just before he was arrested and led away by two police officers. A few days later, Hubsi Kramar, as the subversive actor is known, was charged with *National Socialist reactivation* (*Wiederbetätigung*) although in his interrogation, he had stressed that his appearance at the Opera Ball had been a theater piece and that he had only been portraying the Nazi dictator. Yet: power knows no simulation.

In his essay, "The Precession of Simulacra"² Jean Baudrillard illustrates the increasing indistinguishability between *reality* and what he calls *simulation* by means of a thought experiment. Baudrillard asks how *power* i.e., the repressive apparatus of state which here apparently represents the reality pole, would react to a simulated hold-up robbery. Along with the fact that the execution of a *pure* simulation is impossible, Baudrillard points out that "power, i.e. the established order, is connected to the reality principle and does not allow for such a thing as simulation" (*B-SS*, 20). What *power* and reality have in common is their stability, or their impenetrable presence, which Baudrillard, as we will later see, understands as "speech without the possibility of reply," i.e., as an unquestionable given.

The power of the *established order* therefore stands in a privileged relation to presence, i.e., to reality. Indeed, insofar as presence is the main feature

of both, the terms power and reality can be equated. But power and reality are therefore also at each other's mercy, as power, in order to preserve itself, can accept nothing other than reality. Power, as presence, remains bound to the real, as any questioning of reality would undermine power itself. This is why simulation cannot be permitted. The incursion of simulation as a kind of non-presence would cause the whole system to collapse. Yet this fact also gives rise to the inability of power to react to simulations, i.e., to that which shouldn't actually exist. Because simulations as such do not occur in the scheme of power, power must grasp them as reality in order to control them. This consequentially leads to a situation where the simulated National Socialist reactivation of our example had to be considered as real by power, with all that this entails. In the words of Baudrillard:

The simulation of an offence, if it is established as such, will either be punished less severely (because it has no 'consequences') or punished as an offence against the judicial system (for example if one sets in motion a police operation 'for nothing'—but never *as simulation* since it is precisely as such that no equivalence with the real is possible, and hence no repression either. The challenge of simulation is never admitted by power (*B-SS*, 20).

As these remarks show clearly, although Baudrillard is concerned with the increasing indistinguishability of reality and simulation, he can explain this *indifference* only by means of the abstractions of *reality* and *simulation*. Although hyperreality is always the First, and the differentiation between reality and simulation is a subsequent abstraction, Baudrillard must first assume the abstract poles of difference in order to explain what lack of difference could possibly be. These two relations, existing only *de verbo*, which always already form a unity in the hyperreality that surrounds us, are reality or the real on the one hand, and simulation or the simulacrum on the other. The unity of both, which according to Baudrillard determines our postmodern *life world*, he calls *hyperreality* or *indifference*. But how does Baudrillard elaborate on his understanding of these three concepts: reality, simulation, hyperreality?

What Baudrillard understands by *reality* has already been hinted at in the equation of reality with the established order and with power. But how does Baudrillard understand *power*? In order to clarify this question it is helpful to turn to another of Baudrillard's essays. In "*Requiem pour les media*"²³ Baudrillard defines power as the phenomenon that permits no contradiction; that allows no answer. As an example of such one-sided movement, he cites the modern mass media. According to Baudrillard, it has only one active pole, the transmitter, while the receiver is damned to passivity. "The media founds itself on this latter definition: *they are what always prevent response*, making all process of exchange impossible . . . This is the real abstraction of the media. And the system of social control and power is rooted in it" (*B-Critique*, 208).

For Baudrillard, true communication does not consist in the transmis-

sion of information from a transmitter to a receiver, as reductionist communication theory suggests, but a concrete exchange, i.e., in the living event of “speech and response.” Baudrillard can therefore claim: “Mass media are characterized by being anti-mediatory and intransitive by fabricating non-communication” (*B-Critique*, 208). But what does “speech without response,” as Baudrillard calls it, have to do with power? To shed light on this question, Baudrillard refers to the power structures of *primitive* societies and explains:

“power [there] belongs to those that can give and to whom nothing can be given back. Giving in a way where nothing can be given back means breaking through self-advantageous exchange and erecting a monopoly: the societal process is thereby thrown out of balance. Giving back, on the other hand, means breaking up this power and establishing (or re-establishing) the cycle of symbolic exchange on the basis of an antagonistic reciprocity. The same situation is found in the sphere of media: speech occurs, but in a way that allows no answer anywhere. Therefore the only possible revolution in this area—but also in all areas, the revolution in general—consists in re-establishing the possibility of answering. This simple possibility calls for cataclysm in the entire contemporary media structure (*B-Critique*, 209).

According to Baudrillard, the fact that media information can appear as “speech without response,” and therefore as power, is due to media still being attached to the metaphysical theory of adaequation or correspondence, insofar as they understand themselves as merely a *representation* of an *objective* reality. Power is firstly the power of the unchanging-objective that opposes the subject as given reality. Power is the thing, the *an sich* or the *thing as such*, that resists the will of the subject. Insofar as the media *represent* this reality, they partake in its power. The medial image is just as unquestionable as the real *ontos on* and its power lies in this unquestionability. Therefore, for Baudrillard, reality and mass media both stand on the side of reality, and are therefore not opposites but merely two occurrences of the reality principle, understood as “speech without response.” This definition of reality—in its different forms of *reality* and *information*—hints at the old metaphysical identification of being and presence, which Heidegger first pointed out. What Baudrillard calls reality or power is in fact the *mere presence* (Heidegger’s *bloße Anwesen*) that metaphysics has always identified with Being. This becomes apparent in the passages of Baudrillard’s post-doctoral text in which he draws a connection between reality and the *obscene*: “[O]bscenity, . . . the naked truth, . . . the insane pretension of all things to express their truth.”²⁴ Here, the obscene is the pure presence of the real. That Baudrillard equates reality, understood as mere presence, with the information of the media, i.e., with “speech without response,” is illustrated by the following passage from the same work: “Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, no more stage, no more theatre, no more illusion, when every-thing becomes immediately transparent,

visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication” (*B-EC*, 21–22).

Baudrillard’s thesis can be further elucidated when contrasted with the media theory of Gianni Vattimo, which proceeds from a very similar interpretation of power or violence, but which arrives at contrary results with respect to the media.⁵ Similar to Baudrillard, Vattimo identifies “reality” with power, or with violence, and this in turn with the kind of speech that allows no contradiction. By reality, Vattimo means the violent immediacy of the “direct force of the given, an incontestable self-obtrusion of the *an sich* [the in-itself].”⁶ This reality is violent, as violence is definable—if one wishes to avoid using the metaphysical concepts of nature or structure—only as the evident ground that excludes all contradiction. Vattimo identifies violence with naked actuality, with an ultimate “resort, which one does not transcend and which silences all questioning, as it terminates the conversation” (*V-OL*, 107). Here, Vattimo does not locate violence in the dominance of the general over the particular, as existentialism had, but in the rendering impossible of free contradiction in the widest sense of the word. According to Vattimo, this non-questionable, and therefore by definition violent *real*, i.e. the objective, is being increasingly weakened by the findings of modern science: “Modern science, heir and completion of metaphysics, is that which transforms the world to a place where there are no (more) facts, but only interpretations” (*V-OL*, 34).

Yet the same destabilizing, de-realizing function that Vattimo ascribes to the sciences, he also locates in the media. Vattimo arrives at his surprising assessment of the mass media in his attempt to critically rethink Heidegger’s “*Weltbild*” essay.⁷ According to Heidegger in this essay, modernity was the epoch of *Weltbilder* (images of the world), the epoch in which the world became an image (of the subject) in the name of boundless domination (of nature). Here, the Turin philosopher shifts the common reading of this passage to its opposite. Vattimo understands image-becoming not as rendering disposable, but—in view of the postmodern duplication of world images—as a symptom of the weakening of traditional Being (understood as presence and structure) and therefore as a positive step toward a *weak ontology*, which unhinges even the supposed certainty of reality. Vattimo writes:

As a matter of fact, the ever-increasing possibilities of acquiring information on the most varied aspects of reality lead to the impossibility of thinking of reality as *one* reality. Perhaps one of Nietzsche’s ‘prophecies’ is being realized in the world of mass media: the real world becomes a fable. If, in our late-modern times, we still possess an idea of reality, it can no longer be understood as an objective actuality that would be found beneath or beyond the images delivered to us by the media. How and where should we find access to such a reality ‘in-itself’? Reality to us is much more the result of the overlapping and ‘contamination’ of numerous images, interpretations and re-construct-

tions that the media disseminates as competing with one another.⁸

When considering the current diversity of the media, it becomes clear that we have freed ourselves from the “metaphysical-objectivist heritage”⁹ of metaphysics, even in our concrete *life world* (*Lebenswelt*). In this sense, Vattimo can speak of the hermeneutics as well as the *koine* of postmodernity:

Hermeneutics is not concerned with freeing itself from interpretations, but much more with freeing interpretations from the dominance of the one, “true” truth, and from the demand for it—because the latter would call for being entrusted to the scientists, the religious gerontocracy, the political central committees, or another category of “unspoiled” intelligence, along with all the risks to freedom that such a step would carry. The world of medial communication can therefore appear as a world characterized by the freedom of interpretation (*V-MWW*, 17).

Indeed, Vattimo even goes so far as to suppose that the “twist” (*Verwindung*) of “metaphysics, as aspired to by the philosophy of Heidegger, only becomes possible under the new conditions of existence, which are determined by the technology of communication” (*V-MWW*, 20).

In this sense, Vattimo’s radical hermeneutic, which grasps even the ascertaining of the interpretive character of all our experience as mere interpretation, is the only possible philosophy of a postmodernity characterized by the limitless pluralization of media; not because it would truly represent unchanging reality, but because it alone would be in a position to enter into dialog with our *life world*:

If hermeneutics indeed wishes to be a philosophy of dialog as a moment that cannot be reduced to a pure instrument, which is provisional and basically does not essentially serve to uncover the one objective truth, it can only consequentially follow the ‘reality-dissolving’ current that Nietzsche identified. Only on this condition will hermeneutics be able to present itself as a philosophy of the society of communication that has become general (*V-MWW*, 19).

For Vattimo, the pluralization of the media landscape constitutes not only the realization of the dissolution of the one truth in innumerable interpretations, but, as we will see, an eminently positive, emancipatory event, because it creates plurality.

Vattimo’s media optimism stands in (conscious) opposition to the media chastising of the Frankfurt School. Where Adorno had interpreted the mass media as manipulative propaganda machinery that only serves to leave the masses in their *immaturity* (*Unmündigkeit*), Vattimo sees in the in principle totally uncontrolled possibilities of communication, e.g., those offered by the internet—perhaps naively, perhaps simply provocatively exaggerated—the principle possibility of absolute freedom of opinion, insofar as every societal fringe group now has

the means to express itself on an equal footing: “This vertiginous duplication of communication, this ‘rising to speak’ of an increasing number of sub-cultures, is the most apparent effect of the mass media” (*V-ST*, 13).

Vattimo knows of the basic danger of manipulation inherent in mass media that Adorno warned about, but believes that the situation of today is fundamentally different from that of the 1930s. He writes:

When Adorno spoke of the mass media, he had the Nazi propaganda of Dr. Goebbels in the back of his mind—the voice of the ‘big brother’ who could impress opinions, behavior patterns and assent on the masses in an almost hypnotic manner. But the media world, as it gradually crystallized out of the seventies, had more resemblance to Babylonian lingual confusion than to a monolithic structure ruled from a single center (*V-MWW*, 16).

If Baudrillard could characterize mass media as a unilateral movement from transmitter to receiver, which excluded all true communication, i.e., living dialog, we must now, after the emergence of the internet at the latest, agree with Vattimo that medial events are today open to more *participants* than ever before. He writes:

Even television advertising cannot manage without a certain reference to the audience, which regardless of how manipulable and manipulated it is, remains a conversation partner that is not totally predictable or conditionable. But it doesn’t stop there: The possibility of becoming an active participant in the media ‘market,’ for instance by founding an independent radio and television station, is no longer the privilege of a small few—it any case, it depends more on political or legislative decisions than on purely economic factors (*V-MWW*, 16).

In Vattimo’s concept of *weak thought* the total medialization and pluralization of *reality*, which appears in our media-dominated *life world*, is highly visible evidence that there is no as such existent *reality*, but that all our seemingly immediate experience is always mediated, i.e., interpreted: “Under the pressure of today’s medial construction of reality we comprehend that reality was always a construction” (*V-MWW*, 7).

The duplication of *world images* in the media can indeed be assessed as evidence that the model of an objective reality that would only need to be represented to derive its truth does not hold up; if reality in-itself were accessible, there would not be so many different representations, or interpretations, of it, but only one:

What sense would the existence of several radio and television stations have in a world in which the exact reproduction of reality, perfect objectivity, the total correspondence between the map and the respective

area were the norm? (*V-ST*, 14).

In the duplication of reality in the media it becomes apparent that the *telos* of the adaequation-theoretical notion of truth is not realizable:

Nietzsche did indeed show that the idea of a reality that arranges itself on a foundation according to rational criteria (the idea that metaphysics always had of the world) is only a ‘disquieting’ myth of a still primitive and barbaric humanity: metaphysics is a still violent way to react to a dangerous and violent situation; it in fact attempts to take possession of reality by means of a ‘surprise attack,’ availing (or believing to avail) itself of the main principle on which everything depends and therefore succumbs to the illusion of possessing domination over events. Along these lines Heidegger showed that conceiving Being as foundation and reality as a rational system of cause and effect was only one method to extend the model of ‘scientific’ objectivity—of the mentality that, in order to rigorously dominate and organize all things as well as finally humans themselves, reduces their inwardness and their historicity to the level of purely measurable, manipulable, substitutable factors—to Being as a whole (*V-ST*, 15).

With the omnipresence of the media this concept is finally demonstrated to be untenable. In the world of mass media it becomes apparent that the object always presents itself to us in interpretations. Empty (objective) facts do not exist, or at least they would have no *meaning*. Whatever appears to us as something is always interpreted in some way. Modern mass media, in which the *one reality* appears as given only in its countless medial *world images*, thereby becomes the demonstration of the phenomenon that the *truth* is accessible only in and as interpretations. In this liberation from unquestionable—and hence always repressive—objectivity or reality lies the emancipatory function of the media, according to Vattimo:

The thesis I wish to suggest, says that in the medial society, instead of an emancipatory ideal of the completely evolved self-consciousness, of the perfect consciousness of those in the know (whether Hegel’s absolute Spirit or the man that is no longer a slave of ideologies, as Marx conceived him), an emancipatory ideal that is based far more on oscillation and plurality, i.e., on the shattering of the ‘reality principle,’ is making its way (*V-ST*, 15).

For Vattimo therefore, *freedom* does not consist in “recognizing the necessary structure of the real and adapting oneself to it” (*V-MWW*, 15). Rather, the new emancipation, the new *freedom* of the foundationless post-metaphysical life world of *absolute meaning*, or of generalized medialization, consists in accepting the finiteness, and hence relativity, temporariness and mutability of every posi-

tion, especially one's own, and comprehending it as opportunity, which is very reminiscent of Nietzsche's *positive nihilism*:

If, in this world of manifold cultures, I follow my own value system—whether religious, aesthetic, political or ethnic values —, I will make a very exact allowance for the historicity, randomness and limitations of all these systems, starting with my own. This is what Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, calls the 'consciousness that I dream and that I *must* keep dreaming in order not to perish.' Is such a thing possible? The essence of that which Nietzsche called the *Übermensch* lies precisely at this point: and it is the task that he assigns to future humans, especially in a world of amplified communication (*V-ST*, 18).

Baudrillard, on the other hand, sees in the media merely the duplication of violent reality and can therefore not view them as means toward emancipation. Why this is so will be discussed presently.

So far we have only considered one pole of Baudrillard's hyperreality, reality in its double nature (reality and information). But what does Baudrillard mean by simulation, the other pole of indifferent unity? If the media are located on the side of reality, simulation can hardly mean representation. On the difference between representation and simulation, Baudrillard notes:

Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real Simulation on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. Such would be the successive phase of the image:

- [1.] it is the reflection of a profound reality;
- [2.] it masks and denatures a profound reality;
- [3.] it masks the absence of a profound reality;
- [4.] it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum (*B-SS*, 6).

The first three phases are still closely associated with representation, as they still somehow maintain a separation of sign and signified, i.e., a sign relation. Only in the fourth phase is representation definitively abandoned. As an example of an image of the first order, Baudrillard introduces the *sacrament*, which, as a symbol of the Real (*Realsymbol*, *tautegorisches Symbol*), does not refer to an accessible *as such*, even one in itself, but is rather the presence of that which is itself appearing, which can only be present in this symbol, but as such is still somehow different from the symbol in which it appears. As an example of a second order

image, Baudrillard names the curse, which doesn't depict a deeper reality, but, in a certain respect, changes it, and hence continues to refer to it as its object. An image of the third order would be magic, which would seek to belie the absence of a deeper reality by presenting itself as the appearance of something, although there is nothing behind it. "In the fourth, it [the image] is no longer of the order of appearance, but of simulation" (*B-SS*, 6). In order to comprehend what Baudrillard means by simulation in this fourth phase, a comparison with Nietzsche's "How the Real World Finally Became a Fable," probably the world's shortest history of philosophy, suggests itself. Nietzsche writes:

1. The real world – attainable for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it, *he is it*. (The oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, and persuasive. A circumlocution for the sentence, "I, Plato, *am* the truth.")
2. The real world—unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man ("for the sinner who repents"). (Progress of the idea: it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible—*it becomes a woman*, it becomes Christian.)
3. The real world—unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable; but the very thought of it—a consolation, an obligation, an imperative. (At bottom, the old sun, but seen through mist and skepticism. The idea has become elusive, pale, Nordic, Königsbergian.)
4. The real world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us? (Gray morning. The first yawnings of reason. The cockcrow of positivism.)
5. The "real world"—an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating—an idea which has become useless and superfluous—consequently, a refuted idea: let us abolish it! (Bright day; breakfast; return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness, Plato blushes for shame, pandemonium of all free spirits.)
6. The real world—we have abolished it. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent one!* (Noon; moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)¹⁰

If we compare Nietzsche's six epochs in the history of philosophy with Baudrillard's fourfold order of images, the following schema results:

The image as a mere *reflex* of a deeper-seated reality would correspond to Plato's doctrine of two worlds, according to which the world on this side only partakes of the *ontos on* of the ideas. The world of appearance that Plato speaks of would be an image of the first order. Christianity, of which Nietzsche speaks, would correspond to Baudrillard's curse. Kant would be the magician claiming that the *thing-in-itself* lies behind appearances. And positive nihilism, which has recognized that only the world of appearances exists and has learned to love it as

itself, without always leering at the real world, would correspond to Baudrillard's simulation, which is pure appearance and therefore no longer refers to any real world or deeper reality. In simulation, the real world and the world of appearances fall into one. Simulation refers to nothing except itself; that which remains, is the world of appearances. But with the abolition of the real world we have also abolished the world of appearances. So what remains is the simulation, i.e., the substrate-less life world. What remains is the simulation without reference. In the words of Baudrillard:

Simulation is no longer that of . . . a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory . . . that engenders the territory . . . (*B-SS*, 1).

What Baudrillard terms *hyperreality* is the becoming-a-fable of Nietzsche's world. Hyperreality is that which remains when one abolishes the real world *and* the world of appearances. Wolfgang Iser remarks on this thesis in his standard work on postmodernity: "The Real . . . no longer exists, as it can no longer be distinguished from its classical contrasts such as description, interpretation or depiction. In an information society where reality is produced by information, it has not only become more and more difficult but increasingly impossible and senseless to still distinguish between reality and simulacrum. Both affect and penetrate each other and consolidate a situation of universal simulation."¹¹

Before we take up a blatant contradiction in Baudrillard's texts, we would do well to discuss another way of illustrating Baudrillard's four-phase model of dissolution. In his book *Moderne/Postmoderne*, Peter V. Zima calls attention to the peculiar parallels between Baudrillard's four-phase model of simulation and his theory of value.¹² In *Pour un critique de l'économie politique du signe* and in *La transparence du mal* Baudrillard, following Marx, points out "how, in the course of societal development, the utility value dissolves into exchange value" (Zima, M/P 96). Baudrillard again names four stages: the *natural stage*, in which things are not yet viewed as exchangeable, but have their value in their predetermined utility, which also makes up their unchanging essence. The second stage is that of exchange value, where things lose their unchanging essence and their value, i.e., the market determines what they are. Baudrillard calls the third stage the *structural stage*: "Value here unfolds with reference to an ensemble of models," without still "referring to concrete objects as referents," as Zima elaborates. "In the fourth stage, the fractal . . . stage of value, there is no reference point at all . . ." (Zima, M/P 96). In the last two stages, the separation of utility value and exchange value still maintained by Marx dissolves. Ultimately, utility value merges with exchange value. What a thing is is no longer derived from its Being, conceived as unchanging, but from its totally fictive exchange value. The utility value, hence reality, can no longer be inquired about. To recapitulate and in a quasi return to

Nietzsche, Zima writes:

The appearance of exchange value corresponds on a linguistic and semiotic level to the signifier, whose unquestionable materiality and ambiguity renders the question of the signified as meaning or truth . . . meaningless. Analogous to exchange value, it is said [by Baudrillard] of the signifier: ‘The signified (and referent) are only an effect of the signifier . . .’ This thought . . . is a Nietzschean attempt to equate appearance as the impossibility of conceivability, meaning, reality and truth with societal totality (Zima, M/P 96).

This condition of hyperreality, which one could grasp positively with Nietzsche as a *liberation of the symbolic* or as a *mobile army of metaphors*—as an epoch in which the objectivism of metaphysics is finally *twisted* and eternal Truth gives way to the play of interpretations, or to the play of free signifiers—Baudrillard now surprisingly castigates as *the hell of simulation*, as the hell “of the subtle, maleficent, elusive twisting of meaning” (B-SS, 18). Baudrillard suddenly seems to be bemoaning the loss of metaphysics of presence. If he previously denounced the real as power that, to maintain its own stability, allows no response and is by definition repressive, he now writes: “The reality of simulation is unbearable . . .” (B-SS 38). This is Baudrillard’s contradiction and it unmasks the prophet of absolute simulation as a *negative nihilist*. Nietzsche calls *negative nihilism* the position that has recognized that there is nothing to moral and other *otherworldly* values, the *thing-in-itself*, the signified, yet does not interpret this as a liberation, but despairs of the *death of God*, i.e., of the dissolution of the objective, and which lapses into the *spirit of revenge against time and its ‘it was,’* i.e., the resentment against the here and now. With *positive* or *active nihilism* Nietzsche meant a position that has overcome the *spirit of revenge*, that remains faithful to the earth and that has learned to love transient and elapsing appearances as such. The positive and active nihilist no longer seeks the value, meaning, or sense of things in a *real world* beyond appearances, but loves the empire of absolute meaning liberated from every *in-itself*, the empire of liberated symbolization, for its own sake. In contrast to this stands Baudrillard, who has recognized that we live in the condition of hyperreality in which we can no longer refer to any absolute referents, yet who can’t bear this fact, but despairs of it. Seen from Nietzsche’s standpoint, Baudrillard remains attached to metaphysics and their desire for objectivity and hence to the *spirit of revenge*. On the other hand, Baudrillard’s position can also serve as a—perhaps deterrent—example of where a Nietzscheanism thought out to its end would lead; in Baudrillard’s words: “The age of simulation is opened everywhere by the exchangeability of formerly contradictory or dialectically opposed concepts. Everywhere there is the same genesis of simulacra: the exchangeability of the beautiful and the ugly in fashion, of left and right in politics, of true and false in all messages of the media, of the useful and the useless on the level of objects, of nature and culture in all levels of signification.”¹³

Chapter 16

Moved by Appearances: Metaphor, Metamorphosis, and Irony

Henk Oosterling

The clanging of the tocsin that is particularly loud in Jean Baudrillard's work published after 1976 sounds ominous to many readers. This clamor is familiar enough by now to philosophers like Nietzsche, Heidegger and a large number of French philosophers who anticipated him. The apparently satanic pleasure with which Baudrillard enjoys connecting extreme events with one another, while denying their very happening—the first Gulf War and the year 2000—and the paralyzing cul-de-sac which results also gets their goat. Despite his adoption of what are often absurd positions, it is hard to resist the impression that he is bringing to light alarming aspects of (post)modern life.

The critics are mainly concerned with the aporetic character of Baudrillard's work and the absence of a new critical socio-theoretical perspective.¹ His *oeuvre* is considered the absolute bottom line of critical theorizing. Baudrillard's hypercritical attitude has become hypocritical: he undermines both his own and his opponents position. Even worse, in adopting a devious and pointless transpolitical position, he seems to destroy any political position.

Thus at the end of *Fatal Strategies*, he asks: "these fatal strategies, do they exist?" And when he concludes that "there is perhaps but one fatal strategy and only one: theory" (*B-FS*, 181)² and goes on to claim that "the hypothesis of a fatal strategy must itself be fatal, too" (*B-FS*, 190), he inevitably raises the question of whether philosophical life is still possible after this book. It looks suspiciously as though Baudrillard's aporetic nihilism only reproduces the meaninglessness of our Western culture in the rhetorical movements of his texts.

I shall read Baudrillard's work against the background of a philosophical discussion of the status of the metaphor and its function within post-metaphysical thought in order to gain some insight into the theoretical terrorism of his fatal theory. His comment that "it's what tears beings away from the reign of metaphor to return them to that of metamorphoses" (*B-FS*, 142) can only be understood, in my opinion, in terms of a dual problematic. The first strand, primarily concerned with the de(con)struction of metaphysics, begins with Nietzsche and

passes via Heidegger to Derrida. The second originates in the semiological theory of Saussure and is transferred to the Lacanian transformation of the psychoanalytic tradition, in which metaphor and metonymy play an important role. In connecting Baudrillard's thesis that metaphysics is dead and metaphor no longer has any persuasive force to these traditions, I hope to show that he in fact presupposes the effectivity of the metaphor rather than denying it. I shall begin by following his train of thought as far as possible, before offering a possible interpretation of his concept of metaphor and connecting his thesis to the two traditions mentioned above. This results in a critique of his notion of the transition from metaphor to metamorphosis. The main target of this critique is the use of a rhetorical figure: irony. Baudrillard does not assign this linguistic strategy to subjects, but to so-called pure objects.³ This curious anthropomorphism may provide readers with a first impression of the ambiguous production of signs to which they are exposed and by which they are moved.

Hyperreality: The End of Reality

What does the world according to Baudrillard look like? Superficial, deprived of any deeper significance, at least within visual culture it gives the impression of a collage-like video clip in which images are thrown together in unusual combinations which incite individuals to act: "Things have found a way of avoiding a dialectics of meaning that was beginning to bore them: by proliferating indefinitely, increasing their potential, outbidding themselves in an ascension to the limit, an obscenity that henceforth becomes their immanent finality and their senseless reason" (*B-FS*, 7). Images and objects lead a life of their own in our multimedia visual culture. But to Baudrillard the world of science, characterised by an immense accumulation of theories that sometimes contradict one another, has also been deserted by truth. For him theoretical hyperactivity is evidence of intellectual despair rather than a steady accumulation of truths. At best, theories produce illusions or simulacra that only suggest that there is an underlying reality.

The need for the accumulation of truth is part and parcel of the Enlightenment project, which envisaged the emancipation of the modern subject—the citizen, the worker, and by now practically all marginalized groups from homosexuals to migrants—by means of a insistent demythologisation. In opposition to the idea that in realising the True and the Good, the subject demythologises and objectifies in order to transform destiny into hi(s)tory, Baudrillard announces that the subject's dialectically motivated strategies of attributing meaning are no longer adequately met by the objects. The myth of the autonomous subject has been overtaken by the irony of fate that, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, has proven the subject to be a new myth.

"However, this is not because no meaning is intended" (*B-FS*, 41). Baudrillard acknowledges that there is nothing wrong with this will for truth. This craving, however, is the result of a yearning for spectacle rather than for subjectivity.

Things innocently lead us astray. The subject falls prey to their fatal strategies. It is exposed to their deadly irony:

But nothing prevents us from assuming that we could obtain the same effects in reverse . . . The world is not dialectical—it is sworn to extremes, not to equilibrium, sworn to radical antagonism, not to reconciliation or synthesis. That is also the principle of Evil, as expressed in the ‘evil genie’ of the object, in the ecstatic form of the pure object and in its strategy, victorious over that of the subject (*B-FS*, 6).

The covetous subject takes commodities to extremes, the knowing subject takes truths to extremes, and the ethical subject takes values to extremes. The subject can no longer appear except within this unfettered consumption of products, theories and values, commodified as lifestyles. According to Baudrillard, the Enlightenment desire to make everything visible resulted in a transparent, obscene world with a pornographic quality—“the obscenity of what is entirely soluble in communication” (*B-FS*, 68)—in which every substantial criterion for distinguishing reality from appearance has disappeared. Transparency is the end of transcendence. Baudrillard presents us an image of a world focused on proliferation. The final image is a network of events branching out chaotically without any origin or purpose. These events have no purpose because they can be employed for every imaginable purpose. What is at hand and what probably disturbs the reader so much is this unbearable lightness of being.

Baudrillard’s thesis on the disappearance of the real in chains of simulacra is heavily dependent on a number of historical assumptions. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*⁴ he diagnoses the loss of the subject—“the mental equivalent of the gold-standard” (*B-SED*, 23)—from a political-economic perspective, arguing that gift and sacrifice have become impossible, because these are immediately fed back to the circulation of signs and simulacra. Here Baudrillard proposes the following periodization in relation to our dealings with objects: first a period of imitation (before the French Revolution), followed by a period of serial production in the industrial era as a result of which originality gradually dissolves, and finally a period of simulation in a post-industrial phase, in which reality disappears in and through an immanent logic of the circulation of commodities. The mode of production is ruled by the code of production: “once it [capital] became its own myth, or rather an indeterminate, aleatory machine, something like a *social genetic code*—capital no longer left the slightest opportunity for a determinate reversal” (*B-SED*, 60).

Unlike Slavoj Žižek, Baudrillard rejects the concept of revolution.⁵ At most we are seduced by this simulacrum. Postmodern man, mesmerized by simulacra and signs, has ended up in a non-alienated hyperreality. Baudrillard writes: “Even the historical illusion which maintained the hope of the convergence in the infinite of the real and the rational, and thereby a metaphysical tension, is dissipated: the real has become the rational. The conjunction has been realized under the sign of hyperreal, ecstatic form of the real” (*B-FS*, 71). With this implicit reference to

what Hegel envisaged as the final stage of history, Baudrillard indicates that we left this end behind us. Our current transpolitical existence implies that the end of time is already behind us: “We are already beyond the end. All that was metaphor has already been materialized, collapsed into reality” (*B-FS*, 70).

Transpolitics: Excess and the End of Politics

In *The Transparency of Evil. Essays on Extreme Phenomena*⁶ Baudrillard returns to the historical presuppositions of his “microphysics of simulacra” (*B-TE*, 5) and adds a fourth: “the fractal (or viral, or radiant) stage of value” (*B-TE*, 5) as a result of which “the possibility of metaphor is disappearing in every sphere” (*B-TE*, 7). The microphysics of power has changed the very notion of politics. Within this constellation the silent majorities function as incomprehensible and elusive, i.e., pure or fatal objects. They are flooded by signs in order to check them out. Objectified by the media as an audience of spectators politicians try to transform them into voters, being unaware of the fact that they just give in to the seduction of the masses that lack the modern social bonds. Authorities can only consolidate their power by giving in to the temptation of these fatal objects and simulate a final object that they try to manipulate as the real thing: “If only for the sake of change, it would be interesting to conceive of the masses, the object-masses, as possessing a delusive, illusive, allusive strategy, corresponding to an unconscious that is finally ironic, joyous and seductive” (*B-FS*, 99).

All this has led to a transpolitical situation: “This paradoxical state of affairs, which is simultaneously the complete actualisation of an idea, the perfect realisation of the whole tendency of modernity, and the negation of that idea and that tendency, their annihilation by virtue of their very success, by virtue of their extension beyond their own bounds—this state of affairs is epitomised by a single figure: the transpolitical . . .” (*B-TE*, 9-10). The excess of the political is revealed as and in terrorism, kidnapping and suicide bombing, mediatized to a degree that no longer allows a genuine change, being already overdetermined by the circulation of signs.

Total politicization turns into indifference, and complete socialization in the welfare state inevitably implies an excess that will end the social too. One-dimensional man has transcended his alienation: not in surpassing it but by total surrender to the simulacra. This is Baudrillard’s farewell to the (neo-)Marxist dialectical heritage of alienation and emancipation, oppression and liberation, suppression and revolution. Critical theory has had its day. Theoretical contact with the hyperreal is only possible if “finally for eternally critical theory an ironic theory is substituted” (*B-FS*, 92).

Our behavior, according to Baudrillard, is not governed by our needs and desires, but by the seduction of objects. The work of art is an exemplary case. Sociological and aesthetic variations of this theory of seduction had already been put forward by others, but in Baudrillard’s work it gets a quasi-metaphysical tonality. In radicalising Baudelaire’s aestheticism the dialectical imperative be-

comes ecstatic: “potentiate what is new, original, unexpected, in the commodity—for example, its formal indifference to utility and value, the pre-eminence given to circulation” (*B-FS*, 117).

Desire is not the cause but rather the effect of the consumption of commodities, values and truths. Individuals gain social esteem and prestige in and through the consumption of sign values. Consumption socialises, individualises and finally constitutes individuals as desiring subjects: consumption of truths transforms them into knowing subjects and consumption of values into ethical subjects. The ironical theory is no longer aimed at use or exchange value, but at the sign value of objects or at sign objects. In an aporetic twist it includes itself in this total circulation. Theory and practice are no longer exchangeable, because they are both swallowed by the circulation of sign values.

Simulacra: The End of Meaning

The exclusive emphasis on the sign value is an indication of Baudrillard’s radical semiotic view. He understands the world as a network of appearances, but he defines these as “signs that do not let meanings filter through” (*B-FS*, 60). Saussurian semiology still conceived a sign as a split entity, as a result of which it could convey meaning. Given the equivalence between an external form—the acoustic, visual signifier—and a concept—the mental signified⁷—meaning resulted of the minimal differences between signifiers and signifieds. Lacan radicalizes this principle of difference in applying these semiological principles to Freudian psychoanalysis. In Lacan’s psychoanalytical writings the claim is substantiated that constitutive meaning (in the last instance: the Unconscious) evaporates in the dynamic circulation of the signifiers. If Freud still considers the Unconscious to be represented through processes of condensation and displacement, for Lacan the link between signifiers (dreams, quirks, symptoms or slips of the tongue) and the signified (the Unconscious) is dissolved.⁸

We can only gain access to the Unconscious through language. It has become a linguistic effect. In an imaginary fixation of signifier and signified the Ego nevertheless still thinks that it can grasp its inner truth. In denying the on-going process of signification this fixation can become pathological. These traumatic effects are resolved in the therapeutic treatment by making the patient aware of the effects of the Unconscious as the Other in the Ego, that is always manifested in language, or better: in the symbolic order. Fixation of an imaginary unity and displacement in the symbolic order correspond to two effects of the dream work: respectively condensation and displacement. Given the fact that “the Unconscious is structured like a language,” Lacan detects these effects in two rhetorical figures: metaphor and metonymy (*Écrits* I, 263). The therapeutic impact of the work of psychoanalysis consists in the liquidation of the metaphorical fixation in and through language, and in the reactivation of metonymy.

Baudrillard’s frequent use of Lacan’s work however does not stop him from

criticizing Lacan's concept of desire as an activity centred on the Ego. Moreover, the implied metaphorical fixation still presupposes the alleged reality of desire. Baudrillard's view of the world as a flux of appearances as signs cannot but favour metonymy over metaphor.

Pataphysics: End of Metaphysics, End of Metaphor

In settling accounts with the notion of desire and truth *Fatal Strategies* lines up within a Nietzschean tradition that is set on destroying, i.e., de(con)structing metaphysics. For Nietzsche, truth, previously seen as the epistemological correspondence between judgement and things, is nothing but "a moving army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphism, in short, a sum of human relations that poetically and rhetorically has been sublimated, transposed and beautified . . ."9 Heidegger and Derrida, however, have pointed out that his emphasis on the metaphor still implicitly presupposes a criterion for the distinction between reality and appearance, and therefore remains within the realm of metaphysics. In order to overcome the distinction between metaphors and metaphysics Heidegger re-thinks truth in the light of its initial meaning of unconcealment: *aletheia*.¹⁰ Truth is now conceived of as a differential *Ereignis* or event (*BW*, 350).

In elaborating the Heideggerian project, Derrida criticises Heidegger's notion of presence that still haunts *aletheia* as a result of which Heidegger implicitly refers to the metaphysical discourse. According to Derrida Heidegger's concept of Being still presupposes presence and reality, though no longer situated in the subject, but in Being. Only the retrospective labor of a *deconstruction* of a textual corpus gives a voice to the Other that was expelled to the philosophical limbo, i.e., the margins of philosophical discourse. Derrida skirts this problem by locating the tension between appearance and being in the effects of *différance*. This quasi-concept is constituting presence and reality rather than presupposing these. Despite the differences between Heidegger and Derrida, both acknowledge that their recourse to a constantly receding *archè* still constitutes a quasi-metaphysical tension—a split, be it an ontological difference or one that is "older than Being itself"¹¹—that enables signification.

Baudrillard seems to have eliminated this tension: as a result of the convergence between the real and the rational that has taken place in hyperreality, fatal theory bites its own tail. Fatal theory is at best hypocritical, realising complicity with the perfect crime, i.e., the murder of reality: "The perfect crime is that of an unconditional realization of the world by the actualization of all data, the transformation of all our acts and all events into pure information."¹² Criticism becomes a tactic simulation, a tautological game with appearances. Once the metaphysical tension is solved, what is left is pataphysical ambiance, i.e., "the tautological and grotesque perfection of the truth processes" (*B-FS*, 71). Pataphysics is a science of the hyper-simulation of an exact, true and objective world with universal laws, including the ravings of those who interpret it in accordance with these laws.

As an option it is a large mouthful to swallow, but what Baudrillard aims at is a post-metaphysical science that no longer needs metaphorization. Heidegger has already claimed that “when one gains the insight into the limitations of metaphysics, metaphor as a normative conception also becomes untenable.” And since “the metaphorical exists only within metaphysics”¹³ the end of metaphysics inevitably entails the destruction of the metaphor. The metaphor no longer refers to an original context or concept. When Derrida claims that every question concerning the real meaning of the metaphor immediately generates new metaphors, this regression unfolds the quasi-metaphysical tension of *différance*. In deconstructing fossilised metaphors he opens a supplementary margin that constitutes the dialectics between being and non-being (*D-Margins*, 215).¹⁴

Baudrillard is less cautious in formulating his assessment of the metaphor. Metaphors are simulacra, which simulate or dissimulate a *Hinterwelt*. For him the end of metaphysics cannot but imply the end of the metaphor.

From Moral Desire to Immoral Seduction

In *Fatal Strategies*, the critique of the metaphor also bears on desire. Lacan is not the only butt. Thinkers of difference like Foucault, Irigaray, Deleuze/Guattari and Lyotard are also criticized. Notwithstanding their unmasking of Freudian—and Marxist—metaphors with their ontological and socio-political implications, their deconstruction of the phallogentric, subject-oriented desire leads to a new ontology: the body and its pleasures, femininity, schizo-desire and *corps-pensée*. Baudrillard claims that they have been led astray by their own dissimulation.¹⁵ In his opinion, they still believe in the production of the real and desire, even if it is masked as pleasure. In spite of their critique of the subject there is still a productive agency implied. In his opinion they are not sufficiently aware of their own theory produced simulacra and as a result overlook the fact that even their critique of the Freudian metaphors is still embedded in the metaphor of productive desire. According to him it is not the moral desire of the deconstructed subject (Foucault’s *ethos*) but immoral indifference of the pure or fatal objects—Foucault’s subversive body as a simulacrum—that determine collective behaviour. Baudrillard rejects sexual difference as an ontological guarantee: “It’s a mystification, in effect, to think of sexual difference as original difference, the source of all differences, which would be only metaphors for this one” (*B-FS*, 106).

In *Seduction*¹⁶ he argues that the truth of desire is simulated in and by pornography in order to save a moral option on sex. Ecstatic pornography in hyperreality is beyond obscenity because there is no longer a theatrical scene behind the spectacular flow of simulacra. Nevertheless it leads the spectator to believe that “there must be good sex somewhere, for I am a caricature. In its grotesque obscenity, it attempts to save sex’s truth” (*B-Seduction*, 35). This obscenity has nothing to do with repressed desire or acting out, but with over-representation: “It is the transparency of the social itself” (*B-FS*, 64). Because pornography overdetermines

the whole discourse, we'd better call this condition pornological instead of pornographic. The pornologic simulation of sex still suggests that there is normal sex which defines the ideal utility value of the body, a value which can be liberated as the ultimate truth of our desire. However, turning everything into sex after the so-called sexual revolution has led to the absolute meaninglessness of this pornological, i.e., transsexual discourse. Inasmuch as Western desire is typically phallogocentric, the male, "as subject, can play only the game of the metaphor," while the woman, "she, abjuring all metaphor, becomes the fatal object which drags the subject down to his annihilation" (*B-FS*, 121). The femme fatale is beyond the metaphor: she literally gives her lover the eye that, to his own saying, has seduced him.

Desire clings to genuine love in order to *discover* its ultimate truth in *unveiling* its secret. Seduction thrives on the disappearance of the truth in a secret that can no longer be revealed. The secret is "the rule of the game of appearance" (*B-FS*, 65). Given the earlier periodization, once there must have been an illusion that seduced us to *discoveries*, but in the current situation "this minimal illusion has disappeared for us" (*B-FS*, 65). Over-represented by the media, appearances with their sign value have become pure objects that no longer convey any meaning. "To disappear is to disseminate oneself in appearances." These appearances slip into one another without mediation. They metamorphose. Or in terms of *The Ecstasy of Communication*: "The power of metamorphosis is at the root of all seduction . . . This is the Law of appearances. The body of metamorphosis knows neither metaphor nor the operation of meaning."¹⁷

Metamorphosis: Immediacy Beyond Metaphors

Seduction "tears beings away from the reign of metaphor to return them to that of metamorphosis. It is what tears beings and things from the reign of interpretation to return them to divination. It is an initiatory form, and it restores to signs their power" (*B-FS*, 142). Metaphors are turned into simulacra and simulacra pile up in and as chains of signs. Baudrillard understands this as a process of metamorphosis. In *Crowds and Power*,¹⁸ Elias Canetti describes metamorphosis—in English translated as transformation—as "the talent for transformation which has given man so much power over all other creatures . . ." (*Canetti*, 337). He associates this talent with initiation rites in tribal communities. Within these communities symbolic exchange in the light of sacrifices and gifts is still possible. Metamorphosis is practised in these collective forms of dissipation: "Only those with a right to it can share in the metamorphosis which is handed down as an inheritance" (*Canetti*, 379). Metamorphosis is thus not subject to the will of the individual.

As such, according to Canetti, metamorphosis is not triggered by identification or empathy: "Imitation relates to externals; there must be something before one's eyes, which is copied . . . Nothing is revealed about the inner state of the imitator" (*Canetti*, 369–70). Instead, metamorphosis is a transgressive event: it takes

place on the boundary between inner and outer, between being and appearance. It is in the disguise or mask that the movement of metamorphosis is temporally fixed on the boundary: “. . . the general significance of the mask is: it is a *conclusion*; into it flows all the ferment of the as yet unclear and uncompleted metamorphoses which the natural human face so miraculously expresses, and there it ends” (Canetti, 375). From Baudrillard’s perspective the mask should not be understood as a metaphor, but as a simulacrum.

But what does this mean in our demythologized world? In the modern, secular world metamorphoses only occur in situations in which individuals lose their grip on things. That is why Canetti refers to psychopathological phenomena, such as major attacks of hysteria, which “are nothing but a series of violent transformations for flight. The sufferer feels seized by a superior power” (Canetti, 345). Two of Canetti’s observations on delirium are relevant for understanding Baudrillard. The first is a reference to Kräpelin who states that “among the hallucinations of delirium tremens, those of sight tend to predominate” (Canetti, 359). The second states that, unlike primitive metamorphoses, “alcoholic hallucinations are always outside the patient; even when he experiences them as reality, they do not transform *him*” (Canetti, 363). For modern individuals, metamorphosis happens to be a purely external visual process that absorbs all reflexivity.

Baudrillard discusses the phenomenon of metamorphosis in two other articles, both of which refer to primitive cultures. In “The Animals: Territory and Metamorphosis,”¹⁹ he situates a metamorphosis that is triggered by animal sacrifice within a specific time sequence. This is not dialectical linear time, but cyclical time in which the process of metamorphosis is not overdetermined by the need of accumulation, progress and development. In bending back upon itself, this cyclical time excludes the bifurcation of dichotomies: “. . . the cycle is *symbolic*: it abolishes the positions in a reversible enchainment” (B-SS, 134). Baudrillard is claiming that metamorphosis disappears with the disappearance of a sacral order and the transformation of a cyclical experience of time into a dialectical and progressive one.

In view of the implied chronology, the fact that he nevertheless presents metamorphosis as the successor of metaphor in *Fatal Strategies* is surprising, to say the least. However, only when ontological things are translated into pure signs does it become clear that a series of metaphors understood as simulacra, once meaning is destroyed, must be understood as metamorphosis, the movement from one signifier to another in an unmediated, i.e., immediate sense.

If revolution is still an option then it is only as a “revolution in things which no longer lies in their dialectical transcendence [*Aufhebung*] but rather in their potentialization [*Steigerung*] . . . in that ascension to extremes related to the absence of rules for the game” (B-FS, 34). Just as in excessive conditions like cancer and obesity, this revolutionary metastasis is an ecstatic form (B-FS, 8) and a metamorphosis. In “Metamorphoses, Metaphors, Metastases” the earlier chronology is resumed and the differences between these three figurations explored.

Metamorphosis is not at random but owes its coherence to a tension of immanence (*B-EC*, 55), that is, seduction.

Baudrillard's views on the metamorphosis effects of the media is deeply influenced by the media theory of Marshall McLuhan (*B-SED*, 65). However, McLuhan's emphasis on the autonomy of the medium *vis-à-vis* the message—"the medium is the message," i.e., the fact that it has become a desire in its own right within its own context—in the final instance is dialectical, even Hegelian in its historical consequences. It aims at restoring autonomous subjectivity. For Baudrillard this is out of the question. In talking about appearances and the cycle of metamorphoses, Baudrillard goes beyond instrumentality and teleology.

Symbolic Exchange, Impossible Exchange

But doesn't this emphasis on metamorphosis in a globalized world imply a reevaluation of his views on symbolic exchange? Baudrillard has elaborated a quasi-nostalgic interest in primitive societies as early as the publication of *Symbolic Exchange and Death* in 1976. In criticising the impossibility of sacrifice in late capitalist society—and by implication of the heterological options of Georges Bataille (*B-SED*, 154; *B-FS*, 78)—he analyses the unambiguous, symbolic link between a sign and collectively experienced reality in tribal communities. Every exchange derives its value from a sacrifice, an excessive gift, in which death is countered in an experienced reunion with the gods. It is this transgressive experience of death in premodern communities, this sacrifice as symbolic exchange, that triggers the process of metamorphosis. *Symbolic*, however, must not be understood in a Lacanian sense: "The symbolic is neither a concept, an agency, a category nor a *structure*, but an act of exchange *and a social relation, which puts an end to the real*, which resolves the real, and, at the same time, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary" (*B-SED*, 133). Lacan's distinction between the real, imaginary and symbolic order is resumed from a non-dialectical perspective. According to Baudrillard, the importance attached to actual death by later societies is precisely what creates the distinction between the real and the imaginary, between being and appearance. However, this dichotomizing was made impossible precisely by the symbolic exchange act within a cyclical temporality. Baudrillard's concept of the symbolic is thus a dismantling rather than a constituting of the Ego.

But can we understand Baudrillard's metamorphosis in terms of the Lacanian metonymic displacement? The term is not used in *Fatal Strategies*, but it pops up in *The Transparency of Evil*: "Today metonymy (replacing the whole as well as the components, and occasioning a general commutability of terms) has built his house upon the dis-illusion of the metaphor" (*B-TE*, 16). Baudrillard probably introduces metamorphosis, neglecting the notion of metonymic displacement, in order to avoid being trapped by the metaphor—and by implication by metaphysics.

In the elimination of subject-oriented desire and the radicalization of sign

circulation, the cogency of dichotomies—content-form, signified-signifier, being-appearance, mind-body—dissolves. This can be illustrated in yet another way with a passage in *Fatal Strategies*, where Baudrillard refers to the Laws of Manu. These laws prescribe the Brahman's behaviour minutely: "Desire and chance are stricken from the ceremony. It is no longer even a metaphor. There is no rhetoric, no allegory, no metaphysics in the texts of the *Laws of Manu*" (*B-FS*, 168). The signs demand absolute compliance, by which they gain their highest intensity. Form and content are dissolved in the meticulous performance in its highest intensity. It does not allow desire and in the final instance has no answer to questions like "Why are you doing this?" "What are you aiming at?" There is no progression, no destination, just repetitive and cyclical performance. The fascination with form—appearance, exteriority, simulacrum—the strict observance without any wish or satisfaction, the total surrender to the metamorphosis implied in the linking of pure objects and signs, without meaning, is nothing less than the affirmation of appearance as appearance.²⁰

Baudrillard's thesis on the disappearance of the metaphor in metamorphosis is instructive when applied to contemporary visual culture, ruled by the primacy of the spectacle and information. During the last decade Baudrillard has analysed and commented socio-cultural and politico-economic highlights—the tumbling of the Berlin Wall, the Gulf War, the year 2000. Nowadays in warfare and media politics Baudrillard's point of view seems to be a self-evident matter.

But in his commentary on the September 11, 2001 event, Baudrillard surprisingly reintroduces the possibility of the symbolic exchange that he criticized in his earlier texts. He even defines *event* as "that which, in a system of generalised exchange, suddenly creates a zone of impossible exchange."²¹ In *Impossible Exchange*,²² published two years earlier, the issue of the metamorphosis is reintroduced in less enigmatic terms: "We are not speaking of the utopia of a historically defunct form of master and slave, but that of a linkage, a concatenation of forms, of a subjection to the cycle of becoming, to the rule of metamorphoses" (*B-IE*, 54). Baudrillard's aporetic enterprise of fatal theorising, i.e., radical deconstruction of meaning and desire, is highly formal: "The necessity of form is of this order: words are not free, and it is certainly not the task of writing to liberate them. On the contrary, writing binds them together, links them in chains, but they are linked together with chains of love. The only thing they are to be liberated from is, possibly, their meaning—so that they may form a more secret concatenation" (*B-IE*, 54). Again metastasis and metamorphosis are linked, the first however expressing exchange, the latter radical change: "In plurality, multiplicity, a being merely exchanges itself for itself or for one of its many avatars. It produces metastases; it does not metamorphose . . . In terms of change, anything is possible—what is needed is a metamorphosis and a becoming" (*B-IE*, 78).

The enigmatic beginning of *Fatal Strategies* is reformulated. The dialectical relation between general and particular is broken by "the passage to singularity as though towards a particular that is, in a sense absolute—henceforth unrelated

to the horizon of the general.” Singularity as event has no equivalent and cannot therefore be exchanged: “it is a unique sign, as Klossowski says—and a sign without content” (*B-IE*, 130). Or in an earlier formulation: a sign that does not let meaning filter through (*B-FS*, 60). On a formal level signs circulate as “a play of metamorphosis of the one into the other on the basis of their non-existence as self being [*être-propre*]” (*B-IE*, 131). In its senseless transparency a singularity is nothing but Evil.

Radical Thought: Irony as Hypocritical Affirmation of Fate

Singularity as an event is absolute, that is, disconnected from any external reference. But what does this imply for fatal theory? Can one really conceive of metamorphosis beyond reflexivity, beyond a third mediating term, be it mythological, religious, aesthetic or discursive? How else can the ecstatic displacement of signs be communicated in Baudrillard’s radical thought? Does this explain his regression to mythological metamorphosis and cyclical time as if he loops his historical philosophical presuppositions? In order to answer this question we have to focus on what Baudrillard systematically tries to hide from view: the production level of his texts. In spite of his critique of his French fellow philosophers he eagerly endorses the death of the author.

If “radical thought is at the violent intersection of meaning and non-meaning . . .” (*B-PC*, 97) and if seduction is the post-metaphysical fatal attraction that connects both, how does this work in Baudrillard’s own texts? Once readers, trying to understand his point of view, give in to this seduction they enter a language game that enforces its rules upon them. As the game proceeds the rules seem to disappear in their own aporia. As a result unmasking becomes impossible, because behind every mask, situated on the intersection of being and appearance, a new mask, a new simulacrum, looms up time and again. Caught in the tautological universe of Baudrillard’s pataphysics the reader’s metaphorical residue—his last resort for his sense of reality—enables Baudrillard to communicate meaningful statements on the loss of meaning. This game of appearing and disappearing, this metamorphosis constitutes a discursive event: “It is this ironic transfiguration which constitutes the event of language” (*B-PC*, 98). Being “eccentric to the real, a stranger to dialectics, a stranger even to critical thought,” radical thought becomes absolute and as such a singularity “by which it constitutes an event, just like the singularity of the world” (*B-PC*, 96).

This event does not entail Heideggerian truth (*aletheia* as unconcealment), nor is it a matter of *Ereignis*: given the above-mentioned critique of *être propre*, Baudrillard’s event must be beyond *er-eignen* and *ent-eignen*. His hypocritical affirmation of nihilism, his *gaya scienza* has a more Zen-like quality, judging by the frequent references to Tao, Zen and martial arts (*B-SED*, 119; *B-FS*, 77). What lends this writing “its intensity is the void, the nothingness running beneath the

surface, the illusion of meaning, the ironic dimension of language, correlative with that of the facts themselves, which are never anything but what they are” (*B-PC*, 98). Although there is nothing to think or write about, we feel the urge to think and write.

This urgency seduces both subject and world into reality, “for the real itself is without doubt only a challenge to theory. It is not an objective state of things, but a radical limit of analysis” (*B-EC*, 98). Once subject and world give in to this seduction, metamorphosis is fixed into metaphors. Theory and the real strive for coincidences, but “fate is always on the intersection of these two lines of force” (*B-PC*, 97). In that very sense theory is fatal.

Although the subject is denied irony in *Fatal Strategies*, ironic strategies being reserved exclusively for pure objects, on the production level of writing one cannot overlook the fact that Baudrillard’s oeuvre exudes the ironic pathos he even claims to share with Gide and Sartre (*Kellner*, 192). He writes: “It is not that I introduce negation into a logically constructed critique. It is more a question of irony. A process takes place in which you drive a system, a concept or an argument to its utmost limits and then push it over the edge, so that it trips over its own logic . . .”²³ This strategy is epistemologically as aporetic as it is academically suicidal. The following hypocritical move is “that you (the reanimated author) become an object, a sort of destiny”²⁴ The author Baudrillard literally objectifies his irony as and in textual metamorphoses. Content, form and textual performance exponentially enhance each other. It is precisely in this Derridean *mouvance* (*D-Margins*, 9), even if it is in a hypocritical fatality, that Baudrillard’s discourse retains a charged meaningfulness. But its hypotheses can neither be verified nor falsified. They only “potentiate commodity’s formal indifference to utility and value” (*B-FS*, 117). Nevertheless they still produce sign effects: in spite of his critique of production Baudrillard’s textual ‘body’ still works.

His radical theorizing unexpectedly gets a Foucauldian quality. Doesn’t he radicalize Foucault’s aesthetics of existence—also inspired by Baudelaire’s dandyish aestheticism—when he states that “perhaps we are here introducing a collective and ironic form of existence which, in its extreme wisdom, no longer appeals to its own principles and only wants to lose itself in the spectacle of its disappearance?” (*B-FS*, 144). Perhaps the summarizing remark on the last page of *Fatal Strategies* gives us a final clue: “Everything can be summed up in this: let’s believe for a single instant the hypothesis that there is a fatal and enigmatic bias in the order of things” (*B-FS*, 191). Is not Baudrillard finally asking us to reaffirm out faith in a thinking (*penser*) that is passionately moved by appearances?

NOTES

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

(Hugh J. Silverman and Anne O'Byrne)

1. Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, trans. Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Nieslochowski (New York: Semiotext(e) Pluto Press, 1990), 142. Henceforth cited as *B-FS*.
2. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. unnamed (London: Tavistock, 1970). Henceforth cited as *F-OT*.
3. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 1. Henceforth cited as *B-SS*.
4. Friedrich Schlegel, *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. intro. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 106. Henceforth cited as *Lucinde*.

NOTES TO PART ONE

Chapter 1 SIMULATE THIS! THE SEDUCTIVE RETURN OF THE REAL IN BAUDRILLARD (Drew A. Hyland)

1. I wish to thank some of my colleagues at Trinity College for their perceptive and helpful comments to an earlier draft of this essay that I read to them at an informal colloquium. They include Katharine Power, Ronald Thomas, Maurice Wade, Miller Brown, Berel Lang, Michael Niemann, Gustavo Remedi, Dario Euraque, Hayley Thomas, Todd Vogel, and Tracy Knight. I also wish to thank the participants in the July 2000 International Philosophical Seminar, entitled "Reading Baudrillard's *Simulations*," held in Castelrotto, Italy, where I formally presented this paper. I shall single them out for their contributions at various points throughout.

2. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1981), 10. *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), 2. The translated material does not include the entire French text. Hereafter, except where I have changed the translation, I refer to the English text, *Simulations*.

3. I owe this suggestion to Tom Flynn at the IPS meeting. One could easily expand on the curious connection between Baudrillard and conventional Platonism. In his characterization of our epoch as one of third order simulations, for example, Baudrillard would seem to return us to Plato's cave in Republic VII. Alternatively, if one entertains the conventional view that the philosopher wishes to permanently escape the cave and dwell eternally with the forms, would not the forms, now devoid of any reference to appearances, become their own simulacra? (I owe this intriguing suggestion to Katharine Rudolph at the IPS conference).

4. In this and what follows, the Derridean point is that the real shows up again and again in the margins of Baudrillard's text.

5. Jean Baudrillard, *De la seduction: l'horizon sacré des apparences*, (Paris; Editions Galilée, 1979), 7. *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 1. Henceforth cited as *B-Seduction*, except where I have changed the translation.

6. The precise connection of seduction and simulation remains somewhat opaque and undeveloped in Baudrillard's work. One dimension of the relation, suggested in discussion by Hugh Silverman at the IPS conference, may be analogous to the noesis/noemata relation in classical phenomenology.

7. In this sense, seduction would be counter to induction and deduction, that is, to the logical modes of discourse of traditional philosophy. One might say that it represents the triumph of rhetoric over logic. This basic point was suggested to me by Tom Flynn at the IPS conference.

Chapter 2

THE FICTION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS: THE USE AND ABUSE OF REPRESENTATION IN FREUD (Alina Clej)

1. A version of this essay, "Reality, Simulation and Hyperreality: An Essay on Baudrillard" appeared in *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 8: July 2011, http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol8_2/v8-2-weiss.html.

2. See Adolf Grünbaum's critical discussion in, *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis. A Philosophical Critique*, (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 1984).

3. See Malcolm Macmillan, *Freud Evaluated: The Completed Arc*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997).

4. Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol 18 trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966). Henceforth cited as *Freud-SE*.

5. In this respect, I agree with George Steiner's oracular judgment: "With the passing of time, Sigmund Freud is emerging, above all else, as a master of narrative and builder of myths," in "Master of Narrative, Builder of Myths," a review of Sigmund Freud, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, trans. Axel and Peter Hoffer, ed. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), in *The Sunday Times* (London), September 6, 1987.

6. Robert Wilcocks, *Maelzel's Chess Player. Sigmund Freud and the Rhetoric of Deceit*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994), 5.

7. Other studies on Freud's literary talents and ambitions, include, Patrick J. Mahony, *Freud as Writer*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), and Leslie Chamberlain, *The Secret Artist, A Close Reading of Sigmund Freud*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000).

8. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Fable (Philosophy and Literature)," *The Subject of Philosophy*, trans. Hugh J. Silverman ed. Thomas Trezise (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 9. Henceforth cited as *LL-SP*.

9. Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 478.

10. As a practitioner of psychoanalysis, Freud often bungled his cases, at a time when malpractice was still an ill-defined concept. This questionable aspect of his career has been well documented. See, for instance, Richard Webster, *Why Freud Was Wrong. Sin, Science, and Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995).

11. See above, n. 6.

12. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, trans. ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1985), 286. Henceforth cited as *Freud-CL*.

13. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 43-44.

14. See Jean Laplanche's interpretation in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, quoted by Lacoue-Labarthe in "Apocryphal Nietzsche," trans. Timothy B. Bent (*LL-SP*, 56).

16. See Michel Foucault's discussion concerning the invention of bourgeois sexuality

in the 19th century, in *History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

17. The figure of the crypt as a psychoanalytical concept does not appear as such in Freud's writings, but is developed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. Nicholas Rand (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

18. See *In Dora's Case: Freud—Hysteria—Feminism*, eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

19. Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 2 Vols. (New York: Basic Books, 1961), Vol. 1, 28. Henceforth cited as *Jones*.

20. Smiley Blanton, *Diary of My Analysis with Freud*, ed. Margaret Gray Blanton (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1971). See entry for March 6, 1930.

21. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), xii-iv.

22. Freud had previously tried to build his reputation and his fortune on the discovery of the untapped medical virtues of cocaine, but failed. For a discussion of this episode, see Ernst Jones, "The Cocaine Episode," *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 1, 56, 78-97. Richard Webster, "From Caul to Cocaine," *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science, and Psychoanalysis*, 33-51.

23. For a discussion of Freud's conflicted Jewish identity, see Peter Gay, *Freud. A Life from Our Time*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), and, Lesley Chamberlain, *The Secret Artist*, 10-11.

24. See Neil Hertz's commentary on Freud's use of language. "Freud and the Sandman," *The End of the Line. Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 101. "Freud uses his figurative language as a means of lending color to what is otherwise imperceptible."

25. See Jacques Derrida's discussion of this particular aporia in psychoanalytical discourse, in "Le facteur de la vérité," *Poétique*, 21: (1975), 96-147. Derrida, Jacques, "La facteur de la vérité," *The Post Card*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

26. Sigmund Freud. *Collected Papers*, 5 Vols., trans. under the supervision of Joan Riviere. (New York: Basic Books, 1959), Vol. 1, 254.

27. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951), 83.

28. Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 34-35.

29. Peter Gay, *Reading Freud: Explorations and Entertainments*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 52.

30. Freud also quoted these lines in a letter to Fliess. See (*Freud-CL*, 147).

Chapter 3
THE POSTMODERN SUBJECT:
TRUTH AND FICTION IN
LACOUÉ-LABARTHE'S
NIETZSCHE
(Hugh J. Silverman)

1. Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 81-2. Henceforth cited as *LL-SP*.

2. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1966).

4. "The Scene is Primal," trans. Karen McPherson (*LL-SP*, 101).

5. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 291. See, also, Karl Schlechta, *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre*, (III, 730) in *Werke*, (Munich: C. Hansen, 1960), IV, 322.

7. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Le Sujet de la philosophie*, (Paris: Aubier Flammarion, 1979), 14.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, in *Werke*, II, 958, III, 404.

9. See "Apocryphal Nietzsche," trans. Timothy D. Bent (*LL-SP*, 37-57).

10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in *The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1984).

11. Jacques Derrida, "Introduction: Desistance," in Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard, 1989), 5. Henceforth cited as *LL-T*.

Chapter 4
THE SUBJECT OF THE GOOD:
EXHALTATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION
(Stephen David Ross)

1. To affirm the subject of the good before and beyond being, Levinas writes that the Good is before Being. See Levinas, "Substitutions," *The Levinas Reader*, ed., Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 112. It is in the relation to the *yes* or to the *Zusage* presupposed in every question that one must seek a new (post-deconstructive) determination of the responsibility of the subject." See Jacques Derrida, *Points...: Interviews, 1974-94*, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 267. Henceforth cited as *D-Points*. Such a vigil leads us to recognize the processes of difference, trace, iterability, ex-appropriation, and so on. These are at work everywhere, which is to say, well beyond humanity (*D-Points*, 274).

2. With Deleuze in mind: "The univocity of being . . . is paradoxically the principal condition which permits difference to escape the domination of identity" and Nietzsche: "from domination to domination," allowing "violence to be inflicted on vio-

lence and the resurgence of new forces that are sufficiently strong to dominate those in power.” Domination and violence, the rule of the categories of identity. From, Michel Foucault. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. and introd. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 192, 151.

3. Julia Kristeva. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 185. Spinoza’s words are somewhat different: “perhaps, someone will ask, whether women are under men’s authority by nature or institution?” He answers, “that women have not by nature equal right with men: but that they necessarily give way to men, and that thus it cannot happen, that both sexes should rule alike, much less that men should be ruled by women.” Benedict de Spinoza. *A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise*, trans. and introd. R.H.M. Elwes, with a new bibliographic note by Francisco Cordasco (New York: Dover, 1883 /1951), 386-87.

4. “[N]ot once *I* swear to you will *I* utter your name.” “*I* am she who holds the secret of your name”. Monique Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David La Vay (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 46, 130. Henceforth cited as *W-LB*.

5. *New French feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. introd. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

NOTES TO PART TWO

Chapter 5

FICTION, ALLEGORY, IRONY: THE UNVEILING OF LACOUÉ-LABARTHE (Massimo Verdicchio)

1. See the Editor's Preface, Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), for a note on the essays contained in the volume. The early Lacoue-Labarthe was concerned with the issue of German Romanticism, writing with Jean-Luc Nancy. See *The Literary Absolute. The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988). The later Lacoue-Labarthe is concerned with issues of the subject and, as Treize reminds us, with the "deconstruction" of mimesis (xi).

2. See "The Response of Ulysses," *Topoi* 7: (1988), 155-160. Henceforth cited as *Ulysses*.

3. Blanchot is the inspiration for this paper. See (*LL-SP*, 116 ff).

4. On the issue of irony see F. Schlegel's essay "On Incomprehensibility," in *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. and introd. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971).

5. On this point see Paul de Man, "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 8: (Summer 1982), 761-775. Even though de Man's reading of Hegel's *Aesthetics* follows a different interpretive path, his critical analysis serves as a good corrective to Lacoue-Labarthe's reading which, as I try to point out, veils more than it unveils.

6. *Ibid.*, 774. "Allegory, in conforming with the received opinion of Hegel's day which was, not unproblematically associated with Goethe, is dismissed as barren and ugly (*kahl*)."

7. See (*Lucinde*, par. 146) where the novel is said to do for modern poetry what satire did for Roman literature.

8. See the introduction to (*Lucinde*, 24). "Lucinde—a name derived from the Latin *lux*, meaning light—is Julian's illumination."

Chapter 6

THE POWER OF THE TEXT: LACOUÉ-LABARTHE, RORTY, AND THE LITERARINESS OF PHILOSOPHY (Gary E. Aylesworth)

1. Richard Rorty, "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?," *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 127. Henceforth cited as *R-P2*.

2. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Obliteration," trans. Thomas Trezise (*LL-SP*, 91).

3. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 2. Henceforth cited as *LL-HAP*.

4. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xvi. Henceforth cited as *R-CP*.

5. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

6. See "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?," (*R-P2*, 119-128).
7. Richard Rorty, "Inquiry as Reconstruction," *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 97. Henceforth *R-P1*.
8. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Typography," *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 117. Henceforth cited as *LL-T*.
9. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xvi. Henceforth cited as *R-CIS*.
10. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (New York: Putnam, 1958), 81.

Chapter 7

EDGING THE SUBLIME: BAUDRILLARD AND THE INACCESSIBLE REAL (Basil O'Neill)

1. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Paroxysm: Interviews with Philippe Petit*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1998), 39-402. Henceforth cited as *B-Paroxysm*. Though philosophical language is not ordinary coded informational language, still it is not, I think, anti-prose, a transgression of coded language, as poetry is.
2. Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *Discours, figure* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), 316-18. Henceforth cited as *L-DF*.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music, Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), 11, 76, Henceforth cited as *BT*.
4. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 1984), 81. Henceforth cited as *L-PMC*. "The sublime and the avant-garde," *The Lyotard Reader* ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989), 196-211. Henceforth cited as *L-LR*. "Newman: the instant," (*L-LR*, 240-49) and *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (London: Polity Press, 1991), 136-7. Also Serge Trottein, "Lyotard: Before and After the Sublime," and Hugh J Silverman, "Lyotard and the Events of the Postmodern Sublime," *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (London and New York, Routledge, 2002), 192-200, 222-229. Henceforth cited as *PPS*.
5. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 50. Henceforth cited as *B-SS*.
6. The historical stages of *Symbolic Exchange and Death* cannot be reconciled with those of "The Precession of Simulacra" in (*B-SS*, 6) but neither of these fit with the assumption contained in "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media" contained in the same volume that the loss of meaning in our world is a continuing process. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 51-7. Henceforth cited as *B-SED*.
7. Cf. Lyotard's claim that Descartes's construction tacitly presupposes a sort of "childhood" of vision (*L-DF*, 183-4). Also cf. "Anamnesis of the Visible, or Candour," (*L-LR*, 229-30). Originally in the *Catalogue Adami*, (Paris: Editions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985).
8. "History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth" (*B-SS*, 43).

9. Except, if Kripke is right, and if our notion of a semantic role for sense corresponds to his notion of sense, for a certain range of proper names. Cf. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

10. Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, trans. Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Nieslochowski (New York: Semiotext(e) 1990; London: Pluto Press 1990), 108. henceforth cited as *B-FS*.

11. Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 149. Henceforth cited as *B-PC*.

12. Cf. John Sallis, *Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Henceforth cited as *Sallis*. Michel Haar, "The Joyous Struggle of the Sublime and the Musical Essence of Joy," *Research in Phenomenology*: 25, (1995), 68-89.

13. Cf. Edmund Burke, *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 55-7. Henceforth cited as *Burke*.

14. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Trans. Chris Turner (London, Verso, 2002). Henceforth cited as *B-ST*.

15. Jean Baudrillard, *Art and Artefact*, ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg (London: Sage, 1997), 50.

16. A good extended discussion of this well-canvassed problem concerning the very notion of the Sublime can be found in J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). Specifically, chapters 1, 3 and 5.

17. Letter to Ficker, probably Oct/Nov 1919, printed as an appendix to Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein: with a Memoir*, ed. Paul Engelmann (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 143.

18. See Carter Ratcliff, "The Sublime was then: the art of Barnett Newman," *The Sticky Sublime*, ed. Bill Beckley (New York: Allworth Press, 2001). For a more modernist perspective on Newman's work as sublime (though it may not be incompatible with Lyotard's).

19. Sherrie Levine, "After Brancusi," in Ann Temkin's, *Sherrie Levine: Newborn*, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1993).

Chapter 8

IN THE WAKE OF CRITIQUE:

NOTES FROM THE INSIDE COVER OF

BAUDRILLARD'S *SIMULACRA AND SIMULATION*

(Thomas P. Brockelman)

1. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). Henceforth cited as *B-SS*.

2. See *Fatal Strategies*, in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. and introd. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 186. Henceforth cited as *B-SW*. Excerpt translated by Mark Poster.

3. Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. English translation quoted from J. L. Borges, *A Universal History of Infamy*, where it is attributed to J. A. Suarez Miranda "Travels of Praiseworthy Men (1658)," (London: Penguin Books, 1975). Henceforth cited as *Borges-Infamy*.

4. See Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, (London: Sage, 1998).

5. Strangely, such an obliterating re-writing is actually a precise *reproduction* of the map structure depicted in Borges' fable.

6. See *B-SW* for an example of this rhetorical move in Baudrillard. There, in writing of Elias Canetti's announcement of history's end, Baudrillard speaks of an event which is "no longer an event," which did not occur! (*B-SW*, 191).

7. See (*B-SS*, 1-2). Baudrillard's strange encomium to life in the U.S., *America*, is also worth noting in this regard. In Baudrillard's treatment of it, America (the place) is remarkably like the state urged upon by the erasure of Borges' fable: "America is the original version of modernity. We are the dubbed or subtitled version. America ducks the question of origins; it cultivates no origin or mythical authenticity; it has no past and no founding truth. Having known no primitive accumulation of time, it lives in a perpetual present. Having seen no slow, centuries-long accumulation of a principle of truth, it lives in perpetual simulation, in a perpetual present of signs." Baudrillard, Jean, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1989).

8. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. and introd. Mark Poster (St. Louis, Telos Press, 1975), 114. Henceforth cited as *B-Mirror*.

9. Two postwar continental theories of note exfoliate the idea of a potentially revolutionary or transgressive *mimesis*. First of all, in his *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno discusses the way in which avant-gardist art resists the reduction of the mimetic to the identity logic of late capitalism. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans., ed. and introd. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Also, see Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, where an extensive theory of revolution as *mimesis* emerges. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). Henceforth cited as *K-RPL*.

10. Precisely this point is given considerable theoretical treatment in the work of Slavoj Žižek. For Žižek, postmodern theory, with its various celebrations of the open present, the event, and delirium, forms the perfect ideology for a globalized techno-capitalism, a capitalism no longer bound to the asceticism of earlier historical moments. It's important, though, that Žižek and other members of the Slovenian school are able to reach these conclusions without giving up on either critique or the possibility of political revolution. See, for example, Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology* (London & New York: Verso, 1999). For a more precise account of the relationship between Žižek and the utopia of '68, see my article "The Failure of the Radical Democratic Imaginary: Žižek versus Laclau and Mouffe on Vestigial Utopia," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 29: no. 2, (1, March 2003), 183-208.

NOTES TO PART THREE

Chapter 9 UTOPIA IS HERE: REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNITIES IN BAUDRILLARD AND NANCY (Anne O'Byrne)

1. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. Mark Poster (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975). Henceforth cited as *B-Mirror*.

2. Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," trans. Jeremy Schapiro *Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). Henceforth cited as *H-TRS*.

3. The Descartes I have in mind here is Descartes as read (or misread) by Heidegger, the Descartes who conceives himself as discovering the subject, readymade, in an empty world. The question then comes to be the question of how (or if) this subject can fill and populate the space in which it finds itself, how it can make its world.

4. Of course, Descartes did not himself reach a satisfying resolution to his problem.

5. Mark Poster, "Critical Theory and Technoculture: Habermas and Baudrillard," *Baudrillard: a Critical Reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 68-88. Henceforth cited as *Poster-CTT*.

6. This passes over very quickly an immensely complex and interesting part of Kant scholarship. For a sophisticated account of this matter, particularly in the pre-critical works See Willi Goetschal, *Constituting Critique*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

7. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

8. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulations*, (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981), 23.

9. Anthony King, "A Critique of Baudrillard's Hyperreality: Towards a Sociology of Postmodernism," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 24: no. 6, (1998), 54. Henceforth cited as *CBH*.

10. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1996), 79. Henceforth cited as *ESP*. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are from *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

11. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 75.

12. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 136. Henceforth cited as *SW*.

13. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

14. It would require more space than I have here to investigate more thoroughly what this active reception might mean. It is worth noting Nancy's comment (*ESP*, 92, footnote 1) on his suspicion of those ideologies which claim that people have been brutalized by television, ideologies which he suspects of ignoring the ways in which people use television.

Chapter 10
EDEN FORECLOSED:
LACOUÉ-LABARTHE AND NANCY ON
DREAMING AND IDENTIFICATION
(Bettina Bergo)

1. A version of this essay first appeared in *Disciplining Freud on Religion: Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Gregory Kaplan and William B. Parsons (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010).

2. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, “Le peuple juif ne rêve pas” in *La psychanalyse est-elle une histoire juive?*, ed. Adélie and Jean-Jacques Rassiail (Paris: Le Seuil, 1981). Henceforth cited as *PJNRP*. A shorter English version appeared as “The Unconscious Is Destructured like an Affect,” trans. Brian Holmes, *The Stanford Literature Review* 6: (1989) 191-209. Both versions are cited, where appropriate.

3. Capitalizing the *Father* here signifies that the first identification is relational, with a being as much phantasmatic as phenomenal. The Father, as we know, introduces the differentiation and separation into the mother-child pair if only by being that which causes the mother’s attention and desire to triangulate. Any idea of identification with the mother would have to be later, although Freud wrestled with this question in 1923. Prior to that time, the mother is imbibed, introjected.

4. I am grateful to Dominique Scarfone, author of *Oublier Freud? Mémoire pour la psychanalyse*, (Montreal, Boreal, 1999), for his remarks on *forclusion* (foreclosure): It is the paradoxical quality of what is radically repressed, yet also analytically re-constructible, on which Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy base their interpretation here.

5. Martin Buber, “Bilder von Gut und Böse,” *Werke: Erster Band Schriften zur Philosophie*, Vol. 1, (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1962), 607-650. Henceforth cited as *BGB*. In English, *On the Bible, Eighteen Studies*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 14-21. Henceforth cited as *OB*.

6. See, for example, *Freud, Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 104ff. In German, “Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion,” *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. XVI (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1950), 101-246.

7. See Marie-Lise Roux’s essay “La contrainte à la représentation” *Revue française de psychanalyse Psychanalyse et préhistoire*, ed. A. Fine, R. Perron, and F. Sacco (Paris: PUF, 1994), 31-9.

8. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist in Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), §§25-26. Nietzsche’s argument follows Julius Wellhausen to the effect that, in order to survive the destruction of the first temple, Jews made their god unattainable. If Yahweh began as a typically national god, it would be transformed gradually into a sovereign beyond humanity and history itself. “The old God could no longer do what he formerly could. One should have let him go. What happened? One altered the conception of him: at this price one retained him. Yahweh, the God of ‘justice’—no longer, at one with Israel; [no longer] an expression of national self-confidence . . .” While many of Wellhausen’s theses have been contested, the argument about the evolution of Yahweh appears valid. See Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israëls*, (Berlin: Reimer, 1895), 423ff.

9. We should contrast human demonism with what Buber calls ‘divine demonism’, in “Der Glaube der Propheten,” *Werke: Zweiter Band Schriften Zur Bibel*, Vol. II, (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1964), 231-484. Henceforth cited as *GP*. Here he comments on a passage from the J manuscript in which all distance between Yahweh and Moses disappears as Yahweh seeks to make Moses into his *Blutsbräutigam* (blood betrothed). See Martin

Burber “Heiliges Ereignis,” (*GP*, 290) and (*OB*, 72).

10. Emmanuel Levinas echoes this rabbinic insight in “And God created Woman” *Du Sacré au Saint; cinq nouvelles lectures talmudiques*, (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 122-48. In English, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 161-77.

11. See Robert Gibbs, “Seeing the Unique God: Humor and the Sublime in Jewish Aesthetics,” *Man and God in Hermann Cohen’s Philosophy*, ed. G. Gigliotti, I. Kajon, and A. Poma (Padua, Italy: Cedam, 2003), 219-232. Specifically, 222.

12. Marc Richir, “Affectivité sauvage, affectivité humaine : animalité et tyrannie,” *Épokhè 6 : L’animal politique*, eds. Miguel Abensour and Étienne Tassin (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1996), 75-115.

13. This irony is not bitter; it would be destroyed if the expulsion were tragic, that is, if it were somehow the goal or perfection of finite creatures actually to become omniscient and temporally in-finite. See Buber (*BGB*, 615) and (*OB*, 19).

14. Immanuel Levinas, *On Escape/ De l’évasion*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 64.

15. Sigmund Freud, “Letter to Fliess No. 75,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 1, trans. under the supervision of Joan Riviere ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 269. Henceforth cited as *Freud-SE*.

16. Buber understood this clearly. See *Le chemin de l’homme d’après la doctrine hassidique (Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre)*, trans. Wolfgang Heumann (Monaco: du Rocher, 1989).

Chapter 11

THE IRRESISTABLE SUFFERING OF OTHERS: TRAGEDY, DEATH AND THE SPECTATOR (Robin Schott)

1. Sigmund Freud, “Psychopathic Characters on the Stage,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 7, trans. under the supervision of Joan Riviere ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 305. Henceforth cited as *Freud-SE*.

2. Sigmund Freud, “Why War?,” *Collected Papers*, Vol. 5, ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 284. Henceforth cited as *Freud-CP*.

3. “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” 289-90. Henceforth cited as *Freud-CP*.

4. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933), 100. Henceforth cited as *LL-SP*.

5. Webster’s *New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 1935.

6. (*Freud-SE*, 306).

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golfing (Garden City: Doubleday Books, 1956), 10. Henceforth cited as *N-BT*.

8. Houston A. Baker, “Scene...Not Heard,” *Reading Rodney King; Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 42. Henceforth cited as *RRK*.

9. “Introduction,” (*RRK*, 1-14).

10. See Ervin Staub's discussion of the role of bystanders in *The Roots of Evil; The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Staub argues that the role of the bystander can significantly impact the fate of the victim, depending on whether the bystanders are willing to tolerate the persecution of a group or not.

Chapter 12

THE SUBJECTS OF PHILOSOPHY: "THE WE" AND US (James R. Watson)

1. A reference to Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie Libidinale*, (Paris: Minuit, 1975). Also to Iain Hamilton Grant's "Introduction," to the English translation of *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), xviii-xx.

2. Martin Heidegger, "Das Verfallen und die Geworfenheit," *Sein und Zeit*, 11th edition (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967).

3. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 76-78. Henceforth cited as *LL-SP*.

4. As reported by Otto Pöggeler, "Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Politics," *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics*, eds. Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 135.

5. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 23. "The 'return of the living dead' is, on the other hand, the reverse of the proper funeral rite. While the latter implies a certain reconciliation, an acceptance of loss, the return of the dead signifies that they cannot find their place in the text of tradition."

6. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 367.

7. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 115-116. Henceforth cited as *LL-HAP*.

8. A reference to Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflection on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

9. James R. Watson, "Why Heidegger Wasn't Shocked by the Holocaust," *History of European Ideas*, 14/4, (1992). "Heidegger's Essentials: Appropriations and Expropriations," *Martin Heidegger and the Holocaust*, eds. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 167-179. *Between Auschwitz and Tradition: Postmodern Reflections on the Task of Thinking*, ed. Alan Rosenberg (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994).

10. Rainer Alisch has argued this very persuasively in his "Das 'Reden' über das 'Schweigen. Heideggers 'Schweigen' zum Holocaust—Anmerkungen zur Rezeption," *Vom Vorurteil zur Vernichtung? "Erinnern" für Morgen*, ed. Erich Geldbach (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1995), 134-146. Translated as "Heidegger's 'Silence' about the Holocaust," *Martin Heidegger and the Holocaust*, eds. Alan Rosenberg and Alan Milchman (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1996), 127-149.

11. Lacoue-Labarthe makes no mention of Sloterdijk's *Der Denker auf der Bühne*:

Nietzsches Materialismus, which was published in 1986, but clearly repeats Sloterdijk's gesture. By placing Heidegger-Nietzsche on stage, Lacoue-Labarthe's drama-turgical posing actually complicates Sloterdijk's dramatic tangle of Nietzschean reflection games. Peter Solterdijk, *Der Denker auf der Bühne: Nietzsches Materialismus*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986).

12. Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 5. I do not know, however, if this passage from *Heidegger et 'les juifs'* is one of the reflections that Lyotard will make a partial retraction from. See Avital Ronnell, *Finitude's Score: Essays for the End of the Millennium*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 268.

13. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche IV: Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 224. Cf. *Nietzsche, II*, (Pfullingen: Neske Verlag, 1961), 366. "Das Sein selbst überwinden wollen heiÙe, das Wesen des Menschen aus der Angel heben." "Unhinging the essence of man" is not exactly the same as "turning the essence of man upside down." The latter sense would have a definite Nietzschean flavor, whereas the former would seem much closer to Heidegger's sense of what Nietzsche's thinking is capable of. This complicitous ambiguity should not be lost here.

14. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 226/369.

15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1968), 134. *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Banden*, Vol. 6, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967-77), 191.

16. See "Heidegger's Essentials: Appropriations and Expropriations."

17. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 134-135.

18. See Jacques Lacan, "D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose," *Écrits*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 531-583.

19. In Part Two of *The Compulsion to Confess*, Theodor Reik notes the manner by which instinctual impulses are modified by education (culture and history) and thus assume the character of a confession. See Theodor Reik, *The Compulsion to Confess: On the Psychoanalysis of Crime and Punishment*, trans. Mrs. Ernest Jones and Dr. Norbert Rie (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), 193-196.

20. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 75.

21. See *Symposium*, 176.

22. See Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, Vol. 1, trans. Peter Gay (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 212-213.

23. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 59.

24. I am, not just of course, playing Merleau-Ponty's terms otherwise than they are read by purifiers. An example:

Philosophy, precisely as "Being speaking within us," expression of the mute experience by itself is creation. A creation that is at the same time a reintegration of Being: for it is not a creation in the sense of one of the commonplace *Gebilde* that history fabricates: it knows itself to be a *Gebilde* and wishes to surpass itself as pure *Gebilde*, to find again its origin. It is hence a creation in a radical sense: a creation that is at

the same time an adequation, the only way to obtain an adequation. ... Being is what requires creation of us for us to experience it. *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 197.

A purist reading will here focus on adequation and withdraw/obscure the sense of the required creation, the inscription of Being which is literature/writing.

25. Theodore W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), especially the chapter “Schein und Ausdruck.”

26. Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 81. Henceforth cited as *Schlegel. The “Athenaeum Fragments,”* of which this is one, were composed between 1798 and 1800, before the first publications of Hegel’s absolute idealism. However, in hindsight, it applies to Hegel and his failure to ever criticize the spirit of his “own” philosophy.

27. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 43. Henceforth cited as *H-LPWH*.

28. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Werkausgabe*, Vols. 3-4, ed., Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1956), 324 (B374/A317).

29. *Kritik*, Vol. 4, 687 (B848/A820). Here I am quoting Norman Kemp Smith’s translation.

30. In a purely parenthetical sense we might note that while interpreting one of his own dreams, Freud relates the following anecdote: “A young man who was a great admirer of feminine beauty was talking once—so the story went—of the good-looking wet-nurse who had suckled him when he was a baby: ‘I’m sorry,’ he remarked, ‘that I didn’t make a better use of my opportunity.’ I was in the habit of quoting this anecdote to explain the factor of ‘deferred action’ [Nachträglichkeit] in the mechanism of the psychoneuroses”—*The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 204-205.

31. This is Jesse Nash’s analysis of Lyotard’s, *Heidegger et “les juifs”* in a paper “A Family Affair: Heidegger, Lyotard, and Repression” presented at the 1994 International Association of Philosophy and Literature conference in Edmonton, Canada.

32. Lacoue-Labarthe very carefully dissociates his notion of ‘figure’ from Lyotard’s ‘figural’. See *LL-SP*, footnote 36 of Chapter 5, 182-183. However, compare what Lacoue-Labarthe says here with his attempt in “Catastrophe” to link Celan’s thinking about poetry with Heidegger’s contra Levinas. See *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), esp. 150-151.

33. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophische Autobiographie*, (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1977), 101. I owe knowledge of this reference to George Leaman, whose work at the Berlin Document Center has resulted in several extremely valuable publications for anyone concerned with Heidegger’s thought and politics. I would especially recommend his *Heidegger im Kontext: Gesamtüber-blick zum NS-Engagement der Universitätsphilosophen*, (Hamburg: Argument-Verlag, 1993).

34. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972), 168-169. Henceforth cited as *Horkheimer and Adorno*.

35. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, 12. What follows, the linking of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence with Levinas’s notion of responsi-

bility, the substitution of one for another, makes neighbors of Nietzsche and Levinas.

36. Lacoue-Labarthe quoting from Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 184.

37. Jean-Luc Nancy has written: “Community is given to us with being and as being, well in advance of all our projects, desires, and undertakings. At bottom, it is impossible for us to lose community. A society may be as little communitarian as possible; it could not happen that in the social desert there would not be, however slight, even inaccessible, some community. We cannot not compear. Only the fascist masses tend to annihilate community in the delirium of an incarnated communion”—*The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, *et. al.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 35. I would also recommend a very close reading of Avital Ronell’s discussion of what’s at stake in her chapter “The Differends of Man” in *Finitude’s Score: Essays for the End of the Millennium*.

NOTES TO PART FOUR

Chapter 13 9/11 AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE UNREPRESENTABLE: CHORA, ALEPH AND MEDIA/TION (Damian Hey)

1. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 25-30. Henceforth cited as *K-PL*.
2. Eric Darton, *Divided We Stand: a Biography of New York's World Trade Center*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999). Henceforth cited as *Darton*.
3. Eric Darton, "Introduction," http://www.ericdarton.net/a_living_archive/html/af-termenu.html. Written January 2002. Consulted 3 October 2010.
4. Jorges Luis Borges, "The Aleph," *The Aleph and Other Stories*, trans. and ed. Norman Thomas di Giovanni in collaboration with Jorges Luis Borges (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970). Henceforth cited as *Borges-Aleph*.
5. David Johnson and Shmuel Ross, "World Trade Center History: Magnificent Buildings Graced Skyline," Information Please Database, Pearson Education, 2007, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/wtc.html>.
6. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," *Writing and Difference*, trans. introd. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 279. Henceforth cited as *D-SSP*.
7. John B. Goddard, "The City in the Global Information Economy," *The Rise and Fall of Great Cities*, ed. R. Lawton (New York: Belhaven Press, 1989), 155.

Chapter 14 AMERIKA (KAFKA)/ AMERICA (BAUDRILLARD): MODERN MEDIA AND TELE-TACTILITY (Katherine Rudolph)

1. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations: The Precession of Simulacra*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 28. Henceforth cited as *B-SS*.
2. Franz Kafka, *Amerika*, trans. Edwin Muir (New York: New Directions, 1946), xii (preface). Henceforth cited as *K-AK*.
3. Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso Books, 1989). Henceforth cited as *B-A*.
4. The fact that the virtual cannot be opposed in any conventional sense to the real also accounts for the difference between the virtual and the possible in Deleuze—the possible is always determined in relations to the actual.
5. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 238. Henceforth cited as *Benjamin*.
6. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, (Boston: MIT Press, 1994), 16-17.

Chapter 15
DRESSING LIKE HITLER:
REALITY, SIMULATION AND HYPERREALITY
(Martin Weiss)

1. For an account of the whole affair, see: *Falter: Stadtzeitung Wien* [Vienna city weekly newspaper], Nr. 10/00, 13-14.

2. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in *Jean Baudrillard, Simulation and Simulacra*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 1-42. Henceforth cited as *B-SS*.

3. Jean Baudrillard, "Requiem pour les media," in *Jean Baudrillard, Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 200-228. Henceforth cited as *B-Critique*.

4. Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, trans. Bernard and Caroline Schutze, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, New York 1988), 34. Henceforth cited as *B-EC*.

5. See Martin G. Weiss, *Gianni Vattimo. Einführung*, (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2003).

6. Gianni Vattimo, *Oltre l'interpretazione: il significato dell'ermeneutica per la filosofia*, (Rome: Laterza, 1995), 116. Henceforth cited as *V-OL*.

7. Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," *Martin Heidegger, Holzwege*, (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980), 73-110.

8. Gianni Vattimo, *La società trasparente*, (Milano: Garzanti, 1989), 39. Henceforth cited as *V-ST*.

9. Gianni Vattimo and Wolfgang Welsch, *Medien-Welten Wirklichkeiten*, (München: Fink Verlag, 1997), 17. Henceforth cited as *V-MWW*.

10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung [Twilight of the Gods]*, in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), Division 6, Vol. 3, 80.

11. Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere Postmoderne Moderne*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1987), 149.

12. See Peter V. Zima, *Moderne / Postmoderne : Gesellschaft, Philosophie und Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1997), 89-107. Henceforth cited as *Zima*.

13. Jean Baudrillard, *Echange symbolique et la mort*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

Chapter 16
MOVED BY APPEARANCES:
METAPHOR, METAMORPHOSIS AND IRONY
(Henk Oosterling)

1. See Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard. From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), 155, 215. Henceforth cited as *Kellner*.

2. Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, trans. Philip Beitchman & W. G. J. Nieslochowski (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990). Henceforth cited as *B-FS*.

3. Baudrillard is not using the concept 'object' here in a conventional sense. He does not see it as an objectified thing inextricably linked to the subject, but as an elusive entity which disconnects subject from objects. There are no indications as to whether he is here

referring to the Kantian *Ding-an-sich* or to Heidegger's *Ding*. It bears a closer resemblance to Lacan's 'chose'.

4. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Sage Publications, 1993). Henceforth cited as *B-SED*.

5. See Henk Oosterling, "Radical Mediocrity as Revolutionary Act. On 'Authentic Fundamentalism' of Inter-esse," *Über Zizek*, eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Erik Vogt (Vienna: Kant + Turia, 2004).

6. Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil. Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict (London/New York: Verso, 1993). Henceforth cited as *B-TE*.

7. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 24.

8. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits I*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 260. Henceforth cited as *Écrits I*. (my translation)

9. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne," *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, Vol. 1, 880. (my translation).

10. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, trans. David Farrell Krell (London/Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 127, 132 and 140. Henceforth cited as *BW*.

11. Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (London: The Harvester Press, 1982). Henceforth cited as *D-Margins*.

12. Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. Chris Turner (London/New York: Verso, 1996), 25. Henceforth cited as *B-PC*.

13. Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 48.

14. See also Jacques Derrida, "Le retrait de la métaphore," *Poésie 7*: (1977/1978), 103-126.

15. In my opinion, Foucault's 'nominalist' approach, his emphasis on the 'strategic' character of his new concept of power, and his introduction of the 'truth game' are open to an entirely different interpretation, which refutes Baudrillard's criticisms. See: Henk Oosterling, *De opstand van het lichaam. Over verzet en zelfverving bij Foucault en Bataille*, (Amsterdam: SUA, 1989), 124.

16. Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer (London: MacMillan, 1990). Henceforth cited as *Seduction*.

17. Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, trans. Bernard & Caroline Schutze., ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1988), 46. Henceforth cited as *B-EC*.

18. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stuart (Hamburg: The Viking Press, 1963). Henceforth cited as *Canetti*. Although Baudrillard does not cite this work explicitly, he regularly refers to Canetti with approval.

19. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 129-41. Henceforth cited as *B-SS*.

20. See for a full exploration of the primacy of form in both Japanese and Western society against the background of French philosophy of differences my essay on Zizek (note 5) and also Henk Oosterling, "ICTheology and local interesse. Desacralizing Derrida's chora," *Essays zu Jacques Derrida und Gianni Vattimo, Religion*, ed. Ludwig Nagl (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2001), 109-130. "A Culture of the Inter. Japanese Notions of Ma and Basho," *Sensus communis in Multi- and Intercultural Perspective: On the Possibility of Common Judgements in Arts and Politics*, eds Heinz Kimmerle & Henk

Oosterling (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 61-84.

21. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. Chris Turner (London/New York: Verso, 2003), 52.

22. Jean Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange*, trans. Chris Turner (London/New York: Verso, 2001). Henceforth cited as *B-IE*.

23. "Interview with Baudrillard," *Trespassers W*, 3/4, 1985/6, 10.

24. "De implosie van de betekenis in de media" (The implosion of meaning in the media), *Skrien*, 132, 1983/4, 11.

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- _____. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. Ed. and introd. Mark Poster. Trans. James Benedict. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1988.
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Contributors

Gary E. Aylesworth is Professor of Philosophy at Eastern Illinois University and Co-Director of The International Philosophical Seminar. His publications include *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and Its Differences*, co-edited with Hugh J. Silverman (SUNY Press, 1990), and translations of Martin Heidegger's *Basic Concepts* (Indiana University Press, 1993) and *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (1920-1963)* (Humanity Books, 2003). He has also published articles on Heidegger, Nietzsche, Gadamer, Lyotard, Derrida, and Postmodernism.

Bettina Bergo is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Université de Montréal. She translated three works of Levinas, Marlène Zarader's *The Unthought Debt: Heidegger and the Hebraic Heritage* (Stanford, 2006) co-translated *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida* (Fordham, 2007) and J.-L. Nancy's *Dis-enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (Fordham, 2008), and most recently, Didier Franck's *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God* (Northwestern, 2012). Bergo is the author of *Levinas between Ethics and Politics* and co-editor of several collections, notably *Levinas and Nietzsche: After the Death of a Certain God* (Columbia, 2008), *Trauma: Reflections on Experience and Its Other* (SUNY, 2009), *Levinas's Contribution to Contemporary Thought* (New School for Social Research Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal, 1999), *Foucault and 'les sciences de l'âme'* (PhaenEx, Vol. V, 2010), among others.

Thomas P. Brockelman is Professor of Philosophy at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, USA. He is the author, most recently, of *Zizek and Heidegger: the Question Concerning Techno-Capitalism* (Continuum, 2009) but also of *The Frame and Mirror: on Collage and the Postmodern* (Northwestern, 2001) and of numerous articles in aesthetics, psychoanalytic theory and political theory.

Alina Clej is Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor. She specializes in nineteenth and twentieth-century French and Francophone Literature, and in European Culture. She received a B.A./M.A. in English and Romanian from the University of Bucharest (1974), and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley (1986). She is the author of *A Genealogy of the Modern Self: Thomas De Quincey and the Intoxication of Writing* (Stanford, 1995), and the editor of Vol. 10 of the Works of Thomas De Quincey (Pickering & Chatto, 2006). She has written a variety of articles on translation and modernity, surrealism, and politics, French thought in the United States. She is currently working on a book project on time and modernity.

Drew A. Hyland is Charles A. Dana Professor of Philosophy at Trinity College and John Findlay Distinguished Visiting Professor at Boston University. He has published books in Greek Philosophy, Continental European Philosophy, and Philosophy of Sport, including *Questioning Platonism: Continental Interpretations of Plato* (SUNY Press, 2004). His most recent book is *Plato and the Question of Beauty* (Indiana, 2008).

Anne O'Byrne is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Stony Brook University. Her work is in political philosophy and ontology, and engages a number of thinkers in twentieth century and contemporary continental philosophy—Heidegger, Arendt, Dilthey, Derrida, and Jean-Luc Nancy—on a range of issues—identity, natality, embodiment, education, history, gender and genocide. Publications include *Natality and Finitude* (Indiana, 2010), a variety of articles, and translations of Nancy's *Being Singular Plural* (translated with Robert Richardson, Stanford, 1996) and *Corpus II* (Fordham, 2013).

Basil O'Neill retired from the University of Dundee in 2002. He is currently Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St. Andrews. He has published papers on ethics, philosophy of language, Derrida and Greek Philosophy, and edited and contributed chapters to *The European Mosaic*, on aspects of contemporary Europe. He is presently writing a book on Plato.

Henk Oosterling is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, where he has taught philosophy of difference, dialectics, and philosophy of art since 1985. His academic research focuses on intermediality and interculturality. He has written and edited several books. In 1996 he was the recipient of the Erasmus Research Award. Between 2001 and 2005, Oosterling was a board member of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature. He is the founder and director a long term educational urban renovation program in Rotterdam called Rotterdam Skillcity. This emancipatory project aims at ecoliteracy, introducing twenty-first-century craftsmanship into the school curriculum based on the philosophical insights of Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Arendt. (See, www.vakmanstad.nl). For this work he was awarded the Rotterdam Laurens Coin (2008) and the national Van Praag Reward (3013). His most recent book on this discursive practice is *ECO3. Refraction* (Jap Sam Books, 2013).

Stephen David Ross is Alfred North Whitehead Fellow of the European Graduate School at Saas-Fee, Switzerland, and Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy, Interpretation, and Culture and Comparative Literature at Binghamton University, where he has taught for over forty years. He has written over thirty books, many around the themes of uncertainty, impossibility, mystery, and

unaccountability. His recent work, *Enchanting: Beyond Disenchantment* (Global Academic Publishing, 2013) is on enchanting, beyond accounting, and betraying, the nonidentity of every identity with itself. His latest books, with Atropos Press, are *Asking, for Telling, by Doing, As if Betraying* (2012); *Unsettling: Asking, Telling, Doing, Betraying* (2012); and *Betraying Derrida, For Life, Perhaps* (2012). He has also written a book-length novel, *A Philosophy Fiction*.

Katherine Rudolph is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Rhode Island College and a Research Affiliate at the Pembroke Center of Brown University. She received her M.Phil in Philosophy from Yale University and her PhD from the Humanities Center of the Johns Hopkins University in 1997. She has completed a book length manuscript, *This Body of My Dreams: Descartes and Augustine on the Body of Language: Linguistic Constructivism in Historical Perspective*. She has published articles on Augustine and Descartes, as well as on topics in twentieth century continental philosophy. She has also written on issues in contemporary art.

Robin May Schott is Senior Researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies, in the section for Peace, Risk and Violence. Among her recent edited books are *Feminist Philosophy and the Problem of Evil* (Indiana, 2007), and *Birth, Death, and Femininity; Philosophies of Embodiment* (Indiana, 2010). She is also co-editor with Dorte Marie Søndergaard of *School Bullying; New Theories in Context* (Cambridge, 2014). She works in social and political philosophy and ethics, with a focus on issues of conflict, violence war, and gender—including mass war rape. She was also professor at the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University on the research project “Exploring Bullying in Schools.”

Hugh J. Silverman (1945-2013) was Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Literary & Cultural Studies at Stony Brook University. He was the Executive Director of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL) and the Co-Director of the International Philosophical Seminar in Alto Adige, Italy. He held visiting professorships at the universities of Vienna and Klagenfurt (Austria), Sidney, Tasmania, and La Trobe (Australia), Torino and Rome (Italy), Warwick and Leeds (UK), Helsinki and Tampere (Finland), and Nice (France). He also was Fulbright Distinguished Chair at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. He is the author of *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (Routledge, 1994, translated into German, Italian, and Arabic) and *Inscriptions: After Phenomenology and Structuralism* (2nd ed. Northwestern UP, 1997). His publications further include over a hundred articles and book chapters in continental philosophy, in particular in the areas of aesthetics, and cultural and social theory, several edited and co-edited volumes and a number of book series, most importantly *Continental Philosophy* (Routledge) and *Textures: Philosophy, Literature, Culture* (Lexington).

Massimo Verdicchio is Professor of Italian and Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta. He has written on Dante and Croce and many articles on Italian literature and theory. His translation of Mario Perniola's *20th century Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury, 2011) was the last work in the series at that press to be edited by Hugh J. Silverman.

Damian Ward Hey is Professor of English at Molloy College on Long Island, where he teaches literary theory and modern and postmodern literature. He specializes in the writings of James Joyce and Thomas Pynchon. In addition, he is the co-founder and editor in chief of and/or, an international print journal of experimental literature and graphic arts (www.and-or.org) and the executive editor of Ars Omnia Press (www.arsomnia.org). He received his doctorate in Comparative Literature from Stony Brook in 1996.

James R. Watson is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Loyola University, New Orleans. His publications include *Louisiana Labor from Slavery to "Right-to-Work"* (University Press of America, 1985), *Thinking With Pictures* (Art Review Press, 1990), *Between Auschwitz and Tradition* (Rodopi, 1994), *Portraits of American Continental Philosophers* (Indiana, 1999), co-editor, *Contemporary Portrayals of Auschwitz* (Humanity, 2000), editor, *Metacide: In Pursuit of Excellence* (Rodopi, 2010). He is President of the Society for the Philosophic Study of Genocide and the Holocaust (SPSGH) and editor of the Rodopi series Holocaust and Genocide Studies (HGS). He and his wife live in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. He can be contacted at profjrwatson@me.com.

Martin G. Weiss is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Klagenfurt and working on the bioethical and biopolitical implications of biotechnologies. He collaborates with the Interdisciplinary Research Platform Life-Science-Governance of the University of Vienna, and is co-director of the trilateral ELSA-GEN Project DNA and Immigration: Exploring the Social, Political and Ethical Implications of Genetic Testing for Family Reunification. His publications include: "Strange DNA. The rise of DNA analysis for family reunification and its ethical implications" in *Genetics, Society and Politics Journal*, Vol. 7 (2011), 1-19; "Dangerous Affinities. Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt and the Specter of a Deconstructivist Theodicy" in *Neighbors and Neighborhoods: Living Together in the German-Speaking World*. Ed. by Yael Almong & Erik Born. Newcastle. Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012, 20-37; "What's wrong with Biotechnology? Gianni Vattimo's Interpretation of Science, Technology and the Media" in *Between Nihilism and Politics. The Hermeneutics of Gianni Vattimo*. SUNY Press, 2010, 241-257; "Die Auflösung der Menschlichen Natur" in *Bios und Zoe. Die menschliche Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Hrsg. von Martin G. Weiss. Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 2009, 34-55.