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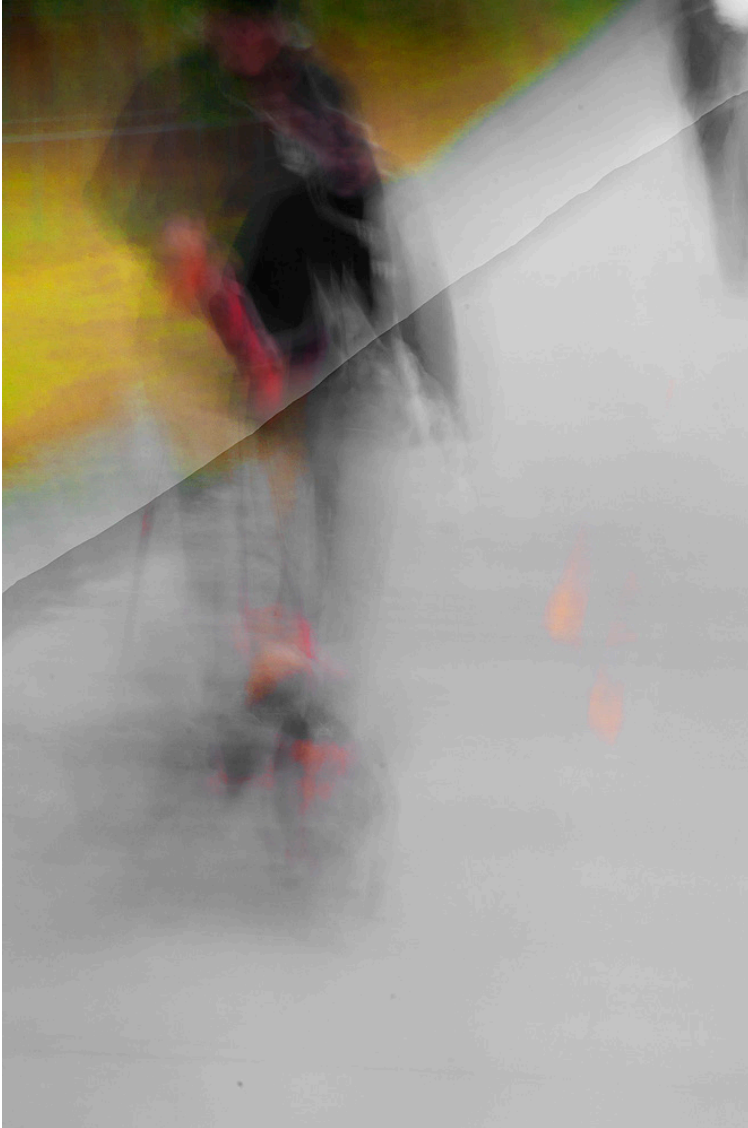
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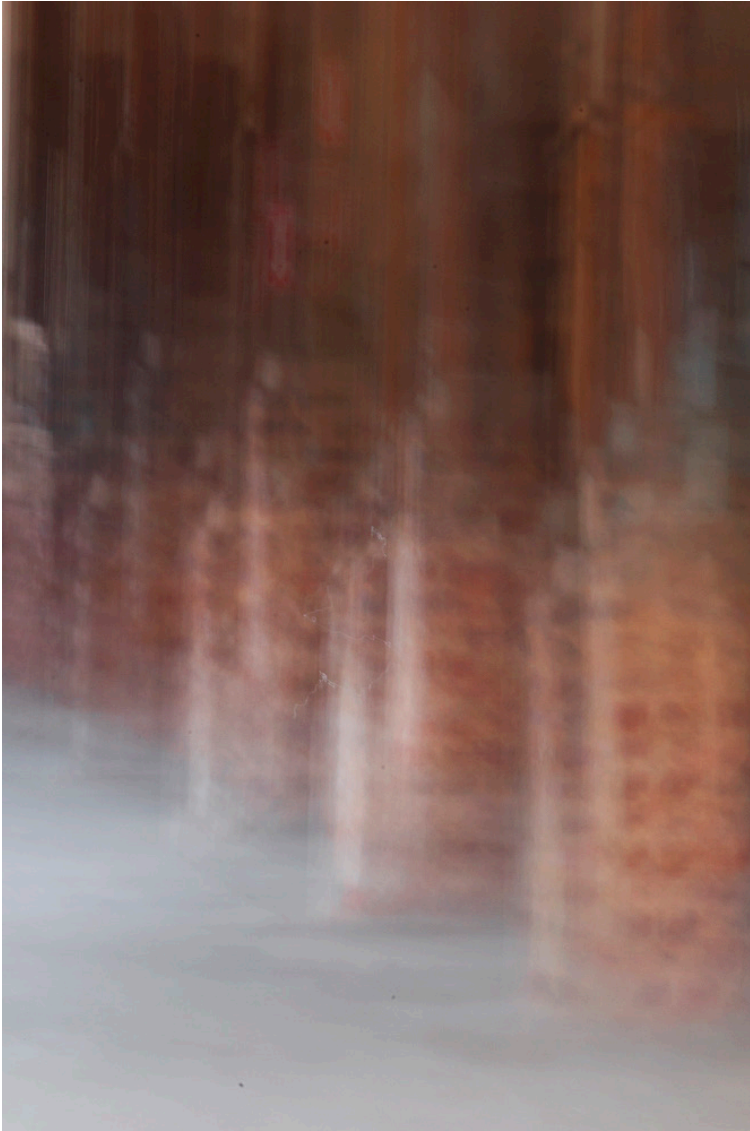
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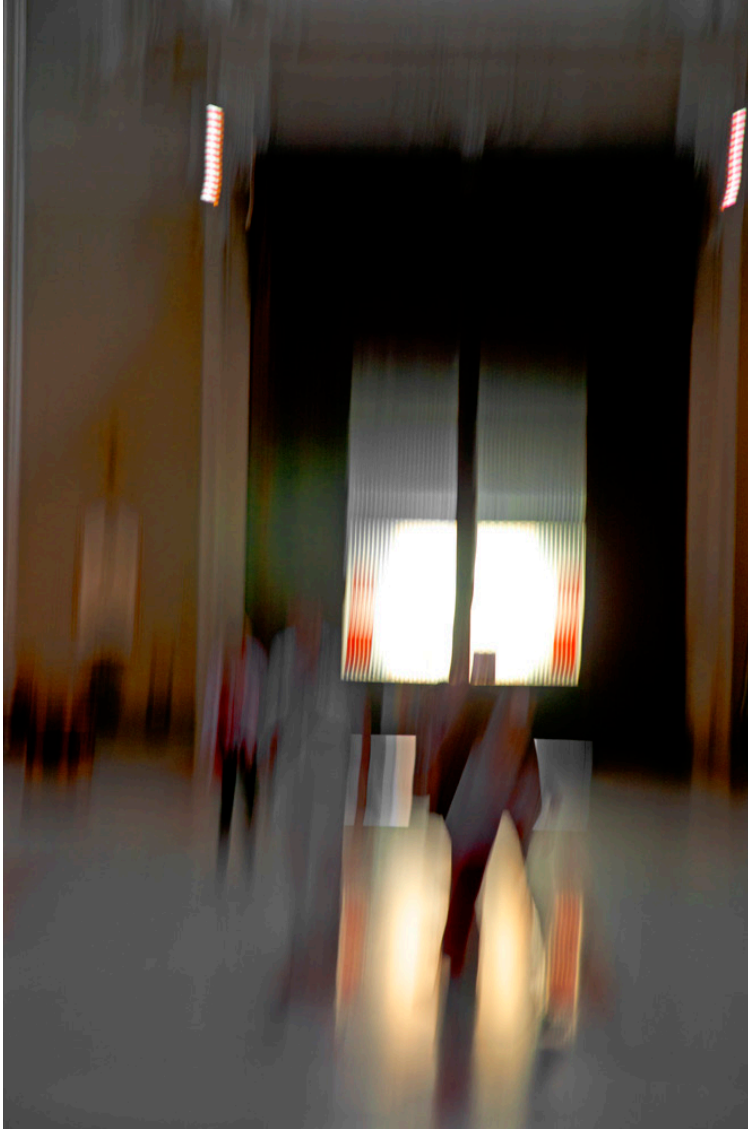
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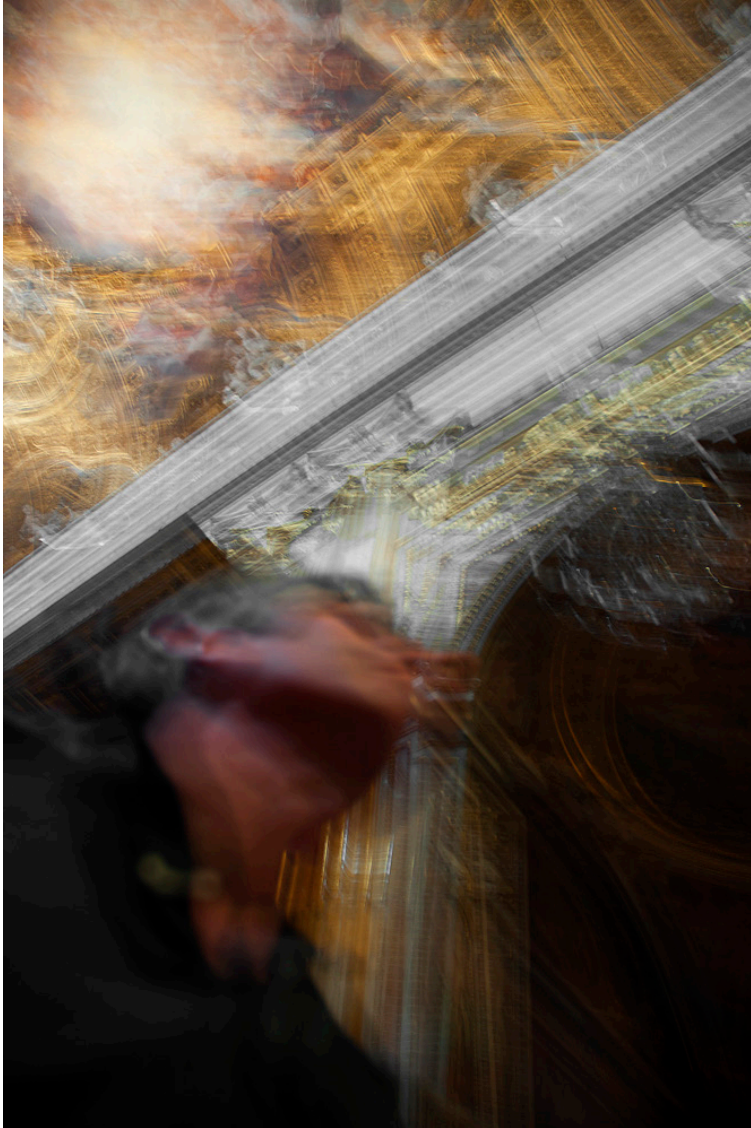
Articles

You Can't Take It with You: On Leaving Emotions Out of Political Life

Jérôme Melançon and Veronika Reichert

Abstract

Contemporary democratic theory, in its focus on the distinction between a private and a public sphere, tends to exclude emotions from political life. Arendt, Habermas, and Angus present critical theories of political action and deliberation that demand that emotions be left behind in favour of a narrower rationality. On the basis of a first step toward incorporating emotions into political life as accomplished by Martha Nussbaum – despite its limitations – and of a second step taken by Sara Ahmed, an outline of a theory of emotions becomes possible, and brings into question the distinction between private and public life. Emotions act as motivations that accompany every instance of participation or for non-participation, be it because of apathy or of disengagement.

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It is chiefly emotions that are left behind and excluded when we enter into a bounded public sphere. We are accustomed to think of politics as a domain: a gated territory with specific points of entry that belongs to those who live there, in fantastic white or copper-roofed buildings from another epoch. In speaking of political life, we use the analogy of spheres: we jump from one to another; we keep part of our lives private; we are made to see part of our lives, problems, and aspirations as ours only; and we insist on our liberty to choose on private matters, in isolation from the interference or domination of others. We are possessive, jealous, of what is ours, of what we own, just as politicians become possessive of their own right and capacity to decide and to act publically. It is important, then,

to ask the question of the relevance of such images and of the underlying distinction in political life: what we take with us and what we leave behind when we enter into politics affects the manner in which political decision and action will take place. In this article we suggest that the metaphor of an "entrance" into politics is inadequate.

More specifically, we argue that in order to recognize the place and role of emotions as motivations throughout political life, we must reevaluate the bounded view of the public sphere. We present three models of the passage from private to public, ensuing from the drawing of the boundaries of the public sphere and the characterization of politics and publicity that ensues.

In the first model, we only bring our reason with us. Hannah Arendt in her consideration of the publicity of action and Jürgen Habermas in his work on the public sphere, as well as Ian Angus, who brings their insights together, provide us with an attempt to give as much meaning and value as possible to democratic political life through a focus on the publicity of actions, which leaves emotions aside as strictly private. To fully understand this model, we begin with a description of the publicity and public sphere that underlie it. In the second model, we bring our body and our emotions into politics, but we must translate them into a universal language. Martha Nussbaum expands the scope of emotions, but presents them as judgments that need to be translated into actions: they are given an important but subordinated role in political life through their expression into actions. In the third model, we begin with our reason, our body, and our emotions, and we show others what we are perceiving and experiencing in an attempt to expand their perspective and establish common ground. This model focuses on emotions as they accompany action – but also as they point to a variety of perspectives due to different experiences and perceptions of the same reality.

We will conclude with the idea, emerging from these analyses, that the space of politics can be seen as a transversal space in which we are always located – a space in which we are more or less constricted and able to act; a space opened by participatory practices just as much as it is closed by exclusivist practices, and in which emotions motivate us not in terms of spurring actions, but of sustaining them and changing with them. To illustrate this conclusion, we will come back to the question of political action central to the bounded view of the public sphere, and create a distinction between apathy and disengagement as tied to different emotional dispositions toward politics.

1. Leaving Emotions Out

1.A. The Boundaries of the Public Sphere

Hannah Arendt, and after her Habermas and Angus, describe politics as a process that has its own worth, regardless of the results of any specific action. Political deliberation and action – which are two figures of the same process – take place in a specifically political, public space. In this space, we form specifically political communities of belonging, resulting from debate in common and action in concert. Such communities are distinct from the communities into which we are born and to which we

belong as a result of chance. Ethnic, national, cultural, and linguistic communities, like communities based on gender, class, or ability, can then be seen as communities tied to *what* we are, communities to which we are ascribed and to which we always already belong and from which we cannot easily separate ourselves. Political communities emerge instead through the creation of *who* we are, on what we have done and are attempting to do, and involve adhesion to common rules of deliberations and action such as constitutions: they are communities of action, often labeled social movements, communities we choose and into which we are born as political actors. We define who we are through our actions, while what we are is always already present for us.

In order to better see the phenomenon of action and thus to rehabilitate active life (the *vita activa*) against Western philosophy's tendency to favour contemplation (the *vita contemplativa*), Arendt focuses on the materiality of action: that is, on its consequences, on its products, as distinguished from the products of labour and of work (as in the examples of the baker and the carpenter, respectively). The distinction between the materiality of such products aimed at consumption or at giving an orientation to everyday life, and the materiality of political action, which is the creation and the occupancy of a space where we can come together in a durable manner, is mirrored in her distinction between economics and politics.

Economic life in general, through labour and work, has the function of maintaining *what* we are: through them we collectively look after our life, our habits, and our practices. Yet against this background of everything that escapes us, that is beyond our control, and that we have received – our culture, our gender, our ethnicity, our class, our capabilities, in other words, all that constitutes our materiality – we can also *show* who we really are, who we make ourselves to be, as the person who has

undertaken a specific course of action. Politics consequently consists in leaving the economic realm of the reproduction and protection of life (the rules and norms, *nomos*, of the home, *oikos*) in order to act upon that realm along with those with whom we choose to act in concert, the *polis*.

While action has its own worth, regardless of its consequences, these consequences do play a role in defining not only the action but also the actor. Action – be it in deeds or in words, and usually through the interplay of both – answers the question of *who* a person is, on the basis of what she has done and said, and so might do and say in the future. Action supposes that we choose not *what* we are, but rather *who* we are and *with whom* we will act. As we come together, we create power and heighten our capacity to transform the space in which we live and our relationships with each other[1]. As we will see, the materiality of action and politics in general is thus what we show and what appears in public as a basis for our creation of new communities for action in concert.

Drawing further inspiration from the work of Hannah Arendt and commenting directly on Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere, Ian Angus develops an explicitly democratic position by arguing that that all people can rule themselves through processes of discussion, debate, and decision making[2]. Democratic action is thus a specific kind of action as Arendt more generally defined it; democracy is a "practice involving participants' very sense of themselves and their relations to others"[3]. The foundational idea underlying democracy is "the ideal that all those who are affected by a decision should be able to participate meaningfully in a public interchange that leads to making the decision."[4]

Angus adds a second foundational layer to democracy, which consists in the necessity, for such meaningful public participation to be possible, for participants to create a common identity which they can adopt, allowing for a common way of speaking for the expression of that identity, and thus identify with each other[5]. In other words, for democracy to be possible, we must create commonality with others in society[6] and the individual person must identify with the larger group and its goals[7].

On the basis of such commonality and belonging, democracy becomes possible not as a regime, but rather as a process of deliberation and action in common. Democracy is "the processes of public decision-making to which economic, social and cultural institutions must be subjected in order to be legitimate and binding upon citizens"[8]. As democracy can only be an ongoing process, institutions must also continuously adapt

to it. Common deliberation requires a critical debate: that is, a constant questioning of social arrangements by those who are affected by them[9], who must then address their critiques to their fellow citizens, who in will turn respond. Through this rational-critical debate[10], the resulting ideas and actions are likely to be much better for both the individual and society, but also to lead to the common good.

This exchange must take place both among citizens and between citizens and institutions. Ideally, based upon the dialogue, an answer or solution will emerge, and the social form that is more appropriate for all citizens is more likely to be found. Indeed, the only required institution is one that enables and protects the right of citizens to speak and to be heard, and to respond to one another[11], because the resulting dialogue is the action out of which the democratic process emerges. Engaging in the democratic dialogue is in fact the very action that turns a person into a citizen instead of being a subject[12].

Such an exchange has an epistemic value: while the outcome is simply better than random processes of decision-making and is not worse than non-democratic processes, it offers "the epistemic benefits of thinking together, resulting in a tendency to make good decisions"[13]. A rational-critical debate involves the willingness on the part of every participant to modify some of her beliefs and opinions as she is persuaded by others and in the hopes of reaching a common agreement which will be good for her and acceptable to all[14]. The resulting consensus, or at least common opinion, unites citizens and provides a sense of an identity of community to which they can feel they belong. With a common opinion detailing the common interest, a common identity is formed in and for democracy, that binds citizens together despite the many possible, and unavoidable, differences that occur amongst citizens[15].

A third foundational layer of democracy has been instituted, resting atop the ideal of participation of all in the decisions that affect them, and the process of their participation. Indeed, a space must exist for this debate and this action in common. The public sphere serves as such a space where rational-critical debate takes place and which is also shaped by rational-critical debate. Angus refers to the public sphere as the key component of democracy, and the determining factor of the degree of democracy in a society[16], while Habermas develops the idea that the formation of the public sphere was foundational in the development of democracy in Europe, and subsequently in North America[17]. With each layer, we gain more and more solidity and concreteness – each layer

making the precedent layer possible, while emerging historically out of its demands. However, this layering remains contentious.

Habermas describes the public sphere as a constituted by private people who have come together as a public; individual citizens with their faculty to reason granting them access to this sphere and a right to rule themselves[18]. This sphere is separate from both the private sphere, which is civil society (essentially trade, labour, and commerce) and the family, and also the sphere of public authority, which is the state[19]. The public sphere developed as the bourgeoisie, who could afford to read and interact with the nobility, while being still distinct from the nobles, began critiquing the sphere of public authority. The private sphere was also changing at this time, so that society eventually had to be shaped to suit the needs and demands of the bourgeoisie. The public sphere, developing from the use of rational-critical debate, remained as a way to protect this very debate, as well as social criticism, from the intervention of those who control non-democratic institutions and who have interests in limiting such debate.

Habermas presents democratic institutions as opening the possibility of critical communication that acts on the very norms used by bureaucratic, administrative, and state apparatuses that seek to extend their power by instrumentalizing reason. Instead, the kind of communication that allows for debate over public opinion, and thus the formation of a rational public will, generates power by bringing into question what legitimates political authority and administrative power, thereby allowing for its redefinition. A democratic formation of public will, a form of rationalized public opinion, is only meaningful if it can influence governmental decisions, and it can only take place through voluntary associations that transform the attitudes and the values not only of their members, but also of the broader public[20].

As a result of this interaction with and struggle against non-democratic institutions, the public sphere was also institutionalized as a physical space. As the public sphere became a political space, rather than one of only literary criticism, it inevitably became institutionalised. Parliament is one such institutionalised space that the space of the public sphere has constructed, solidified by constitutional law[21]. Angus stresses the fixity of the institutions that emerge from the public sphere, and believes that the process of democracy itself can be understood by the coming-into-being and passing-away of these solidified spaces[22]; for we can see the ways in which people established their participation. The media – for example,

newspapers and journals, potentially television, and the Internet – has also been, from the very beginning, a space for rational critical debate, and thus a space both forming and formed by the public sphere[23]. Through the media individuals express their opinions to one another and respond[24] and its ability to transmit widely is vital in any society with a substantial population.

Angus argues that new institutions are the result of criticisms of the exclusion from participation of some members of society, criticisms which make them political actors, often gathered in social movements that can carry them as claims[25]. As a result, each time a new space is created, there is increased belonging and an expansion of participation, and democracy is enhanced and furthered. In fact, Angus believes that due to the foci and assumptions of certain groups acting within democratic space, we should be perhaps thinking of a plurality of public spheres, and even alternative public spheres[26]. The interactions and dialogues of and between these spheres will determine the course of democracy[27].

The metaphor of the actor requires a stage, a physical location reserved for a story to unfold, whence it can be seen by spectators who give it its value and who also emerge from the theatre transformed by their experience[28]. This same story is echoed and transcribed into words, becoming the narrative of news stories and of history books[29]. Media also create places where information about what has taken and is taking place can be found and discussed, even if a spectator was not present at the scene of actions, even if she stayed at home and minded her own affairs. The pages of the newspaper and the bookstore, the location of the television set (set as studio, set as physical object) are thus potentially political spaces, habitual locations to which she turns and which she enters in order to inform herself: that is, forms, shapes her opinion and finds her position, her location, toward the events that take place. Publicity is created through, in, and around these physical and abstract spaces, in which she can enter, so as to solidify the commonality and participation without which there can be no democracy.

1.B. Emotions at the Boundaries of Political Life

The divide between the public sphere and the private sphere is cited as a significant structural factor related to the absence of emotional drive in politics. The relegation of emotions to the private sphere has the effect of privatising emotions and excluding them from political deliberation and action. Miller suggests that those who rely on emotions in politics

are portrayed as unsophisticated and ignorant[30]. And indeed, without proper attention being paid to the role of emotions in politics, those who do rely on emotions find them muted or confusing in their attempt to understand them and deciding on how – or even whether – they should let themselves be guided by their emotions[31]. To take emotions seriously, as a part of political life, might then allow us to reach further sophistication in understanding our emotions and in undertaking action.

Critical theory shares with the liberalism it criticises the exclusion of emotions from political life. In Habermas' critical theory, this exclusion takes place under the guise of a norm of rationality of deliberation and of the public sphere: we are asked to check our emotions at the door, even if they might have led us there. Vetlesen argues that Habermas only pays lip service to emotions and sees them as opening the way for deliberation, which must then take place as a cognitive process; at best, emotions are purified and survive only in their cognitive elements[32]. Against this position, as Neblo argues, Habermas does give emotions a number of roles in deliberation: they act as inputs for reason; they are implicit judgments that need further formulation; they allow for solidarity; they enable us to take on roles; and they help us apply universal norms[33]. However, Neblo himself points out that these roles for emotions remain under-developed. What is more, emotions continue to be left outside of the public sphere, perhaps as a condition of possibility, but remaining outside of deliberation itself and of rational argumentation, as Iris Young argues: feelings are not recognized and are not part of discussions about norms[34].

In Arendt's political thought, this exclusion takes place under the guise of a focus on action as a manifestation of the self, action as visible and public as opposed to emotions, which are invisible and thus can only be private. While for Arendt emotions can be made public through their transformation in art, it is still not emotions that are seen, but only their manifestations. Action, on the contrary, is already entirely manifestation, and manifests the self, and not its emotions, which are only transitory aspects of the self. Reality is what appears, what others can see and confirm – what is public, what can be the subject of a shared experience, as Arendt explains:

> The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves, and while the intimacy of a fully developed private life, such as had never been known before the rise of the modern age and the

> concomitant decline of the public realm, will always greatly
> intensify and enrich the whole scale of subjective emotions and
> private feelings, this intensification will always come to pass
> at the expense of the assurance of the reality of the world and
> men.[35]

In other words, reality is dependent on an external form of materiality:
real is what can be experienced, witnessed or participated, by others –
real is what is public. Emotions and feelings can only be private, and as
they take on more importance in our lives, we become dissociated from
reality. Arendt indeed deplores the rise of the "social" as the overtaking of
the public realm by the private realm[36]. Because they only belong in our
private lives, and because we can never be sure of their reality, emotions
cannot be reliable guides for action.

2. Leaving Emotions Behind

Despite the view that emotions affect participation and act as catalysts,
they continue to be viewed under this model as non-political[37]. The
negation of the political character of emotions takes place following
two strategies of exclusion from political life. The first strategy consists
in focusing on what aspects of a political actor's life ought to be made
public, relegating emotions to the private sphere or to personal life. We
find this position in Rawls, as well as in both Habermas and Arendt.
Rawlsian liberalism has a tendency to leave emotions entirely outside
of the political sphere, mostly by remaining silent on their subject[38].
Emotions would then be as irrelevant as taste in food or art are to
political theory and action: while they might be necessary for the citizen
to be a well-rounded moral agent, they need not be discussed in political
terms. Nussbaum criticizes this position in Rawls[39], yet even in her most
recent work on emotions, her own political liberalism demands that
emotions be treated like political doctrines in the Rawlsian framework:
public emotions ought to be both narrow and shallow, just like political
conceptions of justice, in contradistinction from *private* emotions and
comprehensive doctrines[40].

The second strategy, which counters the first but nonetheless excludes
emotions from political life, consists in speaking of political emotions
as mere bases for actions. Politics then takes place against a background
of emotions, but consists in moving away from emotions. We find this
second model of a position toward emotions in Nussbaum, even as she

attempts to take emotions *very* seriously in political philosophy. It is useful then to remember that the thesis we defend has to do with the role given to emotions in political life, and not the absence of their treatment by political philosophy.

Nussbaum asserts that emotions are of fundamental importance, underlying all of human thought and action. Because emotions play a factor in all we do, we cannot ignore them in accounting for political life[41]. She presents emotions as having their roots in infancy[42], and as being both biologically and socially constructed, with the biological and social constructs interacting and influencing each other[43]. Emotions are "intelligent responses to the perception of value, and are thus a part of ethical reasoning—emotions are not detached from or opposed to rationality or intellect[44]. Indeed, emotions are tied to human flourishing, ensuring our survival but finding relevance well beyond these needs[45]. As recognitions of good and bad[46], emotions seek what is good for a person[47]. They are thus not mere impulses, but rather intentional entities[48], and are always value-laden[49]. Nussbaum rigorously defines the place of emotions in three important aspects of human existence[50]: music, literature, and ethics, which includes politics and religion.

However, Nussbaum does not fully bring emotions into politics. Though Nussbaum very thoroughly discusses emotions as foundational to human consciousness and life, she keeps them at the foundation of human action, treating emotions as background and base only. Nussbaum does not bring emotions into the foreground; she treats emotions only as important and influential undercurrents, never as immediate or fully involved motivations. She considers emotions as the basis for political values, such as freedom, equality, and justice[51], but only at this foundational level. Emotions are not brought into a fully cognitive position, or a place of agency, where a person might acknowledge her emotions within the political sphere and political action. As Nussbaum describes them, emotions do not have a place in politics. They instead solely function in the background as a general basis for other motivations and values.

This exclusion of emotions from politics remains strongly anchored in contemporary political philosophies, despite efforts to rethink the private-public dichotomy. For instance, suggesting, as some feminists have, that "the personal is political"[52] does not necessarily imply questioning the distinction between the political and the personal, but only requires

that we question the criteria that serve to categorize phenomena and issues as political or personal. Yet this formulation of the idea presents the separation of society into two spheres as a major cause of women's subordination.[53] Therefore, the distinction between the public and the private must be re-examined, and altered.

The meaning of the formula 'the personal is political' then appears as: 'much of what is said to be personal, much of what is said to be unseemly for politics, *is* in fact political and must be seen in the public sphere.' According to this formula, emotions are not brought into the public sphere; rather, all of the formerly private aspects of life must conform to political rationality. Most importantly, they must be made rational so as to compensate for the dominant view of emotions as weaker and less valuable, and for the connection of these emotions to women only[54]. To address conflict present in the self-image of women based on the private-public dichotomy, for example, whether a woman sees herself as a mother or as a worker[55], does not prevent a neglect of the emotions involved in this dichotomy, which prompt such issues of self-image.

In the case of these two positions, politics is about crossing a threshold: we enter into political life; we make our views public; we enter into the public sphere to act, and then retire into private life. The political is public, to be seen by all; the personal is private, to be seen only by a chosen few – either because it cannot be seen by others, or because it should not be seen by others, and is unseemly. The focus is on political *activity*: passivity belongs to the realm of the personal, the private, whereas all political life is a matter of will, of decision, of action, all activity on a background of passivity that may or may not be necessary to politics. Emotions are passive, they are passions, acting upon us, making us feel things and desire or want things. In both positions toward emotions, politics is a matter of agency and emotions a matter of passivity. The exclusion of emotions concerns the manner in which politics takes place, the norms that guide political life and action within the public sphere: public emotions must be narrow and thin, and translated into actions.

3. The Passion for Politics

Many contemporary political theorists and philosophers are arguing for the need to see emotions politically, in such a way as to overcome the

distinction between rationality, logic and cognition on the one hand, and emotions and empathy on the other hand[56]. A broad definition of emotion, leading to a reconsideration of the distinction between private and public spheres, can be found by comparing the views of those philosophers who have sought to include them into political life. In this manner, we can define a third position toward emotions, which shows them as continually accompanying and sustaining political action, because emotions are something we do. Such a position, as we will see, requires that public life be less bounded – if at all.

3. A. The Political Character of Emotions

This approach highlights a tension within Nussbaum's position. In her interrogation of the "positive" and "negative" character of emotions, she relies on the different sources of motivation allowing us to decide whether we will gather with others in view of deliberation and action and for the manner in which to do it. She distinguishes most clearly between the positive or negative character of emotions using the concept of eudaimonism: positive emotions are those associated with feeling as though life is enhanced and benefitted, whilst the negative emotions are those experienced with feelings of harm or hindrance to living. Emotions, as eudaimonistic entities, are concerned with human flourishing – that is, living how a human being should live in order to develop and live a good life, in relation to the things she values or deems important[57]. We do not *experience* an emotion because what brings it about is inherently good or bad, but because we deem it to be beneficial or harmful[58].

Emotions may thus be tied to our capacity for pleasure and pain, and thus to our evaluations and judgments; a definition of emotions might then read as "those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgements, and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure..."[59]. While they are uncontroversially tied to our biology[60], they also always remain practices, and so are always social and cultural, emerging from our body and from social interaction[61]. Thus, with Ahmed, we can emphasize not the question of "what are emotions?" but rather "what do emotions do?"[62]

As such, emotions are always intentional[63], in that they are about or directed at a phenomenon we are experiencing. Inevitably, emotions involve a stance on the world or a way of apprehending it[64]. In fact, different emotions are considered and named as different entities in that they are different orientations towards some object[65]. When a person is

oriented to an object in one way, the characteristics of that orientation are labeled as an emotion; a different orientation to that object is named differently (for example, love and hate are two orientations a person might have to the same object; it is the stance towards the object for which the emotion is named and categorised). In that regard, emotions are explanatory[66]. Emotions describe our conditions, our intentions, and our preferences and values—though often these explanations are invisible in use[67]. They are thus bound with judgements, and may be seen as a mode of judgements, being strongly connected with values[68]. Judgements are certainly constituent elements of emotions, as Nussbaum notes[69]. Responses are judgments of whether what is experienced is beneficial or harmful. Negative emotions contain very plain judgements[70], as we can see in the case of anger at an action or event deemed immoral, or of the blame that follows.

However, an important tendency seems to structure the study of the role played by emotions in politics in relation to Nussbaum's eudaimonism: political emotions are almost always "negative", "*bad*" emotions. Often a reaction to an undesired political event, such as outrage over feared practises or the shame of a soiled collective identity[71], a negative emotion may also be the result of the continuous and prolonged experiences of other negative emotions, such as disappointment and frustration[72].

Anger and indignation provide very strong motivation for political action. According to Kemper, "social movements often arise from a sense of grievance and/or injustice"[73]. Anger is the main emotion of those who believe they have been denied, and the anger is the driving force behind action in pursuit of the justice they seek[74]. Shame, though a negative emotion triggered by a belief about a person's own character[75], may become transformed into collective solidarity through the attempt to overcome it, providing the energy for political action[76]. Contempt and hatred also inspire action, though this action is an effort to separate rather than to join others. Hate has the capacity to align the general with the particular as it imposes general feelings and judgements onto every particular object categorised under the object of hate (for example, in hating a religion or race in general, every particular person of that religion or race—and all of their beliefs, features, and actions—becomes hated, whether or not they would not be hated if tied to a different race or religion)[77], broadening the object and thus providing a wider motivation for political action. Such emotions must then be countered[78].

The concept of injustice frames provides an example of how emotions are

used to mobilise political endeavours. An injustice frame uses the negative emotions, such as suspicion, hostility, anger, and indignation, to view a situation so as to identify targets, strategies, and tactics[79]. These emotions are viewed as and felt to be just and righteous, and thus the emotional experiences are structured in such a way as to find a political course of action.

Anxiety also promotes and enhances citizen engagement[80]; indeed, Marcus argues that "anxiety is the central emotion on which reason and democratic politics rest"[81]. The uneasiness of anxiety compels a person to examine and judge more critically their environment and its politics, and become more involved so as to gain certainty and stability[82]. Anxiety heightens awareness of a person's surroundings, and motivates people to act to ensure their surroundings are set in a way that suits them.

In spite of the prevalence of negative emotions, positive emotions do find their way into the attempts to understand the political role of emotions. Hope, like hatred, broadens a person's emotional intentions, uniting specifics with a broad target, and thus opens up the desire for political participation; hope may even be necessary for political possibility[83]. Hope provides joy in imagining a better society, and participating in the effort of realizing that society[84]. The moral sentiment, solidarity, love, and compassion are positive feelings that also elicit their own political experiences. Love can provide a drive for politics in the effort to express this emotion towards the object, whether the emotion is experienced for one's community, nation, or other people in general. Love involves a person giving themselves to objects that are outside of their control, and as such the object also internalised by that person, and becomes a part of them and their well-being, and so we do seek our own flourishing in love[85]. Love has the capacity to unify a community; further, love may unify a population as they view the national or political community as an object of love[86]. Compassion is experienced when another person's situation is perceived as undeserved and unjust, and this leads a person to act on the sufferer's behalf[87]. It has even been argued that compassion is eudaimonistic beyond the satisfaction a person feels when she believes she is doing what is right and just, in that it ties the good of the other person to her own cares and values[88].

Emotions are also tied to considerations of power and status. Different uses of power can trigger different emotions, and different political consequences would follow. For example, guilt may be experienced if a person believes she has used her own power excessively[89]; but if her own

power falls, she will most likely experience fear and/or anxiety. A decrease in status will likewise bring about disappointment, anger, depression, shame, and even hatred[90]. A person will experience these negative emotions as well when her opponent experiences an increase in status and power[91].

Considerations of power and status apply to positive emotions as they do to negative ones. If a person uses power in what they believe to be a legitimate way, she will feel satisfied[92]. When a person's own power or status rises, so will her sense of safety and security, and thus her contentment, satisfaction, and pleasure[93]. And when an opponent's power or status decreases, a person will also experience positive emotions. Love will sustain power relations, in that a person is likely to be at least content with them, or even to love the relations themselves.[94] Emotions are already part of a person's life, both before she acts and as she acts, through their ties to power and status (and although we have two theories of power in Kemper and Ahmed), through the interaction of negative and positive emotions that lead a person to act or not, and through the judgments and intentions that take place through them.

3. C. Emotional Orientation

Following Ahmed[95] and a broader phenomenological attitude, we can understand emotions as part of what orients us: they give us our bearings, they compel us to act in certain ways, to reach out to others. They define a space for our actions, and transform the physical spaces and the manner in which we relate to the objects and the others who inhabit them and make them what they are. They shape and are shaped by our habits. Quite simply, in the phenomenological sense, they are part of our intentionality, of the manner in which we are directed toward things. In moving to the topic of orientation in general, beyond emotions, Ahmed summarizes her "phenomenological model of emotions as intentional: as being 'directed' toward objects. […] In other words, emotions are directed to what we come into contact with: they move us 'toward' and 'away' form such objects."[96] Emotions define our very spatiality – and all its instances: they cannot be detached from the objects toward which they are directed, and which they apprehend, of which they take hold, so that we may do something with them.

We can broaden this notion of orientation for our actions. Participation generally begins when there is perceived a problem to be addressed, and follows through when an appropriate action response (a strategy made,

a target selected, a plan or proposition developed) is pursued[97]. Political actions need emotions as condition of possibility, just as emotions create a need for action, to the point where we may say that passion fuels politics[98] and emotions create belonging to a community of action[99]. In this manner, emotions are not merely to be left behind when acting, but continue to bind us to those with whom we act. All political gatherings – thus all collectives – hold an "emotional energy" in the collective and in the individual participants[100]. Of course, political actions and events elicit emotions as well. These emotional reactions may, in turn, lead to further political actions.

The vocabulary of passivity is inescapable in speaking of emotions. But in passivity, we remain active: we do not choose how we feel, but we decide to continue feeling in the same manner or to bring about the conditions for different emotions. Pleasant emotions might lead us to continue the experience – success in action breeding further success, creating emotional energy[101]; unpleasant emotions might lead us to abandon the experience, or to transform what created it in the first place. In this sense, we can say that those who act politically are driven: their emotions accompany them and sustain them throughout the process leading to action, through a series of small decisions and small reactions furthering the emotion or creating new ones – each time potentially creating confusion or frustration –, against adverse odds, against the likelihood of facing adversity and the actions and reactions of others, against the likelihood of failing to achieve the goals that have been set.

3.D. Engagement and disengagement, passion and apathy

The strength of accounting for emotions in political life lies in the possibility to explain participation and disengagement in politics. The hesitation to enter into the public sphere, to take part in politics, to join others, instead of withdrawing to or remaining in the private sphere, is already the topic of wide literature and broad political concern around the question of voter turnout, and is more broadly known as the problem of political apathy or political disengagement. A focus on the categories of apathy and disengagement will help us understand the importance of emotions in politics in relation to the lack of participation, and present an account of political motivation that may come to amend the view of democracy and political action laid out by Arendt, Habermas, and Angus.

The concept of apathy is commonly used to refer to the lack of political

participation in democracies[102]. The term is heavily charged, referring to a "democratic malaise"[103] – or in economic terms to a "democratic deficit" – a pathology of democratic practice that must be cured, but does not threaten the survival of the democratic regime itself. The logic of the reference to voter apathy is simple enough: voters are apathetic, they are only weakly attached to the system and to its values, they are content to let others choose and govern for them, they do not care enough to vote for one party or another. The remedy to this pathology takes on many forms, but all in their logic are also simple: "we" – those who are engaged, who do vote, who run for office, who decide for others – must engage the others and make them care. Given the failure of rational explanation of the merits of political participation in the media, political education, especially through schools, party reform, and electoral reform are among the common remedies for this pathology.

While it remains difficult to suggest a model for political participation that might differ from our current institutions – as necessary as that attempt, as found for instance in Pateman[104] might be –, another conceptual possibility remains open: we are able to question the very conception of apathy as the lack of participation and caring. After all, it seems difficult to conceive of someone who is truly apathetic: that is, someone who experiences no emotions whatsoever toward politics. Instead, apathy can be seen as the absence of *passion* – of a clear drive, clear motivation, or clear emotional response – as distinguished from disengagement, which results from emotions of frustration and powerlessness.

In relation to the question of the lack of participation, distinguishing between apathy and disengagement, rather than speaking in terms of barriers to entry in the public sphere, allows us to focus on the experience of mixed or unclear emotions, or emotions of frustration at these barriers, as causing withdrawal from political participation, while explaining why some persons do participate in spite of such barriers. A person does not always know how she feels[105]. Emotions may even be repressed[106]. When a person has no clear emotional experience, she also cannot find a clear response: the only reactions mixed and unclear emotions provide is hesitation or resignation. In the absence of a clear desire or refusal, there can be no clear course for action. A person will be held back, not knowing if anything should be done, let alone could be done, about a political issue. The only comfortable motivation provided by hesitation and resignation is a withdrawal from political action. Rather

than a political actor or even a political spectator who participates by remaining attentive to events and judging them[107], a person becomes a bystander due to the lack of emotions or to the emotional dissonance she experiences[108]. What is more, a person's sentiment that she lacks power to affect an outcome will lead her emotions to be muted, and she will experience disappointment along with her discontent; the result of this disappointment may become pervasive apathy[109]. If she experiences disappointment from her active participation in politics, she will have no reason to participate in the future. Consequently, the structural lack of power and status may be a root reason for political apathy.

Confusion can also arise from the emotions themselves, since we cannot be said to ever experience one emotion at a time, or without interruption. There are general and particular emotions, background and situational emotions[110], determined by different emotional objects[111], and a person may easily be conflicted by their multiple coinciding emotional experiences. Even pleasure and pain are not wholly distinctive[112]. What is more, Elster suggests that persons often persuade themselves to have emotions they do not have but they believe they should have, or not to have the emotions they do experience because they believe they should not have them[113]. Often, this adaptation is a result of social presentation, as a person chooses to hide or display particular emotions[114] and thus likely believes that there is a correct way to feel that corresponds to her situation. As such, rather than simply hiding an emotion, a person will convince herself that she should and does feel a particular emotion.

When a person lacks clarity in her experience of an emotion or when she experiences multiple emotions at the same time, she can be said to be apathetic. After all, if she is unclear on what she is experiencing, she will not be pushed or led to respond to these experiences. To be aware of emotions, to be able to identify their source and their resemblance to and difference from past emotions or other possible emotions, and thus to be able to respond to these emotions is a learned skill[115]. The lack of discussion around emotions in political life contributes to the lack of an emotional education in collective matters, or as part of an already limited political education, and to the lack of experience in relying on emotions. While there can be no question of achieving complete clarity on our emotions, we can nonetheless contrast the apathetic person, who receives no clear signals from her emotional response to events and does not know how to interpret them or whether she can act on them, with the passionate political actor, who is driven by her emotions and is able to act in response to her experiences because she has a *feeling*, a *sense* for the

possibilities opened by the situation.

In distinction from apathy understood as the lack of clear emotions – confused or mixed emotions, confusion about the emotions that are experienced –, disengagement can be understood as an emotional response of frustration and disappointment. It is only possible for a person to disengage from politics if she was previously engaged in politics; the drive to take part in politics, to deliberate and to undertake an action, is replaced following failure or treachery by the strong and active desire *not* to take part in politics. Another instance of disengagement would be the replacement of the drive to participate by other attachments or drives. Politicians thus often leave public life after a defeat in an election or a nomination procedure, or to pursue other interests, to focus on their family, their health, or another career. As opposed to apathy, which prevents participation (or entrance into the public sphere, if we are to maintain that language), disengagement is the movement of withdrawal from participation and action (and into "private" life). Both phenomena are consequently tied to human emotions, rather than solely to the structures of a public sphere.

Conclusion

The three models presented here are just that – models. Habermas seems to have attempted to modify his position in order to make room for emotions, without integrating them fully. In the process, he hinted at Nussbaum's position, which clearly lays out a role for emotions, which have an effect on politics from outside the public sphere. However, this stated theory clashes with her descriptions of emotions, which shows them at work in politics, hinting at the third position. We sought to flesh out this third position on the basis of many recent contributions, framed by the arguments presented by Ahmed and Collins. If we follow this third model position as to the role of emotions in politics, which presents them as inherently political, we are faced with the blurring of the boundaries of public life. Because emotions orient us and are a constant aspect of our relationships – be they to objects, to persons, to institutions, to actions, or to events – it is more precise and useful to speak not of private and public spheres, but rather of a single plane of existence. A more relevant distinction might be made between what is relevant to an action and to a group, and what is not. Much of what we deem to be "private life" is indeed simply irrelevant to much of political actions and appointed or elected office. What is more, emotions are an

intrinsic part of political life. Not only can we not always decide which emotions we display to others, it is our emotions and emotional energy that brings us together and keeps us together, and the misunderstanding of our emotions by others – the feeling of their being trampled, even as we carefully decide which emotions we *should* hide – is as good a reason as any to disengage from acting with them. Not only can we not simply leave our emotions behind, but there is no place for us to leave them at all. Not only can we not simply detach our reasons from our emotions, our reasons are often transformations of our emotions. In being better aware of the role emotions play in political participation and in the creation of communities for action, we may be able to further the chances for democracy and provide answers that come to complement those that are already being offered to the challenges political philosophy.

Notes

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7 Angus 2001, 62.

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9 Angus 2001, 72.

10 Habermas, Jürgen. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. Page 43.

11 Angus 2001, 25; Habermas 1989.

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13 Estlund, David. 2008. *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Page 182; see also 167-168.

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15 Angus 2001, 83.

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17 Habermas 1989, 13 and 18.

18 Habermas 1989, 27.

19 Habermas 1989, 30.

20 Habermas, Jürgen. 1998. *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. Page 483-485.

21 Habermas 1989, 57.

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23 Angus 2001, 25.

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25 Angus 2001, 42.

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36 Arendt 1958, 38-50.

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39 Nussbaum, Martha C. 2013. *Political Emotions*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Page 392.

40 Nussbaum 2013, 133; cf. 393.

41 Nussbaum 2001, 487.

42 Nussbaum 2001, 194.

43 Nussbaum 2001, 199.

44 Nussbaum 2001, 1.

45 Nussbaum 2001, 212.

46 Nussbaum 2001, 206.

47 Nussbaum 2001, 487.

48 Nussbaum 2001, 231.

49 Nussbaum 2001, 232.

50 Nussbaum 2001, 249; 457; 298; 407.

51 Nussbaum 2001, 646 and 648; 2013 134-135.

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60 Marcus 2002, 50.; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001,13.

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63 Nussbaum 2001, 231 and 501.

64 Ahmed 2004, 7.

65 Ahmed 2004, 14 and 191.

66 Marcus 2002, 9.

67 Marcus 2002, 9.

68 Nussbaum 2001, 49 and 232.

69 Nussbaum 2001, 44.

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115 How this clarification might take place is another matter altogether; the ideas laid out here seem to demand that such emotional clarification take place through an inter-active process. Sara Ahmed (in *On Being Included*, London: Duke University Press, 2012) points to a process including interactions with others attempting to help them experience similar emotions, or perhaps to help them experience emotions about our own.

Space, language, and the limits of knowledge: a Kantian view on William T. Beckford's Vathek

Alessia Pannese

Abstract

William Thomas Beckford's *Vathek* chronicles the eponymous Caliph's struggle and ultimate fall into hell as a divine punishment for his unrestrained desire for knowledge. Around the time Beckford wrote *Vathek*, Immanuel Kant released the *Critique of Pure Reason*, whose central implication is that human knowledge is restricted to appearances.
Drawing on textual evidence from *Vathek*'s first three editions and from Kant's *Critique*, I explore ways in which knowledge is negotiated and mediated by the limits of human intellect and sensory perception as they intersect with the protean boundary between reality and appearance, and suggest that Beckford's *Vathek* may be viewed as a literary instantiation of Kant's transcendental idealism, as they both - albeit in different ways - impose severe limits on man's epistemic ability.

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I

London, 7 June 1786. An anonymous little volume is released by publisher J. Johnson, of St Paul's Churchyard: the title reads *An Arabian Tale, from an unpublished manuscript: with notes critical and explanatory*.[1] No author appears on the frontispiece.[2] The preface claims that 'the Original' of the story has been 'collected in the East by a Man of letters', and 'communicated to the Editor [...] three years ago'. This unnamed 'editor' was so pleased by 'the perusal of it', that he took upon himself to 'transcribe, and [...] translate it', despite 'the difficulty of accommodating our English idioms to the Arabick'.[3]

Lausanne, 2 December 1786. The first issue of the *Journal de Lausanne*, edited by Jean Lanteires[4] and published by Hignou & Comp.,[5] reviews

on its front page[6] a new book released in November 1786 (although the frontispiece is post-dated 1787)[7] by the same publishing house: its title is *Vathek*;[8] its author is identified in the prefatory note as 'M. Beckford'.[9] The preface, which reads more like a warning - *avis* - goes on to inform the reader that the volume presents the original work as it was 'written in French by M. Beckford', and to denounce the 'indiscretion' of an unnamed 'man of letters to whom the manuscript had been entrusted three years ago' for causing the English translation to be 'made known before the [French] original' and falsely represented as a translation from the Arabic.[10]

Paris, 26 January 1787. Louis XVI's Royal censor authorises the publication of a 'small booklet written according to the taste of the Arabian Tales', by the title of *Vathek, a Novel*.[11] The book is eventually released in early August 1787[12] by publisher Poinçot, of rue de la Harpe, under the title *Vathek, conte arabe*.[13] It gives no information about the author, and contains no preface.

These three anonymous volumes - one written in English, two in French - are the first three incarnations of a single literary creature, born of the imagination of writer and art collector William Thomas Beckford (1760-1844). The story, which eventually came to be known by the abbreviated title *Vathek*, is a tongue-in-cheek chronicle of the latest period of the reign of the eponymous 'ninth Caliph of the Abbassides', who, lured by a mysterious stranger's - the Giaour's - promise of infinite riches and supernatural power, renounces Islam, and engages in a spiral of abominable activities which eventually lead him to Eblis (hell), and secure his eternal damnation.

Articulated in elegant prose, laced with irony, and loosely hovering around themes of faith, morality, sin, and punishment, the narrative is dominated by frequent depictions of unrestrained pursuits of gratification of sensual and intellectual appetites and excesses of all kinds, spliced together into a grand, unified portrayal of man's struggle to satisfy a single, unsatisfiable desire: knowledge.

Around the time Beckford wrote *Vathek*, the problem of charting the nature, sources, and limits of human knowledge had been the major occupation and preoccupation of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) for at least a decade.[14] The foundations of Kant's theory of knowledge are laid out in the *Critique of Pure Reason* - the first element of what would eventually develop into a Critical trilogy[15]

- first published in 1781,[16] then, in revised form, in 1787.[17] At the time in which Kant set out to work on his *Critique*, Europe's philosophical landscape was largely split into two seemingly incompatible camps, whose key object of contention lay in the attribution of the epistemic primacy.[18] Rationalism, dominating the Continental tradition in the wake of René Descartes and Gottfried W. Leibniz, tended to view knowledge as the result of intellectual, *a priori* operations, based on innate ideas and deductive reasoning involving the inner workings of the mind, and largely independent from the encounter with external reality.[19] Empiricism, led by the British tradition established by the thought of John Locke and based upon the observations of Isaac Newton, had instead rejected the notion of innate ideas, and ascribed knowledge chiefly to sensory, *a posteriori* operations, based on inductive reasoning applied to the empirical encounter with the outside world.[20] In his first *Critique*, Kant took a novel approach to the problem of knowledge by combining elements of rationalism and empiricism into a hybrid system - the 'transcendental philosophy'[21] - in which the intellectual and the sensory share the epistemic responsibility, and both knowing subject and known object contribute to the epistemic act. Kant's syncretic system carries profound implications in terms of the understanding of the nature and limits of human knowledge. Probably the profoundest, which Kant derives from the analysis of human relation to space and time, is that man can only know appearances, not things in themselves.[22]

Hence, the timeframe and themes of Beckford's *Vathek* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* partly overlap: both were written in the early 1780s and released in 1787; both, albeit in different ways, explore the nature and extent of human knowledge through the dichotomous juxtaposition of a knowing-self and a to-be-known-other.

Here I will use the problem of knowledge as an interdisciplinary window of observation that brings into dialogue Beckford's fiction and Kant's thought. Drawing on textual evidence from *Vathek*'s first three editions - London, Lausanne, and Paris - and from Kant's first *Critique*, I will explore the ways in which knowledge is negotiated in terms of encounter with otherness, and mediated by the limits of human intellect and sensory perception as they intersect with the protean boundary between reality and appearance. Based on this analysis, I will suggest that Beckford's *Vathek* may be viewed as a literary instantiation of Kant's transcendental idealism, as they both deal a blow on the understanding of man's epistemic ability, which, be it by supernatural decree (as in *Vathek*) or by the intrinsic nature of man's own subjective condition (as in the

Critique) is ultimately denied access to truth.

II

Born on 1 October 1760,[23] and baptised at Fonthill, Wiltshire, on 6
January 1761,[24] William Thomas Beckford was the only legitimate son
of William Beckford - alderman, MP, and twice Lord Mayor of London,
as well as owner of extensive plantations in Jamaica and the West Indies
- and his wife Maria Hamilton, daughter of the Hon. George Hamilton
and granddaughter of the sixth earl of Abercorn.[25] His mother, a pietist
of 'stern and uncompromising temper',[26] secured for him the best
private education the country could provide - including the study of
architecture under Sir William Chambers,[27] painting under Alexander
Cozens,[28] and piano under Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart[29] - topped off
with a Swiss finish on the shores of Lake Geneva, where the seventeen-
year-old William became personally acquainted with Voltaire,[30] Charles
Bonnet,[31] Horace-Bénédict de Saussure,[32] Germaine Necker,[33] and Jean
Huber.[34] In 1781, Beckford came of age and into his vast inheritance,[35]
marking the occasion with three-day-long festivities on 'aldermanic scale',
attended by 'seven or eight thousand people' treated to 'Gargantuan
hospitality',[36] fireworks displays, and a performance by Italian castrati
Gaspare Pacchierotti, Giusto Tenducci, and Venanzio Rauzzini.[37]
The revelries resumed at Christmas of the same year with a three-day
saturnalia, for which Beckford hired painter and scenographer Philippe
de Loutherbourg,[38] that he might turn Fonthill Splendens - Beckford's
grand Palladian country house in Wiltshire - into the setting of an
unprecedented phantasmagoria.[39] Clearly, Loutherbourg delivered on his
promise: his stage, sound, and light effects transformed Fonthill into an
extravagant orientalised and eroticised universe that engaged all senses[40]
into 'something [...] that eye ha[d] not seen or heart of man conceived'.[41]
It is from this hedonistic and exotic extravaganza - some would call it an
orgy[42] - held at Fonthill at Christmas 1781, as well as from the resulting
interplay between perception and imagination - what the eye sees and
what the mind conceives - that the germ of *Vathek* began to form.[43]

If it is safe to assume that Beckford began writing *Vathek* immediately
after that infamous 'voluptuous festival' of Christmas 1781,[44] and that,
despite his reported assertion that it took him 'three days and two
nights'[45] - or even 'two days and a night'[46] -, he did not complete the
manuscript until at least May 1782,[47] much controversy surrounds the
circumstances of its publication. The records indicate that Beckford

wrote *Vathek* in French, and eventually entrusted the manuscript to the Rev. Samuel Henley, a scholar of Arabian and Persian literature whom Beckford had met in 1781 (when Henley was assistant master at Harrow and tutor of Beckford's cousins),[48] in order that he could translate it into English.[49] Beckford's letters to Henley chronicle the genesis of *Vathek* from its inception, in January 1782,[50] through the early developments,[51] to the later stages, when, having completed the main story, Beckford was working on the *Episodes*.[52] After two years of smooth exchange, during which Beckford, mostly from Switzerland, regularly enquired - and Henley, from England, provided regular updates - about the state of advancement of the translation,[53] the tone of the correspondence began to turn brisk, with Henley progressively claiming broader editorial authority on the manuscript (for example, he insisted on complementing the translation with a 'preliminary dissertation' and explanatory notes),[54] and Beckford responding to Henley's initiatives with firmer requests,[55] culminating with the crucial injunction that the English translation of *Vathek* should not be made public until the *Episodes* were finished, and the entire work could first be published in its original French version.[56] The situation, however, quickly degenerated: instructions were ignored, letters remained unanswered,[57] and, in the autumn 1786, as he was already in a state of despondency following his wife's death,[58] Beckford discovered with horror that Henley's English translation of *Vathek* had been surreptitiously released through the London publisher J. Johnson in early June.[59] To make matters worse, Henley had included a prefatory note presenting the work as deriving from an anonymous Arabian manuscript, which he (alone) had translated from the Arabic.[60] No mention was made of Beckford's name or authorship. Outraged by Henley's betrayal, Beckford hasted to vindicate authorship and originality: in November, he rushed out an edition of the (original) French text through the Lausanne publisher Isaac Hignou (who released it post-dated 1787),[61] and, in December, on his way back to London, left another version of the French text with the Paris publisher Poinçot (who eventually released it in August 1787).[62] Hence, by August 1787, Beckford's *Vathek* existed in three editions: an English translation purportedly from an anonymous Arabian text, with Henley's notes added and Beckford's authorship *de facto* suppressed; a first 'original' French version (without notes) with Beckford's preface denouncing Henley's fraud and reclaiming authorship; and a second 'original' French version, unprefaced, and accompanied by a French translation of a selection of Henley's notes.

III

If it enraged Beckford, Henley's preface did not fool the critics. Early reviews (appeared before Henley's deceit was exposed by the Lausanne edition) show that the purported Arabian origin of the *Tale* was immediately perceived as problematic, suspicious, or outright fraudulent. *The European Magazine* was among the earliest to voice concerns: 'The editor in the Preface to this work informs us, that it is translated from an unpublished Arabian Manuscript [...] How far the above assertion is founded in truth, it may not be easy [...] to determine'.[63] 'We are told from the preface of this romance, that it is translated from a manuscript [...] collected in the East by a man of letters', noted the *English Review*, but 'in an age that has abounded so much with literary impostures, [...] we cannot see the propriety of such a palpable fiction. The general strain of the work, and the many allusions to modern authors, indicate the author to be an [*sic*] European'.[64] On a similar vein, the *Critical Review* called into question the authenticity of the work: 'The present editor speaks of an unpublished manuscript, from which this story is translated; but the disguise of a translator of an invisible original, is now suspected'.[65] 'There are in this work too many ideas and sentiments of European growth', observed the *Monthly Review* 'to admit of its passing for a translation of an Eastern manuscript'.[66] Importantly, since the work's first appearance, critics seem to have scented in it not only a generally European origin, but also some distinctly French quality. '[W]e perceive, in many parts, the acute turns of modern composition, so easily learned in the school of Voltaire',[67] and, again, 'the author [...] has introduced a sufficient quantity of the marvellous [...] to enable the work to pass muster as an Arabian Tale [...] whether it be the produce of Arabia, or of the fertile banks of the Seine, (which a variety of circumstances induces us to believe it is)'.[68] It is therefore clear that reviewers suspected that, despite its Arabic claim and appearance, *Vathek*'s origin was actually French. But what are the 'variety of circumstances' that might have induced the reviewers to trace *Vathek*'s origins to the 'fertile banks of the Seine', as opposed to, for example, the banks of the Thames?

One potential cue is the presence of *faux amis* in Henley's translation. Beckford's 'tourterelle'[69] is rendered by Henley as 'turtle'[70] (as opposed to the correct English equivalent 'dove'). Similarly, Beckford's 'enfermer à double tour'[71] becomes 'shut [...] in the double tower'[72] (a far cry from the correct English equivalent of 'shut [...] by double-locking the door'). Early commentators (e.g. Marcel May)[73] claimed that the Lausanne

edition suffers from Anglicisms, and used this argument to advance the theory that the Lausanne text is Beckford's (French) retranslation of Henley's (English) translation. However, the 'turtle' and 'double tower' examples - both Gallicisms - suggest that a similar argument could be made in the opposite direction. A second and stronger cue may have to do with the cultural connotations embedded in the French language itself, which articulate the encounter with otherness and the unknown through linguistically-inscribed cultural markers.

In the Europe of Beckford's time, marked by increasing circulation of people, goods, and ideas,[74] the French language had already secured a solid standing as the language of commercial and cultural exchange and diplomacy with the East. The European editions of the Koran were often translations from the French translation.[75] European readers had been introduced to the composite collection of oriental tales which would later become collectively known as the *Arabian Nights* through Antoine Galland's French edition - *Les Mille et une nuit*[*s*], released in twelve volumes between 1704 and 1717 -, upon which virtually all the other European translations are based.[76] Much of the oriental lore that had reached the European public had done so through Barthélemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale* of 1697.[77] In Paris, the Collège de France and Collège Royal, where Galland himself had been a student and later professor of Arabic, had long offered instruction in Greek, Persian, Turkish, and other oriental languages.[78] Similarly, the **École des jeunes de langues**,[79] founded by Colbert in 1669 on the model of Venice's *Scuola dei giovani di lingua*,[80] had established a tradition of training for professional interpreters of Persian, Turkish, and Arabic, which, under a different name, still operates today.[81] In England, a timid initiative of this kind, the Greek College at Oxford, had lasted only six years.[82] The institutionalisation and professionalization of the function of interpreter (particularly of oriental languages) in seventeenth-century France had both reflected and created the conditions for increasing fascination, contact, and peaceful exchange - a sort of cultural alliance - with the East.[83] As a result, from the early modern period throughout the eighteenth century the Ottoman Empire was France's most active commercial and diplomatic partner, and France was by far the first destination for oriental diplomatic missions to Europe,[84] which included Moroccan,[85] Tunisian,[86] Tripolitan,[87] Ottoman,[88] and Persian envoys,[89] often met in Toulon by professional interpreters despatched by France's Ministry of the Navy with instructions to accompany and provide linguistic brokerage for the ambassadors throughout their journey to

Paris.[90]

Based on this tradition of contact, exchange, and mediation, it seems reasonable to presume that, in eighteenth-century Europe, France and the French language had come to acquire a privileged status as a linguistic and cultural conduit between Europe and the East. Compared to other European entities and identities, France and the French had achieved a position of greater proximity - and therefore benefited from a privileged access - to the non-European, Oriental other. Crucially, this privileged access to the non-European other was negotiated within the boundaries of France's firmly European identity. Hence, the French language reached across Europe's geographic and cultural border to initiate the exciting but potentially perilous encounter with the non-European other without ever relinquishing the safety of its European self. Therefore, it is conceivable that, from an English perspective - e.g. from Beckford's - France and the French language connoted an intermediate geographic, linguistic, and cultural space between the reassuring familiarity of England and the fascinating but threatening unknown Orient. Through Beckford's use of the French language, *Vathek* is allowed to inhabit this intermediate space, across which the familiar-observer-English-self confronts the foreign-observed-Oriental-other from an intimate but non-threatening standpoint.

In *Vathek*, the Oriental connotation of the French language is amplified by a narrative that calls upon all the senses.[91] Its eponymous protagonist devotes himself solely to their gratification,[92] for which he orders five palaces to be built.[93] He plunges from excess to excess, being 'much addicted to women, and the pleasures of the table',[94] which he orders to be 'continually covered' with 'exquisite dainties', 'delicious wines' and 'the choicest cordials',[95] whilst 'perfumes [...are] kept perpetually burning',[96] and 'troops of young females'[97] are kept at hand. His voracious mouth is 'like a funnel',[98] whose 'avidity exceeds [the] zeal'[99] of his mother, wives, and many servants devoted to satisfying his desires. His fastidious capriciousness, endless gluttony[100] and extreme thirst make him 'bellow like a calf',[101] land on food like a vulture,[102] and 'lap up the water'[103] from the ground like a dog.[104] Whilst Vathek is orientalised, primitive, and excessive, the Giaour is even more so. Unlike Vathek, who is 'majestick',[105] the stranger is 'short and plump'.[106] He comes from a 'wholly unknown'[107] place of 'penetrating odour[s]',[108] where even rarities are 'horrible'.[109] In fact, he himself is horrible, a 'horrible stranger',[110] with a 'horrible visage',[111] almost unwatchable.[112] His 'horrid mouth'[113] waters[114] with a parching thirst that, unlike Vathek's, which can be

quenched with cold water,[115] can only be appeased with human blood.[116] He emits 'loud shouts of laughter',[117] exhibits 'horrid grimaces',[118] and his loquacity equals that of 'a hundred astrologers'.[119]

A crucial distinguishing trait between the excesses of the Giaour and those of Vathek is that, in the former, they are almost invariably of a sensorial nature - i.e. as impulses to satisfy corporeal needs -, whereas in the latter they also manifest themselves as intellectual desires, and particularly as an urge to satisfy intellectual curiosity, create meaning, and seek knowledge. Vathek 'wishe[s] to know every thing; even, sciences that d[o] not exist'.[120] Driven by 'insatiable curiosity'[121] he builds an observation tower on which he spends entire days scrutinising the stars, but, despite having studied and acquired 'a great deal of knowledge', this is never sufficient to satisfy himself,[122] as he is 'of all men, the most curious'.[123] Vathek's inability to satisfy his own intellectual curiosity echoes his inability to satisfy his thirst, and creates a condition of hopelessness in which excess and abstinence are tied together and equally lethal.[124]

The contrast between Vathek's quest for combined sensual and intellectual satisfaction, and the Giaour's exclusively sensual demands is accentuated by the latter's being portrayed as dark skinned, with his forehead and body 'blacker than ebony'.[125] The notion of blackness,[126] which, from a Eurocentric perspective denotes ethnical otherness, at an epistemic level also connotes ignorance (i.e. darkness, lack of knowledge), and therefore casts the encounter with the other in terms of a confrontation with the unknown, emphasised by the Giaour's carrying 'such rarities as [Vathek] had never before seen; and of which he had no conception'.[127] Hence, the characterisation of the Giaour as the object of a narrative grammar in which Vathek is the temporary subject, couples the hideousness and primitiveness of the observed-other with the opening up of new possibilities for the observer-self, and the promise of knowledge of known unknowns ('rarities never before seen') and unknown unknowns ('of which he had no conception').

Thus, the vicious quality implied in Vathek's sensual excesses is tempered by virtuous traits, which include generosity[128] capacity for refined taste,[129] and, most importantly, an irrepressible urge to pursue knowledge.[130] The direct juxtaposition of the Giaour's thirst and Vathek's curiosity - 'neither my thirst, nor thy curiosity be satisfied'[131] - serves to stress the contrast between the former's primitive, animal, sense-centred need with the latter's civilised, intellectually oriented desire, resulting in two distinct

degrees of otherness: the sensual full otherness of the Giaour and the more intellectualised intermediate otherness of Vathek. Whilst Vathek is initially cast as object-other, the arrival of the Giaour - more oriental, mysterious, primitive, and sensually excessive, hence, more other, than Vathek - causes him to appear under a less exotic light. This change in perspective, whereby the presence of a more extreme form of otherness - the other's other - turns the previous otherness into a more moderate and intermediate entity, reflects the reversal of perception experienced by Vathek, when, after the emboldening feeling - 'he was almost ready, to adore himself'[132] - of looking down upon Samarah from the top of his eleven-thousand-step-high tower, he turns his gaze to the sky only to realise the relative insignificance of his elevation.[133] Just as the European gaze others Vathek, Vathek's gaze others the Giaour, thus causing the European gaze to revise its judgement of distance: compared to the Giaour, Vathek is not so other after all.

Hence, the arbitration between fictionalised and historicised elements of the Orient in *Vathek*'s content, coupled with the negotiation of authenticity in *Vathek*'s various editions, whose titles and prefaces vacillate between conceding fictionality and claiming historical accuracy,[134] results in an emergent intermediate quality of westernised East and fictionalised truth, in which the original constituents are no longer discretely identifiable. Beckford's ambiguous characterisation of Vathek as indolent, impulsive, and sensual, but also as supremely committed to knowledge and truth seeking - at the cost of defying god's will - creates an intermediate identity integrating elements of Oriental-sensual-otherness and European-rational-selfness. The irreducibility of this emergent identity to its original constituents is epitomised by Vathek's irrepressible 'thirst for knowledge', in which the implicit distance that separates the observer-self from the observed-other collapses into a moment of identification of the sensory-empirical (thirst) with the intellectual-rational (knowledge).

The synthesis of the empirical and the rational is key to Kant's theory of knowledge as well, and part of my argument here is that the ways in which Beckford negotiates the tension between the European-self and the Oriental-other through the creation of intermediate and mediating geographic, linguistic, and cultural spaces resonates with the ways in which Kant reconciles the conflict between rationalism and empiricism by integrating human reason and experience into an intermediate, hybrid account of human cognition.

IV

Born on 22 April 1724 in Königsberg (modern-day Kaliningrad) into a Pietist family of modest means, Kant was educated and spent nearly his entire academic life at the local university, known as the Albertina, where he was exposed to a broad spectrum of thinkers, including Gottfried W. Leibniz and Christian Wolff - whose work was then very influential in German universities -, but also, under the influence of Martin Knutzen, to Isaac Newton and John Locke - whose work was relatively unpopular in Germany, albeit prominent in Britain.[135] The philosophical landscape of eighteenth-century Europe was in effect split into two conflicting accounts of human knowledge:[136] rationalism conceived of knowledge as the result of deductive reasoning based on innate ideas, and largely independent from the encounter with external reality;[137] empiricism, conversely, rejected the notion of innate ideas, and conceived of knowledge as resulting from inductive reasoning applied to empirical observations and the sensory encounter with the external world.[138] Both accounts were partly unsatisfactory: the rationalist outlook delivered certainty at the cost of dogmatism; the empirical traded dogmatism for scepticism.[139] A further crucial difficulty was that of admitting of religion and morality in a world that Newton had shown to be governed by natural laws, i.e. entirely deterministic. Kant set itself the goal of reconciling rationalism and empiricism[140] whilst avoiding dogmatism and scepticism, and of showing that reason is in itself a secure basis to account for both morality and determinism.

Kant's work revolves around the examination of the 'possibility of metaphysics, as well as its sources, [...] extent and boundaries',[141] in order to assure human reason 'its lawful claims, and deliver it of all groundless assumptions'.[142] Within this framework, the *Critique* is divided into two main sections: the 'Transcendental Doctrine of Elements'[143] and the 'Transcendental Doctrine of Method',[144] the former being further divided into the 'Transcendental Aesthetic'[145] and the 'Transcendental Logic'.[146] Here I will focus my discussion on the Transcendental Aesthetic, as it is in this section that Kant lays out the fundamental principles with which aspects of Beckford's work resonate.

Any attempt to discuss Kant's transcendental theory is bound to start with three key distinctions: between intuition and concept, between *a priori* and *a posteriori* (or empirical), and between analytic and synthetic. Intuition (*Anschauung*) and concept (*Begriff*) are two forms

of objective perception (*Bewußtseyn*) (i.e. they represent objects), and, along with sensation (*Empfindung*) - which is subjective (i.e. it does not represent any object) - are the fundamental components of knowledge.[147] Intuitions are sensory,[148] singular, and immediate representations of particular objects;[149] concepts, instead, are intellectual;[150] collective, and mediated representations of categories of objects,[151] i.e. they represent objects as belonging to a certain class (e.g. a table as a member of the class 'tables'). Both intuitions and concepts can be either empirical or *a priori*.[152] Kant holds that, although all knowledge 'undoubtedly begins with experience'[153] - to which he refers as the 'first product' of the understanding[154] -, it does not necessarily arise from[155] nor is it limited to it.[156] Experience 'tells us what is, but not that it must necessarily be so, and not otherwise':[157] hence, experience gives 'no true universality'.[158] Knowledge of universality and necessity must therefore originate independently of - hence logically prior to - experience.[159] Kant calls this experience-independent mode of knowledge '*a priori*', and contrasts it with the empirically grounded mode termed '*a posteriori*'.[160] Thus *a posteriori* cognition derives from empirical sources and (sense-based) experience, which cannot generate judgements of universality and necessity;[161] conversely, *a priori* cognition, which instead is characterised by universality and necessity,[162] originates in reason and is 'absolutely independent'[163] of (sense-based) experience. Importantly, Kant argues that, whilst *a priori* knowledge is independent of experience,[164] *a posteriori* knowledge is never only empirical, as experience is always infused with some degree of *a priori* cognition.[165] *A priori* cognition comes in two varieties: analytic and synthetic.[166] In analytic judgements, the predicate 'does not add anything to the subject'[167] because it is already contained in it: for example, in the statement 'all bodies are extended',[168] the predicate 'extended' is already implied in - and therefore adds nothing to - the subject 'bodies'. Conversely, in synthetic judgements the predicate is 'ampliative'[169] in that it adds information that 'no analysis could possibly extract from the subject':[170] for example, in the statement 'all bodies are heavy',[171] the predicate 'heavy' is not contained in, it could never be extracted from - and therefore adds to - the subject 'bodies'.[172]

The main question in Kant's *Critique* is: 'How are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?'[173] The question is important because synthetic *a priori* knowledge is universal and necessary (as per its being *a priori*) yet ampliative, i.e. informative, and not merely definitional (as per its being synthetic). Kant tackles the problem by devising a system of concepts - which he calls 'transcendental philosophy' - through which he examines the possibility of *a priori* knowledge: 'I call transcendental all cognition

that is occupied not so much with objects, but rather with our concepts *a priori* of objects [i.e. concepts which exist logically prior to objects]. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy'.[174] He clarifies this notion in the corresponding passage of the *Critique*'s second edition, in which 'concepts *a priori* of objects' is replaced by 'mode of cognition of objects, insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*',[175] thereby stressing Kant's aim to explore and establish the conditions of the possibility of cognition. Within this overall agenda, the aim of the Transcendental Aesthetic is to present a 'science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility',[176] and its main conclusions is that there are 'two pure forms of sensible intuition, as principles of *a priori* knowledge, namely, space and time'.[177]

V

Space and time are key to critical philosophy, because Kant's argument about the nature of space and time suggests a conclusion about the nature of all knowledge, namely that it is impossible to know things in themselves. Kant asks: 'What are space and time? Are they real entities? Are they only determinations or relations of things, yet such that they would belong to things even if they were not intuited? Or are they such that they belong only to the form of intuition, thus to the subjective state of our mind?'[178] Kant tackles the question through a series of logical steps. As per scholarly tradition,[179] I will focus the discussion on space,[180] with the understanding that the conclusions apply to time as well.

Kant's first observation is that the representation of space is neither empirical nor conceptual, but rather intuitive. Kant contends that space cannot be an empirical concept (*empirischer Begriff*)[181] originating from outer experience, because for sensations to be referred to something outside oneself (i.e. in a different place) one has to have already a representation of space.[182] Hence spatial experiences are not the causes, but rather the consequences of an inner representation of space: they do not supply it: they presuppose and are made possible by it.[183] His second consideration is that, although it is possible to imagine space in the absence of objects (i.e. empty space), it is impossible to imagine the absence of space.[184] This indicates that space is a 'necessary *a priori* representation, which underlies all outer intuitions'.[185] Based on this necessity and apriority - whereby space is 'an *a priori* representation, which necessarily underlies outer appearances'[186] - space must be regarded as a pure intuition (*reine Anschauung*)[187] (in the sense that it is represented

as a one, unique and all-encompassing space that is logically prior to any discrete sub-regions one may imagine within it),[188] as well as 'the condition of the possibility of appearances'.[189] Kant elaborates these two points - i.e. the necessity and apriority of space - by invoking the so-called argument from geometry.

Geometrical knowledge is synthetic and *a priori* because it is necessary and universal (hence *a priori*) yet ampliative (hence synthetic), as the knowledge that two sides of a triangle together are greater than the third side can never be derived from the concepts of side or of triangle,[190] in the same way as no amount of analysis of the concepts '5', '+', and '7' will yield the concept of '12'.[191] Because it is necessary and universal - certain beyond doubt (apodictically)[192] - this knowledge cannot derive from experience, because experience cannot deliver universality and necessity.[193] Geometrical knowledge is therefore an intuition: a synthetic *a priori* intuition. Since geometry is the mathematics of space, if knowledge of geometry is a synthetic *a priori* intuition, knowledge of space is too. Transcendental idealism argues that the *a priori* knowledge of the structure of space, and of the necessity of space for experience (i.e. as a condition of the possibility of experience) can be explained only by the supposition that space does not represent any property of - or relations between - things in themselves, i.e. as existing independently of the subjective conditions of intuition.[194] Rather, space is 'the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e. the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible'.[195] The representation of space is therefore relative to the human standpoint, and specifically to the subjective condition of human intuition.[196] Consequently, it can be ascribed to things only as they appear to the human subject, i.e. as they are 'objects of [human] sensibility',[197] as 'if we remove our own subject or even only the subjective state of the senses all the states and relations of the objects in space and time, and even space and time themselves, would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. [...] We known nothing except our way of perceiving'.[198] This means that space is empirically real (in that it is objectively valid with respect to objects of sensibility, i.e. appearances) but transcendentally ideal (in that it is a form of intuition, belonging to the subjective condition of human sensibility, and being meaningless with respect to things in themselves).[199] Kant's argument culminates in the assertion that 'nothing intuited in space is a thing in itself [*Sache an sich*], nor is space a form of things in themselves' rather 'objects in themselves are unknown to us, and [...] what we call outer objects are nothing but mere representations of our sensibility, whose form is space, and whose true correlate, i.e. the thing

in itself [*Ding an sich selbst*], is not known, nor can be known, through these representations'.[200] Hence, all human intuition is 'nothing but the representation of appearance'.[201]

Summarising: humans represent the world as being in space. However, space is not a mind-independent thing[202] - or a property of or relation between things[203] - existing in a mind-independent world that would exist independently of one's knowledge of it. Rather, space is a form of intuition - along with time, the only pure form of intuition[204] - i.e. a structure that the knowing mind itself imposes upon the representation of the world, and through which the world is intuited. It follows that, when humans represent the world in space and time, they do not represent it as it is in itself (since space and time are not things - or properties of things - in themselves), but rather as it appears, given the spatial and temporal structure imposed upon it by the knowing mind. Hence, space and time enable human knowledge but also set drastic boundaries to it, because the conditions that make it possible to represent the world as being in space and time also make it impossible to represent it otherwise (i.e. independently of - or as not being in - space and time). Specifically, they make it impossible to represent the world as it is in itself.[205] Therefore, the grand verdict of Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic is that the world as it is in itself is out of bounds: all human knowledge is restricted to appearance, i.e. to the way in which things appear to, through, and given the limitations of - the human mind.

VI

Kant's strategy to reconcile the conflict between rationalism and empiricism by embracing reason and the senses into a integrated account of human cognition resonates with Beckford's casting of the tension between subject-self and object-other through the creation of intermediate and mediating geographic, linguistic, and cultural spaces characterised by a hybrid form of otherness (e.g. Vathek, France and its language) - greater than the subject's (e.g. the English), lesser than the object's (e.g. the Giaour, the Orient and its language). The duplicitous nature of these mediating cultural and linguistic spaces both enables and restricts the possibilities of knowing the other, because the conditions that make the encounter possible on intermediate terms (e.g. a shared *lingua franca*), also dictate and impose those terms to the encounter. Beckford's use of the French language, with its connotation of diplomatic intermediation between the East and the West, encourages the encounter

with otherness by drawing the English reader into a middle ground that affords - but also shapes and limits - the interaction with the unknown Oriental other. This dual enabling-limiting quality of Beckford's mediating instances echoes the enabling-limiting quality of Kant's *a priori* forms of intuition, namely space and time, which make it possible to experience the world spatially and temporally, and impossible to experience it in itself.

Kant's transcendental aesthetic's struggle with knowledge of things in themselves is Vathek's own struggle with knowledge of the elusive other, epitomised by the stranger-Giaour. Vathek attempts to master the Giaour by gathering all the information he can extract about and from him. He seeks out anyone who can provide 'intelligence of the stranger'.[206] When the stranger speaks, Vathek is unsatisfied with hearing his voice, and wants him to manifest himself visibly: 'Where art thou? be present to my eyes';[207] conversely, when faced with his physical presence, he 'want[s] him to speak'.[208] But the Giaour won't comply, and instead withstands the gaze of the Caliph's 'terrible eye' silently and without the 'slightest emotion'.[209] By withholding his speech and withstanding Vathek's gaze, the Giaour resists being read as a text.[210] This resistance is reiterated in the cryptic messages on his sabres, whose meaning Vathek attempts - both personally[211] and through the enlistment of interpreters[212] - but repeatedly fails to extract because the characters of the script keep changing after every decoding attempt.[213] By constantly changing, the language of the sabres refuses to perform its role as a vehicle for communication. On the contrary, here language stands in the way of meaning. The constantly changing characters, whose meaning, even when deciphered, cannot be fixed, but rather is 'effaced with the act of reading',[214] embody the tension between creation and destruction inherent in Kant's notion of a knowing mind that half-observes, half-creates the object of knowledge by imposing upon it its own *a priori* structure: what creates the sensible world (i.e. what makes knowledge of the sensible world possible) destroys the world in itself (i.e. makes its knowledge by man impossible - although the world in itself may continue its existence in inscrutable ways). Hence, Vathek's attempts to know (i.e. to understand and master) the other - by making him speak, manifest himself, and surrender the code of his language - fail on all fronts. By returning the gaze and withholding his speech, the object-other resists both being destroyed and being created by the subject's epistemic effort, and refuses to yield and be reduced to meaning. It is noteworthy that, although Vathek is unable to 'decypher [*sic*] the characters',[215] he is nevertheless able to perceive 'that they, every

day, changed'.[216] The juxtaposition of deciphering and perceiving - the former connoting an intellectually oriented high-level cognitive activity, the latter a low-level sense-based perception -, and Vathek's ability to handle the latter but not the former, illustrates the central tenet of Kant's transcendental idealism, namely that man's knowledge cannot reach beyond the sensible realm of appearances.

Hence, both Beckford's *Vathek* and Kant's first *Critique* address the problem of knowledge and reach the castigating conclusion that man cannot access truth. Both develop their case by casting knowledge in terms of encounter with otherness - be it by juxtaposing the European self with the Oriental-other (as in *Vathek*), or the knowing subject with the represented object (as in the *Critique*) -, as it is mediated by the human faculties, and intersected by the boundary between reality and appearance. Beckford's intermediate and mediating geographic, linguistic, and cultural spaces (e.g. France and the French language combine oriental connotations and squarely European identity, which places them not only geographically but also culturally and conceptually mid-way between England and the Orient; Vathek's character traits combine sensual excesses and intellectual yearnings, which place him on an intermediate degree of otherness, mid-way between the European self and the Giaour's greater otherness) enable the encounter with the unknown other, but also dictate its modalities and limitations: the other is therefore experienced not as it is in itself but rather as seen through the filter of these mediating instances, through which the encounter is at all possible. This coupling of and tension between enabling and limiting qualities also undergirds Kant's transcendental idealism, as the hybrid integration of reason and sense-based experience delivers certainty about the possibilities of human knowledge, but also spells out its modalities and its inherent and unavoidable limitations. Beckford's mediating spaces, whereby the subject-European-self experiences the object-Oriental-other not as it is in itself, but rather as it manifests itself as its identity interacts with, is filtered through, and is partly constructed by the subject-European-self, echo the main tenet of Kant's transcendental idealism: man experiences the world not as it is in itself, but rather as it appears to the knowing mind. Despite Beckford's and Kant's moral exhortations seem, on the surface, opposite to each other - the former condemning,[217] the latter preconising (*sapere aude!*)[218] knowledge seeking - they ultimately converge in the shared conclusion that the possibilities of human knowledge are severely restricted, and that, whether it be by divine proscription (as per Beckford's account) or by human limitations (as per Kant's account) man

cannot access truth.

VII

Vathek saw the light at the peak of the Enlightenment, an age dominated by a conception of reality as governed by natural laws, and of man as capable of knowing those laws. In this conception, subject and object of knowledge are clearly distinct entities - the former being a rational observer endowed with cognitive faculties, the latter an external reality whose existence is independent from (and, in principle, fully knowable by) the observer -, and the epistemic act is key to human progress. In this context, it is unsurprising that contemporary critics should condemn Beckford's choice to encase *Vathek*'s narrative within a moral framework that rewards ignorance and punishes curiosity: 'The chief defect of the work arises from the moral [...] Indolence and childishness are represented as the source of happiness; while ambition and the desire of knowledge, so laudable and meritorious when properly directed, are painted in odious colours, and punished as crimes'.[219] It is also understandable that similar concerns be raised *vis-à-vis* the appointment of a supernatural and omnipotent legislator to impose limits on human intellectual quests, thus shattering the idea of the self as an agent through the enforcement of a 'supreme and malignant "otherness" which cannot be escaped or transcended'.[220] Held up to the light of the Age of Reason, *Vathek*'s moral and fatalistic frame, coupled with its orientalist setting, invokes notions of backwardness and vice.

If, however, Beckford's tale is observed through the prism of Kant's transcendental system, itself a product of the Age of Reason, an alternative interpretation emerges.

Kant's integration of rational and empirical elements - by which reason and the senses are both epistemically required for knowledge to obtain - challenges the notion of a clear boundary between the subject-observer-self and the object-observed-other, as the ways in which the observed object manifests itself sensorily to the knowing subject includes contributions from the knowing subject itself. Kant's theory also introduces severe limits to the possibilities of human understanding of the outside world. These limits, by which man's epistemic reach upon reality is restricted to its appearance, are inherent to man's own nature, as they result from the imposition of the structure and limitation of the human cognitive apparatus upon the reality which it seeks to apprehend.

Read from a Kantian perspective, *Vathek*'s intermediate identities, mediating linguistic and cultural spaces, and hybridised historical and imaginary material, become literary expressions of the *Critique*'s defiance of the border between the knowing subject and its object of knowledge, and between reality - i.e. the world as it is in itself - and appearance - i.e. the world as it appears to the human observer. Crucially, *Vathek*'s representation of the limits of human knowledge as dictated by an external, supernatural deity becomes a fictionalised transposition of the *Critique*'s notion of the limits of human knowledge as imposed by man's own physiology. What in *Vathek* is forbidden by god, in the *Critique* is forbidden by the human condition. Hence, seen through a Kantian lens, Beckford's seemingly fatalistic verdict on man's quest for knowledge turns into a sophisticated allegory of the Enlightenment, as the appeal to the supernatural (e.g. the will of god) as an attempt to justify, explain, and escape from the limitations of human nature, ultimately leads straight back to it.

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Notes

1 See: 'Caliph Vathek | This day is Published, in Small 8vo. Price 4s. | The History of the Caliph Vathek: | An Arabian Tale from an unpublished Manuscript | with Notes Critical and Explanatory. | Printed [f]or J. Johnson, No 72, St. Pauls Church-Yard. | A few copies, on large paper, price 7s. 6d. in boards'. *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* **(London, England), Wednesday, 7 June 1786, Issue 5323.**

2 *An Arabian Tale from an unpublished manuscript: with notes critical and explanatory* (London: J. Johnson, 1786). Hereafter: [Lo].

3 [Loiii].

4 *Catalogue de la bibliothèque cantonale vaudoise, Volume I: Généralités* (Lausanne: J.S. Blanchard aîné, 1853), p. 80, n. 1569.

5 *Dictionnaire des journaux: 1600-1789, sous la direction de Jean Sgard* (Paris: Universitas, 1991), Vol. 2, No. 661.

6 The review was first brought to scholarly attention by Beckford collector Rowland Bur-

den-Muller. See: John Carter, 'The Lausanne Edition of Beckford's *Vathek*', *The Library*, Fourth Series, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (1937), pp. 369-394, (p. 392).

7 Kenneth W. Graham, 'Introduction', in William Beckford, *Vathek; with, The episodes of Vathek*, ed. by Kenneth W. Graham (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 17-41, (p. 22).

8 *Vathek* (Lausanne: Isaac Hignou & Co., 1787). Hereafter: [L].

9 '*L'Ouvrage que nous présentons au public a **été** composé en François, par M.* Beckford' [Liii].

10 '*L'indiscrétion d'un homme de Lettres à qui le manuscrit avoit **été** confié, il y a trois ans, en a fait connoître la traduction angloise avant la publication de l'original. Le Traducteur a même pris sur lui d'avancer, dans sa préface, que Vathek **étoit** traduit de l'Arabe*'. [Liii].

11 'J'ai lu, par ordre de Monseigneur le Garde-des-Sceaux, un manuscrit qui a pour titre: Vathek, Roman. C'est une petite brochure **écrite** dans le goût des Contes Arabes'. Blin de Sainmore, 'Approbation du Censeur Royal', reprinted in *The History of the Caliph Vathek, with an introduction and notes by E. Denison Ross, with a portrait from a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), p. xxii.

12 The precise date of publication is unclear, but it is believed to fall between the end of July ('it is clear that this edition did not appear till the end of July', Carter, 'The Lausanne Edition of Beckford's *Vathek*', p. 392) and 6 August ('I have received a letter from Mrs Hervey and read to my great joy that [...] my Vathek is at length published in Paris', Beckford's letter dated 6 August 1787, reprinted in Guy Chapman, 'Introduction', in *Vathek, with the Episodes of Vathek: by William Beckford of Fonthill. Edited with a Historical Introduction and Notes by Guy Chapman. In Two Volumes with Illustrations*. Volume I (Cambridge: Constable and Co. & Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929), p. xxii). Further indication for an early August date is that the book received the *Privilège du Roi* on 22 August, and was registered with the Chambre Royale & Syndicale des Libraires & Imprimeurs de Paris on 4 September (for the full text of the *Privilège* and of the Registration see *Le Vathek de Beckford, Réimprimé sur l'Édition française originale avec préface par Stéphane Mallarmé* (Paris: Adolphe Labitte, 1876), unnumbered pages following Mallarmé's preface).

13 *Vathek, Conte Arabe* (Paris: Poinçot, 1787). Hereafter [P].

14 Kant's philosophical labour during the so-called 'silent decade' (1770-1780) is chronicled by his correspondence with medical student Marcus Herz. See Paul Guyer, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason, ed. by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-18.

15 The other two elements are the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Here I will focus on the *Critique of Pure Reason* on the ground of its chronological and thematic relevance to *Vathek*.

16 Immanuel Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1781). Hereafter [A].

17 Immanuel Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, 2nd ed. (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1787). Hereafter [B].

18 For an overview of the dispute, see Peter Markie, 'Rationalism vs. Empiricism', *The*

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2015 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta. [<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/rationalism-empiricism/>, accessed on 22 August 2015].

19 See, for example, René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Leiden: Ian Maire, 1637).

20 See, for example, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London: T. Basset, 1690).

21 [A] *passim*.

22 [A], part I.

23 The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* gives Beckford's birth date as 29 September 1760 (Anita McConnell, 'Beckford, William Thomas (1760–1844)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, May 2009 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1905> [accessed 20 Aug 2015]), whilst Beckford's biographer Cyrus Redding gives Beckford's birth date as 'September 29th, 1759' (Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill, Author of "Vathek", in two volumes*. Vol. I (London: Charles J. Skeet: 1859), p. 71). Both appear to be incorrect, as notices in the public records indicate that the birth took place on 1 October 1760 (see, for example, entry 'Oct. 1. Lady of Alderman Beckford [was delivered] of a son', under the list of births in the *London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, Vol. 29 (October 1760), p. 556).

24 See previous footnote.

25 McConnell, 'Beckford'.

26 Chapman, 'Memoir', p. xvi.

27 Anglo-Swedish architect whose renown is linked to London's Somerset House. John Harris, 'Chambers, Sir William (1722–1796)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, May 2009, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5083 [accessed 30 Aug 2015]. He is erroneously referred to as 'Sir John Chambers' by Chapman, 'Memoir', p. xv.

28 Drawing master at Eton from 1763 to 1768. Chapman, 'Memoir', p. xv.

29 Matthew O. Grenby, 'Beckford, William Thomas', in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, ed. by Christopher John Murray. Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2004), pp. 63-64, (p. 64).

30 See 'Voltaire has asked me to spend two or three Days at Ferney [...]', Beckford's letter to his sister Elizabeth Hervey dated 19 January 1778, reprinted in Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill (Author of "Vathek")* (London: William Heinemann, 1910), pp. 47-51, (p. 49).

31 Naturalist and philosopher, developer of the 'catastrophe theory of evolution'. 'Charles Bonnet', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015), <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Bonnet> [accessed 30 August 2015]. References to Beckford's acquaintance with Bonnet are found in Redding, *Memoirs*, pp. 130-131.

32 Philosopher, physicist, and geologist, author of *Voyages dans les Alpes* (Neuchâtel: Samuel Fauche, 1779-1796), and inventor of the hygrometer. 'Horace Bénédict de Saussure', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015), <http://www.bri-

tannica.com/biography/Horace-Benedict-de-Saussure> [accessed 30 August 2015]. Beckford's acquaintance with Saussure is mentioned in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 26.

33 Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Baronne de Staël-Holstein, later known as Madame de Staël. 'Germaine de Staël', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015), <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Germaine-de-Stael> [accessed 30 August 2015]. Beckford is said to have recalled: 'I knew Mdlle. Neckar [*sic*] at Coppet, a lovely place near Geneva [...]'. Undated statement, quoted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 26.

34 Painter and polymath, for whom Beckford displayed intense admiration: 'The way of living at Geneva [...] is very improving. The Societies are composed of so many clever people [...] In the first rank of these, shines my friend Huber [...] You must live with Huber, to be able to discern his real perfection'. Beckford's letter to his sister Elizabeth Hervey dated 19 January 1778, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, pp. 47-51, (pp. 49 and 51). References to Huber recur throughout Beckford's later correspondence as well, and are extensively discussed in André Parreaux, 'Les "peintres extraordinaires" de Beckford sont-ils une satire des **écoles** flamande et hollandaise?', *Revue du Nord*, Vol. 43 (January-March 1961), n. 169, pp. 15-42. For further analysis of Huber's connections with Beckford and other members of the British expatriate community in Switzerland, see Garry Apgar, 'An Anglo-Swiss Connection in the Age of Voltaire: Jean Huber's British Friends and Relations', in *British-French Exchanges in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Kathleen Hardesty Doig and Dorothy Medlin (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 274-287, *passim.*

35 Beckford's father died in 1770, when William was ten years old (Richard B. Sheridan, 'Beckford, William (*bap.* 1709, *d.* **1770)›,** *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1903> [accessed 31 Aug 2015]). The inheritance included sugar plantations and thousands of slaves in Jamaica (the exact figures are reported in 'William Thomas Beckford', in *Legacies of British Slave-ownership database*, 2015 <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/22232> [accessed on multiple dates in July 2015]), properties in London and Wiltshire, as well as the rich collections housed in them (McConnell, 'Beckford'). The magnitude of Beckford's inheritance is reflected in Byron's reference to Vathek as 'England's wealthiest son' (Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. A Romaunt.* Second edn (London: John Murray, 1812), canto I, stanza XXII, p. 19).

36 Chapman, 'Memoir', p. xxiv.

37 'Pacchierotti, Tenducci, and Rauzzini, sang like superior beings'. Beckford's letter to Lady Hamilton dated 14 October 1781, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters,* pp. 121-123, (p. 121). The episode is also referred to in Helen Berry, *The Castrato and His Wife* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 69.

38 De Loutherbourg, chief scenographer at London's Drury Lane theatre, was renowned for his invention of the Eidophusikon, hailed by contemporary commentators as a 'new species of painting [...] one of the most remarkable inventions in the arts, and one of the most valuable, that ever was made' (see 'A View of the Eidophusikon', *The European Magazine, and London Review*, Vol. 1 (Mar 1782), pp. 180-182, (p. 180)). For a detailed

description of the Eidophusikon, see Richard D. Altick, 'The Eidophusikon', in *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 117-127.

39 'Every preparation is going forwards that our much admired and admiring Loutherbourg [...] in all the wildness of his fervid imagination can suggest or contrive – to give our favourite apartments the strangeness and novelty of a fairy world'. Beckford's letter to Louisa Beckford dated December 1781, reprinted in Guy Chapman, *Beckford* (London: Cape, 1937), p. 99.

40 In his correspondence, Beckford reminisced about 'the delightful days of F[onthill]' when 'we used to recline, like voluptuous Orientals on silken beds in the glow of transparent curtains', whilst 'soft perfume of roses [...] seemed to float in the air', and the 'affecting sound of the musick' filled the hall. Letter to Louisa Beckford dated Rome, 30 June 1782, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, pp. 158-159, (p. 158).

41 Beckford's letter to Louisa Beckford dated December 1781, reprinted in Chapman, *Beckford*, p. 99.

42 André Parreaux, *William Beckford, auteur de "Vathek" (1760-1844), Etude de la création littéraire* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1960), pp. 211-212.

43 'I composed *Vathek* [...] thoroughly embued with all that passed at Fonthill'. Quoted in Roger H. Lonsdale, 'Introduction', in William Beckford, *Vathek* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. vii-xxxi, (p. xii).

44 'I composed *Vathek* immediately upon my return [from that] voluptuous festival'. Quoted in Lonsdale, 'Introduction', p. xii.

45 'I wrote Vathek [...] at one sitting, and in French. It cost me three days and two nights of hard labour'. Redding, *Memoirs*, p. 243.

46 'The fit I laboured under when I wrote Vathek lasted two days and a night'. Beckford's statement quoted in Lonsdale, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

47 Melville suggests that it took Beckford twelve months to finish the manuscript (Lewis Melville, 'Introduction', in William Beckford, *The Episodes of Vathek*, translated by Sir Frank T. Marzials with an Introduction by Lewis Melville (London: Stephen Swift & Co., 1912), pp. vii-xxxi, (p. x)); Chapman argues that it took him until November (Chapman, 'Introduction', p. xvi). Beckford's correspondence to Samuel Henley - e.g. 'My Arabian tales go on prodigiously' (letter dated 25 April 1782), and 'My Caliph advances on his journey to Persepolis' (letter dated 1 May 1782) (both letters reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, pp. 126 and 127, respectively) - suggests that *Vathek* was still in the making at least until late spring.

48 Melville, 'Introduction', p. viii.

49 'You proposed [...] to translate Vathec [...]'. Beckford's letter to Samuel Henley dated Cologny (Geneva), 18 November 1783, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 126.

50 'The spirit has moved me this Eve, and [...] I have given way to fancies and inspirations. What will be the consequence of this mood I am not bold enough to determine'. Beckford's letter to the Rev. Samuel Henley, dated 21 January 1782, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 126.

51 'My Arabian tales go on prodigiously' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated 25 April

1782), and 'My Caliph advances on his journey to Persepolis' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated 1 May 1782). Both letters reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, pp. 126 and 127, respectively.

52 'I go on bravely with the episodes of Vathec [*sic*], and hope in a few weeks to wind up his adventures'. Beckford's letter to Henley dated 13 January 1783, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 127.

53 E.g. 'I rejoice very much at the progress you have made in the translation' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated Geneva, 29 December 1783), and 'Have you finished Vathek?' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated Portman Sq., 6 May 1784) (both letters reprinted in Melville, 'Introduction', p. xi), as well as 'I long eagerly to read your translation' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated 19 May 1784), 'Have you got a fair copy of your translation?' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated 14 October 1784), and 'Your translation has all the spirit of the Caliphes [*sic*] and their Daemons. - I long for the continuation' (Beckford's letter to Henley dated 26 February 1785) (latter three excerpts reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 128).

54 'I think, to exhibit Vathek *properly* in English - there should be some account given of the original and translation in a preface - then should follow a preliminary dissertation on the Fable and Machinery - and to the Story itself, should be subjoined notes to illustrate the costume: otherwise a very considerable part of its merit must be lost to 999 readers of a thousand'. Henley's letter to Beckford, dated Rendlesham, 26 April 1785, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 130.

55 'As I have several things of importance to say to you, I must beg the favour of seeing you here *immediately* [...]'. Beckford's letter to Henley dated 11 June 1785, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 131.

56 'The publication of Vathek must be suspended at least another year. I would not have him on any account precede the French edition. [...] You must be sensible that, notwithstanding my eagerness to see Vathek in print, I cannot sacrifice the French edition to my impatience. [...] I must repeat, therefore, my desire that you will not give your translation to the world till the original has made its appearance'. Beckford's letter to Henley dated Château de la Tour (Vevey), 9 February 1786, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, pp. 134-135.

57 '[...] it appears you had sent the MSS. for my inspection. If you have, Heaven knows its fate; certainly it has not reached my hands any more than a letter to which you allude as immediately preceding your last. I beg you will clear up these doubts [...]'. Beckford's letter to Henley dated 1 August 1786, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 136.

58 'My spirits and rest are broken [...] The slow fever [...] has been preying upon me [...] the dejection of mind into which I am plunged [...]'. Beckford's letter to Henley dated 1 August 1786, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, p. 136.

59 [Lo].

60 [Loiii].

61 [L].

62 [P].

63 *The European Magazine, and London Review*, Vol. 10 (August 1786), pp. 102-104, (p. 102).

64 *English Review*, Vol. 8 (September 1786), Art. IV, pp. 180-184, (p. 181).

65 *The Critical Review*, Vol. 62 (July 1786), pp. 37-42, (p. 38).

66 *Monthly Review*, Vol. 76 (May 1787), Art. 41, p. 450.

67 *The Critical Review*, Vol. 62 (July 1786), pp. 37-42, (p. 38).

68 *The European Magazine, and London Review*, Vol. 10 (August 1786), pp. 102-104. The similarity between the style in *Vathek* and in Voltaire's work has continued to be invoked by reviewers ever since. See, for example, George Saintsbury's description of *Vathek* as 'an Arabian tale [...] into which Anthony Hamilton and Voltaire had infused western sarcasm'. George Saintsbury, 'The Growth of the Later Novel', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller, Vol. XI: The Period of the French Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914, reprinted in 1970), pp. 285-310, (p. 290).

69 [L23/P20].

70 [Lo24].

71 [L123/P99].

72 [Lo128].

73 May, *La jeunesse de William Beckford*.

74 See, for example, Urs Bitterli, 'Types of Cultural Encounter: Contacts, Collisions and Relationships', in *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 20-51.

75 E.g. the German Koran of 1688 claimed to be a translation from the Dutch translation of the French translation. Peter Burke, 'Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe', in *Cultural Translation in early Modern Europe*, ed. by Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 7-38, (p. 27).

76 Although note that a manuscript of a direct English translation was discovered in the Beckford Papers. See Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, 'A Manuscript Translation of the "Arabian Nights" in the Beckford Papers', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 7 (1976), pp. 7-23.

77 D'Herbelot died in 1695. The *Bibliothèque* was completed by Galland.

78 Mary Hossain, 'The Employment and Training of Interpreters in Arabic and Turkish under Louis XIV: France', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* Vol. 14, No. 1 (1 January 1992), pp. 235-246, (p. 240).

79 Marie de Testa and Antoine Gautier, 'De l'établissement des Pères capucins à Constantinople à la fondation de l'École des jeunes de langues (1626-1669)', in *Drogmans et diplomates européens auprès de la Porte ottomane* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2003), pp. 43-46.

80 Francesca Lucchetta, 'La scuola dei "giovani di lingua" veneti nei secoli XVI e XVII', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* Vol. 7 (1989), pp. 19-40.

81 The **École** was subsequently annexed to the Collège de Clermont (modern-day Lycée Louis-le-Grand) and eventually absorbed by the **École** spéciale des Langues orientales vivantes (modern-day Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales). Gustave Dupont-Ferrier, *Du Collège de Clermont au Lycée Louis-le-Grand (1563-1920): la vie quo-*

tidienne d'un collège parisien pendant plus de trois cent cinquante ans, Volume 3 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1925), pp. 391 and ff..

82 ED Tappe, 'The Greek College at Oxford, 1699-1705', *Oxoniensia* Vol. 19 (1954), pp. 92-111.

83 See on this topic Géraud Poumarède, 'Les envoyés ottomans à la cour de France: d'une présence controversée à l'exaltation d'une alliance (xveᵉ-xviiieᵉ siècles)', in *Turcs et turqueries, XVI-XVIIIe siècles*, ed. by Lucien Bély (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2009), pp. 63-95; Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

84 Mathieu Grenet, 'Muslim Missions to Early Modern France, c.1610-c.1780: Notes for a Social History of Cross-Cultural Diplomacy', *Journal of Early Modern History* Vol. 19, No. 2-3 (2015), pp. 223-244, (p. 230). For an comparative overview of the different diplomatic ceremonials across Europe see Jean Rousset de Missy, *Le cérémonial diplomatique des cours de l'Europe, ou Collection des actes, mémoires et relations [...]. Recueilli en partie par Mr Du Mont. Mis en ordre et considérablement augmenté par Mr. Rousset.* Second Volume (Amsterdam: Janssons, Wetstein & Smith, & Z. Chatelain; and The Hague: P. de Hondt & J. Neaulme, 1739).

85 E.g. Ahmad ibn Qasim al-Hajari's mission to Paris in 1611 (see Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700: The Formation of a Myth* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 210-211), and Abdallah bin Aisha's embassy to Paris in 1699 (see Nabil I. Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century.* First English Translations. Edited and translated by Nabil Matar (New York, NY, and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. xviii and 197).

86 E.g. the Tunisian envoys to Toulon in 1743. See Jean-Baptiste Hélin de Fiennes, *Une mission tunisienne à Paris en 1743, racontée par De Fiennes Fils, secrétaire-interprète du Roi: Relation inédite publiée par Pierre Grandchamp*, ed. by Pierre Grandchamp (Tunis: J. Aloccio, 1931), and Christian Windler, *La diplomatie comme expérience de l'autre: consuls français au Maghreb (1700-1840)* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), p. 536.

87 E.g. the 1788 envoy mentioned in *Voyage de F. Hornemann, dans l'Afrique septentrionale.*[...] *Traduit de l'anglais et augmenté de notes par L. Langlès.* Second Part (Paris: Dentu, 1803), footnote on p. 451.

88 E.g. Müteferrika Süleyman Ağa's embassy to Versailles in 1669. See William Bernstein, *A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped The World* (London: Grove Atlantic, 2008), p. 247.

89 E.g. Mohammad Reza Beg's controversial (for not being properly attired) ambassadorial visit to Versailles in 1715. See Susan Mokhberi, 'Finding Common Ground Between Europe and Asia: Understanding and Conflict During the Persian Embassy to France in 1715', *Journal of Early Modern History* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2012), pp. 53-80.

90 Grenet, 'Muslim Missions', p. 240.

91 E.g. 'the delight of the eye' [Lo3/L3/P5], 'the nightingale sang' [Lo24/L23/P19], 'the murmurs of the Four Fountains' [Lo44/L42/P33], 'the subtle and potent odour, which the torches exhaled' [Lo125/L120/P97], the scent of 'harebells, and pansies [...] jonquils,

hyacinths, and carnations; with every other perfume that impregnates the air' [Lo24/L20/P19], 'the most exquisite dainties [...] the most delicious wines, and the choicest cordials' [Lo2-3/L3/P4].

92 [Lo69/L65/P52].

93 [Lo2/L2/P4].

94 [Lo2/L2/P3-4].

95 [Lo2-3/L3/P4].

96 [Lo4/L4/P5].

97 [Lo5/L4/P5-6].

98 [Lo22/L21/P18].

99 [Lo25/L23-24/P20].

100 'Put an end to your gluttony' [Lo63/L60/P49], is his mother's reproach.

101 [Lo89/L84].

102 'Le Calife fondit sur tout cela [i.e. food] comme un vautour' [P47].

103 [Lo25/L23-24/P20].

104 'Why assumest thou the function of a dog?' [Lo25/L24/P20].

105 [Lo1/L1/P1].

106 [Lo32/L30/P25].

107 [Lo26/L25/P21].

108 'subtle and penetrating odour' [Lo55] / 'odeur subtile & pénétrante' [L52] / 'odeur suffocante' [P41].

109 'horrible rarities' [Lo55].

110 [Lo23/L22/P19].

111 [Lo9/L9/P9].

112 'so hideous, that the very guards who arrested him, were forced to shut their eyes' [Lo9/L9/P9].

113 [Lo26/L25/P21].

114 'perceivest thou not how my mouth waters?' [Lo46] / 'Ne vois-tu pas que l'eau m'en vient à la bouche?' [L43].

115 'cold water, which calmed him more than every other' [Lo22/L21].

116 'Know that I am parched with thirst [...] I require the blood of fifty of the most beautiful sons' [Lo41/L38/P31].

117 [Lo32/L30/P25].

118 [Lo32/L30/P25].

119 [Lo28-29/L27/P23].

120 [Lo5/L5/P6].

121 [Lo40/L37].

122 [Lo5/L5/P6].

123 [Lo4].

124 'Perceivest thou not, that I may perish by drinking to excess, no less than by a total abstinence?' [Lo25-26/L24/P21].

125 [Lo10/L10/P10].

126 'Vathek beheld a vast black chasm, [...] before which stood the Indian, still blacker' [Lo40] / 'ouverture noire [...] l'Indien, plus noir encore' [L38]. Also: 'his body, was blacker than ebony' [Lo10] / 'plus noir que l'ébène' [L10/P10].

127 [Lo9/L9/P9].

128 'his generosity was unbounded; and his indulgences, unrestrained' [Lo2/L2/P4].

129 He delights in the performance of 'the most skilful musicians, and admired poets' [Lo3/L3/P4], and at the sight of 'rarities collected from every corner of the earth' [Lo3/L3/P5].

130 'He wished to know every thing' [Lo5/L5/P6].

131 [Lo41/L38/P31].

132 [Lo7/L7/P7].

133 'The idea, which such an elevation inspired, of his own grandeur, completely bewildered him [...] till, lifting his eyes upward, he saw the stars, as high above him as they appeared, when he stood on the surface of the earth' [Lo7-8/L7/P7-8].

134 The Lausanne edition's minimalistic title and half-title - both simply 'Vathek' - contrast with the clearly fictional quality of the Paris counterparts - both 'Conte Arabe' - and with the ambiguous wording of the London edition, which announces a 'Tale' in the title, but a 'History' in the half-title. The tension between tale-conte and history is played out in the preface as well, where Henley's cryptic statement in the London edition refers to the text as a 'Story' (hence, no longer 'History', as in its half-title), whose anonymous 'Original' has been written in 'Arabick' and 'collected in the East' by an unnamed 'Man of Letters', to which Beckford's Lausanne edition rebuts by reclaiming the text's original authorship and French language.

135 For biographical information see Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

136 For an overview of the dispute, see Markie, 'Rationalism vs. Empiricism'.

137 See, for example, René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Leiden: Ian Maire, 1637).

138 See, for example, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London: T. Basset, 1690).

139 See, 'those who observe a scientific method have the choice to proceed either dogmatically or sceptically' ('entweder dogmatisch oder sceptisch' [A856/B884]).

140 It was Kant himself who, in 'The History of Pure Reason' ('Die Geschichte der reinen Vernunft' [A852-855/B880-883]) categorised his predecessors into 'sensual-' and 'intellectual philosophers' ('Sensual- [...] Intellectualphilosophen' [A853/B881]), calling the former 'empiricists' ('Empiristen' [A854/B882]), represented by Locke; the latter 'noologists' ('Noologisten' [A854/B882]) (i.e. rationalists), represented by Leibniz.

141 'die Entscheidung der Möglichkeit oder Unmöglichkeit einer Metaphysik **überhaupt** und die Bestimmung so wol der Quellen, als des Umfanges und der Gränzen' [Axii].

142 'gerechten Ansprüchen sichere, dagegen aber alle grundlose Anmassungen [...] abfertigen könne' [Axi-xii].

143 'Transscendentale Elementarlehre' [A17/B31].

144 'Transscendentale Methodenlehre' [A705/B733].

145 'Transscendentale Aesthetik' [A19/B33].

146 'Transscendentale Logik' [A50/B74].

147 [A320/B376-377].

148 'Vermittelst der Sinnlichkeit also werden uns Gegenstände gegeben, und sie allein liefert uns Anschauungen' [A19/B33].

149 'unmittelbar', 'einzeln' [A320/B377].

150 'von ihm [i.e. dem Verstand] entspringen Begriffe' [A19/B33].

151 'mittelbar', 'Mehrmals' [A320/B377].

152 [A20/B34].

153 'Daß alle unsere Erkenntniß mit der Erfahrung anfange, daran ist gar kein Zweifel' [B1].

154 'Erfahrung ist [...] das erste Product, welches unser Verstand hervorbringt' [A1].

155 '[...] alle unsere Erkenntniß [...] entspringt [...] nicht eben alle aus der Erfahrung' [B1].

156 'Erfahrung [...] ist [...] nicht das einzige Feld, darinn sich unser Verstand einschränken läßt' [A1].

157 '[Erfahrung] sagt uns zwar, was da sey, aber nicht, daß es nothwendiger Weise, so und nicht anders, seyn müsse' [A1]. See also [B3] (in slightly different wording).

158 'keine wahre Allgemeinheit' [A1].

159 'Solche allgemeine Erkentnisse nun, die zugleich den Character der innern Nothwendigkeit haben, müssen, von der Erfahrung unabhängig, vor sich selbst klar und gewis seyn' [A2].

160 'man nennt sie daher Erkentnisse *a priori*: da im Gegentheil das, was lediglich von der Erfahrung erborgt ist, wie man sich ausdrükt, nur *a posteriori*, oder empirisch erkannt wird.' [A2]. See also [B2-3].

161 '[...] Behauptungen wahre Allgemeinheit und strenge Nothwendigkeit [...] dergleichen die blos empirische Erkentniß nicht liefern kan' [A2].

162 'Nothwendigkeit und strenge Allgemeinheit sind [...] sichere Kennzeichnen einer Erkenntniß *a priori*' [B4].

163 'schlechterdings [...] unabhängig' [B3].

164 'wenn man aus den ersteren auch alles wegschaft, was den Sinnen angehört, so bleiben dennoch gewisse ursprüngliche Begriffe und aus ihnen erzeugte Urtheile **übrig**' [A2].

165 'selbst unter unsere Erfahrungen sich Erkentnisse mengen, die ihren Ursprung *a priori* haben müssen' [A2].

166 See [A6 ff. /B10 ff.].

167 'durch das Prädicat nichts zum Begriff des Subjects hinzuthun' [A7/B11].

168 'alle Körper sind ausgedehnt' [A7/B11].

169 'Erweiterungs-Urtheile' [A7/B11].

170 'durch keine Zergliederung desselben hätte können herausgezogen werden' [A7/B11].

171 'alle Körper sind schwer' [A7/B11].

172 I personally find Kant's example ambiguous, as the concept of body seems to imply

both extension and weight. However, the validity of Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic (ampliative) propositions remains.

173 'Wie sind synthetisch Urtheile *a priori* möglich?' [B19].

174 'Ich nenne alle Erkenntniß transscendental, die sich nicht so wohl mit Gegenständen, sondern mit unsern Begriffen *a priori* von Gegenständen **überhaupt** beschäftigt. Ein System solcher Begriffe würde Transscendental Philosophie heißen' [A11-12].

175 'Erkenntnißart von Gegenständen, so fern diese *a priori* möglich seyn soll' [B25].

176 'Eine Wissenschaft von allen Principien der Sinnlichkeit *a priori*' [A21/B35]. For an analysis of the Transcendental Aesthetic see Lisa Shabel, 'The Transcendental Aesthetic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason, ed. by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 93-117.

177 'es zwey reine Formen sinnlicher Anschauung, als Principien der Erkentniß *a priori* gebe, nemlich, Raum und Zeit' [A22/B36].

178 'Was sind nun Raum und Zeit? Sind es wirkliche Wesen? Sind es zwar nur Bestimmungen, oder auch Verhältnisse der Dinge, aber doch solche, welche ihnen auch an sich zukommen würden, wenn sie auch nicht angeschaut würden, oder sind sie solche, die nur an der Form der Anschauung allein haften, und mithin an der subiectiven Beschaffenheit unseres Gemüths?' [A23/B37-38].

179 See for example Andrew Janiak, 'Kant's Views on Space and Time', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta <http://plato. stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/kant-spacetime/> [accessed on multiple dates June-September 2015]. Although Kant was not 'any less committed to the transcendental ideality of time than to that of space', in the Transcendental Aesthetic the theory of time is 'derivative' on the theory of space (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 345.

180 'Von dem Raume' [A22ff./B37ff.].

181 [A23/B38].

182 See 'der Raum ist kein empirischer Begriff, der von **äusseren** Erfahrungen abgezogen worden. Denn damit gewisse Empfindungen auf etwas ausser mich bezogen werden, (d. i. auf etwas in einem andern Orte des Raumes, als darinnen ich mich befinde,) imgleichen damit ich sie als ausser einander, mithin nicht blos verschieden, sondern als in verschiedenen Orten vorstellen könne, dazu muß die Vorstellung des Raumes schon zum Grunde liegen' [A23/B38].

183 'Demnach kan die Vorstellung des Raumes nicht aus den Verhältnissen der **äussern** Erscheinung durch Erfahrung erborgt seyn, sondern diese **äussere** Erfahrung ist selbst nur durch gedachte Vorstellung allererst möglich' [A23/B38].

184 'Man kan sich niemals eine Vorstellung davon machen, daß kein Raum sey, ob man sich gleich ganz wohl denken kan, daß keine Gegenstände darin angetroffen werden' [A24/B38].

185 'Der Raum ist eine nothwendige Vorstellung, *a priori*, die allen **äusseren** Anschauungen zum Grunde liegt' [A23-24/B38].

186 'eine Vorstellung *a priori*, die nothwendiger Weise **äusseren** Erscheinungen zum Grunde liegt' [A24/B39].

187 [A25/B39].

188 'erstlich kan man sich nur einen einigen Raum vorstellen, und wenn man von vielen Räumen redet, so verstehet man darunter nur Theile eines und desselben alleinigen Raumes. Diese Theile können auch nicht vor dem einigen allbefassenden Raume gleichsam als dessen Bestandtheile, (daraus seine Zusammensetzung möglich sey) vorhergehen, sondern nur in ihm gedacht werden' [A25/B39].

189 'die Bedingung der Möglichkeit der Erscheinungen' [A24/B39].

190 'daß in einem Triangel zwey Seiten zusammen größer seyn, als die dritte, niemals aus allgemeinen Begriffen von Linie und Triangel [...]' [A25/B39].

191 See [A164-5/B15, 205].

192 '[...] sondern aus der Anschauung und zwar *a priori* mit apodictischer Gewißheit abgeleitet' [A25/B39].

193 '[...] Behauptungen wahre Allgemeinheit und strenge Nothwendigkeit [...] dergleichen die blos empirische Erkentniß nicht liefern kan' [A2].

194 'Der Raum stellet gar keine Eigenschaft irgend einiger Dinge an sich, oder sie in ihrem Verhältniß auf einander vor, d. i. keine Bestimmung derselben, die an Gegenständen selbst haftete, und welche bliebe, wenn man auch von allen subiectiven Bedingungen der Anschauung abstrahirte. Denn weder absolute, noch relative Bestimmungen können vor dem Daseyn der Dinge, welchen sie zukommen, mithin nicht **a priori** angeschaut werden' [A26/B42].

195 'die Form aller Erscheinungen **äusserer** Sinne, d. i. die subiective Bedingung der Sinnlichkeit, unter der allein uns **äussere** Anschauung möglich ist' [A26/B42].

196 See [A26/B42].

197 'Gegenstände der Sinnlichkeit' [A27/B43].

198 'wenn wir unser Subiect oder auch nur die subiective Beschaffenheit der Sinne **überhaupt** aufheben, alle die Beschaffenheit, alle Verhältnisse der Obiecte im Raum und Zeit, ia selbst Raum und Zeit verschwinden würden, und als Erscheinungen nicht an sich selbst, sondern nur in uns existiren können. Was es vor eine Bewandniß mit den Gegenständen an sich und abgesondert von aller dieser Receptivität unserer Sinnlichkeit haben möge, bleibt uns gänzlich unbekant. Wir kennen nichts, als unsere Art, sie wahrzunehmen' [A42/B59-60].

199 See [A28/B44].

200 'nichts, was im Raume angeschaut wird, eine Sache an sich, noch daß der Raum eine Form der Dinge sey, die ihnen etwa an sich selbst eigen wäre, sondern [...] uns die Gegenstände an sich gar nicht bekant seyn, und, was wir *äussere* Gegenstände nennen, nichts anders als blosse Vorstellungen unserer Sinnlichkeit seyn, deren Form der Raum ist, deren wahres Correlatum aber, d. i. das Ding an sich selbst, dadurch gar nicht erkant wird, noch erkant werden kan' [A30/B45].

201 'alle unsre Anschauung nichts als die Vorstellung von Erscheinung sey' [A42/B59].

202 As the 'mathematical researcher' (i.e. the Newtonians) would have it. See [A39-40/B56-57], and Andrew Janiak, 'Kant's Views on Space and Time', *The Stanford Encyclopedia*

of Philosophy (Winter 2012 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/kant-spacetime/> [accessed on multiple dates June-September 2015].

203 As the 'metaphysicians of nature' (i.e. the Leibnizians) would have it. See [A39-40/B56-57].

204 [A41/B58].

205 A key consequence is that it is impossible to know that the physical laws known to govern things in space and time also apply to things in themselves, as these, including God, cannot be known. Hence, by assuming ignorance of things in themselves, Kant manages to reconcile Newtonian determinism with morality. In his words: 'I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith' ('Ich mußte also das Wissen aufheben, um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen' [Bxxx]). On this point see also Desmond Hogan, 'How to Know Unknowable Things in Themselves', *Noûs* Vol. 43, No. 1 (March 2009), pp. 49-63.

206 [Lo17/L16/P15].

207 [Lo40/L37/P30].

208 [Lo12/L12/P11]. This point is reiterated when Vathek, 'not satisfied with seeing, wished also to hear Nouronihar' [Lo113/L108/P87].

209 [Lo11/L11/P11].

210 On this point see also Eric Meyer, '"I Know Thee not, I Loathe Thy Race": Romantic Orientalism in the Eye of the Other', *ELH*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 657-699, especially p. 666.

211 'Vathek [...] could not decypher [*sic*] the characters himself' [Lo21/L20/P18].

212 'Read again to me what you have read already' [Lo19/L18/P17].

213 'these sabres hold another language to-day, from that they yesterday held' [Lo20/L19/P17].

214 Meyer, '"I Know Thee not"', p. 667.

215 [Lo21/L20/P18].

216 [Lo21/L20/P18].

217 'Woe to the rash mortal who seeks to know that, of which he should remain ignorant; and to undertake that, which surpasseth his power!' [Lo20/L19/P17], and 'Such was, and should be, the punishment of unrestrained passions, and atrocious deeds! Such is, and such should be, the chastisement of blind ambition, that would transgress those bounds which the Creator hath prescribed to human knowledge; and by aiming at discoveries reserved for pure Intelligence, acquire that infatuated pride, which perceives not the condition appointed to man, is, to be ignorant and humble' [Lo210/L203/P165].

218 Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?' *Berlinische Monatschrift*, Vol. 12 (December 1784), pp. 481-494, (p. 481).

219 *English Review*, Vol. 8 (September 1786), Art. IV, pp. 180-184, (p. 181).

220 Frederick S. Frank, 'The Gothic *Vathek*: The Problem of Genre Resolved', in *Vathek and the Escape from Time. Bicentenary Revaluations*, ed. by Kenneth Wayne Graham (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1990), pp. 157-172, (p. 169).

Spinozan Realism: The Prophetic Fiction of Jane Bowles

Don Adams

Abstract

This essay argues that the critically neglected work of the American mid-twentieth-century writer Jane Bowles is a rare attempt at realism in modern fiction that takes as its metaphysical premise the reality referred to in Spinoza's pronouncement, "By reality and perfection I understand the same." Bowles' innately allegorical fiction is an effort to reveal the perfect reality of the world by prophetically creating the future rather than mimetically preserving the present and recovering the past, expressing a world that is existentially founded rather than representationally endured. The realism of perfection her prophetic creations strive to apprehend serves as a necessary reproof of the all too actual world reflected in merely mimetic fiction.

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> "I keep forgetting what writing is supposed to be anyway."[1]
> > --Jane Bowles, writing to Paul Bowles in a letter

> "She had to manufacture her own hammer and all the nails."[2]
> > --Paul Bowles, commenting on Jane Bowles' writing process

My creative writing students are often frustrated that the stories they create from their most vital, precious, and traumatic experiences fail to work as fiction. Their frustration stems, at least in part, from the fact that art doesn't want to express their lives and emotions, but to express itself. And it is resentful of interference. By its nature, art strives to be its own cause and not dependent on another, and the art that succeeds at this the most is the most real and the most perfect. "By reality and perfection I understand the same," Spinoza wrote in the *Ethics*.[3] Art, in Spinozan terms, must be understood not as representation or imitation,

nor even as memory or expression, but as virtue, freedom, necessity, and truth. Martin Heidegger was thinking in a Spinozan vein when he labeled art "the becoming and happening of truth,"[4] as opposed to the usual modern understanding of truth as "the agreement or conformity of knowledge with fact."[5] Most of the time the world presented in so-called realistic art looks more or less like our own, which is indeed the conventional criterion of realism as it is practiced in fiction. But a very few fictional artists are able to create a world so revelatory in its reality that it makes our own look fake, calling into question our most basic assumptions. Almost everything that Jane Bowles wrote inhabits this universe of the prophetically real – of the world to come that is being prepared for a people to come, as Gilles Deleuze, a self-avowed Spinoza heir, describes it.[6] For it is true that life imitates art,[7] as Oscar Wilde famously pronounced, but art serves its inspirational purpose in a profound and prophetic fashion only when it is more real, more perfect, than the conventionalized life that surrounds it, and not a mere reflection or appendage of life as it is habitually known and experienced.

Jane Bowles had the prophetic gift, but in her late years of physical and mental decline, she came to hate it. Her hatred had nothing to do with her willingness to work. She was determined to work when she could work well – when her work resulted in a legitimate discovery, a happening of truth. But she stopped when her prophetic vision failed, when she no longer could create a fictive world more perfect in its reality than the one we habitually live in. Of course *not* writing for one so inspired and driven was much worse than writing, however tortured and difficult the process. She frequently complained to her increasingly famous writer husband, Paul Bowles, about her compositional difficulties, which amounted for her to an existential struggle, "I keep forgetting what writing is supposed to be anyway."[8] Paul's emotional and editorial support were crucial to Jane's completion of the rare work she was willing to let go of, before a severe stroke at the remarkably early age of thirty-nine effectively ended her writing life, transforming her habitual frustration with creation into a long-drawn-out despair. Although she never had been satisfied with her work, she understood its worth. But the stroke impeded the creative process. Paul said, "It was as though she were not running on full power, as if there had been a disconnection within her, and the lightning-quick changes in her feeling and thinking had been slowed."[9] The "Dead Jane Bowles," she later referred to herself in reference to her earlier, vibrant writing.[10]

There *is* one suicide in her writing, one of her most compelling

characters. "Sister Sadie … is a great lover of security," Harriet says of her younger sister in "Camp Cataract."[11] But Harriet is laboring under a misimpression, as the narrator – who does not pretend not to know her characters – tells us. Sadie is lost, is perhaps even, as she secretly fears, beyond hope. But she hides this state of affairs from herself by obsessively worrying about her sister, Harriet, and scheming to keep her in the family home, which Sadie herself hates so deeply and instinctively that her fledgling survival instinct has transformed the overwhelming emotion into its opposite: "Sometimes an ecstatic and voracious look would come into her eyes, as if she would devour her very existence because she loved it so much."[12] And she does indeed do so. Sadie's life and death is a cautionary tale, terrifying in its implication that when our emotions and their motives are hidden very deeply within ourselves, we are powerless to protect ourselves against them. As Spinoza wrote, "An emotion is bad, i.e. harmful, only in so far as the mind is hindered by it from being able to think."[13] Or as Wilde, a thoroughgoing but unrecognized Spinozan, put it, "There is no sin except stupidity."[14]

Jane Bowles could not stop thinking. She wrote to Paul in a letter, "Please write to me. It is much easier for you to write than for me, because I always feel that unless I present a problem in a letter I have not really written one."[15] Her compulsion to agonize over choices and decisions was legendary. "She had no capability of relinquishing choice," observed her resourceful and perceptive biographer, Millicent Dillon. "She had to choose and to accept the consequences of her choice."[16] Paul said, "Jane's worry was that a choice had to be made and every choice was a moral judgment and monumental, even fatal. And that was so even if the choice was between string beans and peas."[17] Perhaps Tennessee Williams interpreted this character trait most insightfully: "All the indecision was a true and dreadful concern that she might suggest a wrong turn in a world that she had correctly surmised to be so inclined to turn wrongly."[18] Bowles was unable or unwilling to adopt a passive attitude toward her own existence and this placed huge responsibilities upon her shoulders. It was not enough for her to react to a situation, but she had to take responsibility for it and choose to act accordingly. Such an active approach to one's own existence may seem to be a burden, but it brings with it ethical joy and power and freedom. Or, to look at it from the opposite direction, we could say that the possession of this ethical freedom and power and joy enables one to act, thereby entailing the responsibility of doing so. Spinoza wrote in "The Political Treatise": "Freedom does not remove the necessity of action, but imposes it."[19] And in the *Ethics*, he explained: "The more perfection each thing has,

the more it acts, and the less it is acted on; conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is."[20] Only through action can we posit the world as a reality that is founded rather than endured and exist in that world as a reality ourselves. In one of his last works, *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze hypothesized, "It may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task."[21] When we are merely reactive sufferers, on the other hand, we endure existence as an imposition in a world that is inherently alien to us, "We have lost the world, worse than a fiancée or a god,"[22] Deleuze concluded. In a statement that reads as a prophecy of the modern world's debilitating spirit of alienation, Spinoza observed of the reactive, ignorant man, that "as soon as he ceases to be acted on, he ceases to exist."[23]

The great weight of ethical responsibility concerning choice is felt throughout Bowles' work in the very succession of her sentences, which evolve out of one another unexpectedly and unpredictably, but necessarily and rightly, rather than progressing according to the plan of some overarching or underlying plot or convention. These sentences are neither representative of a disembodied abstract truth nor mimetic of an exterior or interior reality; they are, rather, expressive of their own reality, which is posited and proved at once. In the terms of Spinoza's logic, they may be compared to "adequate ideas," which are their own cause and evolve innately from "intuitive knowledge," which "is inextricably joined to its own valid proof."[24] Writing fiction in this manner, as the positing or founding of truth, is no doubt almost impossible, which is why we encounter it so rarely. In his introduction to Bowles' *Collected Works*, Truman Capote wrote of Jane's creative process that "it [was] difficult to the point of true pain."[25] Paul gave an illuminating description of Jane's remarkably arduous writing process in implicit comparison to his own more conventional approach:

> I used to talk to Jane by the hour about writing. I'd say to her, "Just for the first page, say she comes in, sees this, does that." And she'd say, "No, no, no. That's your way, not my way. I've got to do it my way and my way is more difficult than yours." … She couldn't use the hammer and the nails that were there. She had to manufacture her own hammer and all the nails. She was a combination of enormous egotism and deep modesty at the same time.[26]

Like their creator, the most notable fictional characters in Jane Bowles's

work are fixated on positing and proving reality through their choices, although some of them relinquish their freedom in exhaustion, becoming slaves to the will of their whim. The contrast between the "two serious ladies" in the only completed novel is instructive in this manner. Christina Goering has an obsessive, fanatical nature, as her name implies. Although Bowles later said that she would not have used the name "Goering" if she had known the full nature of the Nazi leader's character and actions as she was writing the book, in the middle of the war years, the choice obviously is meant to signify the character's fanatical personality. The Christ reference (Christina) is also obviously intentional, as the character, when a child, "was in the habit of going through many mental struggles – generally of a religious nature," sometimes organizing games with other children that "as a rule, were very moral, and often involved God."[27] There is a degree of self-portraiture and self-travesty here. Several of Bowles' characters fantasize when they are young about being a religious leader, and in an unfinished work, "Going to Massachusetts," one of her most fascinating characters, Bozoe Flanner, is obsessed in adulthood with the connection between her private actions and character and the political-spiritual fate of the world: "At times she was frightened at the failure of her spirit – and so ashamed of it – that she felt the entire world – might turn totalitarian because of her."[28] Jane Bowles herself believed that her creative failure in writing (which was always a felt danger, and later a resigned acknowledgment) was indicative of a failure of her spirit, of a whole life failure that threatened the reality of the world, both within and without of herself, resulting in an implicit servitude in the face of a tyrannical existence.

Jane Bowles' fiction is a constant striving after existence, an effort to make the world real, or perhaps one should say, to comprehend the reality of the world. Spinoza contrasts the ignorant, reactive, and weak man, who is the slave of an existence that is always slipping away from him, so that even his dream of freedom is a nightmare of non-existence, to the wise and powerful man who is "conscious by a certain eternal necessity of himself, of God, and of things" and who therefore "never ceases to exist."[29] In a letter to Paul, Jane attempts to explain her existential difficulty with writing the novel *Out in the World*, which she was never to finish:

> When you are capable only of a serious and ponderous approach to writing as I am – I should say solemn perhaps – it is almost more than one can bear to be continually doubting one's

sincerity which is tantamount to doubting one's product. As I
move along into this writing I think the part I mind the most is
this doubt about my entire experience.[30]

Nothing less than the truth will do. But the truth is not easy. It is not
merely a matter of openness and of will, but of certainty; as Spinoza
writes, "A false idea, in so far as it is false, does not involve certainty."[31]
One cannot find the truth within one's mind alone, because this does
not involve certainty of the world. Rather the mind and the world
must be made to correspond through the work of art in certainty and in
truth. "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and
connection of things," Spinoza wrote.[32]

So it is that the mock-epic allegorical hero of *Two Serious Ladies*,
Christina Goering, "in order to work out [her] own little idea of
salvation," feels compelled to leave the family home, which "gives [her] a
comfortable feeling of safety," and go to "live in some more tawdry place
and particularly in some place where [she] was not born."[33] In venturing
out from her cloistered environment, Miss Goering is attempting to
forge a correspondence between her habitual inner world, emblematically
ensconced in the all too comfortable family home, and the feared and
"tawdry" world at large. Existentially, she is seeking to make herself a
reality within a real world, while psychologically, her self-uprooting is the
novel's mock-epic rendering of the ego-hero's riding forth from his castle
of ego-defensiveness to meet the emotional dragons (anxiety and fear)
that have penned her inside. Metaphysically, moreover, Miss Goering's
quest creates an exemplum of the parallel correspondence between mind
and body, thought and matter, that is the basis of Spinoza's philosophical
system and the basic structure of allegory. Miss Goering's decision to
abandon her comfortable home and venture outward provokes outrage
in her living companion, Miss Gamelon, whom Miss Goering feels
instinctively is not a nice person:

> "In my opinion," said Miss Gamelon, "you could perfectly well
> work out your salvation during certain hours of the day without
> having to move everything."
> "No," said Miss Goering, "that would not be in accordance
> with the spirit of the age."
> Miss Gamelon shifted in her chair.
> "The spirit of the age, whatever that is," she said, "I'm sure it
> can get along beautifully without you – probably would prefer
> it."

Miss Goering smiled and shook her head.[34]

A large part of the great humor of Bowles' work stems from the
interactions between characters who are strivers after reality and those
who are determined to get through life using as little exertion as possible.
Then there are the characters who fall somewhere in between, who
can recognize the beauty and joy of living an active life in the desired
enhancement and fulfillment of one's individual being, culminating
in the effort to comprehend reality from the standpoint of everything
altogether – "under the species of eternity,"[35] as Spinoza famously put
it – but who find themselves unable to control their emotions so as to be
able to direct their actions toward the achievement of true self expression
and fulfillment, which is to strive toward making oneself both perfect
and real. This is not a selfish endeavor, since only those individuals who
understand and fulfill their own nature (and to *understand* oneself – in
Spinoza's terms – is to *be* oneself) are able to "live in accordance with the
guidance of reason," which is to make oneself useful to others as well,
since "the highest good of those who follow virtue is common to all,
and all can enjoy it equally."[36] Miss Goering's "little idea of salvation"
is thus a public as well as a private endeavor, and her success or failure
has implications for the world she lives in, as well as for herself as an
individual within that world.

The other "serious lady," Mrs. Copperfield, by contrast, is a character
beset by negative emotions, particularly fear, that hinder her nature when
uncontrolled by reason and understanding. Miss Goering admires Mrs.
Copperfield for her "courage to live with a man like Mr. Copperfield,"[37]
who "made a point of never reassuring his wife. He gave her fears their
just due."[38] Mr. Copperfield, who obviously is based on Paul Bowles,
is determinedly unsentimental, seeming somewhat dead inside. "My
husband is a man without memory," Mrs. Copperfield says to herself,
whereas, "For her, everything that was not already an old dream was an
outrage."[39] Mrs. Copperfield is just as obviously based on Jane, on a side
of her personality that corresponded in a particular manner with Paul's.
Although they would seem to be conflicting spirits, they also would
appear to be dependent on one another, as the opposing roof beams that
hold a house together, active in stasis.

According to Spinoza, all contiguous bodies act on one another. As
Deleuze glosses it, "Nothing is passive, but everything is interaction, even
gravity."[40] A positive and virtuous relation results from an interaction
with another body that increases both beings' power, augmenting the

self-contentment and potential for action of both individual natures.[41]   In such a system, the "good" is "that which satisfies a desire," while the "bad" is "that which frustrates a desire."[42]   The ethical categories of good and bad replace the relative morality of good and evil, which are "extrinsic notions," belonging to the laws and customs of a society, having nothing to do with "nature."[43]   Human nature, according to Spinoza, operates not according to right and wrong, but according to love and hate, so that we are naturally drawn towards that which we love and repulsed by that which we hate. Or, to be more accurate: we love something because we are drawn toward it, and hate something because we are repulsed by it. It is a matter of instinct and not of judgment. "This is not subjectivism," Deleuze explains, "since to pose the problems in terms of force, and not in other terms, already surpasses all subjectivity."[44]   A mutually augmenting and interactive relationship is inherently pleasurable and rewarding, although it may appear to the observer to be violent and even abusive. But it is a combat that is mutually beneficial and enlivening, like the violation of the sexual act.

Deleuze contended that, in a world that has moved beyond the cultural realities of good and evil (which are mistakenly treated as absolutes, when they are socially relative), and toward the individual and natural ethical realities of good and bad (which appear relative in practice, but are absolute in instinct),

> it is combat that replaces judgment…. it is the combatant itself who is the combat: the combat is between his own parts, between the forces that either subjugate or are subjugated, and between the powers that express these relations of force.[45]

In this sense, *Two Serious Ladies* might be understood as the combat in Jane Bowles' own personality between the personas and destinies of Miss Goering and Mrs. Copperfield, who represent opposing aspects of that personality. But within the fictive context of the novel's narrative, Mrs. Copperfield is pitted against her husband in creative combat. She forsakes this difficult but enlivening relationship, however, for a one-sided, self-defeating and obsessive relationship with a young female prostitute, "Pacifica," whose name is indicative of her role in Mrs. Copperfield's psyche as representing a place of safety and stasis beyond activity and combat. "If you could only stop me from thinking, always, Pacifica," Mrs. Copperfield says to her early on in their relationship.[46]   This is an omen, indicating Mrs. Copperfield's willful self-abasement into

emotional servitude in order to avoid responsibility for her existence. Mr. Copperfield understands his wife's danger and warns her against it in a letter: "Like most people, you are not able to face more than one fear during your lifetime. You also spend your life feeing from your first fear towards your first hope. Be careful that you do not, though your own wiliness, end up always in the same position in which you began."[47] And here is the scene containing Mrs. Copperfield's own prophetic self-analysis:

> Mrs. Copperfield started to tremble…. She trembled so violently that she shook the bed. She was suffering as much as she had ever suffered before, because she was going to do what she wanted to do. But it would not make her happy. She did not have the courage to stop from doing what she wanted to do. She knew that it would not make her happy, because only the dreams of crazy people come true. She thought that she was only interested in duplicating a dream, but in doing so she necessarily became the complete victim of a nightmare.[48]

The dream Mrs. Copperfield is compelled to duplicate is a recurring one in which she is "being chased up a short hill by a dog." At the top of the hill she finds a large "eight feet high" female mannequin fashionably dressed in "black velvet" and with a body "fashioned out of flesh, but without life." She wraps the mannequin's arms around her, after which they both topple forward and roll down the hill, "locked in each other's arms, with the mannequin acting "as a buffer between herself and the broken bottles and little stones over which they fell" – a fact which gives the dreamer "particular satisfaction."[49] We naturally are not surprised to find, in the last section of the novel, that Mrs. Copperfield has become "like a little baby" in her one-sided obsessive relationship with Pacifica, her paid partner.[50] Miss Goering, on the other hand, who has abandoned both her comfortable house and her devoted friends, and is preparing to force herself into a relationship with a brutal gangster, because it is something that she fears, is suddenly abandoned by him, prompting "a new sadness within herself. Hope, she felt, had discarded a childish form forever."[51]

Although she is a mock-epic figure, Miss Goering is a legitimate hero, attempting to live a life that will be individually challenging and fulfilling, while serving as a model and reproof to the people about her "who are grim because they still believe the earth is flat and that they are

likely to fall off it at any minute. That is why they hold on so hard to the middle."[52] Her pilgrimage away from her safe and comfortable home and into the netherworld that is, for her, the modern world momentarily aligns her with a series of life-defeated characters, each of whom she must forcibly abandon when they prove themselves incapable of taking responsibility for their own existence and threaten to drag her down into their egoistic mire. True to their ignorance, these crippled and perverted souls repeatedly project upon Miss Goering their own monstrosity:

> "You're crazy," said Andy. "You're crazy and monstrous – *really* monstrous…."
> "Well," said Miss Goering, "perhaps my maneuvers do seem a little strange, but I have thought for a long time now that often, so very often, heroes who believe themselves to be monsters because they are so far removed from other men turn around much later and see really monstrous acts being committed in the name of something mediocre."[53]

One is reminded of Kierkegaard's comment that the modern individual who is undergoing a "spiritual trial" will likely be regarded by others as "a very extraordinary sinner," since "in our time people have no idea at all of spiritual trial."[54]

Jane Bowles' life after the composition of *Two Serious Ladies* (which was published when she was only 26) was to be in some respects difficult but triumphant, like that of Miss Goering, and in other respects obsessive and self-defeated, like that of Mrs. Copperfield. What is remarkable throughout her biography is the degree to which her life experience is forecast by her fictional creations. Her last completed story, for instance, "A Stick of Green Candy," is autobiographically both prescient and ominous in its depiction of the struggle and failure of a child approaching adolescence to maintain a belief in her imagined play-world. Those who delve deep down into the psyche through the creative process may experience the phenomena of creation's power of prophecy and revelation in their own life history. This experiential phenomena relates to the modes in which fiction is written. What is commonly thought of as realistic or mimetic fiction is innately backward-looking, presenting the world as it was known, in the past tense. But we actually live our lives in the future tense, combining the past with the present in every forward-moving moment of our existence. The only truly realistic fiction, in this sense, might be thought of as that which prophetically creates the future. Jane Bowles is one of the rare fictional writers to practice this kind of

realism almost exclusively in her writing – creating a fictive universe that is comprised of continual "mobility" and "states in the process of change," as Henri Bergson (a crucial link between Spinoza and Deleuze) famously defined reality.[55] Bergson's contrast between creation that is a backward-looking "manufacturing" process and creation that is a forward-looking organic process of intuitive "organization" is apposite to the distinction between what is traditionally and conventionally thought of as mimetic realism in fiction and the prophetic realism practiced by writers like Jane Bowles.

Creation by manufacturing, according to Bergson, is an intellectual activity that "proceeds by concentration and comprehension" and works from "the periphery to the center," and from "the many to the one."[56] This is, of course, the typical trajectory of a mimetic-realist work of fiction, which proceeds by conscious imitative construction as it builds a world that is recognizable as our own, or at least a likely possibility. Creation by organization, by contrast, proceeds like natural life, working from the center to the periphery by a sort of "explosion" of concentric waves moving outward from that originating point.[57] The realist writer working in this mode proceeds by intuition – the kind of knowing that Spinoza defined as being posited and proved at once[58] – devising the hammer and nails as she needs them in order to fashion a virtual reality more vital with potential than our own tired version that has atrophied into cliché and opinion. As Deleuze wrote,

> What counts for a great novelist … is that things remain enigmatic yet nonarbitrary: in short, a new logic, definitely a logic, but one that grasps the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason. The novelist has the eye of the prophet, not the gaze of a psychologist.[59]

The danger for the committed prophetic realist artist lies not in the false appeal and easy answers of the merely mimetic world of cliché and opinion, but in the failure of intuition as a source and guide. The power of prophecy through intuition requires the attention of the whole self to the world's appeal. The title of Jane Bowles' unfinished novel, "Out in the World," is indicative of a goal of merging the half worlds of our inner and outer, subjective and objective, mind and body realities into a whole that is perfectly meaningful and real.

Spinoza's monistic model of the world is an apt description of this reality, in which the mind and the body are seen as two parallel and

complementary attributes of one singular substance. In Spinoza's metaphysics, there is nothing that is *not* out in the world. The soul is not inside our selves and God is not in some transcendental heaven. Rather the entire world is an expression through the parallel and dual attributes of mind and body, thought and matter, of the singular and perfect reality that is God or nature. In fictive terms, Spinoza's model of reality is expressed as allegory.

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.[60]
                --Spinoza

"I have always been seeking my spirit, Janet, and yet the more eagerly I seek it, the more
            like a gorilla I seem to behave."[61]
                --Jane Bowles, from an unfinished fiction manuscript

Little has been written about the allegorical nature of Bowles' fiction, and allegory is itself a practice that is inadequately appreciated by contemporary criticism. The hallmark of allegorical literature is its resistance to the appeal of the false transcendent: its insistence upon the materiality of metaphor and the immanence of existence. Traditional mimetic realist fiction is inherently devoted to the false transcendent; it works on the assumption that there exists a world of reality *elsewhere* that the fiction is representing, copying or imitating, commenting upon and arguing about. The assumption of the existence of this real world elsewhere is so complete that it is almost unrecognizable in the practice of mimetic fiction, or even in our everyday thinking concerning reality. But we are constantly positing its existence by our attitudes towards and arguments concerning it. In a scene in *Two Serious Ladies* in which a young man is railing against an economic and social system in which the owners oppress the laborers, "It is this security of theirs that makes us cry out at nights." Miss Goering comments, "You are interested in winning a very correct and intelligent fight. I am far more interested in what is making this fight so hard to win."[62] What makes the argument so hard to win is that the very assumption of a class struggle determines its nature and makes one complicit in it.

By its parallel form, allegory innately questions its own assumptions.

As Paul de Man famously observed, "The persistence of the referential moment … prevents the confinement of allegory to an epistemological and ethical system of valorization."[63] In other words, by keeping always separate but parallel the text of the world and its meaning, the allegorist highlights the ultimate incommensurability of one to the other. This is the manner in which Roger Scruton glosses Spinoza's parallelism, his system of "ontological monism and conceptual dualism":

> Mind and body are one thing; but to describe that thing as mind and to describe it as body is to situate it within two separate and incommensurable systems. The details of those systems cannot be mutually substituted, and therefore the assertion of a causal relation (a relation of dependence) between mind and body is incoherent.[64]

Deleuze gives a further analysis of Spinoza's monistic dualism that allows us to apply it to the practice of allegory: "What is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion of the body is necessarily a passion in the mind. There is no primacy of one series over the other."[65] Although the body and mind form separate series, they are one single substance, as with allegorical figures and their parallel meaning. The relationship between the two series in life, as in allegory, is not arbitrary, but necessary, since "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."[66]

The challenge that life presents to us, according to Spinoza, is to understand the necessary and meaningful nature of an existence that appears to be random and meaningless, which is to "conceive things under a species of eternity."[67] The modern malaise that Spinoza's philosophy attempted to ward off, and which Friedrich Nietzsche later famously diagnosed as nihilism, results from our failure to understand that existence is necessary and meaningful, rather than arbitrary and absurd. Simone Weil, whom Bowles acknowledged as a kindred spirit and is key to understanding the prophetic nature of her fictive project, similarly distinguishes between a nihilistic belief that force is the ultimate reality of the world, and an essentially Spinozan conception of necessity as an eternally sanctioned limit that gives force its shape and meaning:

> Brute force is not sovereign in this world. It is by nature blind and indeterminate. What is sovereign in this world is determinateness, limit. Eternal Wisdom imprisons this universe

in a network, a web of determination. The universe accepts
passively. The brute force of matter, which appears to us
sovereign, is nothing else in reality but perfect obedience.[68]

In a world in which brute force is deemed supreme, allegory is made
to seem a mere metaphorical trick or convention, rather than a fictive
expression of the dual attributes of a singular perfect substance that is the
real.

The dream-like flatness of Jane Bowles' fiction alerts us to its allegorical
nature, pointing us insistently toward the realm of meaning parallel to
its materialism. The characters in a Jane Bowles story always somewhat
resemble the overtly theatrical characters of an explicit allegory like *The
Faerie Queene* in their intense materiality and perpetually provisional
meaning, seeming both more and less real than people we know. In a
fundamental sense, they make us question the reality of such people and
of ourselves. As allegorical theorist Theresa Kelley writes:

> Because it is wayward, provisional, and openly factitious,
> modern allegory can assist a line of reasoning that breaks open
> self-enclosed symbols or systems and thus break out of the
> "habitus" of culture, whose patterns of received knowledge would
> otherwise close off inquiry.[69]

In terms of fiction, conventional realism may be thought of as reflecting
and representing the world as it is habitually known: static and finished
and closed. In this sense, the often complex and sometimes ingenious
plot complications of a conventional realist work may appear like
the frantic maneuvers of a rat in a maze. They do not escape the
conventional nature of the universe they inhabit and represent. Prophetic
allegorical realism like that of Jane Bowles, on the other hand, is never
finished or static, but perpetually surprising and open. The parallel
series of materiality and meaning are continually moving forward,
but never converging on a fixed point of judgment and closure. The
always surprising and episodic nature of Bowles' fiction emphasizes this
forward movement; likewise, the refusal of Bowles as narrator to limit
her characters through judgment and interpretation emphasizes their
perpetual signification.

The allegorist insists that human consciousness, which strains after closure
and certainty, is necessarily approximate and provisional. It is therefore
not a coincidence that allegory came into disrepute as a fictive mode

at the same time that scientific discovery came to be thought of as an ultimate truth that human consciousness could apprehend with certainty. Coleridge's famous denigration of allegory in favor of symbolism, for instance, was allied with his effort to defend the literal scientific truth of the Bible.[70] Of course, contemporary post-quantum science knows better than to insist upon the certainty of its truth. As Karl Popper aptly noted, scientific truth is always prone to error, whereas certainty is never prone to uncertainty; thus a distinction must be made between them. Scientific truth is a goal; certainty an ideal.[71] What is most valuable for life in art, as necessarily distinguished from science, is precisely art's allegorical artificialness, by which it merges certainty and truth in and through fiction – that is, art's unique ability to lie convincingly, which Oscar Wilde identified as art's fundamental duty and prophetic purpose.[72] Likewise the duty of the critic, as Wilde further argued, is to respond to authentic art imaginatively and to refrain from judging it in terms of habitual existence, which is to misunderstand and demean both art and life.[73]

The advantage of allegory as a contemporary fictive mode is that it highlights the artificiality of art, and so prevents us from interpreting it as a mere representative slice of life. Likewise the frustration that allegory so often creates in the contemporary reader may be traced to its success in highlighting the provisionality of our assumed truths. In her essay, "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," Weil pushes this point further, contending that the artificiality or lying nature of art is only apparent, the result of the "attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, modeled by man, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe. If the attempt succeeds," however, "this portion of matter should not hide the universe, but on the contrary, it should reveal its reality to all around."[74] This insightful observation can be read as a defense of fictive art in general, and of allegory in particular, in both their means and methods.

The general failure of contemporary readers and critics to recognize and appreciate implicitly allegorical creations like Jane Bowles' fiction is proof that our contemporary models of humanistic knowledge and thought are lagging behind the complex and sophisticated knowledge models of post-quantum scientific theorizing. As Deleuze wrote in his book on Foucault:

> We have all too quickly forgotten … the old sciences that are no longer useful, but in moral matters we are still weighted

down with old beliefs which we no longer even believe, and we
continue to produce ourselves as a subject on the basis of old
modes which do not correspond to our problems.[75]

Recent theorists such as Deleuze have attempted to address these
discrepancies by insisting upon the necessary uncertainty of human
knowledge through consciousness: "Consciousness is by nature the locus
of an illusion. Its nature is such that it registers effects, but it knows
nothing of causes."[76] Consciousness follows on the heels of the parallel
series of mind and body as they progress into the future, and consoles
itself by imagining that the two series converge into a fixed point which
can be registered by and in consciousness, and then used to predict the
future and explain the past. Consciousness hankers after what, in physics,
would be called a closed system. In reality, however, consciousness knows
nothing definite concerning causes, but is single-mindedly working
towards a desired end. As Spinoza wrote, "Human beings do everything
on account of an end; namely, on account of something that is useful,
which they seek."[77] Misery results from a human consciousness that
mistakes ends for causes, confusing that which is merely "good and
bad," in terms of aiding us in achieving our desired ends, with "good
and evil," which are imagined as final causes that can be known, and by
which we come to be judged. "All that one needs in order to moralize
is to fail to understand," Deleuze observed.[78] Morality understood as
an existential absolute is only an impediment to those who are devoted
to understanding existence, resulting in ethical joy, rather than judging
it, which ends all affirmative speculation.[79] One of Jane Bowles'
friends commented, "Jane was fundamentally – and beyond anything –
interested in human beings and their behavior…. Her whole attitude
of mind was to understand and not to judge."[80] The final sentence is as
apt for the temperament and philosophical project of Spinoza as for the
personality and fiction of Jane Bowles.

The potential frustration for a committed ethical artist such as Jane
Bowles is the life condition that impedes further affirmative speculation
and understanding. In the unfinished work tentatively titled "Going to
Massachusetts," Bowles focused on such an impediment in the psyche
of one of her most intriguing characters, Bozoe Flanner, who attempts a
self-diagnosis in explaining herself to her uncomprehending lover, Janet
Murphy:

There is a Bozoe Flanner who goes forth to seek for happiness

and glory with a wild uncontrollable greed, with the appetite
of a gorilla – an appetite which is even more embarrassing since
she has declared to herself the urgency of cultivating her spirit –
however much like a bad flower it might be. To seek its shape is
what she has declared she would do – declared not only to herself
but to her friends. I have always been seeking my spirit, Janet,
and yet the more urgently I seek it, the more like a gorilla I seem
to behave – an earthbound gross woman, content to gratify base
instincts.

   The fact that I seldom do seem to gratify those instincts doesn't
matter at all.[81]

Bozoe Flanner is caught in the existential dilemma whereby her great
spiritual longing is necessarily represented by and through a bodily
appetite. Alone of fictive modes, allegory allows for full expression of
this dilemma. Bozoe's failure to satisfy her appetite is thus a dual failure,
a failure to satisfy both the body *and* the mind-spirit, two aspects of one
substance. Bozoe Flanner's dual failure is symptomatic of a modern
world in which we have attempted to rid ourselves of the superstitious
moral conception of a judging God, who is opposed to the satisfaction
of our bodily appetites, only to be left with a body and mind-spirit that
both have been made incapable of achieving satisfaction. The material
"real" world has been made to seem hard-wired and animalistic, while the
mind-spirit-soul world appears to us unreal. This is exactly the dilemma
that Spinoza attempted to address through his monistic dualism at the
beginning of our modern age. As Scruton acutely observed:

   Spinoza, like Pascal, saw that the new science must inevitably
   "disenchant" the world. By following truth as our standard,
   we chase from their ancient abodes the miraculous, the sacred,
   and the holy. The danger, however, is not that we follow this
   standard, for we have no other. It is that we follow it only so far
   as to lose our faith, and not so far as to gain it. We rid the world
   of useful superstitions, but continue to see it in fragmented form.
   Oppressed by its meaninglessness, we succumb to new and less
   useful illusions – superstitions born of disenchantment, which
   are all the more dangerous for taking man, rather than God, as
   their object.[82]

We must continue on our journey toward Spinozan enlightenment
concerning the perfection of a singular reality within its parallel modes

of body and mind, nature and God, of which the forked creature of man is but one expression. But first we must recognize our perilous and paralyzed condition in a world that assumes brute force to be the ultimate reality in a meaningless existence. The allegorical fiction of Jane Bowles is an attempt to shock us into such a recognition and is pointedly prophetic in this regard.

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> To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.[83]
> 				--Simone Weil

> "I fear nomads, I am afraid of them and afraid for them too."[84]
> 			--Jane Bowles, from "Camp Cataract"

Jane Bowles dramatizes our perilous modern spiritual state throughout her allegorical creations in and through the themes of homesickness and of sick-of-home-ness. The affinity she felt with the work of Simone Weil is doubtless related to Weil's own preoccupation with the existential "uprootedness" of modern man. In *Two Serious Ladies*, Mrs. Copperfield remarks upon arriving in a Panamanian port city:

> "Now," she said to herself, "when people believed in God they carried him from one place to another. They carried Him through the jungles and across the Arctic Circle. God watched over everybody, and all men were brothers. Now there is nothing to carry with you from one place to another, and as far as I'm concerned, these people might as well be kangaroos; yet somehow there must be someone here who will remind me of something… I must try to find a nest in this outlandish place."[85]

Weil wrote in her late work, *The Need for Roots* (composed in the same period of the early 1940's as was Bowles' novel): "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul"; adding, "It is one of the hardest to define."[86] Rootedness involves being at home both in place and time, which requires a sense of the presence of the past. "Loss of the past," Weil writes, "whether it be collectively or individually, is the supreme human tragedy, and we have thrown ours away, just like a child plucking off the petals of a rose."[87] In *Two Serious Ladies*, Mrs. Copperfield continues her reverie upon arrival in Panama:

> "Memory," she whispered. "Memory of the things I have loved
> since I was a child. My husband is a man without memory."
> She felt intense pain at the thought of this man whom she liked
> above all other people, this man for whom each thing he had
> not yet known was a joy. For her, all that which was not already
> an old dream was an outrage. She got back on her bed and fell
> sound asleep.[88]

Alice Toklas commented of Jane Bowles' complex personality that it was
easier to understand if one thought of her as an "Oriental D. P.[Displaced
Person]."[89] When Jane followed Paul to North Africa and settled down
in Tangier, she felt that she had simultaneously found her true home, and
become permanently and finally dislocated.[90]

In the novella "Camp Cataract," Harriet's spiteful drive to get away from
her family's apartment may be read as a commentary on Paul Bowles'
reactive drive to escape from Western culture. Sadie's hankering after
Harriet and her obsession with the family apartment likewise resembles
Jane's need to find a nest in the world, and Sadie's fateful trip to Camp
Cataract may be read as a prophecy and a commentary on Jane's reaction
to relocating to North Africa, where she completed the novella. Sadie's
suffocating and anxious home-life, and her unconscious yearning for "the
dreaded voyage into the world,"[91] serve as an intense dramatization of the
modern condition of uprootedness masquerading as a domestic bliss of
freedom and ease. It is telling that Sadie, who unconsciously hates her
life in the alienating and anonymous city apartment, spends most of her
conscious psychic energy scheming to keep Harriet confined there with
her. Weil contends that those who are suffering from being uprooted
feel a compulsion to uproot others.[92] The irony is that Harriet is so
committed to the specious values of an uprooted society that her only fear
is of creating a "scandal," which prevents her from making "an unseemly
dash for freedom."[93]

Sadie's true fear, as well as her almost unbearable longing, concerns her
own nomadic instinct. She writes to Harriet at Camp Cataract: "I fear
nomads. I am afraid of them and afraid for them too. I don't know what
I would do if any of my dear ones were seized with the wanderlust."[94] As
Two Serious Ladies is the comic and mock-epic version of the perils of
uprootedness, so "Camp Cataract" is the prophetic and tragic version,
and Sadie's unconscious journey to self-destruction is as ominous,
inevitable, surprising, and disturbing as that of Oedipus or Lear. After
her arrival at Camp Cataract on her inspired mission to retrieve Harriet

from a threatening homelessness, Sadie becomes herself finally and utterly dislocated:

> A deep chill had settled into her bones, and she was like a person benumbed. Exactly when this present state had succeeded the earlier one Sadie could not tell, nor did she think to ask herself such a question, but a feeling of dread now lay like a stone in her breast where before there had been stirring such powerful sensations of excitement and suspense. "I'm so low," she said to herself, "I feel like I was sitting at my own funeral."[95]

Sadie's long years of self-deception concerning her motives and instincts are about to take their toll, as the very success of the deception makes her powerless to forestall her doom:

> She felt that something dreadful might happen, but whatever it was, this disaster was as remotely connected with her as a possible train wreck. "I hope nothing bad happens…" she thought, but she didn't have much hope in her.[96]

"Camp Cataract" is a harrowing portrayal of spiritual malaise and paralysis, recalling Weil's comment that "for people who are really uprooted, there remain only two possible sorts of behavior"; either they obsessively work to uproot others, or they "fall into a spiritual lethargy resembling death."[97] When Sadie abandons her obsessive effort to rescue Harriet by retrieving her to the family home, she sinks into the lethargy that leads to her death. The conclusion of the story, in which Sadie presumably kills herself, is profoundly ambivalent. The preceding movements of the story, detailing Sadie's descent into a delusional reality, are so convincingly rendered, and so poignant in their psychological analysis and spiritual import, that we are prompted to wonder whether it is not the conventional reality the other characters inhabit that is the delusion after all.

In the overtly allegorical realm of Sadie's delusion, the material world through which she has spent her life drifting, as in a dream, becomes overwhelmingly and unbearably meaningful and real. The world so revealed displays for Sadie her own repressed instincts and emotions, in particular her lesbian proclivities and her hatred of her life in the family apartment. It is an awareness of her fundamental homelessness, a revelation that is extended to include an awareness of the uprootedness

of the country and culture in general when Sadie observes the souvenir seller, who is an Irish-American man dressed up to resemble an American Indian, complete with head-dress and face paint: "She stared intently at his Irish blue eyes, so oddly light in his brick-colored face. What was it? She was tormented by the sight of an incongruity she couldn't name."[98] Her delusional response is to try to hide the Indian along with herself behind the waterfall, where his face loses "any trace of the incongruity that had shocked her so before. The foaming waters were beautiful to see. Sadie stepped forward, holding her hand out to the Indian."[99] Sadie's delusion and death are, like Prospero's island exile, at once a retreat from the conventional world of reality and a reproof of it.

"Camp Cataract" is arguably Jane Bowles' masterpiece, as Truman Capote asserted in his introduction to her *Collected Works*,[100] and it is one of the most profoundly and disturbingly prophetic of modern stories in its unflinching envisioning of our age of existential anxiety and malaise; and yet it is largely unread and little analyzed or understood. Even the normally acute Paul seemed uncertain about it,[101] an uncertainty that may have served to protect him from the unnerving implications of the story for his own life and marriage. It is also possible to interpret Jane's subsequent writer's block as a more or less unconscious effort to shield both Paul and herself from her uncanny insight. There is good reason, after all, that a prophet is unwelcome in his home country. Jane's doctor in Tangier said of her that she seemed to understand everything.[102] The reckless hard living that led to Jane's early stroke and subsequent debility may likewise be thought of as an effort at self-preservation through self-destruction – martyrdom taking many forms, as Weil's self-starvation attests.

Although Weil considered uprootedness to be a modern calamity for Western society, concerning which we are largely and tragically unconscious, she also contended that there is a form of self-uprootedness that is a useful and necessary creative and existential act. "When we uproot others," she contends, "it results in unreality. But by uprooting oneself one seeks greater reality."[103] In *Two Serious Ladies*, Mrs. Copperfield is uprooted by her husband's reactive wanderlust and reacts by uprooting her kept lover, Pacifica. The novel's mock-epic hero, Miss Goering, on the other hand, uproots herself in her effort to pursue her own "little idea of salvation."[104] In Jane Bowles' own life, she seems to have struggled to choose the uprooting that resulted from following Paul to North Africa. Near to death, she told her caretakers at a nursing home

that moving to Africa had been good for Paul's writing, but bad for her own.[105]

In any case, the unfinished work she labored on for years in Tangiers is full of interest and promise. There seems little doubt that she was headed in a direction in her work in which the always implicitly allegorical nature of her writing was to become more pervasive and explicit. Such an allegorical expression of the world implies a belief in the necessary and meaningful nature of an existence that is without human purpose. As Weil writes, "The central truth to be known concerning this universe is that it is absolutely devoid of finality. Nothing in the way of finality can be ascribed to it except through a lie or a mistake."[106] Such a Spinozan understanding of the eternally perfect reality of the world qualifies all other truths and makes of our lives a perpetual quest to make ourselves amendable to a necessity that never entirely can be understood, but which nevertheless can be chosen by being loved. It is a quest that Bowles dramatizes repeatedly in her allegorical fiction, as when Bozoe Flanner attempts to explain to her lover the full import of her long anticipated trip to Massachusetts, which in true allegorical fashion represents both something other and more:

> "I was born to make this voyage – I have never spent a moment of the day or night free from this knowledge."
> "Your life is your own, Bozoe."
> "My life is not my own…. Have you missed the whole point of my life?"[107]

Jane Bowles' sustained effort through her allegorical-realist fiction is to convince us that our lives are not our own, but are both other and more. She consistently attacks and undermines the figure of the modern individual who, reactively secure in his opinions and in the certain knowledge of his own seemingly self-evident reality, is entirely self-deceived. The prophetic allegorical realism she created implicitly asserts that the life of our mind that lies beyond consciousness is just as mysteriously and profoundly meaningful and real as the life of our body in its infinite complexity. As Deleuze elucidates:

> What does Spinoza mean when he invites us to take the body as a model? It is a matter of showing that the body surpasses the knowledge that we have of it, and that thought likewise surpasses the consciousness that we have of it. There are no fewer things in the mind that exceed our consciousness than there are things in the body that exceed our knowledge.[108]

Having thoroughly pondered and then rejected Descartes' self-limiting cogito, Spinoza foresaw the inevitable dead-end to which the ideal of the individual's disembodied soul (or one confined to the pineal gland) would lead us. Rather than posit disembodied souls as the ghosts in the machine of a material world, Spinoza sought to redefine our understanding of God as existing materially and mentally in and of and through all things, including ourselves, so that we are both more and less than individual beings, and are far more profoundly complex and mysterious than any individual consciousness would assume. "The human body is composed of very many individuals of a diverse nature, each of which is highly composite," Spinoza wrote.[109] As Scruton observed, "There is really no place in Spinoza's philosophy for the concept of an individual, or for the distinction, so important to our ordinary thought, between an individual and its properties."[110]

Conventional fictive realism proceeds upon the implicit assumption that the disembodied subject as creative artist can apprehend and represent the real world, the world elsewhere – "out there" – of which he implicitly is not a part, as the Cartesian individual as subject is self-confidently (and self-alienatedly) abstracted from the objective real world. Prophetic realism, on the contrary, such as that practiced by Jane Bowles, implicates the perceiving subject within the material world as a part of the world's immanent reality, while it posits that world's meaning allegorically on a parallel signifying plane, within the mind. The contemporary reader entering such a fictive world is typically disoriented by the lack of a presumed vantage point of judgment and by the feeling that every material aspect of this world is potent with meaning awaiting investigation and discernment. Weil gives a useful description of such a world, which can be expressed only in and through allegory:

> This sensible universe in which we find ourselves has no other reality than that of necessity; and necessity is a combination of relations which fade away as soon as they are sustained by a pure and lofty concentration on the part of the mind. The universe around us is made up of mind materially present in our flesh.[111]

Jane Bowles' incomplete fictive project was directed toward the allegorical expression of such a universe. For her unfinished novel, *Out in the World*, Jane told Paul that she

> had in mind something of the quality of Balzac, the creation of a

world of sensory and realistic detail. But in addition she wanted her characters to be representative, each of them to represent an abstraction, almost in the sense of a morality play.[112]

This ambitious and unfinished project, like Jane Bowles' allegorical fiction in general, represents a prophetic exhortation to the reader to comprehend the meaningful perfection of reality in its dual mind-body aspects. Both Spinoza and Weil insisted that the partial and necessarily subjective realities of our actual worlds are meaningfully true and truly meaningful only if they are considered from the point of view of a comprehensive mental-spiritual reality, to which Weil said that Christ was referring when he bid his disciples to be perfect, even as their father in heaven is perfect.[113] This God's-eye, under-the-species-of-eternity reality can only be indirectly apprehended and expressed by human consciousness, as both Spinoza and Weil observed, but without such an effort of expression it doesn't exist at all in this world.[114][115] The prophetic allegory that Jane Bowles was struggling to create for modern literature is an effort at such expression, and the realism of perfection it strives to apprehend is an eternal and necessary reproof of the all too actual world of our habitual lives reflected in merely mimetic fiction.

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On What Matters for African Americans: W. E. B. Du Bois's "Double Consciousness" in the Light of Derek Parfit's Reasons and Persons

Michael Wainwright

Abstract

In Reasons and Persons *(1984), the greatest contribution to utilitarian philosophy since Henry Sidgwick's* The Methods of Ethics *(1874), Derek Parfit supports his Reductionist contention "that personal identity is not what matters" by turning to the neurosurgical findings of Roger Wolcott Sperry. Parfit's scientifically informed argument has important implications for W. E. B. Du Bois's contentious hypothesis of African-American "double-consciousness," which he initially advanced in "Strivings of the Negro People" (1897), before amending for inclusion in* The Souls of Black Folk *(1903). An analysis of "Of the Coming of John," chapter 13 in* The Souls of Black Folk, *helps to trace these ramifications, resituating Du Bois's notion from the pragmatist to the utilitarian tradition, and revealing how his concept effectively prefigured Parfit's scientifically informed Reductionism.*

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In four years as a student at Harvard University (1888–1892), W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy, gained a master's degree in history, and conducted twelve months of doctoral research. As his autobiography attests, however, the cumulative effect of these studies undermined Du Bois's unmitigated commitment to "the lovely but sterile land of philosophical speculation." In reaction, he "conceived the idea of applying philosophy to an historical interpretation of race relations" (148). That application, which would ultimately forward his "program for the Negro" (148), concerned the health of African-American consciousness. Yet, Du Bois's critics, while repeatedly analyzing this attempt, have consistently failed to situate that treatment in the utilitarian tradition. The following paper, which recognizes Du Bois advance beyond his erstwhile mentor William James (1842–1910),

redresses that situational failure with recourse to Derek Parfit's (1942–) *Reasons and Persons* (1984), thereby answering Lucius Outlaw's call "to give Du Bois's work the kind of careful consideration that is cultivated in attending to the works of canonical figures in philosophy" (6). In *Reasons and Persons*, the greatest contribution to utilitarian philosophy since Henry Sidgwick's *The Methods of Ethics* (1874), Parfit supports his reductionist contention "*that personal identity is not what matters*" (255; emphasis original) by turning to the neurosurgical findings of Roger Wolcott Sperry. As Hixson Professor of Psychobiology at CalTech, Sperry pioneered an operation for patients with acute epilepsy that severed the bundle of nerve fibers (or corpus callosum) between the upper brain hemispheres. This procedure, which ameliorated but did not cure the sufferers' symptoms, produced an unanticipated side effect: "everything we have seen so far," reports Sperry, "indicates that the surgery has left these people with two separate minds, that is, two separate spheres of consciousness" (299).[1] Parfit appropriates this unexpected consequence as "striking evidence in favour of the Reductionist View" (245). Personal identity, reiterates Parfit, is not what matters; "*what matters is Relation R*," which he defines as "psychological connectedness and/or continuity" (215; emphasis original), where "*psychological connectedness* is the holding of particular direct psychological connections," and "*psychological continuity* is the holding of overlapping chains of *strong* connectedness" (206; emphasis original).[2] This philosophical perspective remains controversial, as Parfit readily admits but rationalizes, because humans are "naturally inclined" (217) to believe that individuals "*are separately existing entities*" owing to some deep further fact. According to the most widespread of these beliefs, either a Cartesian Ego or a soul accounts for a person's distinct existence beyond "his brain and body, and his experiences" (210; emphasis original).

Confronted by this natural inclination, Parfit conducts a series of thought experiments, some of which may be scientifically unrealizable, but all of which help to test Relation R against the criteria of logical necessity and logical sufficiency. Some philosophers dismiss the usefulness of such trials; "this," concedes Parfit, "would have been [Ludwig] Wittgenstein's view" (200). Unlike Wittgenstein, however, Parfit carefully distinguishes between two types of thought experiment: while one sort is "*deeply* impossible," the other sort is "*merely technically* impossible." Parfit, who never resorts to deeply impossible scenarios, illustrates a valid thought experiment with reference to the Einsteinian observer who wonders what "he would see if he could travel beside some beam of light at the speed of light" (219; emphasis original). Parfit's own merely technically impossible

scenarios include teletransportation, body-brain replication, and brains with "no single state of awareness" (250). For reasons of brevity, the present paper must commend without detailed comment the rigorousness of Parfit's interrogation, an examination that validates his thought experiments with respect to both logical standards; as a corollary, Relation R applies not only "to all people, at all times" (273), but also to the separate consciousnesses within the single brains of Sperry's postoperative patients.

The implications of Parfit's contentions for ontological studies are significant, with this importance gaining additional worth for African Americans from the reciprocal inferences triggered by that application, as brought to light by an analysis of Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness." Initially advanced in "Strivings of the Negro People," which appeared in the August 1897 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Du Bois amended this notion for *The Souls of Black Folk*, which A. C. McClurg first published in 1903, with Du Bois's modified article serving as chapter 1, under the heading "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." For Du Bois, "the problem of the Twentieth Century," as he insists in "The Forethought" to his volume, "is the problem of the color-line" (359), and the personal realization of African-American racial identity stems from the initial enforcement of that demarcation, an imposition that can split, as chapter 1 details, a unified mind into two separate streams of consciousness.

A graduate of Fisk University, Du Bois first met the concept of a stream of consciousness during his studies at Harvard University. He "spent four academic years at Harvard, from the Fall of 1888 through the Spring of 1892," as James Campbell documents. "The first two years were spent completing a second baccalaureate degree, which he earned cum laude in philosophy in 1890. The third year found Du Bois involved in graduate studies, completing an M.A. in history in 1891." His final year "was spent in doctoral research" (569). Throughout his time at the university, as Frank C. Worrell chronicles, Du Bois "sought out teachers for whom he had respect" (56), and he especially "reveled in," as Du Bois's autobiography makes clear, "the keen analysis of William James, Josiah Royce, and young George Santayana" (148). The order in which du Bois lists these influences reveals something of their relative importance to him; indeed, he "became a devoted follower of James" (133). This commitment led Du Bois to study James's *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), which reconsiders the visualization of consciousness that James had first mooted in "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology"

(January 1884). In this essay for *Mind*, James visualizes consciousness as a "wonderful stream" (2), which comprises both "resting-places" and "places of flight" (3), and although "a good deal" of James's material for "The Stream of Thought," which constitutes chapter 8 of *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), is self-admittedly "reprinted from" (1:224 n) his earlier article, much of the new material concerns the appropriateness of this visualization.

"Consciousness," as James elaborates, "does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are [*sic*] the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter*," he counsels, "*let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*" (239; emphasis original). What is more, as James stresses in both his original article and his subsequent monograph, consciousness is a function, not a tangible entity. Hence, in denying "the immediate agency of a super-sensible Reason" (4), "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology" offers "the fact that a peculiar modification of our subjective feeling corresponds to our awareness of each objective relation, and is the condition of its being known" (4), and *The Principles of Psychology* reemphasizes this conclusion, stating that "no pure act of reason inhabit[s] a supersensible and semi-supernatural plane" (1:478).

By the 1880s, psychology had become an international movement, and academic influences crisscrossed the Atlantic. The intertextual relays between James and Alfred Binet (1857–1911)—whose work alongside that of James's other major contemporaries in Europe (including Edmund Gurney in England, Pierre Janet and Théodule-Armand Ribot in France, and Carl Stumpf in Germany) Du Bois would have met in attending James's classes and studying his publications—were notable among these exchanges. In *The Principles of Psychology*, James not only rates Binet's *The Psychology of Reasoning* (1886) as a "most intelligent little book" (2:327), but also remarks on "victims of that curious dissociation or splitting-off of one part of their consciousness from the rest which we are just beginning to understand, thanks to Messrs. Janet, Binet, and Gurney, and in which the split-off part [. . .] may nevertheless remain to produce its usual effects" (2:520–21 n).[3] French psychologists, "during the past few years," as the title of Binet's *On Double Consciousness* (1890) implies, and as Binet therein documents, "have been diligently at work studying the phenomena of double consciousness and double personality in hysterical

individuals" (14).

In contrast, James's related investigations concern non-hysterical subjects under hypnosis, and his findings suggest that psychologists "look rather towards sleep and dreaming, or towards those deeper alterations of the personality known as automatism, double consciousness, or 'second' personality for the true analogues of the hypnotic trance" (2:600). This sole use of the term "double consciousness" in *The Principles of Psychology* unwittingly supports Binet's wariness in conceding James's point. That Binet's extended interrogation of "whether the phenomena of the duplication of consciousness are to be met with in non-hysterical subjects" (80) appears at the end of *On Double Consciousness* confirms this circumspection. "The rudiment of these states of double consciousness which we have studied first in the hysterical" patient, concedes Binet, "may with a little attention be found in normal subjects" (87); yet, unlike James, "I have [. . .] not succeeded in demonstrating double consciousness in healthy as in hysterical subjects" (88).

A carpenter named Ansel Bourne, whose identity changed to that of the iterant preacher Albert Brown on hearing the Word of God, but who reverted to his original identity thirty years later without any memory of his time under God's calling, provided the most notable study in James's *The Principles of Psychology*. The Bourne-Brown case, as Dickson D. Bruce chronicles, "occurred at the same time Du Bois's relationship with James was at its closest." Whether the two men discussed the case is speculation, "but based on Du Bois's use of 'double consciousness' in his *Atlantic* essay he certainly seems to have known the term's psychological background, because he used it in ways quite consistent with that background" (304). Du Bois, then, explicitly supports James's side of his transatlantic argument, while silently dismissing Binet's opinion, and he remains committed to this opinion in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

What Du Bois calls the "peculiar sensation" of African-American "double-consciousness" ("Strivings 194; *Souls* 364) is not a matter of "hysteria," a term that alongside its conjugations earns no place in either of Du Bois's texts; rather, double consciousness derives from the psychological watershed elicited from the traumatic imposition of a supposedly inferior racial identity onto a previously healthy subject. After this unexpected, sudden, and divisive event, and as Parfit states of Sperry's postsurgical patients, "each of these two streams separately displays unity of consciousness." Each stream conforms to Relation R both retrospectively and prospectively, and although "this may be a surprising fact," as Parfit

acknowledges, "we can understand it. We can come to believe that a person's mental history need not be like a canal, with only one channel, but could be like a river, occasionally having separate streams" (247). The realization of African-American identity and the postoperative awakening of Sperry's patients can be of a similar magnitude.

Du Bois's appeal to the spiritual—the titular invocation in *The Souls of Black Folk* and his recourse to "two souls" (364) when describing the "peculiar sensation" of "double-consciousness"—does not undercut this conclusion; Du Bois, as an appeal to Parfit indicates, is naturally inclined to believe that some deep further fact accounts for personal identity. Two factors supported this inclination. On the one hand, despite his "wholesome respect for common sense," as Richard M. Gale remarks, James establishes disciplinary tenets and categories for pragmatism that are admittedly open "to revision and often are the repositories for past metaphysical theories" (225), and the philosophical thoughts of James's followers were similarly welcoming. On the other hand, that racists often rationalize bigotry in an essentialist manner, insisting that they appeal to a racial hierarchy that is biologically determined, salted Du Bois's essentially psychological approach to race with an unnecessary (but accountable) dash of metaphysics.

Thus, as Du Bois's final thesis in *The Souls of Black Folk* unambiguously posits, an African American who has newly confronted the concept of race can be numerically identical but qualitatively different to the person that went before—and an intimate aspect of that difference is consciousness. "One might say," as Parfit does of someone who has had a serious accident, "'he is no longer the same person.' This is a claim about both kinds of identity. We claim that *he*, the same [numerical] person, is *not* now the same [qualitative] person. This is not a contradiction" (201; emphasis original). The parallel inference that results from reading *The Souls of Black Folk* from a reductionist perspective, which places a physical accident alongside a psychological one, insists that psychological trauma alone can split a hitherto unitary consciousness.

The watershed event productive of African-American double consciousness—an intentional incident from the instigator's standpoint; an imposition from without for the targeted individual—occurs almost invariably during childhood. "It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one," insists Du Bois, "all in a day, as it were." Significantly, however, in moving from the impersonal to the personal, Du Bois recounts his own experience of this event as

a passing psychological shadow (or eclipse) rather than as a permanent division of unitary consciousness (or schism). "I remember well when the shadow swept across me" (363). In Great Barrington, Massachusetts, "in a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance" (363–64). The young Du Bois, expecting the reciprocal gesture he has already experienced on a number of occasions, unguardedly approaches the newcomer, but she, as the mention of her height implies, looks down on him with disdain. Whether she has recently arrived from the Unreconstructed South or not, the newcomer renounces the boy according to her notions of racial construction, thereby essentially misrecognizing him as her inferior.[4]

Du Bois's oppressive shadow, however, is not the extreme and common expression of racial dawning. "The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all," but "with other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny" as with Du Bois, who still "lived above" (364) the watershed, which he calls the "Veil" (359). Thereafter, as a silently and self-appointed member of the "Talented Tenth" (435)—"who through their knowledge of modern culture," as he explains in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), "could guide the American Negro into a higher civilization" (604)—Du Bois could give what most African Americans could not: undivided attention to the existence of double consciousness. Du Bois suggests this personal ability by his skillful avoidance of begging the question. "*One*," rather than Du Bois, "ever feels his two-ness" (364; emphasis added). From his singular point of view, Du Bois appreciates the production of this phenomenon as a manifold event, one that leaves psychological facets of a positive as well as a negative character.

On the positive side of psychological splitting, each of the resultant consciousnesses enjoys psychological continuity with the single consciousness that went before, and this connection affords not only an African-American perspective, but also an American one. "After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian," writes Du Bois, "the Negro is a sort of seventh son." Psychological continuity with the single consciousness that went before provides an African American "with second-sight in this American world." On the negative side of psychological splitting, this process "yields him no true self-consciousness" (364). The imposition of the "color line" (438), across which the talented Du Bois can "move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas" and can "sit with Shakespeare" (438), establishes that

demarcation as a hierarchical construct.

Thus, when the tall newcomer looks down on the young Du Bois, her intended victim registers this attempt at marginalization. The mature Du Bois can then explain how this imposition often succeeds in casting American consciousness above its African-American counterpart, with the resultant psyche replicating the hierarchical construct intended by the color line. That neither direct nor transitive relations exist between the consciousnesses of a racially split mind adds another degree of intricacy to the contradictory nature of the resultant psychological state. The gap between the two consciousnesses is not directly bridgeable. Nor can either stream of thought backtrack to its unitary source and then transitively extend that link into the other consciousness. Each stream is aware of both a numerically unchanged life and a psychologically changed mind, but neither consciousness is able to access the workings of its counterpart.

The attempt at marginalization, therefore, does not totally succeed. For, despite the hierarchical construction intended by the color line, and despite a legacy from slavery that equated African Americans with beasts of burden, these two consciousnesses do not transform their subject into a human form of Buridan's ass. Named after the scholastic philosopher Jean Buridan's reading of a dilemma from Aristotle's *On the Heavens*, this victim of paradox "starved to death between two equally nourishing bales of hay," as Parfit relates. "This ass had no reason to eat one of these bales of hay before eating the other" (258). The beast simply refused to choose. Asinine minds might fall prey to such contingencies, but as James asserts in "The Dilemma of Determinism" (1884), "antipathy to the idea of chance" (153) does not characterize human cognition.

"The Dilemma of Determinism," which mounts what Robert Richardson describes as "a dazzling attack on those who claim (and they still do) that everything we do is determined by forces outside our control" (xiii), must have particularly appealed to the Jamesian in Du Bois, which denied African-American enslavement to the notional antipathy to chance, as must James's contradistinctive analogy, which appears in "The Will to Believe" (1896):

> Suppose, for instance, that you are climbing a mountain, and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Have faith that you can successfully make

it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and think of all the sweet things you have heard the scientists say of *maybes*, and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss. In such a case (and it belongs to an enormous class), the part of wisdom as well as of courage is to *believe what is in the line of your needs*, for only by such belief is the need fulfilled. Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. (59; emphasis original)

In Du Bois's opinion, the socioeconomic conditions of racialized America demand the wisdom and courage from the Talented Tenth to believe what is in the line of African-American needs. That ratiocinative surety must recognize not only the racial miscasting that continues to produce individuals numerically identical yet qualitatively different from the individuals who went before, but also the attendant asymmetric pressure that produces a dynamic rather than a static difference between that individual's two consciousnesses. "If a mind was permanently divided, and its halves developed in different ways," as Parfit muses, "it would become less plausible to claim that the case involves only one person" (256). In Du Bois's model, many African Americans have two streams of consciousness, with the unmediated original flowing below that mediated through the eyes of Americans, and schizophrenia (Du Bois's sense of "two warring ideals" [364]) rather than Binetian hysteria expresses this double consciousness, with the problem of numerical unity (Du Bois's sense of "two warring ideals in one dark body" [364–65]) promoting the solution of passive or active suicide (Du Bois's sense of "two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" [364–65]). Owing to their mutual isolation, these two consciousnesses are equivalent to two players in a game of strategy, where the coordination condition of silence demands that each player defects or cooperates in ignorance of the other player's choice between defection and cooperation. For Du Bois, the phenomenon of double consciousness is a matter of homeostasis: the numerically identical person can function effectively (if not efficiently), but he is qualitatively different from the person that went before; physical integument rather than mental strength maintains numerical identical.

As the scientifically informed philosophy of the preceding argument indicates, Du Bois's conception of double-consciousness has extremely complex ramifications, yet critics of African-American literature

have tended to avoid casting his notion in terms of either utilitarian philosophy or cognitive epistemology. Instead, as Adolph Reed traces, the related history of academic appropriations "have clustered around three ideological programs: an integrationist-therapeutic motive from the 1920s to the mid-1960s, a nationalist-therapeutic one from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, and an academic race-celebratory one since" (92). Each of these approaches lets Du Bois down.

The first phase of appropriation, as characterized by Everett V. Stonequist and St. Clair Drake, emphasized the marginalization and psychological harm that resulted from ambivalent loyalties. For Stonequist, who reads double consciousness in terms of geographically environed pangenesis, Du Bois's "peculiar feeling" plagues "the Northern mulatto" (265), whose "identification with the white race has been more complete" than his Southern counterpart's has been. In "consequence," reasons Stonequist, "that failure of full acceptance has been more disturbing. He has experienced acute mental conflicts about his racial status" (266). To Drake, the strain of trying to conform to both African-American and American standards "generates distorted perceptions of the total society and occasionally bizarre definitions of situations, but it also results in cognitive crippling" (131). That debilitation, however, applies to a unified (rather than to a bifurcated) consciousness.

The second phase of appropriation, as characterized by Carol B. Stack, John O'Neal, and Huston A. Baker, shifted the normative function of Du Bois's postulation. For Stack, the notion of double consciousness no longer entertained the prospect of idealized American goals; rather, it represented "the conflicting and warring identities between being a Black and an American in a white world" (26). For O'Neal, "color" was "a cultural, social and political fact" (53). For Baker, "the sense of 'twoness' that Du Bois handles so skillfully in *The Souls of Black Folk* is fast disappearing as cultural nationalism grows stronger. The doubts, speculations, and reflections are falling into a clear and ordered pattern, and we realize that America is something apart" (17). The black nationalism of Stack and O'Neal hereby found a counterpart in Baker's reversion to the model of American exceptionalism.

The third phase of appropriation, as characterized by Manning Marable and Bettye J. Gardner, emerged from the institutionalization of African-American studies. These critics celebrate, without interrogating in scientifically informed terms, the essentialist inherence of double consciousness. While Marable acknowledges double consciousness as

"the basis of the struggle to attack institutionalized racism" (56), Gardner credits the condition for "the study and teaching of Afro-American history" (172).

Reed's own addition to this history of appropriation understands the notion of double consciousness to have flourished in a historically contingent niche. "Two-ness, or 'alienage,'" he contends, became "prominent among fin-de-siècle American intellectuals" (107). Yet, in analyzing "what led so many of them to find the specific image of fragmented consciousness a compelling metaphor for their own circumstances" (107), Reed not only shifts the focus on double consciousness from African Americans to Americans in general, but also imposes a postmodern notion of conscious fragmentation onto the period of proto-modernity. In contrast to these unfortunate changes, the Du Bois of fin-de-siècle America posits a division of consciousness into two asymmetric or unequal streams, rather than a fragmentation of that function. Certainly, African-American double consciousness is historically contingent, but that contingency does not deny the lived effects of dividing a hitherto unitary stream of consciousness.

Postdating Reed's history, the latest phase of academic appropriation, which Paul C. Mocombe, Robert Gooding-Williams, and Frank M. Kirkland characterize, does concern Du Bois's "peculiar sensation" as a stream of consciousness. In *The Soul-less Souls of Black Folk* (2009), Mocombe laments Du Bois's failure to "articulate the sociohistorical nature of all black practical consciousness or identity" (58), arguing that the "ambivalent estrangement" of which Du Bois writes concerns a particular group of African Americans: liberals who strive for bourgeois status in a country where the bourgeoisie have effectively denied that social standing to them. While Mocombe's work has considerable merit in attributing double consciousness to a subset of African Americans, his understanding of Du Bois's concept is mistaken on two fronts. On the one hand, Mocombe's explanation amounts to a pair of social constructs contesting for the full attention of a single mind, instead of two consciousnesses vying for strategic control of a single brain. On the other hand, he attributes double consciousness to Du Bois's Talented Tenth rather than to members of Du Bois's African-American majority— an error that occurs if one mistakenly takes Du Bois to imply that most African Americans are talentless.

An interpretation of double consciousness is central to Gooding-Williams's *In the Shadow of Du Bois* (2010). "In the extensive scholarship

on double consciousness," as Gooding-Williams observes, "it is not frequently remarked that Du Bois characterizes double consciousness as a sensation" (79). Kirkland, as "On Du Bois' Notion of Double Consciousness" (2013) reveals, agrees with Gooding-Williams. Academics often forget that "'double consciousness' for Du Bois is taken as a conflicted psychological disposition or state of mind" (137). In Du Bois's hypothesis, maintains Kirkland, the "peculiar sensation" of double consciousness results from "one's *estimation* of the displeasure of the sensation of being a problem produced by one's encounter with something or someone *and* (b) one's *comparison* of the displeasure of this sensation so produced either with reflection or from others' estimation" (139; emphasis original). Du Bois falls short, however, in showing "how 'double consciousness' as a 'kind of feeling' intimates" (139) the second part (clause b) of his hypothesis. What is more, believes Kirkland, Gooding-Williams, commits the same explanatory error.

Keeping this failure in mind, and drawing on a definition he first posited in "Modernity and Intellectual Life in Black" (1997), Kirkland interprets and supports Du Bois's notion as a matter of "*dyadic*" (151; emphasis original) negotiation. For Kirkland, Du Bois provides "three related yet distinct senses" of double consciousness, "two lying on the negative side, and the third lying on positive side" (151). The "least prominent sense is double consciousness as *duplicitous* in which 'one looks at one's self through the eyes of others or measures one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.'" This negative case "leads one to a false self-interpretation constitutive of a false kind of life, thwarting an authentic self-presentation." The "most prominent sense is double consciousness as *dualistic* and *duellistic*, in which 'the contradiction of double aims' predominates." In this negative instance, "double consciousness produces disorientation, competing ideals, irreconcilable strivings, all of which yield a kind of *self-doubt*." The moderately prominent sense of double consciousness is "dyadic" in form. This positive case "represents for Du Bois the 'merging'" of a "double self into a better and truer self' without losing its twofold character of being both an African and an American" (151; emphasis original). Kirkland's preference, as his later essay emphasizes, is for the term "'dyadic' rather than 'synthetic,'" because he takes Du Bois "to be endorsing a negotiated pairing, through the proper education, between citizen and person of color rather than an amalgamation of both or two forms of life" (146 n.24).

Notwithstanding the thoroughness of Kirkland's approach, translating his

three senses of Du Bois's concept into functions of consciousness provides a radically different interpretation. The self-duplicitous sense involves one stream of consciousness in reflexive mode, and the remaining two senses, as different expressions of double consciousness, point to further interpretative difficulties. The conjunction between dualistic "and" duellistic makes for exclusive antagonism, yet dualism need not invoke duellism: opposition between streams of thought would produce a merged (as in homogenized) response, but one stream of thought might coincide with its complement, or a dominant stream of thought might register no response from its recessive counterpart. Furthermore, in folding double consciousness into a sentient rather than a conscious middle ground, Kirkland deepens the confusion that striates his model: what amounts to a poststructuralist move, which would normally help to disseminate an interpretative proliferation with regard to its subject, confines two conscious functions within a single feeling.

Reading double consciousness through the reductionist lens of Relation R, as supplied by Parfit's utilitarian philosophy and supported by Sperry's neurosurgical findings, provides a means of addressing both the general dearth of scientifically informed readings of Du Bois's "peculiar sensation" and Kirkland's scientifically misinformed interpretation. This innovative approach also highlights Du Bois's twofold desire for the African American who has experienced the watershed event of double consciousness "to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self," without losing either of his "older selves." Du Bois "would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" (365). For Du Bois, therefore, the majority of African Americans are not talentless; indeed, many of them possess what he can only hypothesis: a form of double perception.

Du Bois's initial step toward accomplishing his deceptively (some might say "naively") simple wish is to write; the Du Boisian writing process recalls aspects of Parfit's "Physics Exam"; this thought experiment draws on Sperry's experimental test for the bifurcation of consciousness experienced by his postsurgical patients; and this experiment evokes those aspects of Binet's work with which James and his students would have been cognizant. During his "Physics Exam," Parfit has "only fifteen

minutes left in which to answer the last question. It occurs to me that there are two ways of tackling this question. I am unsure which is more likely to succeed. I therefore decide to divide my mind for ten minutes, to work in each half of my mind on one of the two calculations, and then to reunite my mind to write a fair copy of the best result" (246–47). Philosopher of science Richard Swinburne neatly summarizes Sperry's related postoperative experiment:

> suppose you present to one such person a tray containing miscellaneous items and ask that person to pick out those described on cards presented to them. Among the items on the tray are a key, a ring, and a key ring. You present to him the card reading "KEY RING," but in such a way that the first word "KEY" is visible only to his left visual field, and "RING" is visible only to his right visual field. He then ignores the key ring, but picks out the key with his left hand and the ring with his right hand. (146)[5]

Both Parfit's thought experiment and Sperry's postsurgical test cater to the watershed event of double consciousness. The shielding that facilitates this accommodation recalls Binet's examination of hysterical patients. "In order to test his theory of double consciousness," chronicles Felipe Smith, "Binet used a screen to block his subjects from seeing what their hands or other anesthetic body parts were doing." Concealed by his screen, "Binet would induce activity in the affected body parts" (389 n.71). To Binet's delight, as recounted in *On Double Consciousness*, "the sensations and movements of the anaesthetic limb, by grouping themselves together, formed a second consciousness" (57). Du Boisian terminology in *The Souls of Black Folk* translates Binet's screen into the "Veil" (or watershed). The entry into double consciousness precipitates a lack of accurate self-perception. "In this sense of self-veiling," confirms Smith, "Du Bois's trope has an analogue in Binet's studies on double consciousness" (389 n.71); that comparison finds similar parallels in Parfit's and Sperry's work; and these analogues collectively deny Ernest Allen's assertion that Du Bois's notion of double consciousness "not only fails the test of internal logic but that of empirical verification as well" (235).

Parfit's thought experiment relies on ambidexterity. Each hand writes down the thoughts of its controlling stream of consciousness. "In both of my streams," maintains Parfit, "I know that I am now having thoughts and sensations in my other stream. But in each stream I am unaware of my thoughts and sensations in my other stream" (288). Du Bois,

according to biographical record, was not ambidextrous, and his writing experiment relies on diachronic rather than synchronic thought. The two consciousnesses in Parfit's single brain "communicate in a public way. I might in one stream write a letter to myself in my other stream. With one hand I would then place this letter in my other hand" (288). Du Bois furthers his deceptively simple wish to express and accommodate the double self-consciousness of the African-American majority by dividing his public communication into two successive steps. His next task after writing is to rewrite. This concluding step provides each of the consciousnesses he envisages with a retrospective appreciation of its conscious complement.

The literary provenance of *The Souls of Black Folk* traces this two-stage process at the formal level, with eight of the fourteen chapters amended from previously published articles.[6] The bifurcation of form common to each chapter—and one of the immediately recognizable emendations to the original articles that contribute to *The Souls of Black Folk*—additionally testifies to Du Bois's creative negotiations. Each chapter opens with a poetic quotation followed by a musically notated excerpt from an African-American sorrow song. From the perspective of an American stream of consciousness, the chirographic technology of reason assumes preeminence over the vernacular expression of thought, not only coming first on the page, but also translating an oral form into written notation.[7] From the perspective of an African-American stream of consciousness, the inclusion of a sorrow song, however expressed, produces a complementary confusion of the senses: reading/singing the poetic epigraph parallels hearing/reading the epigraphic music; as a corollary, the synaesthetic interpretations of *The Souls of Black Folk* undertaken by critics including Anne E. Carroll and Steve Andrews gain support from a scientifically informed appreciation of Du Boisian double consciousness.

In narrative terms, Du Bois's creative negotiations come most explicitly to the fore with one of the pieces written especially for *The Souls of Black Folk*, the short story that comprises chapter 13, "Of the Coming of John." Titular expectation concerns a single character, a singular John, but the narrative actually concerns two Johns, as the name of their shared birthplace in the Unreconstructed South, Johnstown, intimates. Before the watershed of race intervenes, "playmates" (524) John Jones and John Henderson are numerically different but qualitatively equivalent in each other's estimation. After this intervention, the African-American Jones and the American Henderson are aware that ruling social norms

cast them as numerically *and* qualitatively different. That Jones is the
protagonist while Jones's former playmate plays a secondary role is
a defiant authorial strategy that inverts this qualitative demarcation.
Du Bois supports this inversion by casting Jones as a member of the
Talented Tenth and Henderson as the son of a local judge. While the
unmediated stream of consciousness flows below the mediated one in the
double consciousness of a racially traumatized African American, as Du
Bois's formulation of the watershed of race makes clear, Jones's unitary
consciousness takes precedence over Henderson's corresponding stream

Jones's mother recognizes her son's potential talent before he does. She
sends him to college, where at first he fails, but at last succeeds. This
educational process provides Jones with a command of modern culture
in line with Du Bois's philosophy. He can act as a cultural guide for
the African-American majority. That Henderson concurrently attends
Princeton University (523) places the two Johns, like their separate
streams of consciousness, on separate but parallel courses. The eventual
conflux of these streams, however, is predictably turbulent. The day
following Jones's graduation encompasses Du Bois's figurative attempt
to merge these two consciousnesses. At the New York Metropolitan
Opera House, the two Johns practically bump into each other, when
John Jones, standing "stock-still amazed" at having paid five dollars for
a seat, unintentionally blocks the auditorium doors. "'Be careful,' said a
low voice behind him; 'you must not lynch the colored gentleman simply
because he's in your way,' and a girl looked up roguishly into the eyes
of her fair-haired escort." That escort is Jones's former playmate. "One
never sees in the North," continues John Henderson, "so cordial and
intimate relations between white and black as are everyday occurrences
with us" in the South. Nonetheless, Henderson's mood changes abruptly
when the young couple reach their seats, with Henderson "stopp[ing]
short and flush[ing] to the roots of his hair, for there directly beside
his reserved orchestra chairs sat the Negro he had stumbled over in the
hallway" (526).

By sitting in adjacent seats at the opera, the two Johns would occupy
numerically different but qualitatively identical spaces, and that
qualitative identity is of a cultural nature. Du Bois's double figuration
adumbrates that the two unmediated streams of consciousness have the
power to erode the social barrier between them. However, by asking
an attendant to reseat what he deems a racial parvenu, Henderson
immediately eliminates this potential. A reactionary understanding
of identity effectively insists that the hierarchical construct of race

supplements the double consciousness instinctively assumed of the upstart in question. The revolutionary Jones, who "did not for some time notice the usher tapping him lightly on the shoulder and saying politely, 'Will you step this way, please, sir?'" is initially oblivious to Henderson's demand. Then,

> a little surprised, he arose quickly at the last tap, and, turning to leave his seat, looked full into the face of the fair-haired young man. For the first time the young man recognized his dark boyhood playmate, and John knew that it was the Judge's son. The white John started, lifted his hand, and then froze into his chair; the black John smiled lightly, then grimly, and followed the usher down the aisle. The manager was sorry [. . .] some mistake had been made in selling the gentleman a seat already disposed of; he would refund the money, of course. (527)

> The reciprocal and mutually interrupted gestures of the two Johns recapitulate the watershed event productive of double consciousness in traumatized African Americans. Jones both accepts and declines this recapitulation. In the first instance, he immediately leaves the opera house, thereby consciously forfeiting his refund. In the second instance, he returns to his hometown, visiting Judge Henderson's "house to ask for the privilege of teaching the Negro school" (531).

The judge grants his request, but the hierarchical construct of race almost immediately intervenes to disrupt Jones's mission. "Heah that John is livenin' things up at the darky school," volunteers the postmaster to Judge Henderson one morning. "What now?" the Judge asks. To which the postmaster replies, "Oh, nothin' in particulah,—just his almighty air and uppish ways" (532). From an American perspective, Jones's uppishness intimates his attempt to raise the lower, unmediated stream of double consciousness that each of his pupil's supposedly possesses, and such a promotion threatens to dismantle the asymmetric preeminence enjoyed by the unmediated stream of American consciousness. Schools for African Americans, as Du Bois's visiting-card incident during childhood eventually taught him, and as the existence of such American institutions intends, should reinforce, if not implement, the watershed of double consciousness. The judge, inculcated to believe in the African-American defiance of this intention, closes Jones's school without further consideration.

This closure, which blocks a revolutionary stream of consciousness with the impedimenta of a reactionary one, leaves Du Bois with a single figurative option, which he effectively follows by permanently damming both streams with a double murder: John Jones kills John Henderson for what he interprets as Henderson's attempted rape of Jennie Jones (his sister); this murder, of course, provokes another killing, with a mob,

headed by Judge Henderson, lynching John Jones. Hence, according to a figurative extrapolation that cannot help but posit the funereal symbolism of "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," Du Bois collapses the numerically different Joneses into a twofold equivalence. Double consciousness, which Du Bois has not experienced but can fully imagine, returns to its unitary origin. This response to the concept of double consciousness, which draws on contemporary psychology, but which is ahead of its time, is both Jamesian and Parfitian; indeed, Du Bois's response provides an extended thought experiment that supports Parfit's reductionist claims.

Although Parfit does not reference James in *Reasons and Persons*, and cites him only once in *On What Matters* (2011), and then in a comment on Sidgwick's self-reflective frankness that has no relevance to a discussion of double consciousness, James's challenge to the accepted standard of selfhood certainly prefigures Parfit's similarly oriented move. "It would not be wildly anachronistic," concurs Richard M. Gale, "to see [James's] attempt to analyze Self identity in terms of distinctive sort[s] of emotions, attitudes, and actions that give importance to Self identity as a forerunner of Derek Parfit's account." James's pragmatic and Parfit's utilitarian approaches "pare off from the bare numerical identity of common sense those importance-bestowing features that are its almost invariable but contingent accompaniments and replace the former by the latter." Different stances justify the two philosophers' departures from commonsense morality—James's tendency is toward an ethical imperative; Parfit's tendency is toward an altruistic impersonality—but their constituting streams of thought come together when the issue concerns an individual who has undergone "a psychological upheaval that results in a radical difference in the way in which he remembers and evaluates the importance of things" (224).

Gale fails to mention, however, an important difference maintained by this rapprochement. In *The Principles of Psychology*, James argues that the victim of a radical disruption in psychological continuity "disowns his former me, gives himself a new name, [and] identifies his present

life with nothing from out of the older time" (1:336). In contrast, Parfit's scientifically informed loyalty to Relation R insists that each consciousness in a traumatically bifurcated mind maintains psychological connectedness and/or continuity with its unitary source, a fidelity that the Du Bois of the "Strivings of the Negro People" and *The Souls of Black Folk*, in advance of his erstwhile mentor James, prefiguratively and effectively shared.

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Notes

1Sperry's work would earn him the 1981 Nobel Prize for Physiology-Medicine.

2 One must note, however, that Parfit issues a warning to those who follow his lead. "It may be thought that, if this is so, we ought to give to R the importance that we now give to personal identity. This does not follow" (272). R replaces the concept of personal identity, but R demands less importance in the reductionist paradigm than personal identity does in its non-reductionist counterparts.

3 In their turn, as Sam Halliday chronicles, these French psychologists had drawn on the work of the American physician and naturalist Samuel L. Mitchell. "Although the term 'double consciousness' owes much of its currency to literary sources," observes Halliday, "its entrance into psychotherapeutic discourse may be traced to Samuel L. Mitchell's 'A Double Consciousness, or a Duality of Person in the Same Individual' (1817)" (180).

4 Students of African-American literature will recall other such misrecognitions. In James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), for example, racial revelation is even more shocking because the protagonist has been unwittingly passing for white. "One day near the end of my second term at school," recounts the narrator, "the principal came into our room, and after talking to the teacher, for some reason said, 'I wish all of the white scholars to stand for a moment.' I rose with the others," recalls the narrator. "The teacher looked at me, and calling my name said, 'You sit down for the present, and rise with the others.' I did not quite understand her, and questioned, 'Ma'm?' She repeated with a softer tone in her voice, 'You sit down now, and rise with the others.' I sat down dazed. I saw and heard nothing. When the others were asked to rise I did not know it" (12). Intriguingly, "when we pass beyond alterations of memory to abnormal alterations in the present self," as *The Principles of Psychology* reveals, James's understanding of altered states of consciousness speaks to Johnson's Ex-Colored Man. "These alterations are of three main types," enumerates James: "(1) Insane delusions; (2) Alternating selves; (3) Mediumships or possessions" (375). The second of these categories comes closest to Du Bois's notion of double consciousness, but this proximity is one of

titular expectation rather than actual closeness, with James's notion of alternating selves even somewhat isolated from Johnson's concept of switching consciousnesses in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. "The phenomenon of alternating personality in its simplest phases seems based on lapses of memory," writes James. "Any man becomes, as we say, *inconsistent* with himself if he forgets his engagements, pledges, knowledges, and habits; and it is merely a question of degree at what point we shall say that his personality is changed" (379; emphasis original). In a more complex phase of the phenomenon of alternating personality, "in which the secondary character is superior to the first, there seems reason to think that the first one is the morbid one. The word inhibition describes its dulness [*sic*] and melancholy" (384).

5 Importantly, Swinburne provides subsequent alternatives to the model of two consciousnesses supported by Sperry and Parfit, alternatives that might prove equally rewarding to African-American studies. "One is that the subject has only one consciousness, sustained by the left hemisphere; the severing of the corpus callosum frees many of his or her patterns of response (e.g. those of the left hand in typical split-brain experiments) from conscious control. These responses," maintains Swinburne, "then become as automatic as are many of the movements of my limbs when I am driving a car and talking about philosophy at the same time. Another interpretation, advocated by [D. M.] Mackay" (146), reports Swinburne, "is that there remains a single consciousness sustained by both hemispheres; and that the disunity of response is (to use Tim Bayne's terminology) only 'access disunity.' Yet another interpretation is Bayne's 'switch model,'" which promotes itself as a scientifically inflected response to Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, an analogous update to that implicitly performed by Parfit on James's model, in which "consciousness in the spilt-brain switches between the subject's two hemispheres" (147). The right hemisphere sometimes takes over from the normally predominant left in giving rise to consciousness. The model suggested by Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* implies that sociopolitical environing imparts an asymmetric character to African-American double consciousness. In short, racism is forever invoking the African-American consciousness *in favor of* the American consciousness, with the later being responsive but unstimulated.
6

Chapter in *Souls*	Originally Published under the Title	Original Source	Month	Year
1	"Strivings of the Negro People"	*The Atlantic Monthly*	August	1897
2	"The Freedmen's Bureau"	*The Atlantic Monthly*	March	1901

3	"The Evolution of Negro Leadership"	*The Dial*	July	1901
4	"A Negro Schoolmaster in the New South"	*The Atlantic Monthly*	January	1899
6	"Of the Training of Black Men"	*The Atlantic Monthly*	September	1902
7	"The Negro as He Really Is"	*The World's Work*	June	1901
9	"The Relation of the Negroes to the Whites in the South"	*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*	July	1901
10	"The Religion of the American Negro"	*New World*	December	1900

Figure 1: Table Detailing the Previously Published Chapters in *The Souls of Black Folk*

7 What is more, and as Du Bois surely intends, all but one of these poetic fragments, which include one piece each by Arthur Symons, Lord Byron, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, and two pieces by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, come from the Western canon. The exception appears at the opening of chapter 6, "Of the Training of Black Men," with the quotation translated by Edward FitzGerald from *The Rubaiyat* (1120) of Omar Khayyam. A rounded education, suggests Du Bois, must partake of Eastern as well as Western wisdom.

"Where Eyes Become the Sunlight": Roman Fountains in Martin Heidegger and Richard Wilbur

William Tate

Abstract

For the most part, interpreters of Martin Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" have neglected his appropriation of C. F. Meyer's "The Roman Fountain," yet the poem deserves attention because its final description of water as it "streams and rests" provides a motif which Heidegger uses to work out his understanding of the relationship between "world" and "earth." Richard Wilbur uses similar language to make a similar point in his own poem about Roman fountains, "A Baroque Wall-Fountain at the Villa Sciarra." Juxtaposing Wilbur's depictions of moving and resting water with Heidegger's brings out a latent implication in Heidegger's use of the imagery, the possibility that the moving and resting interplay will result in enhanced understanding.[1]

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> The nature of poetry…is the founding of truth…everything with which man is endowed must…be drawn up from the closed ground and expressly set up… All creation, because it is such a drawing up, is a drawing, as of water from a spring.
> -Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"[2]

> λέγει αὐτῷ Κύριε, οὔτε ἄντλημα ἔχεις καὶ τὸ φρέαρ ἐστὶν βαθύ· πόθεν οὖν ἔχεις τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν;
> -John 4:11 (Nestle Greek text)[3]

Introduction

Near the end of the poem "A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the Villa Sciarra" Richard Wilbur describes heaven as "That land…/ Where eyes become the sunlight"[4] (56 and 58). The phrase conjoins two insights crucial to an

adequate understanding of the poem. First: it presupposes that successful human knowing involves a necessary holism of the human perceiver with that which is perceived; the eyes will only fully understand sunlight when they *become* sunlight—a claim which seems counter-intuitive, even peculiar.[5] Second (and less peculiar): it acknowledges that this hoped-for fulfillment of knowing remains incomplete in the life which human beings experience "under the sun" (to borrow a relevant biblical phrase). Given Wilbur's Christian theological commitments, the poem effectively glosses 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known."[6] The difference between "now" and "then" for Wilbur, as well as for Paul, includes (at least) a desire for fullness and immediacy of knowing which is thwarted by human fallenness and finitude. In other words, these texts presuppose (1) that human beings are meant to know, (2) that their knowing in "this present age" is inevitably limited, and (3) that awareness of this limitation implies the possibility (perhaps difficult to achieve) of progressively better understanding, even "now."[7] Moreover, both texts anticipate fullness[8] of understanding in a future consummation.

Curious as the juxtaposition may seem, I want to suggest that a similar awareness of the tension between knowing and not-knowing, also based in an account of human finitude, informs the epistemological themes of Martin Heidegger's essay "The Origin of the Work of Art," so that reading the two works inter-textually will clarify both. In that essay, Heidegger elaborates characteristics of the tension with his account of truth as disclosure and the closely related account of the relationship between "world" and "earth."[9] As one way of expressing these ideas, Heidegger borrows the image of water "stream[ing] and rest[ing]" from a poem by C. F. Meyer. Wilbur's poem twice makes use of a similar pairing. He describes the figures of fauns in the wall-fountain of his title as "at rest in fulness of desire," registering a kind of restlessness in tension with their repose. He contrasts this fountain with two rather different fountains in St. Peter's Square, in which the water is "Struggling aloft until it seems at rest." Despite the substantial differences between the fountains, they have in common their making present of this tension-with-rest, and precisely this element of shared significance makes Wilbur's point, as we shall see.[10]

In a preliminary way we may say that both Heidegger and Wilbur recognize that works of art bring to expression those clusters of assumptions, beliefs, prejudices, and habits of thought—models of the way things are—which allow cultures and communities to make sense

of the world and their place in it.[11] Both Heidegger and Wilbur realize
that such models are incomplete, contingent,[12] and therefore subject
to correction—thus allowing, among other things, for what Heidegger
calls "a greater degree of being." The "greater degree of being" may take
the form of a "fusion of horizons." By "fusion of horizons" (a phrase
made familiar and clarified by Heidegger's student and colleague, Hans-
Georg Gadamer) I mean an event of understanding which occurs when
representatives of more than one world (in the sense which Heidegger
uses and which I will explain more fully below) open themselves
(and thus their world) in sincere conversation with representatives of
another world and are thus able to assimilate insights from that other
world, with the result that the borders of that world (so to speak)
become more expansive. For Heidegger, the contingency of a world is a
function of his phenomenological practice, so that his account is non-
teleological. Wilbur's account contrasts with Heidegger's because Wilbur
contextualizes contingency with reference to Christian orthodoxy; his
account is thus both theological and teleological. By considering the
texts together, however, I hope to show the usefulness of Heidegger's
description of human experience for a theologically explicit account of
that experience such as Wilbur's.[13] Wilbur also resembles Heidegger in
presupposing the interpretive participation of a viewer (or audience or
reader) in the event of meaning which, on Heidegger's understanding,
characterizes works of art.[14]

As a means of focusing my reading of Heidegger, I will pay special
attention to an example he provides of a successful work of art, the poem
by Meyer. Meyer's poem, like Wilbur's, describes a fountain in a public
park in Rome.[15] Not surprisingly, Meyer and Wilbur use similar images
in their descriptions of fountains. Since Meyer's imagery gives shape
to parts of Heidegger's argument (and, more broadly, since the images
are common to the tradition which all three writers share), Heidegger
also shares images with Wilbur. In contrast with the other examples he
mentions (Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes and the Greek temple
at Paestum), for which he offers at least some explanatory comment,
Heidegger provides very little direction with respect to what readers
ought to discern in Meyer's poem. (This lack of direction may explain
why very few critics have given any attention to the poem as one of
Heidegger's examples.) He introduces it simply by saying that "the view
that [a work of art] is a copy is confirmed in the best possible way by a
work of the kind presented in C. F. Meyer's poem 'Roman Fountain.'"
Heidegger continues by quoting the entire poem:

The jet ascends and falling fills
The marble basin circling round;
This, veiling itself over, spills
Into a second basin's ground.
The second in such plenty lives,
Its bubbling flood a third invests,
And each at once receives and gives
And streams and rests. (37)[16]

He then comments, "This is neither a poetic painting of a fountain actually present[17] nor a reproduction of the general essence of a Roman fountain. Yet truth is put into the work" (37-38). Towards the end of the essay Heidegger makes the comment which I have already used as an epigraph: "The nature of poetry…is the founding of truth" (75). The continuation of that passage suggests the beginnings of a reason for Heidegger's appreciation of Meyer's poem; the poet draws truth out into the open in something like the way that a person draws water from a well or spring: "All creation, because it is such a drawing up, is a drawing, as of water from a spring" (76).[18] Heidegger uses Meyer's controlling image because it expresses the core of his thought in "Origin," his assertion that a work of art brings truth to presence. Before turning more directly to Meyer's poem (and then to Wilbur's), therefore, it will be useful to lay out some of the key ideas from Heidegger's essay.

Verification and Perspective

Heidegger's assertion—that works of art bring truth to presence—applies to works of art an account of truth as disclosure which preoccupied Heidegger in a number of his writings.[19] In order to clarify why and how truth matters in "Origin," it will be necessary to keep in mind that Heidegger's account of truth is epistemological[20] and phenomenological[21] rather than metaphysical. He expresses himself somewhat broadly, so that at times he seems to be opposing a correspondence account of truth,[22] but this impression is misleading. His target, more precisely, is verificationism; that is, he *denies* the doctrine that a proposition only has meaning if its correspondence to reality can be verified. On the contrary, Heidegger wants his readers to remember that truth occurs first for human beings as unanalyzed holistic insight.[23] To submit such an insight to analysis in order to test its factuality may clarify the insight in part, but will also be likely to falsify it by selecting for attention just those measures

of any particular state of affairs which are suited to the examiner's values; that is, the expectation of or search for a particular kind of evidence will determine what the observer is able (or likely) to notice.[24]

According to Heidegger, then, an overemphasis on verifiability renders (the experience of) truth static and one-dimensional. Heidegger argues, on the contrary, that human awareness of truth is perspectival.[25] He illustrates with reference to human experience of the weight of a stone and of color:

> If we try to lay hold of [a] stone's heaviness in another way [other than by feeling its heaviness], by placing the stone on a balance, we merely bring the heaviness into the form of a calculated weight. This perhaps very precise determination of the stone remains a number, but the weight's burden has escaped us. Color shines and wants only to shine. When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. (47)

This is to say that the scientific analysis of material reality, revealing as it undoubtedly is in its proper place, nevertheless also conceals. Because it focuses our perception in just one way, tacitly discouraging alternative foci, a verificationist account of things risks distorting our perception with respect to other possible accounts. Again, Heidegger doesn't deny the usefulness of knowing a precisely calculated weight; rather, he wants us human beings to remain alert to other modes of knowing and to the tendency for one mode of knowing to obscure another.

Heidegger's account of perspective implies that human knowing is dynamic. By calling knowing dynamic, I mean that the strength of certainty (or confidence) which human beings experience with respect to what we know, our central (or peripheral) awareness of bits of what we

know (depth of ingression), and the relative rich
ess of our knowing are generally in flux. New information, or a reminder of forgotten information, may change our levels of confidence or the relative centrality of some point of knowledge. This implies the possibility that an insight from another era of our own tradition or from another culture will correct or enhance our understanding.[26] The potential viability of more than one world implies further that two (or more) worlds might interact in such a way that each is enriched because of its encounter with the other(s). (For Gadamer this potential allows for a

"fusion of horizons," and Wilbur's "Baroque Wall-Fountain," I will argue, allows two different worlds to encounter each other in just this way.)

In an account of Heidegger's "On the Way to Language,"[27] Mark Wrathall considers the differing ways that gold might be valued in different worlds; the example makes it readily apparent that either world might benefit from a consideration of the other and that the worlds are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For Heidegger, as Wrathall explains, "the essence of a thing" is *not* "the essential property that makes the thing what it is." Rather, "the essence of a thing" is "whatever leads us to recognize an essential property or concept as essential." Human beings learn (or come into) this "whatever" by learning to be at home in a "world." Like the stone mentioned above, "gold…has a colour and a weight and a texture and a shape, but also all sorts of other properties like being good for making bracelets, gleaming in a way that seems divine, being buried in the sand of a riverbed, etc." Wrathall asks, "Which of all these properties are essential to the piece of gold, and which are merely accidental to its being?" He then explains:

> When we decide what any particular object is, and thus decide what its essential properties are, we do so by selecting out from the infinite properties it has some subset that is most important. To do this, we need to have a prior sense for what matters to us and concerns us—we need, in other words, to be disposed to the world in a particular way so that something will appear relevant and important while other things will seem trivial…. (92)[28]
>
> Different domains and worlds will consequently have different Heideggerian essences, and part of inhabiting a world is being moved by the essence proper to the world…. For Heidegger, which properties are essential will depend on how the Heideggerian essence has oriented us to the world, and thus what is essential about a thing can change historically because different ages or cultures might be 'essenced' differently. For example, one culture might be moved to find things important to the degree that they approach God by being like Him. Another age or culture might find the true being of a thing in what allows it to be turned into a resource, flexibly and efficiently on call for use. When someone disposed to the world in the first way encounters gold, she will take as essential its God-like properties—its incorruptibility, its divine sheen [she may use gold to adorn a cathedral]. When someone disposed to the world in the second way encounters gold, she will take the essential

property to be whatever it is about it that allows us to most flexibly and efficiently use it as a resource. These it turns out, are the properties that physics and chemistry focus on: its atomic structure [she may use gold in specialized circuitry]. (93)

Truth as Disclosure

Wrathall mentions being "disposed to the world in a particular way" and "inhabiting a world." In the essay "…Poetically Man Dwells…" Heidegger considers a poem by Hölderlin to explain that human beings are taught to inhabit particular worlds by the poets who make those worlds present.[29] The claim there is closely related to part of his argument in "Origin," the assertion that a work makes a world present. For Heidegger the presencing of a world in a work of art (such as a fountain or a poem) is not merely a matter of recording. Rather, to some significant degree, the work creatively renders a world. Even a work of art which seems simply to represent actual (physical) artifacts, such as one of Van Gogh's depictions of peasant shoes, fails for the observer *as a work of art* if she attempts to determine its meaning with reference to how faithfully it renders a particular pair of peasant shoes. Heidegger makes the point by responding to one of these paintings. "As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture," then we will miss the truth of the shoes. "From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand…. There are not even clods of soil from the fields or the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use" (33), so that in at least a couple of senses the painting fails the correctness test. Nevertheless, the painting makes Heidegger as observer aware of much more than the shoes alone:

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw

wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates[30] the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment [the shoes] is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once

more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the sudden menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself.

> *But perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes.* The peasant woman, on the other hand, simply wears them. (33-34; emphasis added)

By means of this passage Heidegger offers his own experience of Van Gogh's painting as an indication that works of art require participant audiences in order to *mean*. He also distinguishes between the shoes as *equipment* (the peasant woman's perspective, most properly satisfied when she can take the shoes for granted) and the perspective opened by the painting, which "let[s] us know what the shoes are in truth" (35). The peasant woman's perspective encourages closure: the shoes either serve their purpose or they don't. In contrast, the perspective opened by the painting, on Heidegger's account, discloses the *world* of the peasant woman; it occasions the viewer's reflectively open *insight*; it lets the shoes be what they are as part of a world. The work is *not* mimetic if we mean by the term that it accurately portrays the particular equipmental thing which it portrays, but it *is* mimetic in that it occasions the viewer's reflection concerning the ways in which the world it evokes *is*. (This difference gets at why Heidegger can say that Meyer's poem "is a copy"— mimetic in the sense that it evokes the way things are—but deny that it is "a poetic painting of a fountain actually present"—mimetic in the limiting sense that it accurately portrays a particular thing.)

The passage thus informs a summary account of Heidegger's notion of truth as unconcealedness (or disclosure). With respect to truth, Heidegger says that "Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being" (36; his emphasis). As he does elsewhere, Heidegger bases his notion of truth here on a quasi-etymological account of Greek ἀλήθεια, which he explains as the manifestation (or bringing to presence) of that which in itself remains concealed—truth is disclosure.[31] Understood as disclosure, truth is the limited, contingent, dialectical manifestation of things as they may be known by finite and situated human beings.[32] Applying this definition of truth, Heidegger characterizes a work of art as a work which provides an occasion of disclosure: "If there occurs in the work a disclosure of particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work" (36) or as he puts it later, "Art is the

setting-into-truth of work" (77). In the peasant woman's forgetful use of the shoes, they are merely equipmental, but by occasioning the viewer's insight into the *world* of the peasant woman, the painting of the shoes becomes (or for that moment is[33]) a work of art.

So Heidegger relates his explanation of truth to the difference between world and earth, describing the disclosure enabled or occasioned by a work of art as the setting up of a world: "To be a work means to set up a world" (44). "The work *as work* sets up a world…. To work-being there belongs the setting up of a world" (45; emphasis added). In this essay Heidegger contrasts "world" with "earth."[34] "In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth." Fundamentally, a "world" is that which is disclosed to a particular person (or community) within a particular cultural place and time; "earth" includes that which is undisclosed. Heidegger's explanation follows directly from the distinction quoted above between the felt burden of the stone (which remains a mystery) and its calculated weight (which only partially discloses what the stone is): "Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it" (47). The point is this: on Heidegger's understanding in "Origin," a work of art is a human work which occasions and enables a viewer's awareness of the manifold richness of a "world" *and* keeps the viewer aware of the corresponding hiddenness of "earth." It establishes a "world" even as it manifests the impenetrable mystery of "earth."[35] These are the considerations Heidegger has in view when he says specifically of Meyer's poem that "truth is put into the work" (38).

Meyer's "The Roman Fountain" in Heidegger

In other words, Meyer's "Roman Fountain" counts as *art* for Heidegger because it discloses a world without presuming closure. It apprehends (or intuits[36]) "the particular being" of the fountain as well as the essence of fountains without presuming that it comprehends (or owns) either. More important for Heidegger, however, is that in representing these things it also represents how disclosure occurs; as Gover puts it, Heidegger chooses this poem for its representation of "not an other being, not a universal, but the clearing in which beings come to presence" (149). The fountain poem puts the mystery in front of us. This explanation clarifies why Heidegger can say both that the work is a copy (that is, mimetic), and yet that it is not about "a fountain actually present" (37). What matters for Heidegger is not identifying a particular fountain on the basis of the poem's description, but the way the fountain, as it is brought to presence

in the poem (and like the peasant shoes) occasions insight and thereby generates thought.

Several terms and phrases in the poem resonate[37] with Heidegger's account of truth as disclosure. Among phrases in the poem which would have caught Heidegger's interest, one is certainly "veiling itself" (*sich verschleiernd*). Throughout his writings Heidegger uses a number of terms to indicate the hiddenness that accompanies disclosure. In their index to *Being and Time*, for example, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson include *verschleiern* (along with *verhüllen* and *einhüllen*) as words which Heidegger typically uses to designate this "veiling." Heidegger uses the compound *Sich-verschleiern* ("self-veiling") as early as *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. The phrase in Meyer suitably describes the light curtain of water that would fall from the rim of a gently flowing fountain, partly obscuring the edge of the basin it flows over; it also expresses in Heidegger's lexicon the veiled nature of earth. A passage from later in "Origin" makes these connections explicit:

> The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up. All things of earth, and the earth itself as a whole, *flow together* into a reciprocal accord. But this *confluence*[38] is not a blurring of their outlines. *Here there flows the stream, restful* within itself, of the setting of bounds, which delimits everything present within its presence. (47; emphasis added)

Like Meyer's fountain, "veil[ed]" by its own "stream[ing]" (lines 3 and 8), the veiled earth vitally, restfully flows in its nourishing strife with world.

Art matters because it lets beings be. The particular fountain (a work of architectural art) matters, as does the poem which lets it be what it is, because the fullness of being of one thing contributes to the fullness of being of everything else. We might say that art brings more truth to light (or allows more truth to come to light), and this coming to light is the character of the beautiful in art:

> Thus in the work it is truth, not only something true, that is at work.[39] The picture that shows the peasant shoes, the poem that says the Roman fountain, do not just make manifest what this isolated being as such is—if indeed they manifest anything at

all; rather, they make unconcealedness as such happen in regard to what is as a whole. The more simply and authentically the shoes are engrossed in their nature, the more plainly and purely the fountain is engrossed in its nature—the more directly and engagingly do all beings attain to a greater degree of being along with them. That is how self-concealing being is illuminated. Light of this kind joins its shining to and into the work. This shining, joined in the work, is the beautiful. (56)

The fountain's contribution to "all beings attain[ing] to a greater degree of being"[40] points towards another phrase likely to have caught Heidegger's interest in Meyer's poem. According to line five, the second basin, as *sie wird zu reich*, ("as it gets too rich"[41]) overflows. The fullness of being, the

"greater degree of being," can be expressed in Heidegger as richness of being; as he asserts later, "The reality of the work has become not only clearer for us in the light of its work-being, but also essentially richer" (71).

Perhaps the most important section of Meyer's poem for Heidegger's appropriation is the dynamic interplay of giving and receiving and streaming and resting in the last two lines. The form of the German verb, *gibt* ("it gives;" Meyer uses the word in lines five and seven[42]), evokes one of Heidegger's specialized terms, *es gibt*. The expression means roughly "it is" or "there is," but with a suggestion in Heidegger's usage that what *is* gives itself in manifestation for thinking.[43] This giving of being implies its converse, the withholding of disclosure in concealment. Pursuing both that which is given to thought and that which is withheld amounts to the "feast of thought" which Heidegger mentions in "Origin" (18).[44] Meyer's "receives" may have suggested to Heidegger the participation of the thinker in this feast, since one feature of Heidegger's account of the work of art (noted above) is the importance of an audience, the "preserver" who reads the poem or stands in front of the painting and is open to being fed by either, as it were.

The reciprocity of giving and receiving in Meyer's poem mirrors the reciprocity of streaming and resting, which brings us back to the imagery with which I opened. At a number of points throughout the essay, Heidegger recalls from the poem the image of calmly flowing water[45] to picture the "repose" of the "strife" between earth and world, hiddenness and disclosure. For Heidegger, in other words, rest is not a matter of stasis

but of balance—the balance of give and take, the accord of freedom with boundaries, as we have seen him assert: "All things of earth, and the earth itself as a whole, flow together in reciprocal accord…. Here there flows the stream *restful* within itself, of the setting of bounds, which delimits everything present within its presence" (47; emphasis added). He goes on to consider the nature of this rest, somewhat surprisingly insisting that it accords with strife:

> But in the essential features just mentioned…we have indicated in the work rather a happening and in no sense a repose, for what is rest if not the opposite of motion? It is at any rate not an opposite that excludes motion from itself, but rather includes it. Only what is in motion can rest…. Where rest includes motion, there can exist a repose which is an inner concentration of motion, hence a highest state of agitation, assuming that the mode of motion requires such a rest. Now the repose of the work that rests is a repose of this sort. (48)

The noun "repose" here, *Ruhe*, (like *es gibt*) has a specialized meaning for Heidegger. It denotes the tensive unity of world and earth[46] which is the unity of manifestation (that prior unity on which, he argues, verificationist accounts of truth depend): "The repose of the work that rests in itself thus has its presencing in the intimacy of striving."[47] In other words, precisely the making present of this striving characterizes works of art. "From this repose of the work we can first see what is at work in the work" (50). Heidegger's description recalls ancient accounts of the strife between chaos ("earth") and cosmos ("world") if we understand that it is the artist (rather than a divine being) who presents us with a cosmos delivered out of chaos through strife: poetically man dwells—that is, the poet provides the safe haven of a world in which some group of humans can feel at home, though this world is always at risk, since earth is breaking out all over.

Wilbur's Fountains

Something very like Heidegger's tensive repose comes to expression in Richard Wilbur's poem "A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the Villa Sciarra." Not surprisingly, Wilbur's descriptions of the play of water resemble Meyer's at several points. Meyer notices the way water looks like a veil; Wilbur compares the look of water with a "scrim" and "gauze" and "mesh." Meyer notices the central "jet"[48] in his fountain; Wilbur likewise

notices the "rising" of "the main jet" in two of the fountains he considers. The water in Meyer's fountain descends by an arrangement of three basins, and the fountain of Wilbur's title has a generally similar structure. I am more interested, however, in an important difference. Meyer's description is brief and very general—it could describe any of numerous fountains, and Heidegger's use of it is correspondingly general. He seems most struck by Meyer's compressed representation—in the phrase *strömt und ruht*—of the fundamental structure in the way earth comes to expression in worlds. The greater particularity of Wilbur's description provides a clearer illustration of the potential competition between worlds, including the possibility that the encounter will produce a more expansive world—a world characterized by what Heidegger calls a greater degree of being—by means of a fusion of horizons.

Despite Wilbur's title, his poem actually describes two (kinds of) fountains in order to compare them—and it compares them in order to compare the distinctive worlds they represent. Part of his point is that neither "world" made present by the fountains fully manifests "earth" (to apply Heidegger's terms). The first fountain, the wall-fountain of his title, makes present a world modeled on classical mythology[49] which favors embodiment, including pursuit of physical pleasure: it depicts a family of fauns, emphasizing details which recall a traditional association of fauns with sensuality. For example, the fifth stanza notes the "sparkling flesh" of the female faun who is "[i]n a saecular ecstacy" (19-20). The poem also emphasizes the downward tendency of the fountain's water, which "braids down" (4) and "spills" (7). The flow of the fountain is a "ragged, loose / Collapse" (11-12).[50] This downward directedness determines the posture of the female faun, whose "blinded smile" is "[b]ent on the sand floor." The overall suggestion is that the fauns represent the sensual, earthly nature of human beings, even what Christian theology identifies as their fallenness. The question asked in the seventh stanza prompts the conventional evaluation: "since this all / Is pleasure, flash, and waterfall, / Must it not be too simple?" (26-28; the last clause acknowledges that this fountain leaves something undisclosed).

The question precedes another which introduces a rather different world-disclosure: "Are we not / More intricately expressed in the plain fountains that Maderna set / Before St. Peter's…?" (28-31). This question overtly indicates that the fountains represent worlds; the speaker assumes that "we" are "expressed" in them. As Heidegger would notice, each fountain in Wilbur's poem makes present a world. The question presupposes, though tentatively, that the better part of human beings

is in their spiritual natures, pictured in the upward movement of the water in the fountains before St. Peter's, emphasized here in contrast with the downward flow characterizing the wall-fountain: "the main jet / Struggl[es] aloft…/ In the act of rising" (31-33); it is "borne up" (35) so that it is "high" (36). "Struggling aloft" evokes the asceticism of strict religious practice, in contrast with the indulgently "effortless descent" of water in the first fountain (12). The St. Peter's fountains also differ from the wall-fountain in their non-figural simplicity, which suits their counter-sensual import. This section, like the first, leads up to a question which seems to presume the superiority of soul over body in human beings: "If that is what men are / Or should be; if those water-saints [the fountains before St. Peter's] display / The pattern of our areté, / What of these showered fauns…?" (41-44). An obvious answer would be that if those fountains display saints, then the fauns display sinners (implicit in the hint of the fall already mentioned), so that the contrast between the downward-trending sensuality of the fauns and the upward-striving rectitude of the non-figural fountains tempts us to adopt the obvious answer. The poem resists this obvious answer, however, and Wilbur unsettles convention with an alternative. What of these fauns? "They are *at rest* in fullness of desire / For what is given" (46-47; emphasis added).

This "rest in fullness of desire" recalls the streaming and resting in Meyer's fountain and Heidegger's appropriation of the motif. Instructively, it also echoes part of Wilbur's description of the St. Peter's fountains, in each of which the main jet "[s]truggl[es] aloft until it seems *at rest*" (31-32). In other words, despite obvious differences, both the baroque fountain and the fountains in St. Peter's Square characterize human virtue as a balance between striving and resting, a holistic tensive repose. In the closing section of the poem Wilbur associates this balance with the example of St. Francis who, without sacrificing devotion, fully accepted creaturely embodiment as demonstrated by his delight in the physical creation and his general refusal to withdraw from physical discomfort (the poem alludes to his lying "in sister snow…[f]reezing and praising," 52 and 54). The speaker in Wilbur's poem suggests that Francis "might have seen in" the fauns of the wall-fountain "[n]o trifle, but a shade of bliss," that is, an anticipatory picture of heaven, here characterized as "a land of tolerable flowers" (54 and 56). The goal of human *desire*, in other words, is a state of being which tolerates—rejoices in—flowers.[51] Fullness of life is the goal towards which "all hungers leap"—the hungers of physical desire as well as the hungers manifest in ascetic practice—and towards which "all pleasures pass" (59-60).[52] This is that "state…where eyes become the sunlight," where human intelligence at last fully corresponds with

the intelligibility of the cosmos. Although Wilbur here goes beyond Heidegger, his point nevertheless corroborates by implication Heidegger's premise that knowing in the present life will always be partial; every disclosure will involve a corresponding concealment.

Wilbur's immediate concern, like Heidegger's, is for human living here and now. The central issue in Wilbur is that the contrasting worlds made present in the different fountains are not mutually exclusive. In Heidegger's terms each fountain discloses a world but also, because of the evident incompleteness of its disclosure, reveals the persisting hiddenness of earth—and awareness of this hiddenness drives the human restlessness-seeking-repose which is brought to presence and perceived in art.[53] Awareness that one's own knowledge is limited invites humility towards the other, whose world understanding has the potential to improve one's own understanding. Thus Wilbur's poem helps us to see an implication of Heidegger's thought which Heidegger does not develop in "Origin": when competing descriptions of "earth" (alternative "worlds") encounter each other, the result may be a fusion of horizons beneficial to both as an increase in being.

Notes

1 I am grateful to my colleague John Wingard for helping me improve this paper in several respects.
2 I cite "The Origin of the Work of Art" from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, as translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971): 17-87; this passage comes from 75-76. I have also been aware of the translation by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes in *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).Andrew J. Mitchell has pointed out that in "A Dialogue on Language," the word which Peter D. Hertz translates as "source," carries the idea of "the source as spring (*die Quelle*), the activity of which Heidegger names as the action of grace, *das Quellen*, a welling up. A spring is not a beginning, but a transition, it is not water out of nothing, but the site where that water crosses a threshold of below to above and springs up between earth and sky" ("The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," *Research in Phenomenology* 40 (2010): 309-330, 321). See Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language" in *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 46-47.
3 The cluster of images I am considering in this essay derives from both classical and biblical sources. Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman in John 4 evokes an entire network of references throughout the Hebrew Bible. The best known is probably Psalm 23:2 [Vulgate 21:2], "He leads me beside still waters," and I notice Psalm 42:2 [Vulgate 41:2] below. Something of the range of possible implications is suggested by Isaiah 41:17-18:

> When the poor and needy seek water, / and there is none, / and their tongue is parched with thirst, / I the Lord will answer them; / I the God of Israel will not forsake them. / I will open rivers on the bare heights, / and fountains in the midst of the valleys. / I will make the wilderness a pool of water, / and the dry land springs of water. (Unless otherwise indicated, I quote the English Standard Version throughout.)

Both Martin Heidegger and Richard Wilbur, whose works I am interpreting here, would have been aware of biblical as well as classical uses of the motif.

4 Unless otherwise indicated I quote Wilbur's poems from *Collected Poems 1943-2004* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2004), citing by title and line number.

5 Wilbur is closer to affirming a "contact" theory of perception than to affirming a "mediation" theory as these terms are used by Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor, who develop Heidegger's notions in their *Retrieving Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). They acknowledge similarities between their approach and "naïve realism," and their understanding has affinities with "common sense realism" and "direct realism."

6 This is the Authorized Version.

7 This is explicit in Wilbur's poem, and it seems self-evident that 1 Corinthians as a whole calls for improved understanding to be manifested in improved practice..

8 Fullness, not completeness. Within a Christian theological understanding only God knows everything.

9 Briefly, a "world" for Heidegger is a (human) description of the way things are, whereas "earth" is everything-that-is. Because human beings are limited, historical, cultural beings, any "world" (understood, again, as a description) will be incomplete, temporary, and very probably mistaken or misleading at some points. I elaborate below.

10 Using a similar image, Wilbur describes angels as "moving / And staying like white water" in "Love Calls Us to the Things of This World" (12-13), where his interest is in the possibility of "invisible attributes…clearly perceived" (I borrow this language from Romans 1:19-20). The ideas recall 1 Corinthians 13:12, quoted above.

11 In using "model" here I am particularly aware of C. S. Lewis' *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964). What Lewis means by "model" is roughly analogous with what Heidegger means by "world." Both are aware of the notion of "worldview" (*weltanschauung*), though Heidegger generally avoids the term in pursuit of his usual strategy of repristinating traditional concepts. This is to say that when considering Heidegger's notion of "world," we should probably be aware of the notion of "worldview" as context but reject the word as a synonym.

12 By "contingent" I mean that it is dependent on the conditions which shaped its construction (including human fallibility, cultural assumptions, etc.).

13 Although Heidegger works at articulating a non-theistic philosophy, the contours of his thought concerning "hiddenness" (which I will consider below) were influenced by his study of Luther's understanding of the "hiddenness of God." One implication is that in some cases, at least, his insights may readily be "at home" within theism. See especially Benjamin D. Crowe, "On the Track of the Fugitive Gods: Heidegger, Luther, Hölderlin,"

The Journal of Religion 87.2 (April 2007): 185-205. See also Crowe, *Heidegger's Religious Origins: Destruction and Authenticity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Crowe, *Heidegger's Phenomenology of Religion: Realism and Cultural Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); and Ben Vedder, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion: From God to the Gods* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007).

14 Hans-Georg Gadamer comments that for Heidegger "the Being of the artwork…holds its truth within itself in such a fashion that this truth is available in no other way but in the work. For the beholder or receiver, 'essence' corresponds to tarrying alongside the work" (*Heidegger's Ways* 74).

15 Meyer's poem probably describes a fountain in the Villa Borghese. Despite his title, Wilbur's poem actually describes three fountains, one in the Villa Sciarra and a pair at St. Peter's Square. I provide further detail below.

16 K. Gover quotes the original in a note:

> Aufsteigt der Strahl und fallend giesst
> Er voll der Marmorschale Rund,
> Die, sich verschleiernd , überfliesst
> In einer zweiten Schale Grund;
> Die zweite gibt, sie wird zu reich,
> Der dritten wallend ihre Flut,
> Und jede nimmt und gibt zugleich
> Und strömt und ruht.

See "The Overlooked Work of Art in 'The Origin of the Work of Art,'" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 48.2, Issue 190 (June 2008): 143-153; 147, n. 13. I owe a general debt to Gover's article, which provides the only developed account of Heidegger's use of the poem that I have discovered. For Heidegger's essay as a whole I have found the following especially helpful: Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Ontology of Art," in Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, eds., *A Companion to Heidegger* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, 2007), 407-419; Charles Guignon, "Meaning in the Work of Art: A Hermeneutic Perspective," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 27 (2003): 25-44; and Guignon, "Truth as Disclosure: Art, Language, History," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28, Supplement (1989): 105-120.

17 Heidegger is not necessarily denying that Meyer's poem is about a particular fountain; instead, he is directing attention to something else, as I will explain below. According to Gover, Meyer's "sister reports that the poem was probably based on a fountain in the Villa Borghese that Meyer saw on a trip to Italy" (144; Gover, note 6, cites Kurt Oppert, "Das Dinggedicht. Eine Kunstform bei Mörike, Meyer und Rilke," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 4 (1926): 747-83). Meyer's description might fit either the frequently photographed seahorse fountain (pictured here as of 7/13/15: http://www.rome.net/villa-borghese) or a simpler oval fountain (pictured here as of 7/13/15: http://www.chasingtheunexpected.com/2012/11/villa-borghese-embodying-the-beauty-of-romes-parks/).

18 It is useful here to notice Heidegger's (and probably Meyer's) awareness of a long tradi-

tion. Like Latin *fons*, the German word for "fountain" (*brunnen*) might also be translated as "spring" or "well" depending on context, and Heidegger makes use of all three possibilities throughout the essay. Moreover, given his study of the philosophical tradition as well as of Reformation theology, Heidegger would have been aware of the Latin tag *ad fontes*, particularly in an essay concerned with origins (but we may notice that the word for origin which Heidegger uses in his title, *ursprung*, is not usually associated with wells or fountains, though it does occasionally appear as a synonym for *quelle*, spring, understood as the origin of a stream). The phrase *ad fontes* comes from the Vulgate of Psalm 41:2 (42:2 in most modern translations): *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.* ("Just as the stag longs for the sources of the water, so my soul longs for you, God"). Renaissance humanists used the verse to encourage the study of classical texts, and Reformation theologians similarly used the verse to encourage the foundation of doctrine on direct study of biblical texts.

Gadamer assesses the philosophical and philological potentials of the traditional phrase in Appendix V of *Truth and Method*:

> As a *philosophical* metaphor it is of Platonic and Neoplatonic origin. The dominant image is that of the springing up of pure and fresh water from invisible depths.… As a *philological* term the concept of fons was first introduced in the age of humanism, but there it does not primarily refer to the concept that we know from the study of sources; rather, the maxim "ad fontes," the return to the sources, is to be understood as a reference to the original undistorted truth of the classical authors. (2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York: Crossroad, 1989, 502)

Although Heidegger does not use the phrase *ad fontes* in "Origins," the tradition associated with the tag informs his essay.

19 In addition to "The Origin of the Work of Art" see especially *Being and Time* §44; *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* §18; "On the Essence of Truth" in *Basic Writings* (most directly relevant for "Origin," in my judgment); and *The Essence of Truth: Plato's Cave Allegory and* Theaetetus. See also Mark A. Wrathall's *Heidegger and Unconcealment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and William B. Macomber's *The Anatomy of Disillusion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

20 That is, he is interested in how we human beings know what we know and what counts as knowing.

21 That is, he deliberately sets aside metaphysical explanation and seeks to describe the way things appear from the point of view of a historically situated and conditioned human observer.

22 For example, he uses Thomas's Aristotelian formula, *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*, as a summary of the position he wants to correct, but for Thomas the assertion arguably has more to do with metaphysical realism than verifiability. In my judgment, Heidegger, like Thomas, is some version of a metaphysical realist; this seems evident in the relationship he describes between "world" and "earth."

23 Dreyfus and Taylor work out some of the implications of this holism in *Retrieving*

Realism. In "*actualized* knowledge [the perceiving subject] becomes one with its object" (18; in this summary, holism overcomes subject/object dualism). Wilbur's description of heaven, "That land…/ Where eyes become the sunlight," expresses a similar holism.

24 The parallel difficulty involved in attempting literal translation offers a relatively straightforward illustration of the issue. For example, "lord" is often an appropriate translation of occurrences of the Greek noun κύριος in the New Testament, but how should it be translated when it is used by the Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets in the fourth chapter of John's gospel? When Jesus tells her (bafflingly) that, if she had asked him, he would have given her living water, she replies "κύριε, you don't have a bucket." To translate with "lord" here is likely to suggest to English readers either a curiously exaggerated respect on the woman's part for the stranger she has just met or an unexplained prescience concerning his identity; if we could discuss it with him, Heidegger might point out that translating "lord" would conceal (or falsify) what's actually happening at this point in the narrative. The solution which presents itself is the fact that the Greek term can also be translated as the courtesy expression, "sir," and English translators tend to make this choice in John 4:11. However, Heidegger would want us to notice that we also lose something with this translation: if we hear the word as only the common expression "sir," we may be missing an irony carried by the ambiguous possibilities in the word κύριος. Perhaps the evangelist means for us readers to recognize that, though the woman merely intends common courtesy, she speaks more truly than she knows, since the man she addresses really is the one Christians acknowledge as "Lord." (For the sake of clarity, I am not attempting to deal with the likelihood that Jesus spoke to the woman in Aramaic. The story as we have it is told in Greek.) Part of the point here is that a speaker "at home" with κοινή Greek would not need all this explanation but would (or at least could) experience the polyvalence of the word with an immediacy impossible to readers for whom Greek is a matter of study. On Heidegger's account, a verificationist account of truth faces a similar difficulty. By focusing attention on the verifiable or quantifiable or measurable attributes of a thing (the accidents of a substance, the form given to matter, and so on), such theories indeed reveal the truth of things, but only part of the truth (in something like the way consulting a Greek dictionary might tell us the usual meanings of κύριος). Moreover, because they tend to look for *the* meaning of a thing, such theories tend to eliminate (or dampen) the play of polyvalence in favor of univocity.

25 Simon Blackburn defines "perspectivism" as "The view that all truth is truth from or within a particular perspective" (in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford: OUP, 1994). Since Heidegger's account is consciously phenomenological, it is correspondingly agnostic with respect to the possibility of a non-relative (absolute) knowledge of truth.

26 This recognition is an important feature of Gadamer's argument in *Truth and Method*. See also Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, especially 216-223.

27 I am quoting from chapter 8, "Language," in Wrathall's *How to Read Heidegger* (New York: Norton, 2005), 88-97 (hereafter cited parenthetically). I have also found helpful chapter 7, "Truth and Art," on "The Origin of the Work of Art" (71-87).

28 In describing the "Baroque Wall-Fountain" Wilbur expresses conventional responses to the figures in that fountain with the words "simple" and "trifle." The context makes clear that these assessments represent only one possible "world," and part of the point of the poem is to call for a re-evaluation of the way things are based on the encounter between two worlds which the poem realizes. In other words, Wilbur's poem illustrates the same relationship between worlds which Wrathall is explaining.

29 I have used the translation in Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 211-229.

30 This surprising verb choice gets at the heart of the issue: the meaning of the painting amounts to a vibration or oscillation, a living give-and-take, between the artist, the work, and its viewer (whom Heidegger calls a "preserver"). A little later in the essay, Heidegger will introduce the tensive stability of the "strife" between "earth" and "world." That more fundamental "vibration" is foreshadowed here. (On the notion of "oscillation" in Heidegger, see Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment*, 137ff.) Gadamer makes a similar point in "On the Truth of the Word" when he mentions "the way that the word sways and plays itself out" (*The Gadamer Reader*, ed. Richard E. Palmer, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007: 132-155; the quotation comes from 152).

31 Compare "On the Essence of Ground": "Propositional truth is rooted in a more *originary* truth (unconcealment), in the pre-predicative manifestness *of beings*" (103).

32 I hope elsewhere to provide a fuller account; here I only want to summarize the most relevant features of Heidegger's illustration for my immediate purposes. It should be noted, however, that Heidegger's "dialectic," though influenced by Hegel's, is immanent and non-teleological; it emphasizes the perpetual resistance of reality to final comprehension.

33 One implication of Heidegger's essay is that a work of art may cease to be a work of art when it ceases to inform an audience; the measure of art is neither permanence nor universality.

34 Prior to "Origin" Heidegger uses "world" without specifying its relation to "earth." In his introduction to "Origin" (published as "The Truth of the Work of Art" in *Heidegger's Ways*, 95-109), Gadamer recognizes Heidegger's addition of "earth" to his account of truth as "the startling new conceptuality" which caused a "real sensation" when the lectures were first presented. "The new and startling thing was that this concept of the world now found a counterconcept in the '*earth*'" (99). Heidegger further developed his account of these counterconcepts in "On the Essence of Ground," written in 1928 (included in *Pathmarks*, 97-135).

35 For the theological underpinnings of Heidegger's treatment of hiddenness and mystery, see again Crowe, "On the Track of the Fugitive Gods." An important biblical text for this tradition is 2 Corinthians 3:18 (which G. C. Berkouwer discusses alongside 1 Corinthians 13:12): "[In 2 Corinthians 3:18] Paul…writes: 'we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of God, are transformed into the same image.'… *There is now an unveiling, an unconcealment…*" (*Man: The Image of God*, tr. Dirk W. Jellema, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, 110; emphasis added). Heidegger also uses the image of unveiling, as we will see below.

36 Choosing the right term is tricky with Heidegger; "intuition" occurs in William Mc-Neill's translation of "On the Essence of Ground" where it refers to an understanding that is both "pre-predicative" and derivative on a prior manifestation of being (see *Pathmarks* 102-105). My use of "intuits" intends the "pre-predicative" aspect of disclosure.

37 I use the word "resonate" here to suggest something like Heidegger's use of "vibrate" noted above—that is, as a reminder that Heidegger's account of understanding involves a perpetual give-and-take as being offers itself and withdraws and the human interpreter appropriates and (mis)represents and is corrected by further offering and withdrawal in the circulation of knowledge.

38 As the context reminds us, "confluence" is "flowing together." Heidegger uses the word again at the end of his "Epilogue," where he summarizes the key features of his argument: "Truth is the unconcealedness of that which is as something that is…. In the way in which, for the world determined by the West, that which is, is as the real, there is concealed a particular confluence of beauty with truth" (81; compare Wallace Stevens' phrase, "the fluent mundo.")

39 The contrast between "truth" and "something true" registers the difference between the openness to being of truth as disclosure and the closure presumed in a verificationist account. (Compare Wallace Stevens' "On the Road Home.") To put it another way, openness to "truth" permits a both/and dynamic "vibration" (or oscillation) rather than requiring the closure of an either/or determinacy. The both/and allows greater fullness of being.

40 On this increase of being, see Gadamer, "On the Truth of the Word," in Richard E. Palmer, ed., *The Gadamer Reader* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 152.

41 I adopt this phrasing from a prose translation of Meyer's poem by my colleague Tom Neiles. Neiles' translation of "reich" replaces Hofstadter's "plenty" with the cognate "rich."

42 Hofstadter only employs the normal English translation, "gives," in line seven, though his translation of line five implies the giving.

43 In *Being and Time* §44 he associates the term with presuppositions and, in particular, the truth we expect to find: "The truth which has been presupposed, or the 'there is' [*es gibt*] by which its Being is to be defined, has that kind of Being—or meaning of Being—which belongs to Dasein itself" (271). Mark Wrathall remarks that Heidegger uses the term "to talk about things that are, but lack the stability and presence that metaphysics took as definitive of being. Something can be 'given,' that is, play a role in the disclosure of the world, without 'being,' that is, having stable presence" (*Heidegger and Unconcealment*, 144).

44 More precisely, "the feast of thought" is the inevitable "moving in a circle" of the effort to understand what art is (one version of the hermeneutic circle in Heidegger), but I understand this effort as one example of the dynamic pattern of disclosure in Heidegger's thought.

45 There is an analogue in the familiar "still waters" of Psalm 23:2; the phrase might also be translated "waters of rest."

46 The last word of Meyer's poem, *ruht*, is a form of the cognate verb. On the importance

of *Ruhe*, see Andrew Mitchell, "Praxis and *Gelassenheit*: The 'Practice' of the Limit," in François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, eds., *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002): 317-338. Mitchell explains:

> The term *Ruhe* is a term of art for Heidegger around this time.... In "The Origin of the Work of Art," the work of art *rests* in the unity of Earth and World. "This is the unity we seek when we ponder the self-subsistence of the work and try to express in words this closed, unitary repose of self-support…" (GA 5, 34; PLT 48). Heidegger cautions against taking *Ruhe* here to be any absence of movement. "It is at any rate not an opposite that excludes motion from itself, but rather includes it.... Where rest includes motion, there can exist a repose which is an inner concentration of motion, hence, a highest state of agitation, assuming that the mode of motion requires such a rest" (GA 5; PLT 57-58; trans. mod.). Rest, then, is a tense repose…

Mitchell goes on to indicate two ways Heidegger uses *Ruhe* in "Ἀγχιβασίη," the dialogue by Heidegger on which Mitchell is focusing: "(1) *Ruhe* holds together those 'opposites' that belong together" and "(2) *Ruhe* is not the absence of motion." Thus "Rest itself is no mere not-doing, and the essence of the human is not merely work. The human must 'also reside…somewhere in the *Ruhe*' (GA 77, 70). The *Ruhe* is the residence between yes and no, the tensed opening of truth" (336, n. 45). As Mitchell's article makes clear, Heidegger's "repose" is related to Heidegger's "dwelling." Compare Gadamer: "The silence of the Chinese vase, the stillness and puzzling peace [*Ruhe*] which comes toward you from every really persuasive artistic construction, testifies that (speaking with Heidegger) truth has here been 'set to work'" ("On the Truth of the Word," 154).

47 The proximity of "rest" and "striving" in the English translation calls to mind Hebrews 4:11, "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest," from a context which helpfully glosses the anticipatory awareness of Wilbur's "Baroque Wall-Fountain."

48 This is Hofstadter's translation of *strahl*, usually translated "beam." Nevertheless, the central image is the same as that indicated by Wilbur's "jet."

49 Several features of the fountain reveal that it is, more precisely, a work of Christian syncretism. For the moment I am focusing on the more overt details of the description.

50 For the sake of brevity I bypass a number of ambiguities by means of which Wilbur requires his readers to consider conventional views and simultaneously begins to undermine those views, preparing readers for the adjustment of perspective which the poem pursues; I plan to provide a fuller account in a separate essay.

51 I take Wilbur's "tolerable" as litotes for "appreciated."

52 The phrasing recalls something like Romantic *sehnsucht*; I hope to develop this notion elsewhere.

53 Both Heidegger and Wilbur would acknowledge the Augustinian flavor of the restlessness which interests them. Augustine opened his *Confessions* with the recognition, "you [God] have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." These are the closing words of the first paragraph of Henry Chadwick's translation (Osford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Chadwick notes an echo of Plotinus, who considers that "the soul

finds rest only in the One" (3, n. 1). Heidegger, of course, wants to separate the insight into human behavior from the theistic context.

The Touch of Meaning: Researching Art between Text and Texture

Gerald Cipriani

Abstract

The academic world, at least in the West, has traditionally always been suspicious when it comes to introducing in its quest for knowledge notions of materiality, touch, texture, or "haptics" – in other words what is generally associated with sensory-experience. In the human sciences and the artistic fields the practice of research has always privileged "textual reason" over "sensory texture," the *textual* over the *textural*. Only in the recent past have so-called postmodern theories of all kinds attempted to overcome the hierarchical dichotomy between discursive reason and embodied thought. Unfortunately, this has very often created an unprecedented ragbag of epistemological confusions and identity crises. This essay shall attempt to explain and clarify the epistemological nature of materiality, touch, texture, or "haptics," and the role it can play in academic research in the artistic fields with particular reference to ideas developed by French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Levinas.

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The academic world, at least in the West, has traditionally always been suspicious when it comes to introducing in its quest for knowledge notions of materiality, touch, texture, or "haptics" – in other words what is generally associated with sensory-experience. In the human sciences and the artistic fields the practice of research has always privileged "textual reason" over "sensory texture," the *textual* over the *textural*. Only in the recent past have so-called postmodern theories of all kinds attempted to overcome the hierarchical dichotomy between discursive reason and embodied thought. Unfortunately, this has very often created an unprecedented ragbag of epistemological confusions and identity crises. Academic research in the artistic fields has not escaped the crisis, and relatively recent attempts to introduce the idea of merely practical

research are ones of the symptoms. What justifies such an idea, it is argued, is that because embodied forms of communication, expression, or language can be as thoughtful as discursive theory, explanation, or analysis, there is no reason why they could not constitute the very body of academic research. This is where the epistemological confusion begins. We find ourselves questioning the difference between what constitutes academic research, for example in Fine Art, and art practice for a set number of years, or between academic research in design and being a practising designer. To put it crudely, we end up confusing religion and theology, or being a revolutionary and a sociologist. This essay shall attempt to explain and clarify the epistemological nature of materiality, touch, texture, or "haptics," and the role it can play in academic research in the artistic fields.

Some may argue that the issue of epistemological confusion is, after all, no more than semantic. Still, if we consider the etymology of the English word "research," it tells us that it comes from the Old French "*re-cerche*," that is to say, literally, "to find again" or to "retrieve." What is retrieved in research – and this applies to the artistic fields – is the ways such or such an event, phenomenon, or practice makes sense in the way it does. This operation, so to speak, is done through analysis and explanation. Research, understood in this original sense, retrieves the mechanisms that make an event, phenomenon, or practice become meaningful or significant. In this sense, the nature of research cannot be confined to experience or practice as meaningful as it is.

If academic research in the artistic fields does not want to lose its *raison d'être*, it must to a certain degree analyse and remain explanatory, including when such a research aims at being self-reflexive or in the form of problem-solving. Academic research must therefore ultimately produce a "thesis" that proves and maintain a point by means of explanation. Academic research must remain reflective "about" some-thing, involving thus a serious level of method awareness. This also applies to modes of investigation whose object of research is reflexivity (i.e., about the "self" and its forms of expression) as it can be the case in Fine Art practice. However, the point is certainly not to suggest that "practice" is irrelevant to academic research in the artistic fields, but rather that the practical element in such a research should be understood in terms of meaningful experiential moments within which, from which, or around which explanation or reflective theory should develop. This implies that a certain degree of discursiveness – and therefore "the textual" – is necessary for all academic research in the artistic fields.

The issue, then, is to truly understand the relationship between the textual and the textural when researching in the artistic fields and what is at stake epistemologically. The relationship between the textual and the textural, we shall argue, must be necessary and complementary. Meaning in art is not the exclusive privilege of the textual, the verb and the word. At the same time, meaning in art is not mere materiality, physicality or gesture. Meaning in art carries a sense of touch at the crossroad between the textual and the textural.

In Western culture, the paradigm of texture has traditionally been contrasted to the image of light and therefore reason. Moreover, as the textural belongs to the sensory world, it could only be epistemologically inferior to the world of reason. This prejudice has tainted Western thought in different ways from Classical Greece arguably up the 19th century. Postmodern thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray have traced this ill-conception back to Plato.[1] The latter's "The Myth of the Cavern", from Book X of *The Republic*, works as a metaphor to describe the evolutionary journey of human beings from the obscure sensory world of the inside of the cave, toward the outside where the sun shines in all its Truth.[2] Against the significance and impact of such an image on Western thought, Irigaray suggests that sensory materiality and modes of thought based on the paradigm of reason, essence, universals and representation should be conceived in terms of complementary difference. To put it otherwise, the metaphysical as understood in traditional Western thought should not be privileged over the physical.

Irigaray deals predominantly with gender-related issues,[3] but the idea of complementary difference between "sensory texture" and "textual reason," or "haptics" and knowledge, remains all the more relevant when it comes academic research in the artistic fields. To clarify the epistemological nature of "sensory texture," let us first recall some key ideas developed by one of the most important – if not the most important – philosopher of embodiment, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

One of Merleau-Ponty's most celebrated themes is that perception is always incarnate, in the sense that there is no such a thing as, for instance, perception of the visual alone.[4] It is always an integrated operation of the senses. Let us take an example from the visual arts. Identifying an object as a figurative sculpture made of clay does not depend on what is seen alone, but also on the network of relationships between the visual and memories of what it feels to touch such a material; already established

knowledge of a particular style, a function or an identity; being aware of a ceramic studio's life; knowing about criteria for the status of an object as an artwork; what one expects or does not expect when perceiving the object, and so on. All these "invisible" dimensions of what makes the sculpture visible connect to each other and as such constitute a network, in other words, what has already been referred to as "texture." But what is commonly understood as "texture" and what is the relevance of this metaphor to understanding the epistemological nature of "haptics" in art research? Cathryn Vasseleu defines "texture" in terms of

> …a disposition or characteristic of anything which is woven into a fabric, and comprises a combination of parts or qualities which is neither simply unveiled or made up. Texture is at once the cloth, threads, knots, weave, detailed surface, material, matrix and frame.[5]

In the previous century Merleau-Ponty and his phenomenologist followers made the "textural" a cornerstone of their philosophy. They thus developed a proper "philosophy of the intertwining" that celebrated the moment when "object" and "subject" were still indistinguishable – a "chiasm," as Merleau-Ponty calls it, to which we should return to understand genuine knowledge formation.[6] In his own words,

> If it is true that as soon as philosophy declares itself to be a reflection or coincidence it prejudges what it will find, then once again it must recommence everything, reject the instruments reflection and intuition had provided themselves, and install itself in a locus where they have not yet been distinguished, in experiences that have not yet been 'worked over', that offer us all at once, pell-mell, both 'subject' and 'object', both existence and essence, and hence give philosophy resources to redefine them.[7]

Such a philosophy was at the time a reaction against theoretical approaches that were inclined to separate the thinking subject from the world to which it belongs. The point was to redeem our chiasmic condition in perceptual experience, which had allegedly been overlooked by traditional Western philosophy. "Intellectualism" for instance had ignored sensory-experience and claimed that knowledge ought to be established by a disembodied reflecting consciousness. Another example, "empiricism," had used embodied experiences in its quest for knowledge, but only as a means by which the theoretical subject could know about reality. As a result the relationship between experience and knowledge had not been conceived as intertwined, but rather in terms of causality.

Merleau-Ponty attempted to challenge these latter conceptions by developing his so-called "philosophy of the flesh." Whether he succeeded or not and whether he simply replaced the dogmatism of disembodied theories by the foundationalism of the philosophy of the chiasm and, by extension, the textural are no matter to be discussed here. The point, though, is that Merleau-Ponty provided the philosophical tools necessary to understand the embodied epistemological nature of the textural.

Tactile experiences are perfect illustrations of Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodied language. Touching an object is not only a sensory-experience. It is the moment of intertwining between perception and what is perceived, which takes place within the texture of the world – so to speak. In this sense we are not dealing with a passive mode of perception of sense data that simply cause an effect in the perceiver, as the empiricists would have it. On the contrary touching an object is a proper mode of awareness that embodies meaningfulness because of its location within the open field of knowledge, memory, intention, will, and desire, as well as because of different types of perceptual experiences. For example, the modeller who gives shape to a figurative sculpture by touching and retouching the clay does not materialise an already existing form, and therefore an idea. Such a conception would establish a set of hierarchical categories such as the mind, sense-organs, the skin, the clay, and the represented idea. The same applies for the painter and paint, the textile artist and the material, or the interior designer and the scale model.

Haptic experiences in art practice correspond to these moments when communicative awareness and materiality constitute one and the same thing – something that, once again, takes place within the texture of the world. It goes without saying that such experiences cannot be re-produced by theorisation, conceptualisation, rationalisation, or systematisation of any kind. Practice in the artistic fields is not about establishing a general law or operating as a rational system.

The experience of touching in art practice is arguably a form of "stylisation" because of its intended meaningful dimension. What, then, makes haptic experience in art practice different from everyday-life haptic experiences such as rubbing the pages of a book, or feeling a drop of water on our skin? At first glance there is no difference, because touching always gives sense to life. However, touching a particular material such as clay in order to shape it meaningfully, or communicate a message, or fulfil an aesthetic function implies two fundamental dimensions that

everyday-life haptic experiences lack: "intention" and "communication." Everyday-life haptic experiences are not about giving shape to something in order to be shared with an audience or experienced by the public. On the contrary, haptic experiences in the artistic fields are about intention and communication in the sense that they constitute a proper "language." The feeling of a drop of water on our skin is certainly a meaningful sensory-experience, but it remains personal unless we decide to "express" such en experience, for example by describing it in words, visually or otherwise.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the flesh becomes all the more relevant to understanding the meaningful dimension of haptic experiences in the artistic fields, understood in terms of embodied and intended communicative language. Such a language consists of meaningfully experiencing an intertwining, that is, the chiasms that exist between already existing meanings and those to be known. This is how the "texture" of the world may be understood: a chiasmic dimension to which the world of objective knowledge vitally relates. Haptic experiences in art practice are therefore "textural" experiences that take place in relation to what is already determined and recognized – for instance what we know about shape, expression, emotion, function, sign, and so on. Those readable entities and dimensions constitute what may be called the "text" of the world. As such, textural experiences are "pre-", "post-", "trans-", or "meta-textual."

We may wonder what distinguishes such textural sensory-experiences from those experienced by animals; in other words, what makes them meaningful. Unlike animalistic sensory-experiences, textural experiences in art remain meaningful because of the way they relate to the "textual." The meaningfulness of textural experiences is not explicit; in a sense, it remains unavowed. The textural nature of sensory-experience within the text of the world or, to put it differently, sensory-experience within a network of relationships made of known entities and those to be known is an orienting experience that takes place against an oriented background. Its textural nature is orienting and therefore meaningful, albeit undecided and yet-to-be-decided.

When Spanish painter Antonio Tapies leaves marks with his fingers on a canvas; when the so- called Young British Artists configure their objects for their neo-conceptual installations; when French designer Philippe Stark makes a scale model to design one of his stylistically Brancusi-inspired tooth brushes; or even when the photographer configures the

composition of a picture, the sense of touch contributes to creating that orienting felt-movement that departs from already existing oriented values and identities of all kinds and heads towards new ones to come. Tapies' marks become noticeable and therefore meaningful; British artist Cornelia Parker's broken bits constitute an unfamiliar configuration; and Stark's objects create an original bridge between design and sculpture.

Arita, Japan

The orienting nature of these haptic experiences can also be found in any other meaningful sensory-experience. To look, listen, smell, or even read can all create a meaningful sense of touch, precisely because there is always a chiasmic contact, an intertwined communion that creates meaningfulness when experienced. In fact, vision in Western culture was for a long time considered to be "the noblest of the senses" – arguably for obvious physiological reasons – for its alleged power to give access to objective "truth" or "reality."[8] Yet, vision too can have a haptic, textural dimension that makes it meaningfully chiasmic, before the split between object and subject.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2001), by Taiwanese film director Ang Lee, offer a revealing example of the textural nature of the visual. When I watched the film, I touched with my eyes those extraordinary moments of magic realism when the characters Li Mu Bai, Yu Shu Lien and Jen Yu jump and fly from ground to walls, from walls to roofs, from roofs to trees, and from trees to the sky and water. These are well-known themes in traditional Chinese culture, but the point is that the viewer feels the

soft touch of the cat and the weightlessness of the bird. We also "touch" our ears what is perceived when, in some raw moments of realism, swards snap, rub and squeak against each other. All these are instances of synaesthetic mode of perception within a network of intertwined associations. *Con-tacts* are in the process of being made, in the true Latin etymological sense of the word: *con* (with), and *tact* (from *tactus*, touch). Meaning unfolds through these situating contacts within a situated context or body of knowledge that will in the process be renewed.

We can now better understand the epistemological nature and role of textural experience in academic research in the artistic fields. Haptic moments in art practice can hardly constitute the entire body of academic research in so far as the latter precisely seeks to establish the degree to which the *textual* can be renewed by the *textural*, which, in turn, can only be meaningfully experienced within the textual world of objective knowledge. Academic research in the artistic fields sets itself to retrieve, analyse, explain and, indeed, *re-search* the ways the textural relates to the textual. A degree of objectification is therefore as necessary as sensory-experience is vital. This is not to say that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the flesh or idea of "con-tactile" nature of human consciousness would justify academic research in the artistic fields to remain entirely practical. The embodied nature of thought in creative haptic experiences or indeed in art practices in general is not a reflection "on" or "from" such experiences or practices. Again, the latter are textural but not textual. If textural experiences express or communicate a meaningful chiasmic moment, they do not reflect on the way they do so by relating to their contexts or, to use Merleau-Ponty's expression, the "objective world." As chiasmic experiences between touching and what is touched, or between practice and what is known, or, even further, between thinking and what is thought, *textural* experiences do not lay out the extent to which they contribute to knowledge, in other words to the text of the world. Although initially oriented, that is, taking place within the known world, textural experiences are fundamentally orienting – for the known world to be renewed. Textural experiences are therefore by nature ambiguous and elusive, albeit epistemologically vital.

Emmanuel Levinas's conception of sensory-experience confirms in a different way the elusive albeit epistemologically vital nature of textural experiences. Identity expresses itself *ad infinitum*, in constant mutation between the sensing and the sensed. The one who senses is the Self and the sensed is what he calls "alterity" – the Other. In *Totality* and *Infinity* he formulates such a conception of alterity in relation to vision, identity

and expression:

> The way in which the other presents himself, *exceeding the idea of the other in me*, we here name face. This *mode* does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading itself forth as a set of qualities forming an image. The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its *ideatum* – the adequate idea. It does not manifest itself by these qualities… It *expresses itself.*[9]

In *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* the same alterity is defined in relation to "contact" and "thinking":

> To be in contact is neither to invest the other and annul his alterity, nor to suppress myself in the other. In contact itself the touching and the touched separate, as though the touch moved off, was always already other, did not have anything in common with me.[10]

When Merleau-Ponty would emphasize the intertwining between the touching and the touched, Levinas would stress that the experience of the textural is the means by which self and otherness express themselves. Both philosophers, however, bring to light the epistemological potential of textural experiences and therefore the relevance to understanding their role in academic research in the artistic fields. Again, this is not to suggest that acknowledging the epistemological potential of textural experiences should pave the way for an ideology designed to dictate the course of academic research in the artistic fields. Nor should analysis and explanation aimed at constructing objective knowledge be the principal motivation of such research. Academic research in the artistic fields that incorporates practice demonstrates, on the contrary, the complementary, differential relationship between the textural and the textual or, to put it otherwise, between the paradigm of chiasm, intertwining and contact, and that of objective knowledge, identity and representation.

Academic research in the artistic fields is no matter for the theorist alone; nor is it for the artist alone. To reflect on textural experience no doubt requires experimenting practice; at the same time it cannot be confined to practice. Unless we redefine the meaning of the word, any "research" involving textural experience must take account of the context within which or against which it takes place, that is to say the textual.[11]

Notes

1 See for example Jacques Derrida in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), trans. A. Bass, Brighton: The Harvester Press; and Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), trans. C. Porter, New York: Cornell University Press.
2 See Plato, 'The Republic', Book X in *The Essential Plato* (1999), trans. B. Jowett, TSP, pp. 378-416.
3 See Luce Irigaray in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993), trans. C. Burke & G. C. Gill, New York: Cornell University Press.
4 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty 'The World as Perceived' in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), trans. C. Smith, London: Routledge, Chap. 1, 2, & 3, pp. 203-345.
5 See Cathryn Vasseleu in *Textures of Light* (1998), London: Routledge, pp. 11-12.
6 See Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1987), trans. A. Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 130-145.
7 Ibid., p. 130.
8 See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes – The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*
(London: University of California Press, 1993).
9 See Emanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1979), trans. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, pp. 50-51.
10 See Emanuel Levinas in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (1981), trans. A. Lingis, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, p. 86.
11 Numerous publications on art practice as research have been released in the past decade, amongst which the latest editions *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, by Patricia Leavy (New York: The Guilford Press, 2015); *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, by Robin Nelson, ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts*, by Graeme Sullivan (London: Sage, 2010); *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean, eds. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Kafka's "categorical imperative" and his sense of "being and non-being"

Ross Crisp

Abstract

In this article, I begin with Kant's notion of a "categorical imperative" as a framework from which to discuss the ontology of Franz Kafka's writing. Since Kant's *moral law* is a device for reflecting on our responses to challenging circumstances rather than one that tells us what we should always do in every situation, I draw inferences concerning Kafka's own descriptions of his sense of being a writer in opposing phenomenal and spiritual worlds. Since Kafka cannot be understood exclusively from a Kantian perspective of autonomous will, I discuss Kafka's experiencing in terms of the reciprocal interplay of being and non-being, and his awareness of finitude and the possibility of transcendence. I argue for a humanistic-existential vision of the reading of a literary text as an encounter that responds to the alterity of the Other and which, consistent with Kafka's oeuvre, privileges being faithful to one's own experiencing.

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I begin this article with Immanuel Kant's (2005) great moral principle as a framework from which to explore Franz Kafka's resolute stance of *being* a writer. I first provide a brief overview of Kant's central idea of a "categorical imperative" that will be discussed in relation to the ontology of Kafka's writing that he articulated in his letters, diaries and notebooks (Kafka, 1977, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1999, 2011).[1]

Kafka cannot, of course, be understood exclusively from a Kantian perspective. As Buber (2002) and others (e.g., DeLue, 2006; Gaita, 2010; Kaufmann, 2015) have argued, Kant's philosophy did not address the *wholeness* of persons, their place in the cosmos, their relation to the phenomenal world, their dialogical encounters with others, and their awareness of their finitude. Therefore, I will discuss Kafka's own sense of his internal struggle with two conflicting inner and social selves that were

attuned to opposing spiritual and phenomenal worlds. I then discuss Kafka's experiencing in dialectical terms of being *and* non-being, his awareness of finitude and striving for transcendence. Finally, I will argue for a humanistic-existential vision of the reading of a literary text as an encounter that acknowledges that there are multiple ways of interpreting Kafka and which, consistent with Kafka's oeuvre, privileges being faithful to one's own experiencing.

Kant's "categorical imperative"

Crucial to Kant's (2005) *moral law* is the notion of a "categorical imperative." Kant argued that we have the capacity for reasoned moral deliberation and self-constraint that may oppose our desires (e.g., happiness, compassion, avoidance of fear) and empirical incentives (i.e., personal advantage or profit). Kant believed that, as agents who are self-directing, we can step back from our natural desires, forsake our own happiness or advantage and follow self-imposed "objective laws" that are valid for others as well as ourselves (Kant, 2005, 4:414).[2] A "categorical imperative" is unconditional for rational persons who value their own existence as an end in itself and who *always* treat others as ends and *never merely* as a means (Kant, 2005, 4:429).

There may, of course, be occasions when we do act on our desires as a means to achieve our ends, and which provide the basis for a rational process of self-direction. Kant called this principle a "hypothetical imperative" that is conditional on our desire and skills to achieve an end. We may, however, be confronted with conflicts and unusual situations that render us uncertain about what is morally right. Kant's *moral law* is a device for reflecting on our responses to these circumstances rather than one that tells us what we should always do in every situation (DeLue, 2006; Gaita, 2010; Kaufmann, 2015; Wood, 2006). It cannot, therefore, be expected that we always adopt a "categorical imperative" and bracket our desires and empirical incentives. On the contrary, both imperatives are an integral part of living, as will be discussed below in relation to Kafka.

Kafka's "categorical imperative"

I have adopted Kant's "categorical imperative" to convey the ontology of Kafka's "writerly *being*" and the resoluteness of his stance in being

a writer. While Kafka often wrote to his interlocutors about his fears and desires, he emphasized the importance of his writerly *being*, the act of writing as something that he *ought* to do, and that commanded or compelled obedience to a "law" (Kant would say a moral law). Kafka's reason for being a writer was least concerned with many of the personal desires that we might expect from writers; for example, he infrequently wrote of earning a living from writing (independently of his career as senior civil servant), of writing for pleasure, or of writing for posterity (cf., Cohen, 2015). He regarded his writerly *being* as a self-governing entity of unconditional worth. At the age of 20, he wrote to a friend:

> God doesn't want me to write, but I – I must. So there's an everlasting up and down; after all, God is the stronger, and there's more anguish in it than you can imagine. So many powers within me are tied to a stake, which might possibly grow into a green tree. Released, they could be useful to me and the country. But nobody ever shook a millstone from around his neck by complaining, especially when he was fond of it. (November 9, 1903; Kafka, 1977, p.10)

Kafka was both innately compelled to write and desirous of it. Writing was not an activity that he had to conjure or manufacture into existence to attain happiness: it *already* existed in the form of his writerly *being* that was "driven by an ontology of writing" as opposed to what existed in his everyday phenomenal world (Corngold, 2004, p.206). He told Felice Bauer that writing "is a part of my nature, and not due to temporary circumstances … [and] has its centre of gravity in depth, whereas the office is on the surface of life" (June 26, 1913).

Apropos Kant's dictum that we value the existence of ourselves and others as ends in themselves, Kafka's "categorical imperative" embraced two kinds of ends: his own perfection being a writer and the happiness of others (Kant, 2005, 4:423, 430; see also Wood, 2006, pp.348-354). It was, however, at odds with how others (in particular, his father) expected him to live. I will discuss Kafka's dilemma in terms of the battle of his two selves: self as writer and his social self.

Self as writer

For Kafka, it was vital that his father and *inter alia* Felice Bauer understood the primacy of his work as a writer. Kafka's *Letter to Father* (Kafka, 2011) attests to his unfulfilled desire of having his life as a

writer appreciated by his father. To Felice Bauer, shortly after their first engagement was broken, he wrote:

> You were unable to appreciate the immense power my work has over me; you did appreciate it, but by no means fully … you were not only the greatest friend, but at the same time the greatest enemy, of my work, at least from the point of view of my work … *it had to resist you with all its might for the sake of self-preservation … in me there have always been, and still are, two selves wrestling with each other.* One of them is very much as you would wish him to be … The other self, however, thinks of nothing but work … The first self is dependent on the second … And yet they are locked in combat, and yet they could both be yours; the trouble is that they cannot be changed unless both were to be destroyed (late October – early November, 1914; italics added).

These two selves, that Kafka deemed to be essential parts of his *being*, may have been dominated by what Corngold (2004) saw as Kafka's "great and central experience: an abundance of creative things rising up in him and … vanishing away – a marked experience of creation and destruction" (p.140) that occurred repeatedly as part of his creative process. Similarly, we may see this process apropos Heidegger's *Dasein* ("Being-there") that "manifests and conceals itself, yields itself and withdraws" (Heidegger, 1975, p.271). In Heidegger's (1962, 1975) view, we are unable to fully disclose or unveil our own being: in our existential-ontological *uncanniness* we have the possibility of knowing ourselves, but we cannot fully or conclusively grasp the condition of our own essence. It is a constant process of unconcealment and concealment that remains mysterious and a puzzle for which we continually seek the possibility of unveiling what we do not know about ourselves, our "self-opacity" (Withy, 2015, p.242).

Perhaps Kafka was telling Felice that his awareness of *being* was characterized by a constant interplay of presence and absence in which an ontological hiddenness *in his being* could not be entirely revealed. If and when it was revealed, he told Felice, "*it had to resist you with all its might for the sake of self-preservation.*" Kafka knew this because it resisted him. For Kafka himself, his state of *being* was difficult to unveil and communicate, as he later told Milena Jesenka (Kafka, 1992b, pp.160, 175).[3]

Like several of the protagonists in his fiction, Kafka "always remained on the threshold of things that eluded him" (Calasso, 2005, p.150). Both Kafka and his protagonists in, for example, *Before the Law* (also a chapter in *The Trial*) and *The Castle* search for what is concealed in their spiritual world and which is allusive and ambiguous (Calasso, 2005; Citati, 1990; Karl, 1991; Sokel, 1985). His stories were written as parables of non-arrival (Corngold, 2004; Zilcosky, 2003).[4]

Inner self versus social self

For Kafka, his own perfection as a writer and the happiness of others were difficult tasks to achieve. His letters and diaries are rife with self-accusations and despair over his struggle to develop his literary life, and his failure to act in the way expected by both himself and significant others in his life (e.g., his parents, Felice Bauer).

Kafka's artistic *inner* self battled with his practical *social* self both of which Kafka believed to be impaired. He agonized over the disparity between these two selves. His artistic self attempted to strive for transcendence towards a spiritual world while his other self was confined to an earthbound prison (Citati, 1990; Corngold, 2004; Sokel, 1975).[5] Kafka wrote in his diary that he is "without an earthly goal" (January 29, 1922). Kafka's preferred option resided in maintaining his existence in *being* a writer that entailed "a higher type of observation" in which "the more independent it becomes, the more obedient to its own laws of motion, the more incalculable, the more joyful, the more ascendant its course" (Diary, January 27, 1922). Yet, he wrote in his diary (29-30 January, 1922) that he experienced the conflict and the discord of living in two worlds:

> But I live elsewhere … the attraction of the human world is so immense, in an instant it can make one forget everything. Yet the attraction of my world too is strong; those who love me love me because I am 'forsaken' … they sense that in happy moments I enjoy on another plane the *freedom of movement* completely lacking here … *the two worlds do exist* … (italics added).

Apropos *the two worlds*, Kafka stated that "the division seems to me to be much too definite, dangerous in its definiteness, sad, and too tyrannical" (Diary, 30 January, 1922). It was, as Calasso (2005, p.23) observed, a "commixture" in which the "social order" of Kafka's empirical experience

continually threatened to devour his writerly, spiritual world. His *two worlds* recalls the abovementioned *two selves* that he described to Felice. The tyranny, fear and sadness he experienced in the existence of the two worlds ran parallel to the combat between, and ontological givenness of, the two selves.

Kafka's disposition to fulfil his "categorical imperative" (to write) required a moral strength, a striving to face his own inner conflict (i.e., to endure the tension between his two selves) and to transcend the "social order," or the phenomenal world, and enter his spiritual world. Two important points need to be made here. First, Kafka would have preferred to not be beholden to something like Kant's notion of the *sensus communis* that "takes account (*a priori*) of the mode of representation of everyone else" (Kant, 2007b, 293-4) and which is analogous to Heidegger's contention that *being* entails a primordial familiarity with others, "those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too" (Heidegger, 1962, p.154; original italic). In an ontic sense, Kafka distinguished himself from others and the social mores of his time and place. Second, Kafka would have preferred that his spiritual world oppose and overpower the phenomenal world. Quoting Kierkegaard, he wrote:

> Granted, the religious relationship wishes to reveal itself, but cannot do so in the world; therefore striving man must oppose this world in order to save the divine element within himself … However the world is, I shall stay with my original nature, which I am not about to change to suit what the world regards as good. The moment this word is pronounced, a metamorphosis takes place in the whole of existence … and everything comes to life: the whole of existence becomes sheer attentiveness (Letter to Max Brod, end of March, 1918; Kafka, 1977).

This moment may have been one in which Kafka experienced a surge of self-confidence and a sense of *freedom* (as suggested by Stach, 2013, p.243). For Kafka, however, freedom was a paradox at the heart of his short parables such as *Before the Law* and his novels *The Trial* and *The Castle* (Calasso, 2005; Karl, 1991; Kaufmann, 2015). It entailed an immediate awareness of being unfree:

> *Your will is free* means: it was free when it wanted the desert, it is free since it can choose the path that leads to crossing the desert, it is free since it can choose the pace, *but it is also unfree*

since you must go through the desert, unfree since every path in labyrinthine manner touches every foot of the desert's surface (Kafka, 1991, pp.49-50; italics added).

In other words, we are free to act because we have the capacity to be self-organizing and guided by intuition and reason. But, our freedom is restricted because to act involves interaction with that upon which we act. There can be no division between self and world in which self and world are both mediated one through the other. Freedom, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) observed, "brings into being the obstacles to freedom [p.439] … The idea of situation rules out absolute freedom at the source of our commitments, and equally, indeed, at their terminus" (p.454). For Kafka, freedom could never be fully realized within or beyond the phenomenal world. It co-existed with his experience of alienation, "the feeling of being foreign or extraneous" (Calasso, 2005, p.149). He wrote of being outcast within family in short stories such as *The Metamorphosis* and *The Judgment*, and in the wider community in which K in *The Castle*, for example, wanders in a labyrinthine social maze, an outcast whose being in the world is precarious:

> … it seemed to K as if they had broken off all contact with him, but as if he were freer than ever and could wait as long as he wanted here in this place where he was generally not allowed … as if nobody could touch him or drive him away, or even speak to him, yet – and this conviction was at least as strong – as if there were nothing more senseless, nothing more desperate, than this freedom, this waiting, this invulnerability (Kafka, 1998, p.106).

While this passage has socio-political implications, it suggests an inner tension "beneath or beyond consciousness" (Karl, 1991, p.701). K experiences something like an implicit, ontic-ontological sense of being and non-being.

Being and non-being

Tillich (2014) lauded Kafka's writing as "an outstanding expression of the courage to be as oneself" (p.133) in which courage was defined as "the self-affirmation of being in spite of non-being" (pp.158-9). It required Kafka's courage to confront the ontological anxiety rooted in his existence that involved the inseparability of *being* and *non-being* that necessitated

a realization of finitude. At about the same time that Kafka quoted Kierkegaard to Brod, he wrote in his notebook:

> Living means being in the midst of life, seeing life with the gaze in which I have created it … The decisively characteristic thing about this world is its transience … centuries have no advantage over the present moment … *the fact that new life blossoms among the ruins proves not so much the tenacity of life as that of death*. If I wish to fight against this world, I must fight against … its transience (Kafka, 1991, p.47; italics added).

His awareness of his own finitude and transcendence recalls Kierkegaard's (2004) view of personhood as a "synthesis of possibility and necessity" (p.70) where possibility requires imagination, and necessity involves restraint and the strength to yield to one's limits. His experiencing as a writer was exemplified by his repeated striving for the textual illumination of his existence *and* veering towards death (Corngold, 2004). In a letter to Felice, he described it thus:

> What will be my fate as a writer is very simple. My talent for portraying my inner life has thrust all other matters into the background; my life has dwindled dreadfully … I waver, continually fly to the summit of the mountain, but then fall back in a moment … it is not death, alas, but the eternal torments of dying (August 6, 1914).

Kafka constructed images and metaphors to convey his being-towards-death in his fiction (see Corngold, 2004, pp.84-93) and in his letters, diaries and notebooks. In February 1918, Kafka (1991) wrote that an end was "an apparent end" registered by the "cruelty of death" that "brings the real sorrow of the end, but not the end" (p.53). It is, perhaps, similar to Heidegger's (1962) *being-towards-death*, that refers to the *anticipation* of the possibility of death that is not a way of being that brings us closer to our end. On the contrary, it refers to the closing down of possibilities that we may experience at any time during our lives. It requires a resoluteness to attune to an ontological mood of anxiety that unveils a pre-existing truth and demands that we understand that we are constantly vulnerable to the loss or disruption of our lives.

But for Kafka, "an apparent end" paradoxically co-existed with a "mad strength of faith" that he "*cannot* not-live, after all" (Kafka, 1991, p.54; original italics) and which may have echoed his reading of Kierkegaard's

(2004) ontological despair that is "an aspect of spirit" (p.47) in which "he cannot consume himself, cannot be rid of himself, cannot become nothing" (p.49).

Inner conflict, transformation and faith

Kafka might have agreed with Kant (2007a) that the "discipline of pure reason … should be in conflict with itself" (A740/B768) and that "it is our duty at all times to look for a real opponent within ourselves … The objections which we have to fear live in ourselves" (A778/B806). Kafka faced his inner conflict and anxieties, and attained a new awareness of self and his existence. He wrote:

> From a certain stage of knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] on, weariness, insufficiency, constriction, self-contempt, must all vanish: namely at that point where I have the strength to recognize as my own nature what previously was something alien to myself that refreshed me, satisfied, liberated, and exalted me …
> Its influence extended further, raising me then to this higher level. It did not cease to be alien, but merely began *also* to be Myself (Kafka, 1991, p.44; original italics).

Kafka was here alluding to a transformation that signified a stronger sense of self. A year later, he told Milena Jesenska that his inner conflicts "these so-called illnesses, sad as they may appear, are *matters of faith*, efforts of souls in distress to find moorings in some maternal soil … Such moorings … are *pre-existing in [our] nature* and continue to form [our] nature" (Kafka, 1999b, p.173; italics added). Similarly, in his fourth blue octavo notebook, Kafka (1991) referred to a *commandment* that was not attributable to psychopathology, but which was immanent:

> Is it a continual or only an occasional commandment?
> … I cannot be sure. I believe, however, it is a continual commandment, but that I hear it only occasionally … *I don't know whose command it is and what he is aiming at* … it finds me unprepared, descending upon me as surprisingly as dreams descend upon the sleeper … *it makes me happy or frightens me, both without cause*, though admittedly it does the first much more rarely than the second; it is not communicable, because it is not intelligible, and for the same reason demands to be communicated (Kafka, 1991, pp. 44-5; italics added).

In Kafka's rendering, the *commandment* is mysterious and illusory. Kafka was unclear about the source or purpose of the "commandment." Similar, perhaps, to Heidegger's (1962) uncanny *mood/affect*, it was sometimes "covered up", inconspicuous or outside of immediate awareness. In disclosing his ontological anxiety to Milena Jesenska, Kafka defined his experiencing as a pervasive feeling of uncertainty, a "subterranean threat" that he described to Milena as "*my way of participating in life*; if it ceases I abandon life, as easily and naturally as one closes one's eyes" (Kafka, 1992b, p.160; italics added). He told her that he was "trying to convey something unconveyable, to explain something inexplicable, to tell of something which I have in my bones and which can be experienced only in these bones" which he defined as "fear extended to everything, fear of the greatest as of the smallest" (Kafka, 1992b, p.175).

The immediacy and primacy of Kafka's ontological mood (being frightened "without cause") may have been a fluctuating awareness of finitude analogous to the "passion" experienced by Kierkegaard's (2003, pp. 68-76) "knight of faith" reconciled to the pain and distress that arose from his self-awareness of the limits of his existence. On the one hand, the "knight of faith" represents the "ideal of mental health, the continuing openness of life out of the death throes of dread" (Becker, 1973, p.258). But, on the other, the "knight of faith" is a person "kept in constant tension" and who "has the pain of being unable to make himself intelligible to others but feels no vain desire to show others the way" (Kierkegaard, 2003, pp.106-7). Kierkegaard depicted the experiencing of faith as an "absolute duty to God" that cannot be made intelligible to anyone (pp.98-9).

In a similar manner to Kierkegaard, and reminiscent of Kant (2007a), Kafka postulated the existence of God in a noumenal realm that could not be comprehended in the language of practical reason. In letters to Max Brod, Kafka wrote: "Granted, the religious relationship wishes to reveal itself, but cannot do so in the world; therefore striving man must oppose this world in order to save the divine element within himself" (end of March 1918; Kafka, 1977, p.203); and must "believe in the determining divine principle and not strive toward it … as it is unattainable" (August 1920; Kafka, 1977, p.242).[6]

"Not-knowable" Kafka: "there is no one who understands me in my entirety"

Kafka's letters and diaries indicate a person who regularly engaged in interpersonal relationships (of varying degrees of intimacy with lovers, friends, acquaintances) and who sought to be attuned to these relationships. However, his diary entry of May 4, 1915 suggests a person who did not believe that he was fully understood: "there is no one who understands me in my entirety.[7] To have someone possessed of such understanding, a wife perhaps, would mean to have support from every side, to have God." Wry humor aside, might Kafka have been referring to his situation in the phenomenal world that is always given in ambiguity and uncertainty; and beyond, in the noumenal world, to something that is unattainable and hidden?

Perhaps Kafka was saying that the ontological nature of the human condition renders it impossible for us to fully understand self and others. He said as much to Milena Jesenska: "You can't properly understand … I don't even understand myself" (Kafka, 1992b, p.160). He was referring to his experiencing deep within himself that I had earlier discussed as a form of ontological anxiety that is an integral part of the human condition but which is only ever partially available to self-awareness.

The "unknowability" of Kafka has been brought into sharp relief in recent legal proceedings in Israel. Since the death of his literary executor Max Brod in 1968, Kafka's manuscripts have been the subject of contentious debates about Kafka's "moral right" to destroy them, Max Brod's decision to preserve them (contrary to Kafka's wishes?), and recent claims for legal ownership. Kafka, the author of *Before the Law*, would probably not be surprised by the conflicting legal arguments of the past 40 years concerning the uncertainty surrounding his and Max Brod's intentions about how to preserve or dispose of his manuscripts (Cohen, 2015). In his short parable *Before the Law*, the meaning of "the law" is ambiguous, beyond reach, and invites many different interpretations.

Reading Kafka may be made meaningful in a variety of ways. We can regard his fiction as insightful parables about himself, and his letters and diaries as a faithful and trustworthy rendering of his immediate, moment-to-moment experiencing (Canetti, 1974). Interpreting the meaning of his fiction is, however, difficult. We may perhaps inhabit and integrate it within the domain of our own experiences and circumstances. We might read beyond Kafka's situation, or beyond our own conditions, complete his text and place it in a larger context that helps us to discover our own way of being and enhance our awareness of lived experience (De Visscher, 2001).

My particular challenge in reading Kafka's letters and diaries was in bracketing my tendency to judge and evaluate Kafka's own self-critical, explicit evaluations of his physical and mental health. My task, therefore, was to put aside assumptions about "psychopathology" in relation to, for example, Kafka's account of having "suffered something like a breakdown" in January 1922. He interpreted the "breakdown" in two ways:

> First: breakdown, impossible to sleep, impossible to stay awake, impossible to endure life …The clocks are not in unison; the inner one runs crazily on at a devilish or demoniac or in any case inhuman pace, the outer one limps along at its usual speed … two worlds split apart, and they do split apart … in a fearful manner … the wild tempo of the inner process …
>
> Secondly: this pursuit, originating in the midst of men, carries one in a direction away from them … it may lead to madness … the pursuit goes right through me and rends me asunder … 'Pursuit,' indeed is only a metaphor. I can also say, 'assault on the last earthly frontier' … launched from below, from mankind, and … I can replace it by the metaphor of an assault from above, aimed at me from above. (Diary, January 16, 1922).

This passage, with its vivid metaphor, again highlights Kafka's self-awareness of two disparate but essential selves, of living in "two worlds split apart." While he feared that the "wild tempo" of his intense experiencing "may lead to madness," it was followed by a period of intense and productive creativity that yielded his third novel *The Castle*. [8] The writing of this novel was arguably a fruitful albeit painful self-organizing, self-healing process. It was also emblematic of Kafka's relentless, innate drivenness to actualize his writerly *being* (Corngold, 2009).

From a humanistic-existential perspective, Kafka was *always* in the "process of becoming" that entailed a fundamental obligation to be responsive to the Other.[9] It was Stach (2005, pp.153-4) who pointed out that Kafka's voluminous letter writing was itself an experience that arose "from a consciousness focused on itself" and which Kafka believed "expressed and generated closeness" with the recipients of his letters. His letters were a dialogical expression of his experiencing in which he communicated and revealed self, sharing in being and co-existing with the Other, most notably, Felice Bauer, Milena Jesenska and Max Brod

(Kafka, 1977, 1992b, 1999).

This process is analogous to a psychotherapeutic relationship in which individuals seek to experience their *own existence* as fully as possible and, in the process, become aware of their ability to *act* on their potentialities (see May, 1986, p.167). Both Rollo May and Carl Rogers believed, despite their differences, that this process was achieved with the therapist's *presence* in which the therapist was focused upon *understanding* and co-experiencing the experiencing of the Other. For both the therapist and the reader of a literary text, the challenge is to work towards understanding the Other's frame of reference, to expect the unexpected, to be curious and as unconditionally open as possible to whatever the Other discloses. Emphasis is upon the primacy, and the alterity, of the Other's (client's/author's) experiencing. It is less concerned with a quest for certainty, or with finding a solution to a problem, than about being in a process of engaging with the Other and upholding an ethically responsive obligation to encounter the Other (e.g., Crisp, 2014; Robbins, 2005; Starr, 2014, 2015).

Conclusion

I have discussed Kafka's "writerly *being*" in terms of Kant's "categorical imperative" and his experiencing in terms of the reciprocal interplay of being *and* non-being, and his awareness of finitude and the possibility of transcendence. In so doing, I drew parallels with the thinking of Tillich, Kierkegaard and Heidegger that, in some instances, seem to mirror Kafka's ideas or highlight the distinctiveness of his thinking.

Kafka believed that he was not fully knowable to several of his most significant interlocutors who may have struggled to understand the complexity of his experiencing that informed his writing. His parables about himself in his fiction, and his letters and diaries suggest that his existence in the phenomenal world was often characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty; and beyond, in the noumenal world, by something that he considered unattainable, hidden and not adequately communicable. It is acknowledged that there are multiple ways of interpreting Kafka including those that are more theistic in their focus than in this article. What is the value of reading Kafka? His letters and diaries are an exemplar of being faithful to one's own experiencing that is, after all, a fundamental teaching of humanistic psychotherapy. Further, the therapist/reader needs to adopt a not-knowing attitude that is attuned to

the alterity of the Other.
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Notes

1. I will quote from Kafka's letters, diaries and notebooks. Since *Letters to Felice* (Kafka, 1999), letters to Max Brod (Kafka, 1977) and Kafka's diaries (Kafka, 1992a) have been published in multiple languages and revised editions, page numbers will not be cited. Instead, the dates of quoted extracts will be cited to enable easiest access for those readers who wish to refer to these sources. On the other hand, page numbers will be cited for *Letter to father* (Kafka, 2011) and *Letters to Milena* (Kafka, 1992b) since specific dates were not provided in these books. Likewise, for *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* (Kafka, 1991) that is known to have been written in late 1917-1918.

2. Since Kant's work has been published in multiple languages and editions, I will cite the original paginations that were the standard method of citing his work in most current editions.

3. I will return to what Kafka told Milena Jesenka (Kafka, 1992b, pp.160, 175) in the latter part of this article.

4. Many different interpretations have been offered concerning Kafka's parables of non-arrival. Corngold (2009), for example, saw K's relentless attempts to meet the higher officials of *The Castle* as a metaphor for Kafka's own ongoing search for entry into his work as a writer. Citati (1990), on the other hand, viewed K as a pilgrim in search of God whereas Kaufmann (1975) saw K as being remote from *The Castle* that he defined as a Nietzschean, godless place devoid of sense.

5. Many commentators have provided different explanations concerning Kafka's religious and spiritual life that are outside the scope of this article. See, for example, Citati (1990, pp. 179-196) who linked Kafka with monism and Manichean beliefs; Corngold (2004, pp. 8-12) and Sokel (1985) who discussed Kafka's gnosticism; Bruce's (2002) discussion of Kafka's use of Jewish folklore and mysticism; and Stach's (2013, pp. 117-121, 235-243) exposition of Kafka's thinking in relation to the religious-socio-political issues that were debated in his lifetime. In general, Kafka referred to theological issues in an oblique manner that may have signified an unspecified affirmation of God (see Calasso, 2005, p.299; Mendelowitz, 2009, pp.332-3).

6. See also Calasso (2005, pp.301-2) and Sokel (1975).

7. Kafka made a similar comment about his relationship with close friend Max Brod in a letter to Felice Bauer (June 16, 1913).

8. See, for example, Citati (1990, pp.221-6), Karl (1991, pp.666-81) and Stach (2013, pp.418-22) for further details of this period in Kafka's life.

9. See, for example, discussions regarding the "process of becoming" of being (May (1986, p.138), the self (Rogers (1961, p.201) and the temporal structure of phenomena perceived

in the natural world (Robbins, 2005, pp.120-1).

Notes on Contributors

Don Adams is Professor of English at Florida Atlantic University and has published widely on literature of the twentieth century.

Gerald Cipriani teaches philosophy at National University of Ireland (NUIG). He studied Western aesthetics with full doctoral scholarship in Leeds (LMU) and East Asian philosophy in London (SOAS). He has taught philosophy of art and culture for some twenty years in Europe and East Asia. His previous positions include Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the Birmingham Institute of Art & Design; British Academy Fellow at Kyoto University; Visiting Professor at National Taiwan University of Arts; and Professor at Kyushu University, Japan. He is the recipient of several study and research awards, including from The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation (2006), The British Academy (2006), and The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (2004). He is chief editor of *Culture and Dialogue* and co-editor in chief of *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*. He has also recently edited *Art for Social Change and Cultural Awakening* (2013) and *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics* (2015). His work has been published in English as well as French, Spanish, Farsi, Japanese and Chinese. His current writing focuses on dialogical aesthetics.

Ross Crisp is a registered psychologist in Australia with extensive experience as a rehabilitation consultant and psychologist. He has published numerous articles on disability and rehabilitation; and more recently on person-centered and experiential psychotherapies. He is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and World Association of Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies.

Jérôme Melançon teaches political philosophy and Canadian politics at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus. He has published on dissent and sacrifice, power, anti-colonialism, democracy, the role of critical intellectuals, and on literature. He is the author of a dissertation, articles, and a book manuscript on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as two books of poetry. He is currently developing a new philosophy of democracy and a political philosophy of culture.

Alessia Pannese is a postdoctoral researcher in clinical experimental medicine at King's College London and a doctoral student in history of art at the University of Oxford. She studied jurisprudence (Rome),

veterinary medicine (Perugia), veterinary neuroscience (Cambridge), human neurobiology (Columbia), and literature and arts (Oxford). She has been the recipient of research fellowships in Cambridge, New York, Geneva, and Paris.

Veronika Reichert studies at the department of political science, York University, where she is exploring capitalism as a dysfunctional system through a theoretical perspective, in relation to the concepts of collective dependence and responsibility. She received the Don Mazankowski Summer Research Assistantship at the University of Alberta Augustana Campus in 2013, which allowed her to participate in the project leading to this paper.

William Tate is professor of English and dean of Arts and Letters at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia. His current research focuses on connections among theology (with special interest in Karl Barth and Herman Bavinck), philosophy (especially Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Paul Ricoeur), and poetry (particularly Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Richard Wilbur). He also teaches and writes about English Renaissance literature.

Michael Wainwright teaches American and African-American literature at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has published five monographs for Palgrave Macmillan: Darwin and Faulkner's Novels: Evolution and Southern Fiction (2008), Faulkner's Gambit: Chess and Literature (2010), Toward a Sociobiological Hermeneutic: Darwinian Essays on Literature (2011), Minoritarian Strategies: Game Theory, American Literature, and Literary Interpretation (2015), and Postwar Strategies: Game Theory, American Literature, and Literary Interpretation (2016). His other publications include articles for Mosaic, Criticism, Papers on Language and Literature, and English Literature in Transition. He champions interdisciplinary studies in literature, philosophy, and science.

Matthew Ziff is an Associate Professor of Interior Architecture in the School of Art+Design, College of Fine Arts, at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. Ziff has taught at Ohio University since 1998. His areas of interest include the photography of architecture, as surfaces and experiences: the impact of architecture, from micro scale, to urban planning, as represented through photographic imagery, upon individual sensibilities. Design education, theory, and philosophy are topics that he has explored

through writings and academic courses. Ziff's use photography is a way for him to explore the production, representation, and deterioration of architectural surfaces and the sensory responses these images may induce. These surfaces function as communicative interface between structure and skin, and serve as a subject of architectural design. Construction methods and technologies, material characteristics, and design decisions each contribute to the form and character of an architectural surface. These surfaces in turn, in varying degrees, reveal or conceal what is beneath. In a built context architectural surfaces help to communicate the modalities of participatory and connectedness or autonomous and distinct relations with their surroundings. These image, a folio of six (6) photographs, in which I am attempting to present my experiences of atmospheric and architectural places; the phenomena at hand rather than the viscera encountered. The deliberately distorted, blurred and expansive nature of the images is done in the hope of opening possible responses, of allowing interpretations that are personal and distinct to any viewer. Ziff has had photographic work published in the journal "Janus Head", and exhibited in shows and galleries in Ohio and the midwest region.