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TADEUSZ RACHWAŁ

Word
& Confinement

Subjectivity
in 'Classical' Discourse



Uniwersytet Śląski
Katowice 1992

Word & Confinement
Subjectivity
in 'Classical' Discourse

**Prace Naukowe
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
w Katowicach
nr 1165**

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Uniwersytet Śląski
Katowice 1992

Editor of the Series:
History of Foreign Literatures
ALEKSANDER ABLAMOWICZ

Reviewer
ANDRZEJ KOPCEWICZ

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The difference *between* entities (prose and poetry, man and woman, literature and theory, guilt and innocence) are shown to be based on a repression of differences *within* entities, ways in which an entity differs from itself.

(Barbara Johnson — *The Critical Difference*)



Breface

If it is at last possible to speak of power, of sexuality, of the body, of discipline [...] and about their slightest metamorphoses, it is because, somewhere, all this is already over and done with.

(Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault*)

In writing about discourse, about the irregular network of texts that constitute the archives not only of human knowledge, not only of what people know, but which are also the record of the ways people think and know the world, there are always a number of risks whose reduction is actually unthinkable. In reading a text, in writing about it, one cannot confine oneself to its seemingly safe and unquestionable totality, to the ideal totality of the book as the fullness of the signified — whatever name the signified is given: meaning, intention, reference — and thus to evade the “intrusion” of something from the outside of the text into the reading. Hence the risk of what one might call a “misreading,” of reading “into” the text what is not there.¹

The faith that there is some safe and stable space in writing, the faith that the risk of misreading a text can be avoided and *must* be avoided actually consists in a reduction of the text to its inside, to a pure and simple presence with its beginning and an end. Jacques Derrida, the French thinker whose name will frequently appear in these (but why not those?) pages, calls this faith a “metaphysics of presence,” a tendency to treat all kinds of writing as only a means which is controlled and regulated by the truth beyond it. A small change of perspective, however, a certain deconstruction of the obviousness of this

¹ Cf. P. de Man, “Nietzsche’s Theory of Rhetoric,” *Symposium* 28 (Spring 1974), p. 50; H. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); R. Crosman, “Is there Such a Thing as Misreading,” in J. Hawthorn, ed., *Criticism and Critical Theory* (London, 1984); F. Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 185–186.

metaphysics, renders the absolute distinction between the text and its outside, the “main body” and its margins, footnotes and supplements, what there is and what there is not, at least questionable. With the acceptance of this new perspective the risk of the error of misreading becomes a practice *of* that error, a practice in the midst of uncertainty. This different perspective is not a simple “relativization” of the text and its truth. To say that something is relative is to necessarily introduce some stable basis of comparison, a something to which the relative something is relative. This is the case, among others, of what is called “subjectivism,” the mode of thinking whose particular readings, or interpretations, are relative, but whose relativity poses at least two unquestionable entities: that of the true meaning of the text which only gets distorted in the act of interpretation, and that of the human subject. In the perspective which accepts misreading, in which all reading is misreading, all the mysterious insides and depths are located on the surface, on the page of the text on which the whiteness of paper, the unwritten, can be read as well as what is written. The margin, “the written’s” other, becomes equally worth looking at as the words, and the space is thus opened where also the outsides of the margins — the margins of the margins — intervene. Within this perspective the totality of the text, of the book, is not so much beyond one’s reach as it is unthinkable.² This is one of the reasons why I could not decide whether the pages I wrote about above should be “these” or “those.” This is also why to say that “the present text is about ...” is not a simple statement of a text’s aim or content, but a statement dictated by a certain silence, by the silent and uncritical assumption that there is a presence.

To write that “the present text is about ...” is also a gesture in which one mistrusts what one actually wrote. Such a statement promises, and simultaneously summarizes, what *there* is in the text, but it also assumes the possibility of there being an error in the language of the text, in the writing which might fail to properly render the “real” thought of its author. The author knows that his language might fail him, but he also confidently believes that there is something that in fact speaks by itself; some unique truth he really wants to communicate. Error is thus relegated to the sphere of potential absence, to the sphere of something corrigible and adjustable to the requirements of a truth or of a meaning. This error is something to be eradicated and never to be positively affirmed. With the change of perspective, with its deconstruction, it is not error in opposition to truth that is being embraced, but error inscribed within any idea of totality, within any presence or completeness pure and simple, and discernible upon the erroneous surface of writing, of the signifier, of the word. “There will be no unique name,” says Derrida,

² “The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier, this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality.” J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 18.

even if it were the name of Being. And we must think this without *nostalgia*, that is outside the myth of a purely maternal or paternal language, a lost native country of thought. On the contrary, we must *affirm* this, in the sense in which Nietzsche puts affirmation into play, in a certain laughter, and a certain step of dance.³

The nostalgia for a presence, for a meaning as natural as the human voice, dematerializes all human expression, expels, or erases, writing from the realm of the primary human concern as the secondary system of signs. For Terry Eagleton

it is in this refusal of the materiality of the sign, the uneradicable nostalgia for a transcendental source of meaning anterior to, and constitutive of all sign systems, that Derrida finds the Western tradition most deeply marked by idealism. The speaking voice [...] opens a passage to the equivalent “naturalness” of its *signata* — a passage blocked by the materiality of script, which (for this lineage) is thus destined to remain external to the spontaneous springs of meaning.⁴

The whole history of philosophy, “from Plato to Nato,” renders philosophy as a struggle against its necessarily being written. “Philosophy,” as Richard Rorty notices, “is a kind of writing which would like not to be a kind of writing [...] philosophers would like not to write, but just to *show*.”⁵

Writing about discourse, writing about writing, about word and its confinement one cannot avoid writing about philosophy, about confinement to truth. One cannot thus write the truth of this confinement, but can only trace the history of its truths, the history of the ways in which the error of writing was censored, paradoxically, *by* and *in* writing, in texts and books which now must be looked at without the silent assumption that they are texts or books about something obvious and easily classifiable — philosophy or literature — without the assumption that they can speak to us only as wholes classified into proper genres. This history cannot thus be a history of philosophy, or a history of literature because in what this history looks at all such categories must be questioned — not in order to be denied, but in order to trace how their existence has become thinkable. Discourse is thus not a stable object of one’s gaze, an object within which such categories as philosophy, literature, politics, truth, fiction, etc., have been established once and for all, but it is a space upon whose surface there is something more. This “more,” according to Michel Foucault, can be made available if we no longer treat discourses as

³ J. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 27.

⁴ T. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London, 1981), p. 13.

⁵ R. Rorty, “Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida,” *New Literary History*, 10 (1978), p. 156.

groups of signs [...] but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs, but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*). It is this “more” that we must reveal and describe.⁶

Our “no” to the surplus of the signifier, to the materiality of writing Foucault and Derrida write about is also discernible within discourses, and the history of this “no,” of this refusal, is one of the themes the Reader will encounter in what follows. In other words, I shall try to “historicize” the metaphysics of presence which, for Derrida, is as old as Western culture, and whose banner is the question: “What is ...?” — the question which institutionalizes philosophy along with all institutions of knowledge.⁷ Derrida’s transcendental truth which governs the organization of institutional knowledge (and life) is responsible for the rise of specialized fields of research and education which as it were guard their domains and, at the same time, suppress what they cannot contain within their limits. What is thus repressed cannot simply “speak itself” from within those institutions (as the “more” Foucault talks about) unless it is looked at from some other position, from the sphere where the institutions can be noticed along with their borderlines and margins. For someone who looks at things from such a perspective to “historicize” is not to pick up a discipline or an institution from the “data available” and to describe its linear development from “the very beginning,” its gradual changes and improvement, but rather to fill in the silent spaces, the “outcasts” of the institutions, the domains which have, or seem to have, nowhere to speak from. In other words, regardless of (or in addition to) what a given field of knowledge declares it is (or is not) there still remain areas of silence, different in different epochs (or in “discursive formations” as Foucault phrases it) which make the seemingly self-identical categories — like philosophy, truth, literature, etc., — always already split. Descartes and Kant, for instance, the two important pillars of the edifice of philosophy, wrote two different philosophies not only because their methods differed, but also because the idea of truth they could conceive of was different for each of them. It is thus impossible to say whose truth was better or truer, and instead of asking which of the truths was true one can legitimately ask the question of how some truth could have become thinkable.

Foucault’s interest in the years around 1800 as a time of “radical change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge” is the interest in two discourses in which also “man” and “man” were two different entities.⁸ These differences, let

⁶ M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan (London, 1972), p. 49.

⁷ “[...] the sign ~~is~~ that ill-named ~~thing~~, the only one, that escapes the instituting question of philosophy: “what is...?”, J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*..., p. 19.

⁸ R. Young, “Post-Structuralism: An Introduction,” in R. Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 10.

us repeat, are not founded only on what the discourses try to inform us about, but also on what (and how) they keep silent about, how the “untruth” of fiction in the Classical Age, for example, became the truth of literature in the nineteenth century, or how the silence of madness in the Age of Reason speaks in the jargon of the modern psychiatric clinic. To “historicize” the question “What is ...?” is thus the task whose truth, whose completion is questioned along with the completeness of the text which inquires. Writing such a history one has to write about the truth of the untrue, about the history of truth which is always “the history of the games of truth and error,” says Foucault, the history of the repression of the error, of the games in which error is always posited as the loser.⁹

The terms like “outcasts” or “repression” bring to mind some apparatus of violence which executes the verdict passed by some high court in whose power it is to decide what a discourse should make present and what it should silence. They bring to mind the image of an institution which establishes the disciplines of knowledge as if from above. The existence of such an institution of distribution and censorship, however, the existence outside the discourse, would make truth and falsehood pre-established categories. For Derrida the image of the pre-established truth is the incentive to our “compulsion for truth” (or “epistemophilia” as Freud once called it)¹⁰ in *all* philosophy and writing. Foucault’s “will to knowledge” is less universal. It utilizes different tactics in different discourses. It is here, however, that the two thinkers seem to meet, regardless of various disagreements.¹¹ If Derrida points to paradoxes and aporias in the language of philosophy simultaneously reading, say, Plato, Nietzsche and Heidegger, Foucault, without denying that human desire of truth motivates discursive practices looks at the complexity of the games of “truth and error” in what he calls *episteme* — in the set of relations “that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems.”¹² The periods which Foucault distinguishes and analyses are conventionally labeled as the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and Modernity, but what makes his reading of history different is that instead of looking for continuous developments that might possibly link these epochs (although he does not absolutely deny such links) he separates the epochs with the “ineradicable chronological threshold”¹³ posited by the organizing principles of the texts he analyses. In short, the organizing principle in the Renaissance is resemblance; representation and comparison characterize the Classical Age, while Modernity is the Age of Man in which “man”, as Dreyfus and Rabinow

⁹ M. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley (New York, 1986), p. 8.

¹⁰ T. Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1986), p. 65.

¹¹ Cf. J. Derrida, “Cogito et historie de la folie,” *L’Ecriture et la différence* (Paris, 1967).

¹² M. Foucault, *The Archaeology...*, p. 191.

¹³ Idem, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. S. Smith (New York, 1973), p. 195.

put it, “is a special kind of total subject and total object of his own knowledge.”¹⁴ The historically analysable unity of discursive practices is granted them by a certain power. This power does not simply repress the untrue, it does not say only “no” but, paradoxically, it says “no” in saying “yes,” it says “no” through so categorical an affirmation that it seems unthinkable to question it. In other words, the organization of discourses is not governed by the “logic of censorship” whose “interdiction is thought to take three forms: affirming that such a thing is not permitted, preventing it from being said, denying that it exists.”¹⁵ Such an entirely cynical power would hardly be tolerable because of its too overtly repressive character. In order to be tolerated power, must be secret, it must “mask a substantial part of itself.”¹⁶

In its traditional image, according to Foucault, power presents itself as institutionalized law clearly discernible on the social horizon as something that leaves a margin of freedom to those who accept it. Such a power manifests itself only as a “limit placed on their desire.”¹⁷ It is not something that *constitutes* freedom, but something that poses itself as *offering* freedom. Such a power, in other words, is not ours, but theirs. “At bottom,” says Foucault,

despite the differences in epochs and objectives, the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king.¹⁸

One who simply says “no” to this power, who addresses this “no” to those who he thinks wield it, actually supports this image which has survived even the chronological thresholds. As long as we look for power’s headquarters without seeing that this power operates mostly where we do not expect it, in us who think ourselves outside its centre, we shall also see other things, along with us, as if they were freely, unquestionably and truly themselves. Some kind of resistance becomes possible only when we realize that “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”¹⁹ We should not, says Foucault, “look for the headquarters that presides over its rationality, neither the caste which governs, nor the groups that control the state apparatus.”²⁰ Power, so conceived, is thus also a discursive category — a category whose unquestionable reign must be questioned and “historicised.” Instead of

¹⁴ H. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, 1982), p. 18.

¹⁵ M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (Penguin Books, 1978), p. 84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

trying to locate this power in one place or other, instead of trying to say *what* it is, one can position it among all other things, not desiring to see their essence, but only to see the secret “that things have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.”²¹ In order to see this we have to embark upon a paradoxical flight in which

the moment of interpretation is like an overview, from higher and higher up, which allows the depth to be laid out in front of him [the interpreter] in a more and more profound visibility; depth is resituated as an absolutely superficial effect.²²

This figure of flight does not place the interpreter in the position of one who wants to broaden the discernible horizon of his gaze in order to eventually see everything. It is not “Romantic” flight in which in order to see one has to estrange oneself from the surface and simultaneously explore some less mundane regions, but a flight in which history unrolls like a map upon which the chronology of events only helps to locate them within the archives. The objects visible upon this “map of misreading” (to use Harold Bloom’s phrase out of context) do not spring from some ancient source, their history is not the history of some continuous development. Their existence is a matter of the discontinuous genealogy which Foucault defines as

grey, meticulous and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. [...] it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history. Finally, genealogy must define even those instances where they are absent, the moment when they remain unrealized.²³

It is thus impossible to analyse something without simultaneously analysing something else. It is impossible to say “literature,” for instance, without mentioning a “non-literature,” a whole area of discourse which forms literature and makes its space discernible upon the map. Paradoxically, however, one cannot really talk about literature, but only about what makes such a category thinkable, about philosophy, epistemology, politics, etc., about the categories about which, like about literature, one cannot really talk about “in themselves”. What we now know about man, what we know *as* man, has also a part in this discourse, and it is also this category that is questioned in order to see that it has never been simply given, but that it partakes, as anything else, in the discursive games of truth and error.

²¹ M. Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in D.F. Bouchard, ed., *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 142.

²² Cf. H. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault...*, pp. 106–107.

²³ M. Foucault, “Nietzsche...,” p. 139.

Making use of such terms as “man” or “literature” the text which analyses their genealogy, the analytic text, necessarily transgresses itself. Such a text must question itself, it must question its own legitimacy in every word it uses. It must remind itself, and the Reader, about this inevitable transgression, about the fact that where (and when) it speaks from, its space and its time, are also governed by an *episteme* which makes them thinkable. In other words, if “man” was an absence in ‘Classical’ discourse, as Foucault has it, it does not mean that he is in some absolute sense present now, in the modern discourse. It only means that what is thinkable now was unthinkable within a different *episteme* in the same way it is thinkable now. Such areas of absence are always open to error because the only absences one can actually point to are the absences from the point of view of the present, the absences of what is now present, and not the absences in absolute terms. All one can do is discover in these absences, in what is absent in the present, “traces of the history of the present,” as Nancy Armstrong once called it, traces of the history of what we seem to be, or to have been.

What links Foucault’s discursive formations, despite all their differences and discontinuities, is the already mentioned “head of the king,” the repressive character of human subjectivity which, regardless of the rhetoric of freedom and liberty of more recent epochs, has always been allied with the idea of the political state. The question “who am I?” has become so deeply human (All too human — Nietzsche would say) that we do not notice its repressive character. But why raise this question if, as has been suggested, one cannot *not* be a human being? Humanity must exist, and to say something against its self-confident existence smacks of anarchy if not of an anti-humanist ideology of the kind associated with Nazism, as if all the bloodsheds of the last two hundred years have not carried the banner of humanism. Humanity has become an argument in whose name actually anything can be done, and it is the same humanism which can, at any time, give birth to monsters (Pol Pot’s Ph.D. at the Sorbone, for instance). Despite the seeming distance between one’s being human, between one’s “private” identity and the ways of the world one can always become a private in this or that regime(nt). There is even more to it. If humanity ought to have been silent after Auschwitz, as Adorno wrote,²⁴ it does not mean that Auschwitz should be forgotten, but rather that this humanity should, as it were, forget itself. The fact that Auschwitz is being made use of as an example of the anti-human is both a self-concealment and a threat of the absolute cynicism of one and the same power, the power which makes subjects subjects and which thus subjects them. What is in this way silenced is, paradoxically, not the areas of the anti-human — these are only too visible — but some other areas which have become almost absolutely inaccessible, even to thinking.

²⁴ T. W. Adorno, *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/M), p. 31, cf. K. Sauerland, *Od Diltheya do Adorna: studia z estetyki niemieckiej* (Warszawa: PIW, 1986), p. 209.

Genealogy does not want and actually cannot answer the questions “What am I?” or “What is...?” It “historicizes” subjectivity as well as history. In this sense it is also a history of history which renders all categories as already historical constructs at which we cannot simply look now, but which have to be looked for upon the synchronically unfolded discursive surface, in seemingly unrelated fragments of texts people wrote at will, but which were also dictated to that will. What I am talking about is not simply the dictatorship of “the standards of the epoch,” but the discursive strategy which dictated those standards by eliminating, both implicitly and explicitly, the non-standard; the strategy which also dictated the absences. In such a predicament one has to work in the midst of uncertainty of what one reads and writes, of what one is, because nothing has been given for certain, not even the words one uses. One cannot *really* begin this work.

The idea of a beginning is also historical. It actually motivates history as continuity and it serves no other purpose than, as Edward Said has remarked in *Beginnings*, “to indicate, clarify or define a later time, place, or action.”²⁵ Beginning functions as a framework, as a threshold which demarcates what is present, and presence is unthinkable without it. There is no exaggeration in saying that beginning is the invention which justifies our presence. “We have turned to the Greeks out of our need to establish beginnings, to create order and continuity,” says Lennard Davis, but we found there no “true origin, but a mythical template, as it were, through which we trace our desire of origin.”²⁶ As a result, even if we look for more discernible origins or beginnings (like those of the novel or literature for that matter) we either postpone them to times immemorial, find a Defoe who simply reflected the influences imposed upon him by the rise of capitalism, or find in the novel the culmination of all other genres which for a long time nothing but dreamed of becoming the novel.²⁷ What motivates these three seemingly different ways of establishing a beginning is not so much an interest in beginnings, but the necessity of locating the beginning of something that unquestionably *is*. With genealogy, despite the fact that discourses are to be looked at as discontinuities, it is impossible to clearly establish their frames, their beginnings and ends. There are no edicts proclaiming them, and some of their strategies may also be discernible in other discourses as “points of resistance”²⁸ or minority voices. Discourses are thus not graspable in their totality, they never speak one voice, so that it is impossible to say with certainty who at a given moment speaks and who is silent. The periodization of discursive formations is necessary to make us realize that the present is also

²⁵ E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York, 1975), p. 5.

²⁶ L.J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York, 1983), p. 1.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 4–7.

²⁸ M. Foucault, *History...*, p. 95.

a transitory product, a formation governed by discursive strategies. What can be uncovered is that within a certain period of time some categories we now find self-evident occupied quite different positions within discourses, they were different objects of different knowledge. The objective of genealogy, we must remember, is not simply the past as it is related to the present, but the history of the present an attempt to free thought from thinking the past as already gone. "Writing about the past," says John Rajchman, "*is* a way of criticizing the present under the assumption that the past still informs the present in ways and with consequences we don't recognize."²⁹ The genealogist tries to find a position outside of history in the traditional sense by criticizing what he *has been*. Of course, he inevitably belongs to what he writes about, but he also hypothesizes a different history, and hence a different sort of being. In an essay on individual and power Foucault wrote:

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. [...] We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.³⁰

This target is not a form of misanthropy, nor is it a matter of saying "no" to the world and going somewhere else, but it is a matter of criticism, of re-thinking our thinking, and of exploring the areas Descartes, for instance, tried to silence. These areas will never become something clear or simply true. It is the undecidability of what we think that is to be constantly excavated in the genealogical work:

As to those for whom to work hard, to begin and begin again, to attempt and be mistaken, to go back and rework everything from top to bottom, and still find reason to hesitate from one step to the next — as to those, in short, for whom to work in the midst of uncertainty and apprehension is tantamount to failure, all I can say is that clearly we are not from the same planet.³¹

The expedition to Lem's Solaris failed to reach the Contact with the planet because of the recurrent anthropomorphism of the scientists' thinking which could not accept that what it thinks is not the only form of being. The question, in short, is in a sense von Daeniken's: is it absolutely impossible that other civilizations still dwell on this planet?

In what follows I shall try to look at 'Classical' discourse in England — with occasional excursions to France — in the light of what might be called the "French theoretical context," although critics and thinkers from other countries are also a significant part of the framework. *Very* generally, this framework

²⁹ J. Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York, 1985), p. 38.

³⁰ M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in H. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault...*, p. 216.

³¹ Idem, *The Use of...*, p. 7.

might be called “post-structuralist.” Post-structuralism, just like what it “proclaims,” does not have a stable identity. It is not a school of thinking, it is not a method, and it is hard to position it among any of the traditional academic disciplines. It is useful as an umbrella word in so far as it covers the areas of thinking generally critical of de Saussurean semiotics and linguistics whose binary oppositions favour, again generally, the depth of the signified, of the concept or of *la langue*, and thus banish writing and textuality from the realm of serious knowledge.³² The label “post-structuralism” can thus be attached to such different critical thinkers as Derrida and Foucault, Harold Bloom and Paul de Man, Terry Eagleton and J. Hillis-Miller, to mention but a few. One of my tasks is, as it were, to “present” post-structuralism (or “deconstruction” — yet another term without any exact reference) at work rather than to write about it. Writing about deconstruction one is bound to eventually write about what it is not, or what it *does*, rather than what it *is*. Presenting deconstruction at work, on the other hand, cannot be an application of some theory or method for reading texts. In other words, it is impossible to follow one leader (a Derrida or a Foucault) because such leadership always turns out to be misleading. These theories are, as it were, hardly theoretical, that is to say, they attest to their own discursiveness which they simultaneously undermine as a theoretical construct. Like Foucault’s history of history critical of history, these theories are also theories of theory critical of theory. In this sense one cannot simply apply them, rather one must constantly theorize what one is doing, read texts and realize that his readings are a matter of some theory of meaning and language without which this meaning is questionable. Such theoretical categories as “meaning,” “truth,” “origin,” are not negated in a post-structuralist misreading. They are only pointed to and simultaneously erased. Derrida, for instance, occasionally simply crosses out the words he uses, as in his “definition” of the sign,³³ and constantly reminds us that the names of all (his) writing, all theory, is always already *sous rature*, that the names he uses are nicknames: “this unnameable movement of *difference* — itself, that I have strategically nicknamed *trace, reserve, differance*.”³⁴ I shall make use of the texts of Derrida, Foucault and others as, as I say, “theoretical context” rather than as theories.

In Part I of this text the Reader will find an attempt at “theorizing” Shakespeare. The task of this part is at least twofold. On the one hand, it is a deconstructive gesture in which the Reader will find an outline of Terry Eagleton’s reading of Shakespeare’s plays and the ways in which the figure of truth as woman is both embraced and denied in Shakespeare’s texts. It is by this paradoxical affirmation and denial that subjectivity in the ‘Classical’ sense is

³² Cf. R. Young, “Post-Structuralism...”, pp. 1–2.

³³ Cf. Footnote 7 above.

³⁴ J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 93.

constantly deferred in the conflict (or incompatibility) of what Eagleton has as Shakespeare's epistemology and political ideology. On the other hand, Part I also serves as an introduction to 'Classical' discourse. In the chronology of 'Classical' discourse I shall roughly follow Foucault's chronology of discursive formations in which the epoch ends at the time of the French Revolution and begins in the middle of the seventeenth century, although Descartes' discourse is also included in it. The great political dispute before the execution of Charles I in 1649 seems to be the time when 'Classical' discourse is already the dominant discourse in England. Shakespeare's writings still belong to the Renaissance in their valuing of social order within an undivided state with a legitimate ruler on the top of the hierarchy, but a space for the individual of the coming epoch is quite evidently pointed to in his texts. The figure of the 'Classical' subject does not appear on Shakespeare's stage, but it is discernible, as it were, behind the arras. This anachronistic intrusion of Shakespeare into 'Classical' discourse also serves the purpose of raising the question of time and history as historical categories.

In Part II the Reader will find an analysis of censorship, discipline, truth, and subjectivity in Milton's *Areopagitica*. These categories are read there along with some themes discernible in the spectacle of the public execution as discussed in Foucault's *Surveiller et punir*.

In Part III an overview of 'Classical' discourse is presented. I try to show there how such notions as individuality and subjectivity are inextricably linked in a network of texts with other discursive categories and practices such as misanthropy, autobiography, law, madness, medicine, education, womanhood, etc. The texts (fragments) I look at range from Swift's letters to *Robinson Crusoe*, from Hume's *Treatise* to Dr. Battie's *Treatise on Madness*, from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Cleland's *Fanny Hill* and Pope's *The Dunciad*, for instance. The "meandering ways" of Part III, however, cannot simply be displayed in a table. In what I have done it is the argument that appears to dictate the choice, that is to say, the quoted fragments not only illustrate the argument but also partake in it, change it, and make it hesitate as to what choice should be made next. In yet other words, I could have chosen some texts "about" subjectivity, medicine or monarchy, for instance, and then simply comment on them, find similarities and differences and elegantly generalize them. But if it turns out that, for instance, writing about some imaginary hospital for the despisers of the world Swift also wrote about the proper name, one cannot legitimately decide which of the themes is "main" and which "marginal," but has to include the proper name into the "agenda" of the argument and follow its wake in which other such shifts of the subject are inevitable. The text loses in coherence but gains in presenting the complexity of the "subject." It presents the subject not as something that is given, but a meandering discursive construct. The obsession with clear and coherent representation is just one of the obsessions of 'Classical' discourse, and this

obsession invariably goes hand in hand with the dream that there is a simple subject or object to be presented. But given that there are no such simple objects (and subjects), we are then faced with the task of problematizing objectivity (and subjectivity) together with the idea of simplicity and the ideal transparency of writing. *The Plan* which opens Part III should help the Reader to, at least momentarily, stabilize the movement of the text.

Part IV is not an attempt to raise Christopher Smart from the death of forgetfulness. Rather, it searches for ways in which the poet has been silenced both by eighteenth-century criticism, and, in a sense, by himself. It is for this reason that I concentrate on two of his texts: *A Song to David* which was published in his lifetime, after his confinement for madness and for the most part silenced, and *Jubilate Agno*, published 1939 on the basis of fragments found in a private library, without a title, written on unnumbered pages whose sequence still remains hypothetical. In the case of Smart, the strategies of 'Classical' discourse I look at earlier find a peculiar realization. Some of them are quite explicitly said "no" to in his texts, to some he conforms, but he also marks the spheres to be explored by the coming discourse, the spheres of Kant's starry sky and Hegel's Absolute. Christopher Smart closes this text in the manner Shakespeare begins it — the latter only points to what is yet to come, the former, in a way, to what is.

This brief self-explanation of the textuality of the text points to the problem of confining the word to its meaning which, in turn, must be confined to what it is. The confinement of the word, but also the confinement of truth to itself, and the confinement of madness as the failure to confine oneself to truth is the theme the Reader will find in all these (but why not those?) pages.



Introductory

“You look as you had something more to say.”¹

But a dense jungle has grown up around [the] house of literature, and the normal route these days to Shelley Bedchamber isn't up the stairs but through the window, by liana.

(Colin Campbell, “The Tyranny of the Yale Critics”)

1. Shakespeare's *Terry Eagleton*?

On the cover of the book published by Basil Blackwell in Oxford in 1986 only four words can be seen: “William Shakespeare Terry Eagleton.” Presumably they are proper names, and also presumably (it is tradition that prompts us here) one name refers to the title, and the other to the proper name of its author.² There is no preposition, traditionally “by,” to help us decide which is which. On the first page of the *Preface* we read:

Those who are sceptical of the relevance of contemporary critical theory to the Swan of Avon should remember that there are more anachronisms in Shakespeare's plays than the clock in *Julius Caesar*. Though conclusive evidence is hard to come by, it is difficult to read Shakespeare without feeling that he was almost certainly familiar with the writings of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein and Derrida.³

¹ *Macbeth*, V.iii. All quotations from Shakespeare come from: *The Works of William Shakespeare* (London and New York: Frederic Warne and CO, not dated).

² I also traditionally assume that names can be proper although some evidence to the contrary comes from Jacques Derrida's writings in which he claims they can only be cryptonyms or pseudonyms. Cf. e.g. his *Glas* (Paris, 1974) or “Signéponge,” in *Francis Ponge* (Paris, 1977). A brief discussion of *Glas* can be found in T. Rachwał, “Jacques Derrida: Autor tych podróży,” in W. Kalaga, T. Sławek, eds. *Znak-tekst-fikcja* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1987).

³ T. Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. ix-x.

One could also add some more names to this list including, of course, Terry Eagleton as one of Shakespeare's masters. The puzzle seems to be solved: Shakespeare's book on Eagleton is yet another of his anachronisms. What we have in front of our eyes is simply Shakespeare's reading of Eagleton's reading of Shakespeare. William Shakespeare obviously knows that such a book is quite improbable and makes use of his penchant for masks, writing the book as if he was Terry Eagleton. He plays Terry Eagleton who plays Shakespeare — the situation antedated in *Twelfth Night* where

When Viola (a boy playing a woman playing a man) confronts Olivia with Orsino's suit, an actor playing an actor presents the case of one actor playing an actor to another doing just the same.⁴

Shakespeare did die, as it were, in 1616, long before Marx and his disciple were born, but the universality of his writings which we learn so much about at school and universities makes the thesis of his writing on Eagleton, say, probable. Yet another possibility is that Shakespeare wrote the book after he died, and it is aspects of this possibility that I shall try to explore, aspects of the possibility of writing after one's death, with no "conclusive evidence," obviously.

Writing and dying seem to be tied together and it is virtually impossible to disentangle the knot. Speech is prior to writing because of its closeness to breath, to the very spirit of life. Speech is unthinkable without the presence of a subject, a producer. Speech marks the presence and is the presence. Speech is tied to presence and thus to life; just as writing is tied to absence, to the "death" of its author. Writing is secondary, supplementary to speech — a thought propagated by what Derrida calls "The Linguistic Circle of Geneva," and whose representatives, the only ones, are Ferdinand de Saussure and Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

Rousseau and Saussure grant an ethical and metaphysical privilege to voice [...] and this gesture is expressed in formulations whose literal resemblance is occasionally surprising. Thus: ROUSSEAU: "Languages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as a supplement of speech. [...] Writing is only the representation of speech."

SAUSSURE: "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first."⁵

Writing is an echo, a shadow of speaking and of being. Its origin — speech — must always already have died before pen touches the paper. Reading my own words, even writing them, I read/write my own absence. We may try to write what we say, but we cannot say what we write; we can read (aloud) what we have written, but our reading will always be bracketed by the quotation marks of

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵ J. Derrida, "The Linguistic Circle of Geneva," trans. A. Bass, *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1982), p. 686. The capitalized (by Derrida) names are also "formulations whose literal resemblance" can be quite surprising. They are almost anagrams.

a repetition. Writing's iterability is irreducible.⁶ Reading what we have written we write, as it were, with our mouths (a theme to which we shall soon briefly return). And what if what we say without any book in front of our eyes, without any visible or invisible notation, what we say from our "hearts" or "minds," what we "truly mean" were also a writing? What if all language were a "language to infinity,"⁷ a language which always already marks the absence of its author and authority, the inevitable absence of its own origin? What if this language were nothing but the material dispersion of traces? This seemingly paradoxical language Derrida christens *écriture*, that is to say, a writing before the letter. And it is by way of *écriture* that Derrida hopes to deconstruct the "metaphysics of presence" which blinds the whole Western culture to its discursive status and makes the "beyond" of writing, the beyond of all kinds of inscription, the only *object* of its *insight*, so that we say "the heart of," "the core of," "the meaning of," "the truth of," totally ignoring the genitive. If Western metaphysics is capable of talking about the meaning of the sign (the sign can only mean), Derridean *écriture* shifts the two cases (the nominative and the genitive) disclosing the sign of meaning (meaning can also sign) as necessity, and thus makes all pure presences and wholes, ideas and ideals, always already written signatures of writing. With this kind of writing presences die, but their death cannot be "complete." Why? Because what is also questioned is the absolute presence of absence, the absolute presence of death as simply opposed to life. Hence talking about living one can only talk about a certain "survival:"

For example, several pairs of quotation marks may enclose one or two words: "living on" ("*survivre*"), "on" living ("*sur*" *vivre*), "on" "living," on "living," producing each time a different semantic and syntactic effect[...] (e.g., living on can mean a reprieve or an afterlife, "life after life" or life after death[...]) and the triumph *of* life can also triumph *over* life and reverse the procession of the genitive[...] this is not wordplay, not on your life.⁸

To "live" on, to write to infinity and to be written to infinity with no originary moment, with no external foundation or authority "underlying" the writing. Such writing must endanger the idea of time just as it endangers the idea of death.

In order to exist time must be timeless; it must exist outside its own sequentializing or linearizing operations. The sequence of historical events can only be a product of a product (time). The edifice of history is a construction without any conceivable foundation. It is founded upon the idea of time which itself is a construction whose very possibility is the lack of the foundation. Time is timeless — without time. A historical event, a point in time, is simultaneously

⁶ Cf. J. Derrida, "Limited Inc...," trans. S. Weber, *Glyph* 2 (1977), p. 242.

⁷ Cf. M. Foucault, "Language to Infinity," in *Language, Counter...*, p. 53.

⁸ J. Derrida, "Living On," trans. J. Hulbert, in H. Bloom, ed., *Deconstructive Criticism* (New York, 1979), pp. 76—77.

undermined and constituted by the very idea of time. Independent existence of an event, of time's letter, puts time to a stop. The very notion of anachronism (in Shakespeare and elsewhere) must thus be a result of some totalized prejudice, the prejudice which grants time its linearity as a continuum of events, of moments, whose existence can only be theoretical. Time is timeless because the moment of its origin, of its birth, is unthinkable. Timeless time is theoretically grounded upon an equally theoretical sequence of events. Thus, from a theoretical point of view, Shakespeare could not have read Derrida, but insofar as he practiced and explored writing, he must have come across *écriture*, and across Jacques Derrida's name disseminated, as *Glas* teaches us, all over the space of language.⁹ Derridean *écriture* erases the present not only in its, say, ontological aspect, but in its temporal aspect as well, thus making the question of who writes, or wrote, and about what practically undecidable. Thus we may only very cautiously say that Shakespeare, among other things, also wrote about writing. In the first paragraph of *William Shakespeare* we read:

For a stability of signs — each word securely in place, each signifier [...] corresponding to its signified or meaning — is an integral part of any social order: settled meanings, shared definitions and regularities of grammar both reflect, and help to constitute, a well ordered political state. Yet it is all this which Shakespeare's flamboyant punning, troping and riddling threaten to put in question. His belief in social stability is jeopardized by the very language in which it is articulated. It would seem, then, that the very act of writing implies for Shakespeare and epistemology (or theory of knowledge) at odds with his political ideology.¹⁰

If social order must necessarily find its expression in language, then language must be ordered as well. There must be some sort of power which keeps it together, which establishes it as a controllable device always ready at hand. If a theory undermines language's stability it obviously undermines the order of things, social order and power, but it at the same time perverts its own status as a theory. If a theory of language looks for order in language (laws, rules, regularities, universals), that is to say, in the sphere already beyond the materiality of language, the theory against theory (like Derridean) must dwell within the materiality of the signifier, and read everything to the letter ignoring, say, the spirit. Such a theory is in fact a practice without a theory in traditional sense (see *Preface*) a practice subversive of the very idea of theory, stability,

⁹ Cf. idem, *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (Chicago, 1981), pp. 287—366. In an essay on *Glas* Gayatri Spivak can "read *derrière les rideaux* as a cryptic rebus for the name of his (Derrida's) father, the same as one's own, but not quite; or read 'Dionysos Erigone Eriopétale Réséda' as his own name crypted in the language of Genet's flowers. [...] He plays a hide-and-seek game with the timing of a proper name that is already given, and the *d* of the spelling of his own: 'everything is always attacked from the back [*de dos*], written described from behind [*derrière*]. I am already [*déjà*] (dead).'" G. Spivak, "Glas-Piece: A Compte Rendu," *Diacritics* (September 1977), p. 25.

¹⁰ T. Eagleton, *William...*, p. 1.

generality, order, power. The theorist of such a theory is in a sense a terrorist. “In a sense,” because writing against theory, and against power, he does not have any power at his disposal, he does not have any bomb¹¹ except for the letter whose abuse by power he wants to demystify in a practice which from the point of view of theory (of language, for instance) would itself be an abuse of language — *catachresis*. As a theory/practice against theory, as a theory which does not “express, translate or serve to apply practice”¹² it is a theory “by nature opposed to power,”¹³ as Deleuze once remarked. Since this power does not have any visible headquarters, since secrecy is necessary to its operation (see *Preface*) the “theorist’s” task is not to say what this power is, but rather to find those places where “it is most invisible and insidious.”¹⁴ What is searched for in human discourses are not the institutions of power whose change is but one of the tactics power utilizes, but rather where the idea comes from that power has some headquarters. Power, let us repeat, “is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but comes from everywhere.”¹⁵ It also comes from us, citizens, individuals, and, as we boast, our own subjects. “The subject,” says Foucault, “who is constituted as subject — who is ‘subjected’ — is he who obeys.”¹⁶

Power also resides in language. As long as this goes unnoticed language is simply accepted and used. If it is inaccurate it is our task to master it (along with the world it names), to orderly attach words to things. We do notice that language happens to be abused, but it is by this fact that we believe it can be simply used. Stanisław Staszic once wrote:

In all languages severity is called prowess, banditry — war, plots — treatises, [...] collusions, ruses, treasons, plunders, murders — politics, [...] force — virtue, slavery — freedom, freedom — dissipation, transgressor’s orders — laws, [...] nation’s will — rebellion.¹⁷

What the statement tells us is that words do not mean what they say, that language’s order has gone astray. It also belies a nostalgia for a lost order, a dream of reintroducing the order to language which has been abused by others

¹¹ A criticism of deconstruction in this vein comes from Erich Heller. “Deconstruction — what a word! It sounds as if the operation were to be carried out not on poetry but on products of mechanical engineering, bombs, perhaps, including their detonation.” E. Heller, “Notes on language and its Deconstruction: On Translating Stephen Mitchell’s Translation of Rilke,” *Poetry* (January 1985), p. 234.

¹² M. Foucault, “Intellectuals and Power,” (A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze), in *Language, Counter...*, p. 208.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹⁴ M. Foucault, *The History...*, p. 86.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁷ S. Staszic, *Ród ludzki* (Warszawa, 1959), ks. xii, p. 275, cited in T. Dobrzyńska, *Metafora* (Ossolineum, 1984), p. 134.

so that murder would mean murder, war — war, regardless of who speaks and from where. But if words mean what they mean it does not necessarily mean that they are no longer abused, but that their abuse simply goes unnoticed, that the power of discourse has gained more secrecy, a new locus. Derrida deprives power of its comfortable den in the stability of words and meanings and closely looks at language's material side, at the labyrinth of *écriture* where no stability, no control is possible. To use language is to necessarily abuse it — catachresis becomes inevitable, “an irreducibly original production of meaning.¹⁸”

Catachresis does not go outside the language, does not create new signs, does not enrich the code; yet it transforms its functioning: it produces, with the same material, new rules of exchange, new meaning.¹⁹

Écriture uses catachresis openly, “to carry thought not forward to the origin (teleology), but elsewhere.”²⁰ Language as *écriture* has no outside, no external authority to enforce something as given, as proper. *Écriture* is too dangerous a space for power's dwelling place, it is its “dangerous supplement,”²¹ and it is always at odds with (social) order. Just as Shakespeare's epistemology, that Eagleton writes about, must be at odds with his political “conservatism.” If Lavinia, in *Titus Andronicus*, subverts the speaking/writing opposition writing with her mouth,²² Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice*, undermines the stability of the law interpreting it to the letter, as if her reading of Shylock's bond was actually written in some book of the law. By doing so, she also subverts the stability of language, which, like the law, must necessarily be at the same time “general and irreducibly particular.”²³ General — as a system independent of particular uses, and particular — since the law, like language, “lives only in specific human contexts, all of which are unique.”²⁴ Portia respects the law, the letter of the law, and has no respect for its spirit. Derrida respects writing, the signifier, and does not respect the spirit and says there is always some writing before the letter.²⁵ Unlike Portia, however, he does not make use of the fact that others respect the spirit. He respects meaning and truth as always already

¹⁸ G. Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e) — Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore, 1985), p. 33.

¹⁹ J. Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” trans. F.C. Moore, *New Literary History* 6 (1974), p. 59.

²⁰ G. Ulmer, *Applied...*, p. 33.

²¹ Cf. J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 141—157.

²² Cf. *Titus Andronicus* IV.i. Cf. also T. Sławek, “Człowiek zraniony. Dwa tematy Szekspirowskie,” in W. Kalaga, T. Sławek, eds., *Znak i semioza* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1985), p. 96.

²³ T. Eagleton, *William...*, p. 35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁵ “Writing before the Letter” is the title of Part I of *Of Grammatology*.

particular. Truth can only be written, it can only be a truth deprived of its eternal validity, a “purloined letter” of truth in search of which we penetrate all possible hiding-places instead of taking it from the place in front of our eyes.

2. Shakespeare’s Truth and Carnival

In any kind of writing its main character can only be a letter, a mark of writing, a character. The character of the character is already coded in the word “character.” The inside, the true quality (character) beyond the visible mark (character) turns out to be the only “nature” of character, its always split mode of being. All questions about truth have always been questions about its character, and always led to the problem of its (and the “its” is obviously ambiguous) being written. They have always generated the problem of an abundance of style (dressing, adornment, paint, mask, writing ...) surrounding the truth which — and this is the lesson of the rhetoric we use — we desire to see “manifest,” “whole,” “unvarnished,” “absolute,” “bare.” The seeker of truth wants to see the true character of this truth as “characterless,” he aims at unveiling the object of his desire in order to really see the truth as it “comes out,” “becomes evident,” “shines through” or “unfolds.” He “pursues” it, “discovers” it, “disentangles” it, “lays it bare” and finally “grasps” it. The verb “to see” modified by “really” is not a simple verb of perception which leaves the object of gaze intact. “Seeing really” is aggressive. To “really see the truth” means “to see it through,” to pierce through its clothing, its exteriority, its style which hides the inner nature, the inner character. “See,” here also means to “possess,” to seize something in its wholeness and its bareness. The object of possession must be graspable by our gaze as a totality in order to be something, a true object distinctly separated from its outside — in order to be a truth. Only then can it be possessed, taken, handled, manipulated, included into an ordered system. Such a truth is the prerequisite of social order and power. Just as writing, the style whose pen always inscribes a distance, which inscribes the inevitable ambiguity of character upon the truth’s pure body, is its enemy. “In the question of style,” writes Derrida,

there is always the weight or *examen* of some pointed object (*objet pointu*). At times this object might only be only a quill or a stylus (*plume*). But it could just as easily be a stiletto, or even a rapier.²⁶

The “pointed object” can be used in an attack upon what philosophy calls “truth,” but it can at the same time protect the truth from the philosopher’s

²⁶ J. Derrida, *Spurs, Nietzsche’s Styles/Éperons, Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. B. Harlow (Chicago, 1979), p. 37.

desireous gaze “in order to keep it at a distance, to repel it — as one bends or recoils before its force, in flight, behind veils and sails (*derrière des voiles*).”²⁷

The two gestures — attack/defence — cannot be separated. The veil which covers the truth simultaneously “attacks” its purity. It is also a sail which puts the truth in motion and thus infinitely postpones the final unveiling. Truth as style, as the movement of veils, “can only be surface,”²⁸ a suspended truth.

In her subversive reading of Shylock's bond, Portia suspends the law of Venice along with the social order. The state puts on the mask and announces the world of carnival in which, according to Bakhtin, “the awareness of the people's immortality is combined with the realization that established authority and truth are relative.”²⁹ The whole trial is in a sense carnivalesque. Portia, disguised both as a man and as a doctor of laws, is obviously wearing a mask. But more importantly, it is the ambiguous figure of Shylock that translates whatever happens into carnival. In their book on transgression Stallybrass and White point to various aspects of hatred against Jews at the carnival. In Rome, Jews “were forced into a race at the carnival time and stoned by the onlookers.”³⁰ In the Venice carnival it was pigs that were “chased across Piazza San Marco and stoned.”³¹ At the same time, however, the crowd also celebrated the pig in the great pig feast whose “pleasures [...] were represented in the sausage.”³² Jews were hated by the carnival crowd because of their abstinence from pork, which momentarily defined them on the side of Lent, the threatening antithesis of carnival, the shadow of power.³³ In *The Merchant of Venice* the carnivalesque inversion of roles plays an important part. The conventional victim (Shylock), as Stallybrass and White notice, “threatens to become the butcher who will kill his oppressor. Shylock then, would transform the Christian into the pig,”³⁴ at the same time turning the world upside down — as in the prints in which the pig is shown as slitting the butcher's throat, a baby nurses its mother and the gentleman receives money from the beggar.³⁵ If Portia had some respect for the law, Shylock would win the case and invert the traditional order of things. Since Portia reads the bond to the letter, she suspends the law and thus undermines its objectivity and authority. The carnival, in any case, turns out the winner. The paradox is that in order to preserve the structure of the law one must as it were reach to its spirit, one must transgress what it actually says. By failing to do this, Portia is

²⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁹ M.M. Bakhtin, *Rebelais and his World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 10.

³⁰ P. Stallybrass, A. White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London, 1986), p. 53.

³¹ Ibid., p. 53.

³² Ibid., p. 53.

³³ Ibid., p. 55.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

dangerously close to promoting private law by a reading which is too literal, or “too faithful.”³⁶ Also paradoxically, Shylock turns out the winner regardless of Portia’s reading of the bond as in any case, says Eagleton, he unmasks “Christian justice as mockery.”³⁷ What is at stake in the courtroom, he goes on,

is less Shylock’s personal desire to carve Antonio than the law of Venice itself: will it [...] penalize one of its wealthy adherents at the behest of an odious Jew? [...] it will not; but in order to avoid doing so it must risk deconstructing itself, deploying exactly the kind of subjective poltering it exists to spurn.³⁸

Truth and law meet beyond the letter. Truth must not be written if it is to be a true truth, it can only exist beyond the particularizing intervention of inscription, beyond its style. The law, on the other hand, must be written; but it must be written ideally, so that its spirit and its letter are absolutely congruent — which means that it in fact cannot be written at all. None of the two can exist without writing, one *beyond* and the other *in* — but it is at the same time writing that subverts them. How can one expect a social order in the world where what must be written is always already “miswritten,” and what must not be written turns out to be always already written? Truth and law are supposed to regulate that order, and it cannot be surprising now that valuing order and stability Shakespeare could not have ignored the subversive movement of (Derridean?) *écriture*.

One of the ways of ordering society is not to see writing’s “deconstructive” energy, and to blind others to seeing it. Metaphysics of presence and ideology go hand in hand, they are almost synonymous terms. What we call social systems are built upon the “law of Venice,” that is to say, upon a law which a Portia might any time prove ridiculous. Hence power must use all sorts of tactics to maintain human hypnotic faith in truth and in the objectivity and necessity of the law. All measures have been taken not to let a Portia appear on the stage of a courtroom or in other institutions which function within the discourse of truth. These measures are not so much institutional (although their role cannot be underestimated) as discursive, that is to say, they are not sent down to us from some easily discernible source. Like Foucault’s “power” they come from everywhere, from social practices, customs, habits; from language itself. Portia’s “ingenious quibbling”³⁹ is dangerous because it demonstrates that the undoubted beyond of the letter — law, truth, system of language, theory, etc., — is exactly the “quibbling” of a woman. For it is obvious that Portia’s “too true,”⁴⁰ to use yet

³⁶ T. Eagleton, *William...*, p. 37.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

another of Eagleton's phrases, reading of the law is not ruled out in the court for the reason that she is a male figure there; a learned man, but because first of all she is a man. Interestingly, this reading fits neatly with what everybody in the courtroom (except Shylock) desires in spite of the transgression of the law's spirit.

3. Shakespeare's Woman

In *Spurs*, an essay on Nietzsche, Derrida says that

All the emblems, all the shafts and allurements Nietzsche found in woman, her seductive distance, her captivating inaccessibility, the ever-veiled promise of her provocative transcendence, the *Entfernung*, these all belong properly to a history of truth by way of the history of an error.⁴¹

Nietzsche's supposed antifeminism is actually attack upon the model of truth which historically followed Plato's identification with truth itself. No longer able to say "I am truth" the philosopher — man — is no longer the truth. "Severed from himself," says Derrida, "he has been severed from truth."

he can now only follow in its trace. At this moment history begins. Now the stories start. Distance — woman — averts truth — the philosopher. She bestows the idea. And the idea withdraws, becomes transcendent, inaccessible, seductive. It becoms from afar (*in die Ferne*). Its veils float in the distance. The dream of death begins. It is woman.⁴²

We must remember that "veils" (*voiles*) are also sails which put truth afloat, in motion, and it is exactly what the male figure of the philosopher rejects. There are only veils (for him) which veil a promised and provoking "something" to be possessed. Truth/woman is what eventually gives itself/herself, "while the man for his part takes, possesses, indeed takes possession."⁴³ Truth seduces the philosopher as something not yet explored and perfect. The rhetoric built up around the notion of truth is very often that of purity and virginity. In *Areopagitica*, for instance, Milton describes truth as "a perfect shape most glorious to look on," "the virgin Truth," "her lovely form," he talks about the "glorious waies of Truth."⁴⁴

Within such a model of truth (and womanhood) the division into "possessor" and "possession" is absolutely indispensable. In order to be possessed, woman-truth must be a "what" — the question "What is...?" must be answered.

⁴¹ J. Derrida, *Spurs...*, p. 89.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 88—89.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁴ J. Milton, *Areopagitica* (Oxford, 1917), pp. 43 and 49.

Attempting to answer the question men (with Freud as one of their leaders)⁴⁵ castrated both her and truth, made it incomplete in the lack of the phallus. Nowadays, says Derrida, women are attempting a kind of self-castration themselves:

For it is the man who believes in the truth of woman, in woman-truth. And in truth, they too are men, those women feminists so derided by Nietzsche. Feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man.[...] Feminism too seeks to castrate. It wants a castrated woman. Gone the style.⁴⁶

The sphere of style, the sphere “between” which so much concerns Derrida, does not allow for the strict demarcation of differences, for a pure and simple separation of the feminine from the masculine, for castration, because style and the *objet pointu*, its pointed object (see above) are always tied together in the double-bind of *écriture*. Woman-truth cannot be simply “propriated (appropriation, expropriation, taking possession, gift and barter, mastery, servitude)”⁴⁷ because she-it does not simply give herself, but is “giving herself for (donne-pour), is simulating.”⁴⁸ She-it always transgresses her-its own “proper-ty” (*Propre*), both possession and quality, and the name, the proper name by which philosophers try to call her. She is giving herself *for* also in the sense of forwards, she is making for her nonexistent opposite, her “difference” advancing

in the manner of a spur of sorts (*éperon*). Like the prow, for example, of a sailing vessel, its *rostrum*, the projection of the ship which surges ahead to meet the sea’s attack and cleave its hostile surface.⁴⁹

Woman-truth is unthinkable without the “spur”, without the “pointed object” of style which, as I have said, both shelters and attacks, nurses and wounds. It simultaneously gives birth and inseminates in the paradoxical gesture Derrida calls “dissemination,”

Germination, dissemination. There is no first insemination. The semen is already swarming. The ‘primal’ insemination is dissemination. A trace, a graft whose traces have been lost. [...] Each term is indeed a germ, and each germ a term.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ On leadership in culture cf. J. Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. P. Kamuf (New York, 1985), pp. 27–29. Derrida quotes there the following fragment from Nietzsche’s *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (1872): “All culture (*Bildung*) begins with the very opposite of that which is now so highly esteemed as ‘academic freedom’: *Bildung* begins with obedience (*Gehorsamkeit*), subordination (*Unterordnung*), discipline (*Zucht*) and subjection (*Dienstbarkeit*). Just as great leaders (*die grossen Führer*) need followers, so those who are led need leaders.”

⁴⁶ J. Derrida, *Spurs...*, pp. 64–65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁰ J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 304.

Each term as a germ is always already different from itself, but the difference cannot be attested. It inseminates another term-germ, another irreducible difference. "Difference as such," says Barbary Johnson, "cannot ever be affirmed as an ultimate value because it is that which subverts the very foundation of and affirmation of value."⁵¹ Woman-truth is such a difference, she is always different from herself and thus, let us repeat, cannot be "propriated."

Locked in a casket by her father's will (a legal act), behind the significant colours of metals, and even more significant inscriptions, Portia, now returned from the court room, can nothing but seduce (even against her will) and wait to be unveiled by a man. But when Bassanio finds a copy of his beloved original in the leaden casket and is informed by Portia that

This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord's[...] (III.ii.170—171)

all he actually gets is a ring (the homophony of my "lord's" and "my lords" is worth noticing here). Portia neither declares that she gives, nor does she give Bassanio a simply graspable object of his desire. She gives him everything, but this everything can only be a part which substitutes the whole. The ring does not symbolize "this same myself." As a substitute, and as a signifier, it is all that Portia has to offer. She gives herself *for* something else. Bassanio (along with Gratiano) ignores this fact offering the ring back to disguised Portia and thus depriving himself of all that he has got of her. In this way Portia as it were marries herself thus putting on one more mask, adding one more "layer" of style upon "this same herself." The men gladly believe they have their wives while the women make men cuckolds and remain "disappropriated" playfully reading their own "possessions" or identities to the letter. Portia does not lie when she informs Bassanio that "by this ring the doctor lay with me" (V.i.259), but read to the letter this fact is "too true" to be true, and the men happily accept it as a joke. "Because a 'woman'," says Derrida, "takes so little interest in truth, because in fact she barely even believes in it, the truth, as regards her, does not concern her in the least."⁵² Woman-truth is too true to be a truth. The truths and treasures Bassanio and Gratiano finally grasp are again rings:

Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
So sore, as keeping safe Nerissa's ring. (V.i.306—307)

says happy Gratiano in the last words of the play, and then probably — if the words "Exeunt." and "FINIS" can mean that — follows Nerissa to her

⁵¹ B. Johnson, *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore, 1980), p. 12.

⁵² J. Derrida, *Spurs...*, p. 63.

bedchamber. Eagleton finds this absence of sexuality eloquent⁵³ and says that Shakespeare's

elaborate idioms of desire [...] are all "about" the physical act of coition itself, yet seem absurdly excessive of it, to the point where one begins to wonder whether the truth is the reverse, and the physical act merely provides a convenient occasion for certain forms of verbal display.⁵⁴

By "appropriating" the ring Gratiano also takes in possession Nerissa's body, and being very literal also her sexual organ. Quite unexpectedly we are returning to the world of carnival which Portia has already announced lifting the law in Venice. The legal bond of marriage is, discursively, changed into the carnivalesque "pork-feast" which crowns the carnival. "Carne Levare — the roasting and taking up meat [...] probably gave carnival its name,"⁵⁵ but Stallybrass and White also remind us that in early records of Greek and Latin slang, *χοιρος* and *porcus* or *porcellus* were used to describe the female genitalia.⁵⁶ And if we remember that Jessica sold her ring for a monkey, a popular figure in fairs and carnivals, the "too true" order of things will become only too complete.

The male desire to totally possess a property is also a gesture towards subjectivity as self-recognition, a desire to be what one is, of having one's particular, one's own properties which do not belong to anybody else. In the "carnivalization" of the idea of property Shakespeare both signals and delays the subjectivity whose kingdom is to come soon. Shakespeare's language is always at odds with the order to come which cuts off the head of the king about half a century later. With the king's (queen's) head still in its place the desire to be the sole possessor is an act of usurpation. The subject is as yet still a subject of the sovereign body. Shakespeare's order still dwells in the body of the king whose subjects do not define themselves from within as individuals with their exclusively own properties. Individual subjection, according to Francis Barker,

does not properly involve subjectivity at all, but a condition of dependent membership in which place and articulation are defined not by an interiorized self-recognition[...] but by an incorporation in the body politic which is the king's body in its social form.⁵⁷

Valuing social order, Shakespeare simultaneously opens up a space for the subject, but the space remains empty as posited beyond the grasp of human being, veiled in writing and language, tempting us with a mystery like Hamlet, the

⁵³ T. Eagleton, *William...*, p. 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁵ P. Stallybrass, A. White, *The Politics...*, p. 184.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵⁷ F. Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection*. London and New York: (Methuen, 1984), p. 31.

Mona Lisa of literature, as T.S. Eliot once called him.⁵⁸ Shakespeare posits the subject in disguise, as a certain “nothing” without an essence:

At the centre of Hamlet, in the interior of his mystery, there is, in short, nothing. The promised essence remains beyond the scope of the text's signification [...] It gestures towards a place for subjectivity, but both are anachronistic and belong to a historical order whose outline has so far only been sketched.⁵⁹

The promised truth of the subject cannot be eventually unveiled because this unveiling would endanger the body politic by inscribing the truth as available to anyone. What one finds behind the riddles of writing, behind the inscriptions on this or that “casket” is always only a picture of a woman (Portia), yet another writing or representation that promises something that does not quite belong to her, the paradoxical something which is nothing, and which always gives itself for something else. Shakespeare offers us this something either as absent and desired, or as present and dead, stabbed with a dagger like Lucrece. He thus annihilates the dream of the final presence of the subject pointing to that subject with a dagger. The desire for truth is thus rendered as a *self*-destructive activity, an activity which destroys him who desires as well as the object of desire; him as the usurper and the object as the woman-truth in whom there is eventually nothing to be grasped. Tarquin's rape of Lucrece, at which we shall have a closer look soon, is a model example of this double gesture. If there were any truth in woman, the usurper, could take it as his own property and thus divide the domain of the king, the dominion (this is exactly Lear's error) and endanger the social order. Simultaneously, however, the very idea of subjectivity, of the exclusively proper (however absent in its “realization”) endangers the social order for yet another reason. It makes the absolute monarch susceptible to usurpation. In other words, if there is a potentiality of there being something which is one's own, the very idea of the king with the state as his body politic is undermined as well. The potentiality of there being a subject inscribes this potentiality within the very person of the king whose power, it turns out, does not come from without, from God, but from himself. The absolute monarch could turn out to be a Macbeth. If in the absolutist state the monarch is the exclusive source of legitimacy, then power and violence are tolerated provided that the king himself is legitimate. Acts of violence, like the massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, for instance, make the legitimacy of violence a very important issue. Tyranny cannot come from God, and hence tyrant and usurper are actually synonymous terms. Only the usurper can be tyrannical, the legitimate king cannot. To show that this is not only Shakespeare's dilemma, let us quote a fragment in which the king himself verbalizes the potentiality of the usurper king. It seems to be the paradoxical

⁵⁸ T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, F. Kermode, ed. (London, 1975), p. 47.

⁵⁹ F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 37.

presence-absence of identity and subjectivity that forces King James to quite explicitly make a distinction between a lawful good king and an “usurping Tyrnat” in *Basilikon Doron* (1599):

The one acknowledgeth himselfe ordained for his people, having received from God a burthen of government, wherof he must be countable: the other thinketh his people ordained for him, a prey to his passions and inordinate appetites, as the fruites of his magnanimitie. And therefore, as their ends are directly contraire, so are their whole actions, as meanes, wherby they preasse to attaine to their endes.⁶⁰

Since there are no other symptoms than motives that distinguish good and bad kings, Alan Sinfield notices, the resistance to what seems to be an usurper might always turn out to be a rebellion against a legitimate king. “Absolutist ideology,” he writes, “declared that even tyrannical monarchs must not be resisted, yet Macbeth could hardly be allowed to triumph.”⁶¹ Neither Macbeth’s fall, nor his rise result from human agency, Sinfield argues. Macbeth’s usurpation and overthrow are prompted by some supernatural forces whose decrees are scrupulously followed by men. There are reasonable explanations for the moving of Birnam Wood and the birth of Macduff, but “the audience is allowed to believe[...] that these are (super) natural effects (thus the play works upon us almost as the Witches work upon Macbeth).”⁶² The question of human subjectivity again remains unresolved. Macbeth hardly does anything he would like to do, and becoming the usurper he acts against nature which predicts both his rise and fall. Human agency in the matters of the world is thus indicated and silenced at the same time, by the very forces which announce it. As in *Hamlet*, the interiority which could legitimize the active intervention into these matter, the idea of the subject as individual remains “gestural,” as Francis Barker puts it, and is actually rendered illegitimate.⁶³ The desire to possess something in its totality which makes subjectivity possible is always already restrained by the illegitimacy of the possession, by the political-epistemological “truth” that the object of desire always belongs to somewhere else. Woman-truth, let us repeat, is always already married. This does not mean, necessarily, that someone else fully possesses her (Bassanio’s ring is in fact all he has got), but that she is, as I have said, beyond any totalizing grasp because, paradoxical as it may seem, she is married to herself. These two themes of the usurper and the married woman quite openly meet in Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*.

⁶⁰ Quoted in A. Sinfield, “Macbeth: History, Ideology and Intellectuals,” *Critical Inquiry* 28 (1986), p. 65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶³ Cf. F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 36.

4. Shakespeare's *Lucrece*

From the *Argument* which opens the poem we learn that Laciŭs Tarquinius "Superbus" had already violated the social order in Rome causing the murder of the previous Caesar and "contrary to the Roman laws and customs [...] had possessed himself of the Kingdom."⁶⁴ The object of his desire is a married woman, Lucrece, who is unique among other wives because she is the only one who does not "enjoy herself" (she is "spinning amongst the maids") when the men of the army — otherwise enjoying themselves besieging Ardea — pay their wives unexpected night visits in Rome. Lucrece's chastity and beauty, reported to Tarquin by Collatinus, her husband, "inflamed the king" who decided to pay her another night visit, by himself, in order to besiege Lucrece instead of Ardea for a while.

Collatinus' story of Lucrece's beauty and chastity in which he "unlock'd the treasure of his happy state" (s. 3) and thus "published" it ("why is Collatine publisher of that rich jewel?" (s. 4)) initiates Tarquin's passage to the truth behind the veils of the text. Collatine's text is obviously not enough for Tarquin who wants to see the beauty speak for itself, and not through the inadequate human tongue:

Beauty itself doth of itself persuade
The eyes of men without an orator. (s. 5)

What he reads from Lucrece's face when he arrives at Collatium is not pure beauty "speaking itself," but a dialogue of beauty with chastity. Her beauty does not speak one tongue, it does not present itself, but mixes and simultaneously struggles with her virtue so that it is impossible to decide which of the two is dominant:

When beauty boasted blushes, in despite
Virtue would stain that o'er with silver white [...]
The sovereignty of either being so great,
That oft they interchange each other's seat [...]
The silent war of lilies and the roses,
Which Tarquin view'd in he fair face's field. (s. 8, 9, 10)

This fair vision, infinitely more perfect than Collatine's story ("her husband's shallow tongue, [...] hath done her beauty wrong," (s. 12)) is still in a sense "impure" as it is not the final unveiling of a perfect object. The quest continues. Lucrece goes to her bedchamber while Tarquin remains sleepless "resolving the soundry dangers of his will's obtaining" (s. 19). In a long dialogue with himself he

⁶⁴ Cf. *The Argument*. In the discussion of *Lucrece* I shall refer to the numbers of stanzas.

silences the language of his conscience, and concludes the dialogue saying to himself in Shakespearian verse:

My will is strong, past reason's weak removing.
 [...] debating die!
 My heart shall never countermand mine eye [...]
 My part is youth, and beats these from the stage:
 Desire my pilot is, beauty my prize; (s. 35, 40)

His desire, however, the natural motor of his pursuit, is already a script (his "part"). He thinks it is his natural voice but actually follows a pre-written scenario. The "pilot" of his passage is then rhetorically transformed into the light at the end of his torch, the only sign which he is going to follow simultaneously wielding it as its master:

Where at a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth,
 Which must be lode-star to his lustful eye; (s. 26)

With his eye now turned into the dangerous tool of seeing through, and with the burning torch in his hand, Tarquin "marches to Lucrece's bed," but his passage is ceaselessly delayed by a discourse of objects which separate him from the sleeping beauty, and which Shakespeare ambiguously calls "The locks between her chamber and his will" (s. 44). The objects speak, produce noises and they yield only to expose that there is nothing but some other discourse behind them. Tarquin translates all these voices into the language of his own script lit on the torch:

As each unwilling portal yields him way,
 Through little vents and crannies of the place
 The wind wars with his torch to make him stay,
 And blows the smoke of it into his face,
 Extinguishing his conduct in this case;
 But his hot heart which his desire doth scorch,
 Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch. (s. 45)

Smoke is the handbook example of the indexical sign. Tarquin's "index," however, is the fire itself. He makes smoke into what it should directly point to. There is no symbolization, no veil of writing or signification involved. The materiality of the signifier is what constantly defers him, and to which he remains blind and deaf. The next obstacle not only talks to Tarquin, but it also illustrates the Derridean *objet pointu*:

Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks:
 He takes it from the rushes where it lies,
 And griping it, the needle his finger pricks;

As who should say, this glove to wanton tricks
 Is not inur'd; return in haste;
 Thou sees't our mistress' ornaments are chaste. (s. 46)

The counter discourse continues in Lucrece's bedchamber. The bed is veiled with curtains which "hide the silver moon," and her naked body "slacks his rage" (s. 61). Tarquin looks and admires the body with "more than admiration" (s. 60). He does not merely see it, he pierces it through seeing not only the body but also "ranks of blue veins" beneath the surface of her skin. Lucrece's body becomes yet another obstacle instead of the object capable of satisfying his desire. Tarquin seems to desire the flesh, he wants as it were to devour her — "grim lion [...] o'er his prey" (s. 61) says Shakespeare. Lucrece's breasts are compared to two round turrets upon the defensive wall of her body (s. 63) thus conflating Lucrece and Ardea. What he desires seems now to be the absolute silence and "stylelessness" of death, a "nothing" which is his prize — beauty. "To want one's death" and "to want one's life" are actually synonymous despite the seemingly opposite objects of desire. Tarquin seems to desire both.

When Lucrece wakes up and tries to talk to her foe, her protests are suppressed. He says: "by heaven, I will not hear thee" (s. 96) and eventually "with the nightly linen that she wears, he pens her piteous clamours in her head" (s. 98). Tarquin rapes Lucrece in the darkness of the night, and in absolute silence. But instead of gaining anything he loses all aspects of his virility:

And then with lank and lean discolour'd cheek,
 With heavy eye, knit brow and strengthless pace,
 Feeble Desire, all recreant, poor and meek,
 Like to a bankrupt beggar wails his case: (s. 102)

Lucrece calls Collatine back home, exposes Tarquin's crime (although what she does cannot be called, as we shall see, an exposition or a statement of fact), and kills herself publically with a knife thus causing the fall of Tarquin.

Ian Donaldson accuses Shakespeare of an evasion of moral issues in his rendering of the myth of Lucrece. Shakespeare, according to Donaldson, fails to unambiguously state whether Lucrece is morally tainted by the rape or not. The critic also says that Shakespeare makes nothing of the political aspects of the story.⁶⁵ It seems, however, that the seeming absence of these two aspects, or better, of an explicitly moral judgement and of political considerations, are the result of the impossibility of separating ethics from politics in the discourse in which, as I have said, individuality is only signalled and simultaneously denied as transgressive. The rape of Lucrece is but an event which serves the purpose of

⁶⁵ Cf. I. Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: a Myth and its Transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

exposing the illegitimacy of the person in power, and thus the immorality of political usurpation. Tarquin's blind desire to possess and the use of violence are the necessary evidence of his usurpation, and in order to become legal evidence they have to be publically revealed as an act of violence against the divine law, and thus against the state. Only then can Tarquin's *individual* desire be rendered as politically illegitimate (in addition to its epistemological failure which the poem also explores). The king cannot be brought to a Court of Justice in person, however, and nobody can actually accuse him. A court which accuses a monarch is still unthinkable in Shakespearean discourse.

Interestingly enough, at his own trial, Charles I refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the court and of the law which dared to judge him. Law and order can only be guaranteed by the sovereign power, by the law in whose construction no subject may have a share. To bring the king to court is tantamount to bringing the law itself to court, which in turn is tantamount to undermining the whole order of things that rests upon it. Charles I said:

[...]and do you pretend what you will, I stand more for their liberties, for if power without law may make laws, may alter the fundamental laws of Kingdom, I do not know what subject he is in England that can be sure of his life and anything that he calls his own.⁶⁶

The liberty of the subject is thus thinkable, for Charles I, *only* if it does not partake in the sovereignty which is "nothing pertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clean different things."⁶⁷ In the absolutist state it is the power of the law as personified by the ruler that *offers* all the members of the social body their liberties and properties in the sense of both what they have and what they are. Any transgression of that sort of property is an offence against the sovereign himself, and for this reason all justice must be done in his name. What happened in 1649 quite explicitly redefined the distribution of power. Tried and executed in the name of the People of England, the sovereignty of Charles I did not die along with the king, but, as Catherine Belsey notices,

the vertical scheme of authority has been supplanted by a broadly horizontal one in which individuals, including the sovereign, are accountable to the social body. [...] The people are now sovereign, and the way is open for their subjection to that sovereignty.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ R. Lockyer, ed. *The Trial of Charles I* (London, 1974), p. 88.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶⁸ C. Belsey, "The Tragedy, Justice and the Subject," in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, Essex Sociology of Literature Conference (Essex, 1981), p. 180. It is with this shift of subjectivity and sovereignty that wars in the name of humanity become thinkable. The sovereign's right to kill and to summon to die in his defence is now, says Foucault, "manifested as simply the reverse of the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its life. [...] Wars are no longer waged in the name of the sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life's necessity: massacres have become vital." M. Foucault, *The History...*, pp. 136–137.

There is no such possibility in *Lucrece*, and it is this new subjectivity that the story attempts to prove transgressive. This is not an easy task because, as I have said, Tarquin cannot be simply accused, Lucrece cannot simply tell the story of her rape in some court. Such a situation would be an anachronism reminiscent of the trial of Charles I, of the subject who openly lays claim to sovereignty. What Shakespeare tries to do in *Lucrece* is, paradoxically, to present such a trial without presenting it. He accuses the law, or at least marks the crisis of absolutist justice, and yet he wants to preserve that justice. In his usual eloquent manner he makes Tarquin accuse himself of the transgression without even appearing in the court.

Weak and deprived of power after his failed attempt at beauty Tarquin "exeunt" and never comes back. The fact that he failed to gain anything is the secret only the text and the reader know, but the secret of his transgression is also known by Lucrece. Not only is the secret known by Lucrece, but it is also "writ" upon her:

[...] the illiterate, that knows not how
To cipher what is writ in learned books,
Will quote my loathsome trespass in my looks. (s. 116)

Lucrece does read the "trespass" as hers although she did not have much choice left.⁶⁹ This might be interpreted in some sense as a moral dilemma if Lucrece were simply "herself." We soon learn, however, that there are now (at least) two of them: "Myself thy friend, will kill myself, thy foe" (s. 171). "Thy" seems to refer to her husband here, but in stanza 148, while considering her suicide, Lucrece says almost the same to her hand:

Since thou couldst not defend thy royal dame,
And wast afeard to scratch her wicked foe,
Kill both thyself and her for yielding so. (s. 148)

There are more passages like this in the poem and I shall not even try to answer the question of who exactly did what to whom. There is a Lucrece who is tainted, and there is a Lucrece who is chaste. Neither of them is simply Lucrece. The transgression written upon her contaminates her chastity which is equally, as it were, textual. Lucrece's chastity is the legal contract of marriage which defines her as necessarily chaste, and one cannot really talk about any absolute virginity or chastity as regards women at that time. There is no such chastity or virginity outside the bond of marriage because all women are, at least potentially, married. This may sound an exaggeration but it is what we learn from the writer known only as T.E.⁷⁰ who wrote in 1632:

⁶⁹ The other option was to be raped and only then killed along with a slave in the role of her lover.

⁷⁰ Terry Eagleton's penchant for feminism excludes him as the potential author.

In this consolidadtion which we call wedlock is a locking together. It is true, that man and wife are one person; but understand in what manner. When a small brooke or a little river incorporateth with Rhodanus, Humber, or Thames, the poor rivulet looseth her name; it is carried and recarried with the new associate; it beareth no sway; it possesseth nothing coverture. A woman as soon as she is married, is called *covert*; in Latine *nupta*, that is “veiled”; as it were clouded or over-shadowed; sha hath lost her streame [...] Her new self is her superior; her companion, her master [...] All women are understood either married, or to be married, and their desires are to their husbands.⁷¹

Woman cannot even have a name (like Rhodanus, for instance) of her own, and her existence cannot be totalized within some pure totality without men and their laws. Lucrece thus knows that she is chaste, but she also knows that she is impure, that upon the chastity there is also an ineradicable text of impurity “writ” upon her. Lucrece is only physically impure (“covert”), but it is exactly the reason why she cannot communicate her purity. Two contradictory laws speak through her, and in this way Tarquin’s “trespass” is not so much hers as her. She has no other legitimate status except for that written upon her and since this status is ambiguous, all moral judgements passed on Lucrece as “herself” are also bound to be ambiguous. Shakespeare develops quite an elaborate “semiology” of women in order to eventually abolish Tarquin. It is, interestingly, not very different from T.E.’s ideas, only instead of the “poor rivulet” he suggests wax, a formless substance in quite a Saussurean manner:

For men have marble, women waxen minds,
And therefore they are form’d as marble will [...]

Then call them not the authors of their ill,
No more than wax shall be accounted evil,
Wherein is stamp’d the semblance of a devil. (s. 178)

The spheres of the law, order and language are thus alien to women who must only blindly take what the hard marble moulds on them. If there is any form in women, it is never really theirs, and it is men as the *authors* who should take responsibility for whatever she does. Shakespeare repeats this idea in a more ambiguous way when he writes:

Though men can cover crimes with bold stern looks,
Poor women’s faces are their own fault’s books. (s. 179)

The ambiguity of “their own” is exactly the ambiguity of Lucrece’s morality. She does not know which of the two writings on her face is properly hers, but she knows that it is impossible to disambiguate this text. She hardly takes part in either her chastity or impurity. Her impurity is an offence against her “legal,”

⁷¹ T.E., *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights* (London, 1632). Quoted in S. Findley, E. Hobby, “Seventeenth Century Women’s Autobiography,” *1642: Literature...*, p. 13.

marital, chastity and thus also an offence which contaminates not so much her, but Collatine, her husband. Lucrece is in this sense guilty of adultery regardless of the evidence she presents to the "court." The offence is serious enough to have the status of a capital offence as late as 1650,⁷² and in this predicament Lucrece can nothing but kill "herself" in order to punish her impure self (the one stamped by Tarquin) and thus expose her purer one (stamped by the law and Collatine), and to thus purify her husband's honour and do justice to impure Tarquin. The spectacle of that death is quite remarkable (Lucrece gets ready for it for about one third of the poem). When her husband, her father and the men of the army arrive at Collatium she welcomes them with tears and tells them the story of her rape. Her tears "purge her impure tale" as it was planned in advance (s. 154), but, interestingly enough, she does not mention her rapist's name despites Collatine's inquiries:

Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break,
She throws forth Tarquin's name: "He, he" she says,
But more than "he" her poor tongue could not speak;
Till after many accents and delays,
Untimely breathings, sick and short assays,
She utters this: "He, he, fair lords, 'tis he,
That guides this hand to give this wound to me." (s. 246)

The namelss "he" (it is Shakespeare who informs us that Lucrece talks about Tarquin) is thus not only a rapist but also a murderer and an executioner in one person, and it is difficult not to read this as an accusation of the whole "malekind." Yet everyone in Collatium knows the transgressor although his name hardly enters the stage. The stamp of impurity he left upon Lucrece is ineradicable and it speaks by itself pointing to Tarquin, as his signature, even after Lucrece "sheathes" the knife in her body:

[Her blood] bubbling from her breast, it doth divide
In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood
Circles her body in on every side,
Who, like a late-sack'd island, vastly stood
Bare and unpeopled in this fearful flood.
Some of her blood still pure and red remain'd
And some look'd black, and this false Tarquin stain'd. (s. 294)

In the society of blood, says Foucault, "of 'sanguinity' — where power spoke *through* blood [...] blood was a *reality with a symbolic function*."⁷³ Suicide was actually a crime, a way to usurp power, to shed blood, the power of death (and life) which only the monarch, or the Lord above, had the right to exercise.⁷⁴ Had

⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷³ M. Foucault, *The History...*, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Lucrece *simply* killed herself, she would have testified to the individual and private right to die (or to live), and thus would have announced the kind of subjectivity which, as yet, was hardly thinkable. Lucrece is rendered in the poem as the victim of a murderer and of a judge in one person:

My bloody judge forbade my tongue to speak;
No rightful plea could plead for justice there: (s. 236)

And since this unjust judge cannot himself be judged because he is the king, it is the impurity of “some of her blood” which seems to replace the accused and serves as the *corpus delicti* against Tarquin, as the evidence of impurity of Tarquin’s blood and hence of his usurpation. We learn, eventually, that it was not Lucrece who was “wronged,” but Collatine whom Brutus (the ambiguous figure which appears at the end of the poem) calls the “wronged lord of Rome” (s. 260). Since Collatine is also the lord of Lucrece the metonymy is obviously made use of and we soon learn that Rome’s chastity is also at stake:

Since Rome herself in them [abominations] doth stand disgraced;
By our strong arms from forth her fair streets chas’d. (s. 265)

All the men swear to revenge the death of their true wife by “This bloody knife” (s. 263) and once more make use of Lucrece’s body carrying it to Rome as a “propagandistic” text to publish the transgressive character of the previous regime. Led by Brutus

They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence;
To show her bleeding body thorough Rome,
And so to publish Tarquin’s foul offence; (s. 265)

Tarquin is exiled and “the state government changed from kings to consuls” (*The Argument*). A new social order is pointed to.



Milton's Temple

“... tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.”¹

I do beleve the world draws near its end, yet is neither old nor decayed, nor will ever perish upon the ruines of its owne principles. As the Creation was a worke above nature, so is its adversary, annihilation; without which the world hath not its end, but its mutation.

(Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*)

1. The Censor

Between November 1640 and June 1643, after the abolition of the Caroline executive courts England enjoyed an unprecedented freedom of press. The customary registration of books and other publications in The Stationer's Company had been neglected and on June 4th 1643 an *Order for the Regulating of Printing* was enacted by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament. A fragment of it reads:

It is therefore Ordered by the Lords and Commons in *Parliament*, that no Order or Declaration of both, or either House of *Parliament* shall be printed by any, but by order of one or both the said Houses: Nor other Book, Pamphlet, paper nor part of any such Book, Pamphlet, paper, shall henceforth be printed, unlesse the same be first approved and licensed under the hands of such person or persons as both, or either of the said Houses shall appoint for the licensing of the same.²

Against this act, in *Areopagitica* (1644) now regarded as “one of the great texts

¹ *Paradise Lost* XII. 95—96. Throughout this chapter I am indebted to Francis Barker and to his book — *The Tremulous Private Body*.

² Quoted in John Hales' “Introduction” to Milton's *Areopagitica* (Oxford, 1917), p. XV.

written against censorship," John Milton, himself a censor in the years 1651—2,³ "raises his voice [...] with so noble a vehemence, so that it will still be heard to the very end of time."⁴

Milton's immortal voice heard in *Areopagitica* tells us a lot more, however, than it is good, desirable and necessary to free print from licensing. What is always at stake in writing about any power to confine is not only the particular techniques this power utilizes, but the legitimacy of the whole system which utilizes such techniques. Milton's desire to liberate the press from licensing was thus not so much an expression of liberalism as a revolutionary gesture which, as it were, cut off the head of the king before the execution of Charles I. This obviously does not mean that Milton's voice was prophetic or unique at that time. There were Erastians like Thomas Coleman, Socinians like Crell, Baptists like Busher or people like Thomas James (Bodley's first librarian, "who used the Papal Index to help him to decide what books to order for his Library.") who also argued for freedom of opinion and for religious diversity.⁵ There were also many others writing against such ideas. The political dispute of the sixteen-forties, the very possibility of that dispute, testifies to a change within the discourse which redefines the position from which one can speak, regardless of whether one speaks for or against monarchy. Texts like *Basilikon Doron* (1599) and *Eikon Basilike* (1649) were both written in the name of monarchy (the former by King James, the latter by John Gauden with the probable assistance of Charles I). But while King James sought to justify royal violence, *Eikon Basilike* attacked the violence against the monarch and presented the king as the victim of an illegitimate court, as a martyr. The text thus also discursively posits the possibility of the king's defensive position. Denying the legitimacy of the court, which dared to try the king for treason, and depicting Charles as a martyr, *Eikon Basilike* actually offers up the king to the judgement of the people of England and asks them for a "better" justice. If King James and, as we have seen, Shakespeare could only vaguely mention the illegitimacy of a particular monarch and only suspect him of usurpation, the scene of the sixteen-forties is a court room in which the monarchy itself is on trial. Junius Brutus, marginalized in *Lucrece* as the one who only promises the re-establishment of order in Rome after the transgression of one illegitimate king, becomes for Milton an "almost godlike mind [...] that [...] great avenger of the lusts of kings."⁶ What the previous discourse saw as anarchy and chaos — the only possible consequence of liberty of expression and publication and of religious diversity comparable to the

³ Cf. C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977), p. 184.

⁴ J. Hales, „Introduction," p. xiv.

⁵ C. Hill, *Milton...*, p. 152.

⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 466.

dispersion of the builders of Babel⁷ — becomes now the foundation of the order of things in which the locus of power is relegated to the domain of civil life and that of the private citizen. Censorship offers itself now as one of the objects to be attacked because it quite openly hinders the birth of something that has already been born; it silences the individual voices whose diversity sounds false notes in the monotonous choir of truth it protects. In writing against censorship Milton does not accuse it of too little tolerance, he does not call for a more liberal licensing, but he writes against the place from which censorship dictates what can be said, against the institution of overt dictatorship. As we shall see, instead of getting rid of it, he only relocates this dictatorship *in* the individual, in the civil subject now capable of writing what he wants provided that he censors himself. In this sense Milton gestures toward the tyrant and simultaneously implants him within the subject who is to see the areas of transgression by himself, who demarcates them as the areas of the other from within and, ideally, punishes himself for their penetration. “Despite the agonistic rhetoric of liberty” *Areopagitica* actually redefines the social roles by displacing the tyrant into us, into our own subjects.⁸

Milton’s homily begins with a fierce attack upon the inventors of censorship. When it comes to Rome and the Inquisition he says:

After which time [year 800] the Popes of *Rome*, engrossing what they pleas’d of Politicall rule into their owne hands, extended their dominion over mens eyes, as they had before over their judgements, burning and prohibiting to be read what they fansied not; yet sparing in their censures [...] until the Councell of Trent and the Spanish Inquisition [...] brought forth ... those catalogues and expurging Indexes [...] Nor did they stay in matters Hereticall, but any subject that was not to their palat they either condemn’d in a prohibition, or had it strait into the new Purgatory of an Index.⁹

Were they only “matters Hereticall” censorship would still be accpactable, but since the censors also prohibited books they simply did not like or understand, occasionally burning a good one, it is impossible, says Milton, “to sublimat any good use of such an invention” (p. 13). He accepts the fact that the Judges of Areopagus ordered the books of Protagoras to be burnt because their censorship was restricted to “either blasphemous and Atheistical, or Libellous” (p. 6) matters, but he also adds that the ancients simply did not have censorship, that till the time of “the most Antichristian Council ... Books were ever as freely admitted into the world as any other birth” (p. 12). Inquisitorial censorship is

⁷ There is no king or controller who supervises the building of Babel in the Old Testament version of the story (Gen 11. 1—9).

⁸ F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 48.

⁹ J. Milton, *Areopagitica* (Oxford, 1917), p. 10. Throughout this chapter I shall refer to the numbers of pages in this edition.

thus rendered as an institution without continuity or tradition, as an institution whose right to guard truth is an act of usurpation whose working is but a display of the ignorance of particular censors. In *Defensio Secunda* (1654) Milton quite clearly stated that he wrote *Areopagitica* first of all in order that the licensing of books

might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiberal individuals, who refused their sanction to any work which contained views [...] at all above the level of the vulgar superstition.¹⁰

Translating this into more general terms, Milton presents censorship as a power which clearly intervenes in the realms of liberty, freedom, and truth. If we recall Foucault's interdiction (cf. *Preface*) we might say that what takes place in Milton's text is a demystification of power's cynicism which makes that power no longer acceptable. Due to its infelicity in the hands of the ignorant, censorship presents itself as aggressive, it manipulates and distorts what it should only guard and thus becomes a means of confinement and repression visible upon the social landscape. It is no longer just a question of limit of liberties but also of their institutionalized transgression. Since, as I have noted earlier, secrecy must necessarily be power's prerequisite, the moment power becomes spectacular — and in Milton's hands it certainly does — the spaces must open where it can be implanted anew and thus regain its partial invisibility. Milton's text hides these spaces by its affirmative rhetoric of liberty which constantly forces the reader to think that all sorts of diversity of opinion are accepted and warmly embraced, that the text does not say "no" to anything.

Milton's attack on the Inquisition concentrates on the negativity of its verdicts, on the "no" Milton himself employs, yet often does not acknowledge. In an ideally functioning censorship the "no" cannot be easily exposed for the simple reason that there is nowhere to record it: the unpublished book does not actually exist. The censor's *imprimatur*, on the other hand, is a mark of power's presence and neutrality with no traces of its repressive character. By positing censors as illiterate and incompetent, *Areopagitica* attests to the potential existence of areas which some more competent censor would allow to see the light. It thus endows the *imprimatur* with a "no" it says to those truths which have not been communicated. In order to diminish the authority of *imprimatur* Milton ridicules it for its exuberance:

Imprimatur, If it seem good to the reverend Master of the holy Palace,
Belcastro, Viceregent.

[...] Sometimes 5 *Imprimatures* are seen together dialogueswise in the Piazza of one Title page, complementing and ducking each to other with their shav'n reverences [...] whether he Author who stands by in perplexity at the foot of his Epistle, shall to the Presse or to the sponge. (pp. 11—12)

¹⁰ Quoted in English in J. Hales, „Introduction,” p. vii.

2. The Public Burning

“To the Presse,” the book quite naturally circulates as one more authorized truth among others. What is not true can only be confessed in the enclosed silence of the censor’s chamber, in the act of reading. The untrue must remain invisible, and, ideally, nonexistent. If a bad book happens to be published it goes “to the sponge” of the index and is preferably turned into nothingness in the purgatory of fire. The whole ritual of public execution and of investigation which precedes it can be traced here.

The practice of judicial torture has an important share in the formation of modern subjectivity. In England torture to extort evidence was not formally allowed, but torture survived as punishment till 1837, along with the public execution.¹¹ On the continent torture was used in investigation till the late eighteenth century. It was also on the continent that Inquisitorial censorship was practiced. The legal investigation was necessarily hidden from both the public and the accused. Neither the charges nor the evidence were known to him. Except for his body the accused was absolutely denied the possibility of participation in the proceedings:

The magistrate constituted, in solitary omnipotence, a truth by which he investigated the accused; and the judges received this truth ready made, in the form of documents; for them these factors alone were proof; they met the accused only once in order to question him before passing sentence.¹²

Ideally the procedure should end with a confession, although it was not required by the law. The criminal’s confession was not the *evidentia rei*; it was not the proof of proofs but was treated as one proof among those already assembled during the secret preliminary investigation. Despite its necessary spontaneity, all sorts of coercion, including torture, could be used to obtain it. Hence the ambiguous status of the confession: one of numerous proofs, but at the same time obtained by torture, necessarily formulated before the competent court, made in full consciousness — the most important and actually indispensable proof.¹³ The confession was simultaneously a part of the investigation and its counterpart, the procedure itself and its confirmation. It was the only moment that the criminal could participate in the procedure; but his participation wholly belonged to the procedure, its spontaneity was, as it were, controlled from within. As Foucault notices, judicial torture

¹¹ Cf. M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (Penguin Books, 1975), p. 8. Cf. also G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (Pelican Books, 1982), pp. 363—364.

¹² M. Foucault, *Discipline....*, p. 35.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 39.

was not a way of obtaining truth at all costs [...] It was a regulated practice obeying a well defined procedure; the various stages, their duration, the instruments used, the length of ropes, and the heaviness of weighs [...] all this was, according to different local practices, carefully codified.¹⁴

If this judicial game did not end in a confession, the criminal turned out to be the winner, but only partially; the investigation would continue without a confession, and the suspect would never be declared not guilty since all the circumstantial evidence was still valid — his only gain was that he could not be condemned to death.

This ceremonial of investigation, carried out in secret, with its documentation and the final signature of the suspect was also a ceremonial of truth. The accused confirmed the truth of the investigation, thus confirming the truth of the law. His not confirming it, paradoxically, confirmed it too, since he nevertheless remained guilty, at least to some extent:

The suspect, as such, always deserved a certain punishment; one could not be the object of suspicion and be completely innocent.¹⁵

Truth and falsehood was not, as it seems, a binary opposition, but rather a matter of degree. I have already said that torture was also a kind of punishment practiced independently of investigation, but it was within the investigation itself that it was simultaneously a punishment. The suspect deserved punishment, and was justly punished by the torture he was submitted to during the investigation. The degree of torture marked the degree of guilt, but it also marked “the degree of truth.”¹⁶ It was impossible for the law to be unjust. The inevitable confirmation of it led to another ceremony, to the spectacle of public execution. It was only then that power could be shown to the public — not power and its mechanisms, not power as an organized, systematic application of pain, but power as truth; the truth of power and the power of truth. Repeated torture which ended in death, the “spectacle of he scaffold,” as Foucault calls it, reinforced the truth of the sovereign’s objective position.¹⁷ The truth of power consisted in its partial visibility as a limit. It remained passive only as long as it was left intact. Guilty or not guilty, the suspect was a transgressor who acted against that power and who *forced* that power to act. Confession served the purpose of justifying that action and its violence. The condemned had to repeat his confession in public, thus justifying his visible torture and death, but also justifying justice: “A successful public execution justified justice,” says Foucault, “in that it published the truth of the crime in the very body of the man to be executed.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

What is thus published is simultaneously renounced. The truth of the crime is not true in any positive sense, but it is the false truth that has to vanish. Like the book without an *imprimatur* whose content is the secret of the censor, the proof of the crime is the secret of the magistrate who represents the king. The public execution, like the public burning of books — the “author’s” confession was welcome in both cases — attests to the violation of the truth of the law which now requires a reparation for the damage. Since the law is also the monarch, the severity of punishment is also the monarch’s revenge.

The punishment is by no means seen as the king’s intervention into the liberties of the society; this cannot be so in the face of the absolute impossibility of an unjust verdict. The sovereign protects the liberties and repairs those spaces where the law was violated in order to make the law back into a natural whole. The task of the punishment is, according to Foucault, “to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did re-establish justice; it reactivated power.”¹⁹ The king acts here both as a person, and as an absolute limit of what is permissible or not, both subjectively (revenge) and objectively (reparation). These two motives are still visible as late as 1768:

If one commits something that the law forbids, even if there is no harm nor injury to the individual, it is an offense that demands reparation, because the right of the superior man is violated, and because it offends the dignity of his character.²⁰

The law must either come directly from the king, or it must be “censored” and approved by him in order to be valid: “For a law to be in force in this kingdom, it must necessarily have emanated directly from the sovereign, or at least been confirmed by the seal of his authority.”²¹ The law is not written by the king, he is not its author, but it emanates from him. The origin of the law is beyond him, but he is the only one capable of testifying to its truth. The “seal of his authority” is actually the *imprimatur* on the first page of the book of the law.

When I said that Milton cuts off the head of the king, I obviously did not mean that the actual monarchies fell apart only because Milton does not like their ideologies. His *Eikonoklastes* (1649), the text openly attacking monarchy and Charles I (after his death) was publically burnt during the Restoration. The texts from which the last two quotations come were written more than a century after *Areopagitica*. Writing about the censor’s *imprimatur* Milton obviously wrote about the king’s *imprimatur* as well, but also about writing, truth and subjectivity alien to the monarchy as conceived by James or Shakespeare. The fact that

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁰ P. Risi, *Observations sur les matières de jurisprudence criminelle* (Paris, 1768), p. 9. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 47.

²¹ P.F. Muyart de Vouglans, *Institut au droit criminel* (1757), p. xxxiv. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 47.

monarchy was the only political system in Europe till the French Revolution does not mean that the position and status of kings and their subjects must always be one and the same. As I have said in the *Preface*, we still live under the spell of monarchy, especially as regards the spheres of the law, although monarchs seem to be quite few.

The monarch and the censor Milton wants to get rid of are the figures to whom the truth and the law belong exclusively and totally, those to whom God directly dictates His verdicts and judgements. In the spectacle of the public execution the penalized body of the individual cannot actually communicate anything but the offence against the monarch's, and thus God's, verdicts. The burning book can communicate exactly the same. The king's power of life is the censor's power of *imprimatur*. What is denied in such a predicament is individual diversity and creativity, and the status of writing can only be that of a commentary upon something already written and published, a commentary upon the truth directly accessible only to the censor who carefully watches whether the commentary pertains only to what has been written so far. Commentary is not a description, a demonstration or presentation but rather a writing on the margin of some other text. It is enough to look at Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, for instance, to see it is mostly quotation.

Words and things were not quite different things to the pre-classical eye. Words did not point to things, both were fragments of a chain of resemblances in which what seemed to be hidden was always linked with the visible by a relation which now could be called metonymic. The meaning of the word was coded in the very form of the word, the inside was marked upon the surface.²² Paracelsus wrote in *Archidoxis magica*:

But we men discover all that is hidden in the mountains by signs and outward correspondences; and it is thus that we find out all the properties of herbs and all that is in stones. There is nothing in the depths of the seas, nothing in the heights of the firmament that man is not capable of discovering. There is no mountain so vast that it can hide from the gaze of man what is within it; it is revealed to him by corresponding signs.²³

Censors are mediators between God and the world and only they can decide who speaks through human creation, God or the Devil. They are in a sense God's publishers and God is the only conceivable Author. All things are marked with God's *stigmata*, all things hide the secret to which their very presence in the world testifies. Since the Devil can speak only through men, through what they do or say, the *imprimatur* is actually the sign which grants the book its status as God's creation. The Bible is thus the only text which can be called original, and all other writings can only be its commentaries and cannot thus lay claim to originality or

²² M. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1970), pp. 17—42.

²³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 32.

creativity. Literature as a creative or fictional kind of writing is obviously unthinkable within such an episteme. A bad book must be burnt not only because it is not true, but because it is an evil thing which comes from the other world, because it testifies to the presence of some other power. Even if one does not comment directly on the Bible, one comments on those who commented on it, and whose books carry God's sign in the censor's *imprimatur*. The comentator does not represent truth, but only confirms it. Truth is a continuous whole whose earthly body is also its continuation. Truth dwells in all earthly forms and if it is granted that none of these forms comes from the adversary we can safely read this book of the world without the risk of being tempted. Without censors there would be nobody to grant the truth its wholeness, just as it would be impossible to grant security and wholeness to the state without the king and his law.

In the world without censors Milton dreams of, one can never be certain what one is reading. Truth has to depart from the world and men have to begin to search for it anew, among the various, good and bad, writings of the world. It is also the fact that the book of the world cannot be censored in its totality that Milton uses as an argument against censorship:

And albeit what ever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, travelling, or conversing may be fitly call'd our book, and is of the same effect that writings are, yet grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far insufficient to the end which it intends (p. 27).

Since the object of censorship turns out to be beyond the censor's grasp, the status of truth has to change as well. It becomes thinkable that in what we hear or see there is already something false, some writing of the devil which systematically misleads us. Truth as a continuous whole, with writing as its commentary, must withdraw, and thus the metonymic chain of words and things must also be disrupted. Writing will no longer contain the truth in its body because the writing of the adversary has contaminated it. Continuous truth and writing, thus separated, will belong to two different worlds:

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on; but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the *Ægyptian Typhon* with his conspirators how they dealt with the good *Osiris*, took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth [...] went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second coming; [...] Suffer not these licencing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our marty'r'd Saint (p. 43).

Milton is evidently talking about a lost paradise in this fragment. The Apostles, like Adam, went to sleep and the adversary did his cunning job. As a result, Truth

fell to pieces and all that can be done is to rebuild it without the hope of ever completing the work in this world. In order for this work to proceed men must be allowed to write freely, because among the scattered fragments of language there are obviously some which belonged to the body of truth, and by burning them we could irrevocably lose even the hope of rebuilding it:

Who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, God's Image; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God as it were in the eye. [...] the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall fift essence, the braeath of reason it selfe, slaies immortality rather then a life (p. 6).

Good books contain the Truth, and their burning is an act not so much against the book as against its spirit, its soul which must be a part of the future edifice of truth. A good book, the Image of God, is actually written by a spirit, and not by a man. Books, says Milton, "are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are" (p. 6). Man is made in God's image, but his death, just like the death of bad books, Milton actually accepts ("wherof perhaps there is no great losse" (p. 6)). What does not take part in the reconstruction of truth, what is found unfit to the perfect shape of truth's second coming "shall to the sponge," and there obviously must be some judge or censor to decide whose soul or reason is the true one. What is to be reconstructed must as it were preexist itself.

3. The Edifice

The scattered body of truth cannot be simply unveiled for it must be first erected. In order to do this we must distinguish between good and bad writing without censors, by ourselves, and thus also correct the language of the tribe by getting rid of bad writing. Only then can our language be of any use in the construction. In order to see the truth in its wholeness and continuity we must first adequately reconstruct it, and this new approach to "her" is now by way of correction, of *adequatio* or *homōiosis*. Milton gives us some directives as to how we should reconstruct the edifice:

Yet these are the men cry'd out against for schismatics and sectaries; as if, while the Temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into continuity, it can only be contiguous in this world; neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay, rather the perfection consists in this: that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not very disproportionall arises the goodly and gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure. Let us therefore be more considerat builders, more wise in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected (p. 47)

In a study of *Areopagitica* David Aers and Gunther Kress notice that unlike in this fragment's Old Testament source in Kings I: 5—6, the builder's name goes unmentioned.²⁴ The Biblical text explicitly states that it was Solomon himself with whom God communicated, that Solomon was the only organizer of the process of building, and that workers building the temple were under the king's command. The workers who appear in Milton's rendering of the story "are not perceived in any chain of command and power," the authors say.²⁵ The sovereign, they also say, is "simply deleted" because his presence "fairly obviously [...] does not suit Milton's radical purposes."²⁶ The way the deletion is achieved is mainly by the abundant use of the passive voice and by the "non-transactive" use of verbs in which agents, often abstract nouns like "truth" or "virtue" do not "engage with the world in any concrete practice."²⁷

By forgetting to mention King Solomon, any by erasing the builders of the temple, Milton makes his construction arise "out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes." Instead of continuity of identical building blocks, whose identity as sameness is obviously granted by some censor, Milton propagates a contiguity of different, dissimilar elements which regardless of any hierarchy must only be artfully put together by some architect, to whom Milton refers using the pronoun "us." It is also "us" who give shape to the dissimilar stones. Building the temple and simultaneously cutting the stone "we" becomes the subject of the object that is being built. "We" becomes both Solomon and the workers. It is also "we," as members of the new society, that becomes the building blocks, and, to be exact, also the temple. The "great reformation" Milton expects is a new order of things in which "we" builds, and "we" build, "us" — "us" being at the same time the construction, and the marble of which it is constructed — sects, but also reasonable men, individuals, citizens. Milton's "we" is in this way always different from itself, it is a "we" whose identity (as *who* or *what* someone is) must be defined and constructed by itself, and thus must always transgress its own limits. In other words, it is impossible to point to the object of building, to the thing accomplished, because what "we" build(s) is both the bricks and the edifice which obviously is also a brickwork. It is also in a sense the builders, the "we" that "we" build(s). No room for censor's intervention seems to be left because the object of the intervention is beyond his grasp, as it can never be simply itself.

Surprisingly, Milton distinguishes between good and bad books as in the already quoted fragment in which he attacks those who kill "a good Booke." He is also quite literal about how bad books should be dealt with:

²⁴ D. Aers, G. Kress, "Historical Process; Individual and Communities in Milton's Early Prose," in *1642: Literature...*, p. 290.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

I deny not but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors (p. 5).

The censor must be dethroned as a tyrant but there also must be someone to do the justice. We cannot be quite sure to whom this justice is to be done, as the reference of “them” is far from being clear. A hint of where we should look for the censor comes from Milton’s reference to Ephesians burning their magic books in Acts XIX: 19:

It was privat act a voluntary act, and leaves us to voluntary imitation; the men in remorse burnt those books which were their own; the Magistrat by this example is not appointed; these men practiz’d the books, another might perhaps have read them in some sort usefully (p. 17).

Quite clearly, Milton is not against the burning of books in this fragment and he rather criticizes the bad use which can be made of them. The magic books are no doubt bad, but it is for us to read them in a reasonable way, and only then renounce them. Good and evil cannot be separated, and we can only know the former by the fight with the latter, by the fight which is “fought in the hearts of men.”²⁸ This is actually one of Milton’s major ideas in *Paradise Lost*. “The good book is reason itselfe,” but it is the same reason that dictates our reading of bad books and makes us realize that the books are actually bad:

He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is trully better, he is the true wayfaring Christian (p. 18).

It is thus not exactly the book which is the malefactor, but rather human reason gone astray. Reason decides what belongs to the body of Truth whose dissevered parts are to be reunited, and this reason needs no authority to regulate what should be considered reasonable. Reason is not only simply natural, but it is also naturally social, and, quite importantly, British:

Writers of good antiquity and ablest judgement have bin perswaded that ev’n the school of *Pythagoras* and the *Persian* wisdom took beginning form the old Philosophy of this Iland. And the wise and civill Roman, *Julius Agricola*, who govern’d once for *Caesar* preferr’d the naturall wits of Britain before the labour’d studies of the French (pp. 44–45).

The authority of the censor supervising “the production and content of discourse” gives way to the authority of individual reason defined in terms of both state and nature.²⁹

²⁸ C. Hill, *Milton...*, p. 364.

²⁹ F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 49.

There are thus at least two senses in which it is possible to understand the idea of the book in *Areopagitica*. In the first sense, it is an inscription, a writing extended to whatever there is perceivable. The book in this sense should not, and actually cannot, be censored or licensed. It merely says things which cannot really be dangerous to the reasonable and mature English whose natural wits will grant the proper interpretation. The second sense of Milton's idea of the book seems to have very little to do with print or writing. Such books "demeane" themselves as men do, and they have to be kept under control. But since to control the production of texts is both futile and "inquisitorial," it is man, the producer, that must be taken care of. The book is thus relocated in the sphere of human reason which becomes the only "dictator" of its content both in reading and in writing, and thus it is only the ability to interpret properly and only then to represent the content of this interpretation that must be licensed. It is no longer the production of discourses which interests the censor, but the content which, seemingly independent of the signifier so easily available to the erasing pen of the previous order, can only be made available by a new form of repression intervening directly into reason. On the final pages of *Areopagitica* Milton declares:

And as for regulating the Presse, let no man think to have the honour of advising ye better then your selves have done in that Order publisht next before this: that no book be Printed, unlesse the Printers and the Authors name, or at least the Printers be register'd. Those which otherwise come forth, if they be found mischievous and libellous, the fire and the executioner will be timeliest and the most effectuall remedy, that mans prevention can use (p. 57).

Directed against censors, *Areopagitica* is also a call for censorship. This new censorship is not a simple change of the moment of the censor's intervention, it requires a new version of the state and its citizens. The pre-publication censorship was mainly preventive and the object it dealt with was basically the written text which the censors might or might not prevent from being published. The writer's freedom to write was in theory unrestrained. It was the text, the object, whose public visibility was strictly measured. Ideally, there was no possibility of publishing an unwelcome book. If a book was "written to the world," as Milton would have it, without being licensed all measures were taken in order to prevent its public circulation as a text, and thus as truth. In *Areopagitica*, as Francis Barker puts it.

the powers of Miltonic "provisions" [...] are essentially deterrent (althought also punitive). They offer the discoursing subject the image of an eventuality of punishment which will occur if the offending book comes out, while she or he remains "free" to publish it.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

With such a positioning of censorship the censored object is also a censoring one, it is capable of looking at itself, and judging itself, from the outside. The outside's punitive and deterrent aspects make the discoursing subject a self-disciplined individual, an individual whose position within society is acceptable only if the discourse he "freely" produces is non-transgressive in his own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. Within such a society some force has to be produced to patrol the areas of transgression, to detect where books and people demean themselves without hindering their birth or publication. Before the Inquisition, says Milton,

Books were ever as freely admitted into the World as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stiff'd then the issue of the womb; no envious *Juno* sate cross-log'd over the nativity of any mans intellectual off-spring; but if it prov'd a Monster, who denies but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the Sea (p. 12).

The object to be detected is not so much an offence against some monarch, but an offence against the harmony of the state, a discontinuity too visible to be implanted within the elegant coexistence of the contiguous elements of the construction. This offence is also an offence against oneself as it produces a monstrosity equally illegal as unnatural. What is transgressive is what is too individual, what is original and unique, what, as dissimilar, does not fit the body of the edifice being erected.

Throughout the Classical Age the punishment for such a transgression ceases to be a revenge of the king and becomes a means of improvement and correction designed to make the transgressor fit for the civil state. The public execution, as I have said, is still visible on the social horizon but more and more reformers demand the abolition of this "theater of atrocity."³¹ The reformers' standard by which power operates "was no longer the power of the sovereign and the truth of the confession but rather 'humanity' which all parties to the social contract share".³² The subject who thus emerges as a private citizen can function only within the confines of what renders him as 'human'. It is not exactly his individuality that defines that subject, but rather the self-discipline which allows him to abstain from the falsehood of the inhuman, from the falsehood of the Other which can only come from the Adversary, from the Devil. In Milton's words, for instance, "To the pure all things are pure, not only meats and drinks, but all kinde of knowledge whether good or evil" (p. 16).

The Classical dictatorship of taste is in obvious ways linked with the implantation of self-discipline, of the ability to distinguish the human from the inhuman, good from evil. The reasonable creature abstains from evil even if

³¹ H. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault...*, p. 147.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

situated in the midst of it, and she or he does not need any guide or prescription that dictates the choice. Man is not kept captive “under a perpetually childhood of prescription,” but God “trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser” (p. 17). Man chooses freely what he likes provided that others like it as well, and the judgement is a matter of reason just as it is a matter of some generalized taste shared by all human beings. Endowed with this kind of reason, with this ability to judge, man does not judge his own reason, he does not look at what determines his humanity, but rather at the areas which endanger that humanity, at the areas which smell or taste of unreason, of any kind of transgression of reason like madness, or animality, or crime for that matter. He looks at the areas of the unnatural, unreasonable or monstrous disinterestedly, that is to say, not in order to, by any means, embrace them, but in order to confine them within the enclosed space of a hospital or an asylum from where no books or voices can come to the world without the mark of that monstrosity. It is for this reason that man hardly looks at himself in the Classical Age. He rather looks at the other which he simultaneously renounces and thus establishes the sphere of his identity. This is one of the reasons why the word ‘man’ has to be treated very cautiously in writing about it. As he who judges he is not an object of his own epistemology. In the Classical Age, says Foucault, “man does not exist,”³³ and “there was no epistemological consciousness of man as such. The Classical *episteme* is articulated along lines that do not isolate, in any way, a specific domain proper to man.”³⁴ The Classical man is not the modern “empirico-transcendental doublet,” but a private citizen whose privacy, as the sphere into which no gazes are directed, is granted him, paradoxically, by his constant visibility. The deep inside and meaning of that citizen come only with psychology and psychoanalysis, and for the time being his legitimate existence is a matter of being identifiable as man both by himself and by others. In order to be thus identifiable he has to constantly watch himself, he has to be aware of the danger of the Other from which he must abstain. In the state where power is not visible in one person, where the king’s head has been cut off, everybody wears at least a part of his crown, of the authority which is thus not only his, but generalized. Watching himself the citizen is thus being watched by the authority of his judgement, he is judged by the court of reason which is also the reason of others, the generalized reason to whose judgements he is also subjected. There is really nowhere to hide from the gaze and judgement of that reason, and Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon as the model of a prison in which the prisoners are never sure whether they are watched or not, and, as a result, constantly watch themselves is but a culmination of the Classical *episteme*. The *episteme* develops what Foucault calls the “disciplinary power”:

³³ M. Foucault, *The Order...*, p. 308.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Those on whom [the authoritarian power] was exercised could remain in the shade; they received light only from that portion of power that was concealed to them, or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried. Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subject who are to be seen [...] It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection (*maintient dous son assujettissement l'individu disciplinaire*).³⁵

This seems to be exactly the sort of liberty *Areopagitica* offers the builders of Milton's New Temple. Milton quite literally talks about the "vigilant eye" watching the books which "demeane themselves as well as men." The author's and the printer's names now obligatorily imposed upon the book, grant their identifiability and actually serve as part of the invigilation system which gives rise to the modern copyright whose disciplinary function has somehow been forgotten. The deterring element in Milton's proposal produces individuality controlled both from the outside and from the inside. Controlled by the the authority inscribed within the subject as self-control or self-discipline, the subject's actions are regulated to the point of transgression whose detection is granted by the vigilant eye of the state, by the eye which is also ours. In this way the state, says Francis Barker.

succeeds in penetrating into the very heart of the subject, or more accurately is pre-constituting that subject as one which is already internally disciplined, censored, and thus an effective support of the emergent pattern of domination.³⁶

³⁵ M. Foucault, *Discipline...*, pp. 187 and 189.

³⁶ F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 47.



From Swift to Pope

“This is worse than Swift.”¹

The well shaped changeling is a man, has a rational soul, though it appear not: this is past doubt, say you: make the ears a little longer, and more pointed, and the nose a little flatter than ordinary, and then you begin to boggle; make the face yet narrower, flatter [...] then presently is a monster. [...] I would gladly know what are those precise lineaments, which, according to this hypothesis, are or are not capable of a rational soul to be joined to them. What sort of outside is the certain sign that there is or is not such an inhabitant within? For till that be done, we talk at random of *man*.

(John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*)

1. The Hospital (A Plan)

In a letter to Pope (1725) Jonathan Swift wrote:

Drown the World, I am not content with despising it, but I would anger it if I could with safety. I wish there were an Hospital built for its despisers, where one might act with safety and it need not be a large Building, only I would have it well endowed.²

Pope himself was very much for the idea of the “Hospital to lodge the *Despisers of the world in,*” but he was afraid that it would mainly lodge “Maim’d Soldiers, and such as had been dis-abled in *its* Service.”³

The confined space the two men of letters seek cannot be easily located within a topography of eighteenth-century discourse. It is not as yet constructed, it

¹ Lady McLeod’s reply to Dr Johnson’s reply to her question in which she wanted to know “if no man was naturally good”. Johnson replied: “No, madam, no more than a wolf”. Lady McLeod said then, “in a low voice, ‘This is worse than Swift’”.

² G. Sherburn, ed., *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956) II, 342.

³ *Ibid.*, II, 349.

remains unerected, but its ambiguous, or undecidable, presence can be traced in the archives, on the margins of texts or documents which “treat” about something quite different. Milton’s new Temple of the Lord founded from the inside, by the self-confining censorship of its parts was the space in which, and by which, society was to be “cured” by its builders. The health of the builders, their shared, though individualized, reason was to grant the building the contiguity of the not too dissimilar parts. From Swift we learn that the perfect edifice need not actually be a large one, it needs only be safe and well endowed. The soldiers accomodated there must be fit for service, they must be ready to (safely) despise the world *there*. They must be fit for service for the hospital and its personnel, and not for the world. These soldiers, themselves the only personnel and, in fact, also the hospital, will act in defence of its unbuilt building against the detestable outside simultaneously defending themselves. Instead of “dis-abled” army from *that* world Pope “would rather have those that out of such generous principles as you and I, despise it, Fly in its face, than Retire from it.”⁴

To confine oneself within some space — even if the space is but a principle, as you and I — from which one can easily, like from a fortress, despise the world and simultaneously defy it. For to “Fly in its face” is an ambiguous gesture. Should one only despise and deny the hostile outside, or should one also resist and challenge it? Should the hospital be only a turret which gives shelter, or should missiles be thrown from it upon the world which will obviously not ignore the enemy building erected in its midst? How active a non-active resistance can be we have learnt much later from Gandhi, and Swift’s and Pope’s activities seem to be, unlike Gandhi’s, hostile. Their planned withdrawal is actually an attack whose task is to enlarge the hospital’s territory so that it, eventually, also transforms and embraces what is despised: to make the Dunces, Men; and the wild Yahoos, Houyhnhms. And in the world where “man” may mean a “horse” there must be at least some undecidability as regards, exactly, animals, men and the world.

In what follows, I shall begin, as I have already done, in Swift’s and Pope’s hospital, and “land” at the place seemingly distant from that secure territory, on the island of Robinson Crusoe. In this kind of journey I shall stop and have a look at (2. The Name) the ways man tries to securely confine himself by means of the properties of his proper name and thus posits himself as an individual citizen and subject whose correctness, as I argue, does not make him that different from an entry in a dictionary or an encyclopaedia. Then I propose another look at the public execution (3. The Transgression) in which the criminal’s transgression of the law is simultaneously the transgression of his identity, and which eventually turns out to be a public suicide of a disciplined subject. The confession of the criminal during the execution, and its links with such literary genres as autobiography, biography, or confession, provide an

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 349.

opportunity to look at (4. The Auto/biography) the novel and its role in the production of individuality. This individuality, it turns out (5. The (too) Individual), must be well measured and balanced, and the areas of its Other, of madness, unreason, extravagance, originality etc., must be carefully watched and censored so that they do not invade the inside of the individual. Hence also the ambiguous status of nature which is either wild, too natural, or already cultivated and guarded (6. The G(u)arden) by the vigilant eye of the gardener which sees or spies on the areas of transgression from a distance, but which can never see itself (7. The Eye) thus making the seeing subject actually invisible to himself. As a result human identity becomes a matter of disciplinary practices whose day to day rhythm confirms the presence of this invisible space (8. The Regulation). This ephemeral presence is thinkable only when man withdraws from the world which he finds improper (9. The Benevolent Misanthrope) to the sphere of property, of the individual property whose existence is determined by there being a society of equals (10. The Coffee-House Society) which distances itself from the improper world of the street and from the centre which hierarchically distributes the properties — God, king, the Father. The ambivalent figure of woman (11. The Woman) in this new society seems to, paradoxically, serve as the pattern for the establishment of male identity. She is seen as both the unregulated and unstable Other men fear and ridicule and as something already *familiar*, as something corrigible and thus an object of (or subject to) discipline regulation and education. Landing on Crusoe's island (12. The Island) we actually return to Swift's hospital, to the confined space in which one hopes to find a territory which one can identify as being properly one's own, where the enemy, the Other, the mad world despised by Swift seems to be far away.

This plan, or map, of the way from the hospital to the island marks a route which cannot be straight. Since it leads mainly through the eighteenth century, although I often look back, one can do nothing better than quote Tristram Shandy's digression concerning digressions:

Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule, — straight forward; — for instance, from *Rome* all the way to *Loretto*, without even once turning his head aside either to the right or to the left, — he might venture to fortell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end; — but the thing is, morally speaking, impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually solisiting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly; he will moreover have various

Accounts to reconcile:
 Anecdotes to pick up:
 Inscriptions to make out:
 Stories to Weave in:
 Traditions to sift:

Personages to call upon:
Panegyrics to paste up at this door;⁵

“Morally speaking,” it is immoral to pretend that one’s writing leads directly to some point, especially if one remembers that, at least in mathematics, there is, as regards points, a certain tendency toward nonexistence.

2. The Name

In a letter to Pope, let us begin again, Swift wrote:

Principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth. [...] I have got Materials Towards a Treatise proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*; and to show it should be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of Misanthropy (though not in Timon’s manner) the whole building of my Travels is erected: And I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my Opinion.⁶

All Swift’s love is towards individuals, and actually towards their proper names which, if adequately attached to objects, strictly define their meanings/identities. A being “capable of reason” is a being separated from the nameless chaos, from its bestiality. To be able to reason is also the ability to name, an ability to properly name oneself. The “turret” of the individualizing name gives shelter in the midst of the wilderness and wildness of unreason, it stops the movement of resemblances which link a John with a beast. In other words, it is the ability to clearly differentiate and individualize that changes the animal into a John. Without this ability one cannot properly be called man. Swift is ready to prove the falsity of the name. What is not human is thus, for him, not only animality but also and abuse of language which in turn reflects the failure to proper individuation and classification in the (Classical) world. If the animality of the human body endangers the emergence of an elegantly delimited identity as it were from below, the possibility of naming things that do not exist, the possibility of the madness of Pope’s “talking with gods,”⁷ endangers this secure sphere of what is properly named from above. If there is a secure territory within this sphere, it can only be between the wildness and the proper name, and it cannot be simply visible at some location, it cannot be simply found, but it must be constructed by certain limits, by confining words to things themselves confined to words. Without this confinement, this double-bind, the space *between* turns

⁵ L. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman* (London, 1956), p. 28.

⁶ G. Sherburn, ed. *The Correspondence...*, II, 325.

⁷ Cf. *The Dunciad*, III. 1. Quotations from Pope’s works are taken from *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq. In The Volumes Complete* (Berlin, MDCCLXIII).

out to be dangerous for man's identity because of the lack of substantiality, because of its inevitable dependence upon a coexistence of extremities, of animality with reason, of a physical body with a mind or a spirit none of which separately is constitutive of man. In the famous opening of Book II of *An Essay on Man* Pope wrote:

Know then thyself, presume no God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
In doubt to deem himself a God or Beast;
In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err; (II. 13—20)

Man belongs neither to nature nor to reason but is constituted by both within the space where the two opposites meet. By studying man we simultaneously study the world, its reason and unreason, its order incorporated into this ambiguous figure. Man is not simply a reasonable nature (animal rationale) whose task is to study itself, a nature capable of positing itself as its own object of study. He does not simply exist as one whole, as an object easily discernible for others and himself. It is rather because of man that nature and reason can be separated. Man is constitutive of what constitutes him, and only insofar as the space he inhabits is granted some sort of security can other things be offered some order and stability. Without man no orderly world would be thinkable just as man would be unthinkable without the world. In Book I of *An Essay on Man* Pope wrote:

The gen'ral order, since the whole began,
Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man. (I. 171—172)

Where the two orders find an expression is obviously discourse and its language, a language which is not treated as the autonomous object of study, but a language as the only way of studying both words and things. Language, like man, is not *in* the world, but *of* the world; it is not one more element in the chains of resemblances as in the Renaissance and earlier, but it is the means (and thus also the middle) through which the order of things is orderly represented. Pope's doctrine of *concordia discors*, of harmony through discord, is actually a doctrine of harmony in discourse, that is to say, the doctrine of harmony and order in the word which grants stability both to itself and to the things it represents and thus makes knowledge as discourse possible.⁸ In his analysis of the Classical *episteme* Foucault wrote:

⁸ Cf. I.P. Russo, *Alexander Pope: Tradition and Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 23.

Language was a form of knowing, and knowing was automatically discourse. Thus language occupied a fundamental situation in relation to knowledge: it was only by the medium of language that the things of the world could be known. Not because it was a part of the world [...] but because it was the first sketch of an order in representation of the world; because it was the initial, inevitable way of representing representations.⁹

Through the medium of language the order dwelling within Nature could be reflected by the order of Man thus representing both him and itself. There was only one condition; the two orders were to be so close to each other that, ideally, there would be no difference between them.

The arbitrariness of language in the Classical Age is thus at least questionable. Language is rooted in its archaic beginning from before Babel. In the initial cry of the “language of action.”¹⁰ General Grammarians of the eighteenth century pay very little attention to the historical modifications of form whose causes are regarded as external and accidental and concentrate on words’ etymologies by searching for their roots not in the transformations undergone by the word, but in the constancy of words’ significations.¹¹ The name becomes in this way the organizing principle of Classical discourse. It governs the movement of speaking/writing “towards the sovereign act of nomination,” says Foucault.¹² To use language actually means “to move, through language, towards the place where things and words are conjoined in their common essence, and which makes it possible to give them a name.”¹³ If the main task of Renaissance discourse was to go beyond the chain of resemblances of words and things scattered upon the surface of the world, to see, like Tarquin, through the significations, the Classical word tends towards its own annihilation in the thing it represents, it tends to be so well adjusted to what it names that it, ideally, is indistinguishable from it:

[...] the great utopia of a perfectly transparent language in which things themselves could be named without any penumbra of confusion, either by a totally arbitrary but precisely thought-out system (artificial language), or by a language so natural that it would translate thought like a face expressing a passion (it was this idea of immediate sign that Rousseau dreamed of in the first of his *Dialogues*).¹⁴

The idea of the book of the world, pointed to in the reading of *Areopagitica*, translates the world into a written being in which words and things fit so perfectly that we no longer know whether what we are reading is the book or the world. This paradox of the Classical *episteme* is made quite explicit in Rousseau whose

⁹ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 295—296.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

dream of an immediate language and whose banishment of writing to the sphere of the supplement of speech is constantly accompanied by the occurrence of writing in places where he would rather have things speak by themselves, in the deepest insides of himself:

C'est l'histoire de mon âme que j'ai promise: et pour l'écrire fidelement je n'ai pas besoin d'autres mémoires; il me suffit, comme j'ai fait jusqu'ici, de rentrer au dedans de moi.¹⁵

Writing hides here in the ambiguity of "mémoires," while on the first page of *Les confessions* he quite plainly informs God that he was a book:

Que la trampoline do jugement dernier sonne quand elle voudra, je viendrai, ce livre à la main, me présenter devant le souverain juge. Je dirai hautement: Voilà ce que j'ai pensé, ce que je fus.¹⁶

If the plain truth of Rousseau is a book, then for *Émile* it is nature. For he does not need any book or teacher for his education.

Émile's natural teacher at first guides his pupil through nature's writing by making him read the principles inscribed within nature. The teacher himself is also inscribed within it, he actually begins to teach *Émile* before he is born, and yet does nothing in order to teach him. Since man as *animal rationale* is a contradictory species

Entraines par la nature et par les hommes dans des routes contraires, forces de nous partager entre ces diverses impulsions, nous ne suivons une composée qui ne nous mène ni à l'autre but.¹⁷

Natural (or domestic) education could improve both him and society by making the social natural and the natural social, so that man and nature are no longer in opposition to each other:

Reste enfin l'éducation domestique ou celle la nature, mais que deviendront pour les autres un homme uniquement élevé pour lui? Si peut-être le double objet qu'on se propose pouvait se réunir en un seul, en ôtant les contradictions de l'homme on ôterait un grand obstacle à son bonheur.¹⁸

The true social order is already inscribed within nature, but in order for it to remain undistorted it must be read from the original source. Man has to be educated for himself, and it is simultaneously through him alone that education emanates. In this sense, all education must necessarily be a *self-education*, a kind of learning one's *self* by oneself, of learning one's self as constitutive of the order

¹⁵ J.J. Rousseau, *Les confessions* (Librarie de Paris, not dated), p. 258.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁷ J.J. Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'Éducation*, Éditions Sociales (Paris, 1958), p. 92.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

of things, by discovering order in things, by discerning and naming things in order to discern and name oneself (one's self) as subject, as a subject subjected to what can be read in the order of things. It is through *Émile* that objects can be classified, subjected to some order and displayed in an ordered table, but it is also *Émile* that is the object of the *taxinomia*, of a general analysis which makes possible the distribution of isolable identities and visible differences over a tabulated space.¹⁹ If there is a man in 'Classical' discourse it is only as an entry in some encyclopedic book or dictionary, an entry which must be different from that of an animal or a plant and yet must belong to the order of general representation.

An encyclopedia or a dictionary is in a sense a means of correcting language, of granting its elements the stability of things with which it is at some originary point linked. The failure of language to properly name, its inferiority in the face of things is obviously noticed, but this failure is treated as at least partially corrigible. Corrective and didactic functions of the dictionary are actually inseparable. In his *Dictionary* Dr. Johnson wrote:

Had Shakespeare had a dictionary of this kind he had not made the *woodbine* entwine the *honey-suckle*; nor would Milton, with such assistance, have disposed so improperly of his *ellops* and his *scorpion*.²⁰

Since man is not, it seems, a woodbine or a scorpion, the inclusion of the entry "man" in the dictionary is a more complex story. Man is not simply a self-present object, but "the experience of pure auto-affection" which, according to Derrida, constitutes consciousness, and whose uniqueness signalled by his "I" can find a representation and thus the stability of the object only in the proper name.²¹ It is only in the confines of the proper name that human identity is granted some epistemological security. In an essay on literary character Claire Hobbs notices that even the fiction of Defoe, which has generally been thought to have internalized in an exemplary fashion the formulae of individualism,

the "I" of the character sometimes gets lost-leaked out, as Barthes might say, through the seams of discourse. But this slippage is invariably kept in check by the proper name. Thus whenever the "I" dwindles within its own narration the proper name acts as a sort of epistemological safety net which secures the character's position.²²

And since it is the particularity of the "I" that all individuals share, it is necessary to look at it from the outside, from the secure position of one's proper name,

¹⁹ Cf. M. Foucault, *The Order...*, pp. 71—76.

²⁰ S. Johnson, *Plan of the Dictionary*, R.W. Chapman, ed. (London, 1962).

²¹ Cf. J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 98.

²² C. Hobbs, "Discourse and Character", [work in progress].

from the position of the "I's" author and proprietor. Only then can we see what constitutes human nature "objectively." It is by this necessary distance that one begins to dream the dream of Descartes, to write the objective of ones individuality, the necessary supplement of the dictionary into which "man" is entered — an autobiography, a biography, a novel; the natural histories of proper names, be they fictional or not.

In the wake of Descartes, man withdraws from his prejudiced "I" into an unprejudiced space of his proper name in which he creates his new identity anew, in seclusion, writing the book of his ego. If *Meditationes* can rightly be called an autobiography of doubt, then the doubt's name is, precisely, Descartes. But Descartes never problematizes the security of his name, and from the name's position he only problematizes what it names, the "I," in the hope of rediscovering it anew and giving this new entity the name of Descartes, in order to attach (properly) a name to a thing. The name itself, however, is as it were *des cartes*.²³ Hegel found in Descartes the secure home, or land, of self-identity after a long journey through stormy seas.²⁴ The paradox is that

"home" is needed and can be imagined only when it is dispossessed and left behind: we cannot know, despite reassurances, whether we will reach the land, whether that land was ever ours, or whether we are really in sight of land at all. What Descartes above all teaches, though mostly despite himself, is that self-consciousness as home is never quite at home, that self-exposure can never be entirely revealing, that self-conscious is continually self-displacing.²⁵

The space from which Classical man wants to speak his identity is always invaded by the materiality of language, by the inevitable return of the word which renders the human "I" always already split by the contradictions inherent in representation. In order to be said the "I" must pre-exist itself as a kind of discourse, or writing, whose eradication is impossible and simultaneously indispensable if the "I" is to be autonomous. I have already said that the task of the search for roots of words in things they name was actually to eradicate the word, to make it as transparent as possible. It is also by this gesture that, in literature, proper names cease to have meanings in themselves, they cease to denote types of characters and tend to signify nothing but the individual. This is obviously one of the novelties about the glorious rise of the novel in the eighteenth century. The proper name, which does not mean anything and only directly points to and identifies its bearer, becomes a requirement, a property of being proper, imposed upon all the words of language. Words, let us repeat, should be things. Hence the

²³ Cf. J. Swift, "A Tale of a Tub", E. Rosenheim Jr., ed., *Jonathan Swift: Selected Prose and Poetry* (New York, 1959), p. 117.

²⁴ Cf. G. van den Abbeele, "Sightseers: The Tourist as Theorist", *Diacritics* 10 (1980), p. 9.

²⁵ R. Flores, *The Rhetoric of Doubtful Authority: Deconstructive Readings of Self-Questioning Narratives, St. Augustine to Faulkner* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 28.

plainness of style so extreme in Defoe, or in Richardson's letters written "from the heart" by Clarissa. Defoe, according to Frank Ellis, deliberately fails as a poet in his task of writing with a "Mathematical Plainness of saying '*Plain Things in Plain Words*' in '**Reasoning Stile**.'"²⁶ In his deliberately failed *The True-Born Englishman* Defoe wrote:

No borrow'd Names conceal my living Theam;
But Names and Things *directly* I Proclaim.²⁷

This being no plain style of prose ambiguities are possible. And, symptomatically read, these two lines tell us not only that names and things should be one, but also that the "living Theam" that Defoe wants to display is the "I" that names and things directly proclaim. If it is so, then what is called the plot of his novels cannot be a story or a narration but a direct experience of things by the subject whose proper name usually figures in the title and who thus, introducing himself, says: "this is I." Tristram Shandy is not very different from a Robinson Crusoe except that his "this is I" is his written dedication on the book which makes us think that the book actually wrote itself. Eagleton puts it more clearly saying:

That the famous 'rise of the novel' in England should produce almost instantaneously the greatest anti-novel of all time should not seem fortuitous [...] for Sterne's fiction is nothing less than a flamboyant exposé of the impossible contradictions inherent in a representational writing that can fulfil its function only by abolishing itself.²⁸

It is irrelevant here whether Defoe, besides his failed poetry, also wrote what would now be called fiction or not. His "degree zero" writing²⁹ was designed to mark the presence of a subject and to encapsulate it in an autobiographical book to prove the very possibility of the subject's expressivity, the possibility of writing a natural history of an "I," and to write it naturally, to present it but actually to make it present itself in the manner plants were to present themselves in the botanical calligrams dreamt of by Linneaus whose wish was "that the printed text, in its variables of form, arrangement, and quantity, should have a vegetable structure."³⁰

Writing's linearity grants the proper reflection of human temporality, of man's existence in time, while the stability and repeatability of the book, its wholeness or completeness, grant the presented identity its status of sameness. In this sense, the book functions as a kind of memory which synchronizes all the

²⁶ Cf. F. Ellis, "Defoe's 'Resignation' and the Limitations of Mathematical Plainness", *The Review of English Studies* (August 1985), p. 345.

²⁷ D. Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman*, pp. 293—294. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 348.

²⁸ T. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin...*, p. 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁰ M. Foucault, *The Order...*, p. 135.

otherwise transitory experiences which make up identity. The book totalizes experiences into a whole, into a coherent "I" which is as it were its own memory, its own ambiguous *mémoire*, the remembering and its representation in writing, in the book of memory.³¹ Like Rousseau, man is the book, be it a true or a fictitious one. The book is actually the only home, the only safe space in which human individuality, now nicely bound, gains some sort of generality just as the individual plant in a herbarium establishes the identity of the whole genre. The synchronic whole of human identity, however, can be grasped only through the diachrony of fragmentary experiences, through the particularity of one's day to day observations and their proper arrangement in the *mémoire* of memory. The patiently, meticulous notary of one's life whose social reality is reduced to the privacy of a chamber, as in Descartes or Pepys, or to an island, as in Crusoe, plainly written and measured by the rhythm of hours and days, becomes the only guarantee of one's stability and security of position.³² Reading Pepys' *Diary* Francis Barker writes:

Don't plainness of style and the epistemological naivety it suggests thus function as a guarantee of profound identity, allowing us across the gulf which we call history but which by the very nature of this particular claim to intelligibility is nothing more than the deployment of sameness along a chronological axis, to glimpse and embrace in Pepys, the "man" rather than the text, the duration and durability of the affections, pleasures, discontents and even [...] the petty vanities which are truly our own?³³

In order to be that man, and not the text, one has to clearly see and represent the experiences that make up the book. Writing becomes the indispensable notation of memory, a transcription of something already written within us as the possibility of identity. Hume has no doubts that it is in memory that man is constituted: "Had we no memory, we never shou'd have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects, which continue our self or person."³⁴ Man is thus a chain of causes and effects inscribed within memory, and the question of identity is a matter of the proper rendering and arrangement of causes and effects, of displaying them in a book. Hume is quite explicit as to the written, or "linguistic," rather than the ultimate status of identity, to its discursive rather than to its philosophical status:

³¹ Cf. J. Derrida, *Memoirs for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. xiv.

³² The political dimension of this status of individuality is, according to Nancy Armstrong, to create "an individual who exists prior to the formation of any political group". The logic of Rousseau's *Social Contract* is actually founded upon the existence of the already individuated individual. Cf. N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction. A Political History of the Novel* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 30—32.

³³ F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 5.

³⁴ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 261—262.

[...] all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than philosophical difficulties.³⁵

Identity is not only discovered by memory, but it is also produced by it. Memory chooses the “resembling perceptions in the chain of thought” and makes “the whole seem like the continuance of one object.”³⁶ It is the identity of perception, the idea whose fitness to other ideas, its contiguity with them which only resembles continuity that is responsible for the shape of identity as a whole. Particular perceptions and ideas grant us some stability of position only as long as they are ours, only as long as they can be adapted to the body of identity already erected. We are again very close to Milton’s edifice of the new society, and Hume does not forget to remind us about the social order in this respect:

In this respect, I cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or a commonwealth, in which several members are united by the reciprocal tie of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in the like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity.³⁷

To possess and identify as a whole is to consolidate all the objects that at a given time constitute that identity. Although the objects incessantly change it is the potency of seeing, classifying, and uniting them under the proper name of the “republic” that constitutes the very possibility of there arising what Hume calls the “identity of connected object.”³⁸ The “individual republic” is by no means a stable union of its members which can be easily replaced or changed. It is not a totality “except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union.”³⁹ The detail of that construction is not a grain of sand in which the whole world is mirrored, as Blake will have it, but an element whose particularity must be noticed, noted, and then displayed as only a fragment of a greater whole which can actually never be completed. So too, man’s identity can only be an encyclopaedia of objects, of impressions and ideas only related to one another under the title of “man” which gives it some sort of unity.

In a paper on the idea of the encyclopedic book Vincent Descombes writes:

[...] ‘encyclopaedic’ adds nothing to ‘book’: and book aspires to be encyclopaedic, i.e. to go *around* its subject, so as to be equal to that subject (to say everything, all that must be said from the point of view that had initially been decided).⁴⁰

³⁵ Ibid., p. 262.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 261.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 262.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 262.

⁴⁰ V. Descombes, “Variations on the Subject of the Encyclopaedic Book”, *the Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1978), p. 54.

In order to say everything, the species of the eighteenth-century encyclopaedia called “the novel” very strictly demarcates its subject by giving it the proper name of a Robinson Crusoe, Joseph Andrews, Pamela, Clarissa, Moll Flanders, Tom Jones, Rasselas, Huphrey Clinker or Fanny Hill — to mention only the most distinguished individuals. The bearer of the name is thus seemingly granted some coherence and uniqueness; just as the uniqueness of his experiences is achieved by the maximal propriety of the language which represents them Man, constellates himself into a whole, which consists of his “connected” experiences whose difference from others is nicely summarized by his name. But the emergence of this whole momentarily translates itself again into a fragment of the whole whose name is republic or society, and whose identity must also be a written being of some similar kind. The subject is free to be himself but it is actually this freedom to which he is a slave. The book of his self that he so patiently writes down and which he crowns with the signature of his proper name turns out to be a chapter in a larger book of society’s identity, a numbered file in its archives. It is again Rousseau from whom we learn that it is society that gives birth to the individual and which simultaneously forces him to create and preserve his independent, free status:

He who dares to undertake the making of people’s institutions ought to feel himself capable, so to speak, of changing human nature, of transforming each individual, who is by himself a complete and solitary whole, into part of a greater whole from which he in a manner receives his life and being.⁴¹ The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.⁴²

It is in the proper name that the two orders, individual and social, overlap. The proper name marks the subject’s freedom to write or construct his own identity, but at the same time it functions as a mark of identity for others, as the author’s name with which Milton wanted to replace the censor. Such a man is the author — and this is not quite a metaphor — of his identity which he is free to write only in so far as he eventually signs it, thus publically attesting to his (his identity’s) conformity with the social order for whose functioning his identity is indispensable.

3. The Transgression

In Rousseau’s state every man is free to voluntarily join the social contract, by doing so he gives his consent to the status of the free citizen. He has to agree to be free, that is to say, to be his own sovereign and subject. There is no possibility

⁴¹ J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*, N. Torrey, ed., *Les Philosophes* (New York, 1960), p. 157.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 149.

(freedom) of not having a free choice because the lack of freedom means the lack of consent, and he who opts for any other sovereignty than the one based on his freedom is declared the “foreigner among the citizens.”⁴³ One signs this contract by one’s very presence as an individual within the state’s territory — “residence constitutes consent.”⁴⁴ By no means can it be called a simple residence, a peaceful dwelling in which man finds shelter for his privacy. In the subject-centred discourse the subject’s “epistemological security of position”⁴⁵ is the prerequisite of the state’s political security and, as such, must be controlled from the outside as well. A transgression of one’s identity is thus necessarily a transgression against the state and it cannot be surprising that the mad as well as the criminal are confined in one and the same “hospital” in the Classical Age as “foreigners among citizens” in the gesture Klaus Doerner calls the sequestration of unreason:

Beggars and vagabonds, those without property, jobs or trades, criminals, political gadflies and heretics, prostitutes, libertines, syphilitics, alcoholics, lunatics, idiots, and eccentrics, but also rejected wives, deflowered daughters, and spendthrift sons were thus rendered harmless and virtually invisible.⁴⁶

He who offends the law simultaneously offends himself as a citizen, and if in the *ancien régime* the offence was directed against the unitary figure of the king, now it is directed against the society, against the piecemeal construction Milton erected. Crime is also a transgression of one’s identity, of one’s fitness within such a construction and it must be clearly marked in the files of his (auto)biography.

In the utopian *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred* (1771) Louis Sébastien Mercier suggests an interesting way of executing the criminal, an infliction of death which actually reminds us of suicide of sorts. The history of the crime is simple but symptomatic: a man “of a fiery disposition” falls in love with a woman whose “temper was as gentle as that of her lover was impetuous,” and who decides to marry another man who was of a character “more comfortable to her own.”⁴⁷ The enraged fiancé kills his rival and thus literary “forces” justice to intervene.⁴⁸ “After this horrid act,” we read,

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁵ Cf. T. Eagleton, *Walter...*, p. 15.

⁴⁶ K. Doerner, *Madmen and the Bourgeoisie: A Social History of Insanity and Psychiatry*, trans. J. Neugroschel, J. Steinberg (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), p. 15.

⁴⁷ L.S. Mercier, “Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred”, in F. Manuel, ed., *The Enlightenment* (New Jersey, 1965), p. 149.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

the inhuman wretch dared to come amongst us; but his crime was already engraved on his front; we no sooner saw him, than we discovered that he was criminal, though then ignorant of the nature of his offence.⁴⁹

A reasonable author of one's will is not capable of committing a crime. The temper of the criminal, his lack of balance and moderation render him incapable of being a true citizen with a true identity even before the crime. He was only accepted as one of the citizens as long as his disposition was not transgressive, as long as his biography lacked the imprints of unbalance and unregulation dangerous to others. Yet even those less dangerous ones render him incapable of being a husband, an equal partner of an equally equal citizen since "Every woman, by our law, is absolute mistress of her person."⁵⁰ By transgressing the law he simultaneously transgresses the standards of identity and thus has to vanish as a fellow-citizen. He is now bound to carry his transgression "engraved on his front" as if it were written by himself in the very act of committing the crime. In the act of transgression the criminal simultaneously erased his signature under the social contract and it is for this reason as well that he was momentarily perceived as a stranger, as a "non-citizen" who must now, again literally, "expire"⁵¹ along with his transgression.

The divine law, which even in Rousseau comes from some mysterious figure of the Legislator posited outside of society, has no power to inflict death upon anybody without his consent. The citizens are only obliged to know the law and to inform the authorities about any transgression of the law they come across. Interestingly enough, they must also write the law down by themselves in order to incorporate it in the body of their identities, to "internalize" it — as the editor of the story tells us:⁵²

At the age of fourteen, they read to us the laws of the country. Every one is obliged to write them with his own hand, and to make oath that he will observe them. These laws command us to inform the police of all those infractions that offend against the order of society. [...] We renew this sacred oath every ten years; and without being busy informers, religiously watch over the preservation of our venerable laws.⁵³

The integration of the law with one's identity seems to be so complete here that it is not surprising that the citizens have no problems recognizing the "physiognomy of guilt [...] that horrid mark which the Divinity imprints on the front of the murderer" whenever one dares to appear among them.⁵⁴ The horrid mark must

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵² Ibid., p. 148.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

thus vanish, it must be effaced from the social body, and ideally the eradication is to be done by the criminal himself. This is achieved by confession whose status must be different from the confirmation of the truth of the law and the sovereign discussed in Part I. He who volutarily confesses is no longer a criminal, but a newly born citizen who actually says that he and the criminal are two different things and thus condemns that part of his upon which the divine law imprinted the mark — his body. This body, whose desire and the lack of temperance drove the criminal to the transgression, becomes his other, an error in the book of life which the book of the law defines and corrects. In the beginning of the execution

He approached the judges, and put one knee on the ground, to kiss the sacred volume of the law. It was then opened to him, and they read, with a loud voice, the sentence relative to homicides; they placed the book before him, that he might read it; he then fell on his knees, and confessed his guilt.⁵⁵

The power to inflict punishments still belongs to the condemned:

It is still in your power to choose. If you will live you may; but it must be in disgrace and loaded with our indignation. [...] Do justice to the society and condemn yourself.⁵⁶

The voluntary death of the criminal translates his crime into an involuntary gesture performed against the will of the law which is at the same time the will of the individual and the will of the society. By this death his own will is restored and the general will of the society is restored along with it. The error so clearly visible upon him is thus also erased. Having condemned himself

He was no longer regarded as guilty; the body of pastors surrounded him; the prelate taking the bloody shirt, clothed him in a white vestment, which was the token of his reconciliation with mankind, and gave him the kiss of peace.⁵⁷

Thus regaining his “mankindhood” the criminal regains his lost identity along with the status of the citizen. He himself corrected the errors his inhuman blindness made him make, and only now is he again complete enough a construction to carry a name:

[...] he was again received into the class of citizens; his name, that had been effaced, was inscribed again in the public register with the names of those who died the same day.⁵⁸

The membership of this society seems to be absolutely dependent upon having a name. But this “having,” on the other hand, absolutely depends on its being

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 151.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 153.

written in some book, even if it is going to be the book of the dead. This catalogue of proper names is again organized upon the ambiguity of the concept which makes an individual independent, dissimilar from others, and yet renders this free individuality necessarily appropriate, non-transgressive, docile. Otherwise the name is nonexistent, “effaced,” but only so long as the individual does not correct himself and does not voluntarily decide to die in order to restore the name.

It should not surprise us that the criminal in Mercier’s story will eventually be rendered as a sovereign, as the one who decides, like a censor, whether his name can be printed within the book of men. In the world of books some sort of *imprimatur* must be at work, and the decision to condemn oneself to death, and actually to have one’s name written, is a matter of some sort of authorship and authority. Before the criminal freely dies — it is still in *his power* to choose — the decision must be approved by some other, seemingly external, authority:

[...] a deputy from the senate bore the sentence of death to the monarch, that he might sign it with his own hand; for no one could be put to death without his own consent.⁵⁹

And on top of this authorization of one’s free decision to be punished by death there is also the ambiguity of “his own consent,” the ambiguity that quite elegantly renders the position of an individual as his own subject. It is not Mercier’s story that is contradictory as regards the freedom of choice, but it is the locus of individual’s power which must be split, which has to gesture outside itself, towards a sovereign or a monarch in order to confirm its legitimacy.

4. The (Auto)biography

Man either has to keep himself in constant check or to confess a transgression, to define the transgression as his Other, as an abysmal absence beyond him and beyond the order of things. Underlying this, there is the abandoned theme of having one’s biography, an “entry” in the book of man.

An autobiography can be complete, it can be written from beginning to end only if one can look upon the totality of one’s life from some objective position. In this sense, an ideal autobiography is actually a biography. The transgressor, the criminal, or the mad can have his biography written not as a criminal or a madman, but only after his autobiography goes through the censorship of his confession, after he himself renders his transgression as transgression and thus withdraws it from his true identity as something alien. By renouncing the transgression he comes out newly born, purified. The transgression becomes the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

place of his “second nativity,” as Cowper would have it.⁶⁰ The confession is only a verbal confirmation of something already written upon one’s front, a text whose truth is guaranteed by the addressee, traditionally God (St Augustine), to whom it is impossible to lie, and for whom the words that constitute the confession are redundant. In the case of Mercier’s story it is society that unmistakably detects guilt and demands the confession in order to render its content as inhuman and eventually nonexistent. To confess, in this sense, is to deny what one was while at the same time saying what one is. The discursive rendering of the past events can only have some instruction or didacticism as its task. It is the speaking, the confessing subject who, by condemning himself, grants his story some status of truth simultaneously absenting himself from the discourse he produces. The task of autobiography, on the other hand, is to represent one’s history as truth, autobiography tends to be a confession, but as regards presence, and thus the completeness of the confessing subject, it is a biography, a complete rendering of one’s “I” and identity. Autobiography necessitates the split of the subject, its internal transformation which is then rendered as narrative. It is this aspect of autobiography which, according to Jean Starobinski, makes pure autobiography unthinkable. He says:

It is the internal transformation of the individual — and the exemplary character of this transformation — that furnishes a subject for a narrative discourse in which “I” is both subject and object.⁶¹

The “I” which narrates cannot be the “I” about which the narration is going to inform us, and yet it is this impossibility that ‘Classical’ discourse attempts to overcome. Samuel Pepys, who wrote a diary “for information sake,” coded and hid his text in a shorthand, kept it locked and was driven blind by it.⁶² As the only reader of the text, he wrote it in order to inform the “I” that read it about the “I” that wrote it and he coded his text in order that no other reader could identify him with this second “I” encountering the dense veil of his handwriting covering the subject. Pepys’ text seems to be a direct extension of the subject; it makes the “I” that is written write itself from the inside of the text, and thus shelters the “I” in a “cocoon” of a writing, in an absolute privacy. Pepys’ “I” is locked in the chamber of his writing whose function is to hide, and to simultaneously materialize, the subject in the materiality of a writing which, paradoxically, produces the distance between the text and the “I.” It is as if Pepys buries himself alive in the private tomb of his scribbling, and thus announces the death of its

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Quinland, ed., “Memoir of William Cowper: An Autobiography, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XCVII (1953), p. 380.

⁶¹ J. Starobinsky, “The Style of Autobiography”, in J. Olney, ed. *Autobiography. Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, 1980), p. 78.

⁶² Cf. F. Barker, *The Tremulous...*, p. 6.

author (unlike Barthes against himself) and translates his diary into a biography written after his death, by himself.

In the eighteenth century the number of such voices from beyond the grave becomes quite impressive; they rise from the dead along with the rise of the novel. The dead rise from lost manuscripts, found or stolen letters, diaries etc., published either by others, like *Clarissa*, or by themselves who, instead of dying, only withdraw from this world and thus mark their inevitable absence. Gulliver decides to confine himself at Redriff,⁶³ for instance, while Moll Flanders withdraws, along with her husband, to some sort of self-imprisonment awaiting death: “[...] we resolve to spend the remainder of our years in sincere penitence for the wicked lives we have lived.”⁶⁴ And since the book was published in 1722 Defoe hides the announcement of their deaths finishing the story with the words: “Written in the year 1683.”⁶⁵ Crusoe’s death is hidden in the rhetoric of journey:

And here, resolving to harass myself no more, I am preparing for a longer journey than all these, having lived seventy two years of life of infinite variety and learned sufficiently to know the value of retirement, and the blessing of ending our days in peace.⁶⁶

The incompleteness of these deaths is responsible for the very possibility of finishing the manuscripts, which will be published later, with the notable exception of *Clarissa Harlowe* whose writing quite literally dies before her body, and whose last days are but biographical reports of others. The actual author of all such writings, a Defoe, a Richardson, a Swift has to pretend to be a publisher, or an editor, in order to grant the discourse both completeness — ideally the whole span of life — and the authenticity of the confession. Even if the stories are not “pseudo-factual” but real autobiographies, and the latter were in abundance in the eighteenth century,⁶⁷ they have to remain incomplete life histories whose completeness can only be achieved either seeing one’s own future, which would render the stories inauthentic because unreasonable, or by a suicide with a pen in one’s hand. An ideally true autobiography can thus only be an unwritten one, a “lonely Cartesian ego radically anterior to its embodiments,” to quote Terry Eagleton a little out of context.⁶⁸ Materially embodied autobiography requires the author whose pen intervenes into this ideality and makes this writing/written subject a pseudo factual event regardless of whether he writes about himself or not. This does not mean that there is no difference between autobiography and

⁶³ Cf. J. Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 344.

⁶⁴ D. Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (Minister Classics, 1968), p. 446.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

⁶⁶ D. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 1957), P. 500.

⁶⁷ Cf. W. Matthews, R. Reader, *Autobiography, Biography and the Novel* (Los Angeles: W.A. Clark Memorial Library, 1973).

⁶⁸ T. Eagleton, *Walter...*, p. 14.

fiction, but rather, as Paul de Man once said, that “the distinction between fiction and autobiography is not an either/or polarity but [...] it is undecidable.”⁶⁹

For Jacques Derrida the question of autobiography is as much a question of fiction as it is a question of death and mourning:

Funerary speech and writing do not follow upon death; they work upon life in what we call autobiography. And this takes place between fiction and truth, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.⁷⁰

An autobiographer is a biographer and a mourner of himself. What he writes is but a fiction of his already dead self in which only the proper name can be left intact as an inscription on the tombstone of the autobiographical book. In Derrida’s phrasing it is the proper name that links writing and death, that announces the death of the autobiographical subject:

In calling or naming someone while he is alive, we know that his name can survive him and *already survives him*; the name begins during his life to get along without him, speaking and bearing his death each time it is inscribed in a list, or a civil registry, or a signature.⁷¹

With death as its companion, with the irreducible signature of death upon its front, the autobiographical book can never be simply true or false, fictional or real, because it always reaches beyond itself and communicates this beyond, inscribes it within the living present of memory (memoir) as “the signature of *memoirs-from-beyond-the-grave*.”⁷² And it is sufficient to look at the title of one of, allegedly, Defoe’s texts to see how the signature of the Other was at least troublesome for the writer, and thus was erased along with the proper name of the autobiographer: *An Account of Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of a Private Gentleman; with Reflections Thereof Relating to Trouble of Mind, some violent Temptations and a Recovery: In order to awaken the Presumptuous, convince the Sceptic, and encourage the Despondent; Left under his own Hand to be communicated after his Decease* (1711). Deprived of his proper name, the private gentleman is to present the plain truth as some events from his life. Paradoxically, it is not only the authenticity of the disturbed “I” of the events that is required, but also the authenticity of the already sane gentleman whose “I” must be different from the narrated one: the “I” which denounces the “I.” In this sense, the book is a confession. “Left under his own hand” the manuscript is not only authenticated by the handwritten signature, but it also authentically ends the moment life ends. From the publisher’s letter we learn that “The Author leaving

⁶⁹ P. de Man, “*Autobiography as Defacement*”, *MLN*, No. 94 (1979), p. 920.

⁷⁰ J. Derrida, *Memoirs for...*, p. 22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the use of his name at discretion; for some reason 'tis fit to suppress it."⁷³ Since it is the name which might complicate the story of life, which might inscribe death within the discoursing subject, it remains secret while death as the limit of the narration is made only too explicit. Because the author is dead, the story of his life is complete and thus authentic. Unlike the stories with proper name in their titles, death is not only rhetorically pointed to, but it constitutes the framework of the text. As I have said, it is the lack of the proper name which renders the author inauthentic as individual. The author must be identifiable — this is also the requirement of Milton's censorship. And despite his efforts to eradicate the author's name — by the lengthy title, by the use of "private," by the absolute completeness of the story granted by the death with a pen in the author's hand — Defoe (?) makes the name eventually recoverable:

If my Friends therefore, when I am gone, think it needful to expose my Name, they may use their discretion [...].⁷⁴

5. The (too) Individual

Man's Other cannot thus be simply defined as his outside since the outside is always constitutive of him, but neither can man himself be fully grasped in the wholeness of his interiority, in the completeness of his (auto)biography. Man is confined within the interiority of an individualizing name, but this interiority must be read from the outside, as if it were written in an encyclopaedia or a dictionary serving primarily to ward off error; to vigilantly watch those areas of discourse in which things "demean themselves," as Milton had it. For this reason the individual must always be properly individual, properly unique and properly original. A clear and undistorted perception of oneself and of the world is the guarantee of order, both social and epistemological. Mercier's utopian vision clearly made the transgression of the law an ill perception of the world's order, an epistemological failure of reading more than there is in the reasonable book of the world. He who transgresses is not a man, and this dehumanizing aspect of transgression can also be found in other spheres of discourse in the Classical Age, whose power to confine quite evidently exceeds the sphere of the law. I have used the words "originality" and "uniqueness" above, and now let us have a closer look at them. In Paul Fussell's book on the rhetoric of the Augustan humanism we read:

⁷³ D. Defoe, *An Account of Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of a Private Gentleman...* (London, 1711), p. iii.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

One argument dear to the Augustan humanists is that the general similarity of men's bodies and physiognomies bespeaks a like similarity of their minds: just as we see no men with three arms or two noses, and just as "mutations" in man's general form seem unlikely, so, the argument goes, it is equally unlikely that one man's mind differs significantly from another's. [...] Thus it is that a man's claims to special inspiration or to singular intellectual or spiritual capacity are probably fraudulent.⁷⁵

Originality which is "grossly dissimilar," to use Milton's phrase once more, which is not as it were a copy of the order of things, or of bodies, inevitably announces itself as monstrosity, as a mutation which can only result from some sort of disease. The general similitude of bodies and minds is the constitutive principle of the species, the principle which establishes humanity as a unique "genre." And paradoxically, it is the unique, or too unique, individuality of its particular representatives that might endanger the species. Also paradoxically, a closer examination of the physical aspects of the body, a Gulliver's look at the bodies of Brobdingnags, leads to the rejection of the body as perfect and harmonious. As a result, the general similitude of bodies is calculated beyond the signifier, beyond the material physicality of the flesh.

The generalized human body rhetorically represents order and harmony in various writings of the epoch — in texts on architecture, city topography or social organization, for instance.⁷⁶ What is looked upon with disgust and suspicion, on the other hand, is the distortion of the body and its impurity, disease and excrementation. Defoe's vision of London in *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) is that of a "body torn by fever, a body diseased, plague-ridden and misshapen," Max Byrd notices, that is to say, a body dissimilar from the healthy body of the ideal *polis*. Despite the book's alleged reference to the famous events of 1665 in London, Pat Rogers suggests that Defoe wrote the text in reaction to the South Sea Bubble of 1720, the first serious illness of the body of capitalist economy. The rhetoric developed around this economic calamity was, as Rogers quite convincingly exemplifies, that of "bodily sickness or a total breakdown in mental and physical health," and was to be found not only in Defoe but in most writings on the subject. Defoe's phrasing in *Applebee* for 17 December 1720 seems to be the extreme case of it:

In a sick Body, when the Mass of Blood is corrupted, when the Constitution of the Body is subverted, and the Motion of the Spirit stop'd and stagnated, the Patient finds no Benefit by Medicine; he must be left to the Secret Operation of Nature, either for Life or Death. The Body of the South Sea People seems to be in just such a Crisis at this Time.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ P. Fusell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford, 1965), p. 56.

⁷⁶ Cf. M. Byrd, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 4–9. Cf. also R. Lehan, "Urban Signs and Urban Literature: Literary Form and Historical Process", *New Literary History* (Autumn 1986).

⁷⁷ P. Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century Encounters: Studies in Literature and Society in the Age of Walpole* (Sussex, 1985), p. 159 (quotation p. 156).

Beyond this study of a “community in extremis” there is hope of averting the disease, of correcting the convoluted body back into a harmonious whole. According to Rogers the “broadly happy” ending of Defoe’s *Journal* “may be seen as a wish-fulfilment: a hope to overcome the disasters of 1720.”⁷⁸ Defoe’s gaze examining the sick body of London and his description of the body are essentially corrective. They are gestures which actually erase the physically unique mutations of the body, the gestures which exorcise, in the manner of Pope’s *Dunciad* or Swift’s *City Shower*, the distortions by writing them down as grotesque, by, paradoxically, pointing to them and simultaneously positing them at a distance as the unwelcome other.

Crime and madness go hand in hand with bodily distortion (see Hogarth, for instance) while reason and harmony dwell in a regular, regulated body. Madness and crime are but mutations of harmony and these spheres of transgression are explored by the Classical gaze disinterestedly, that is to say, as the spheres which ideally should not exist, which should be only detected and cut off from the healthy body of society. The disease and the individual are thus two different and contradictory entities, and to cure the disease does not exactly mean to cure the patient, but to annihilate it as the evil species available only to a specialized medical gaze. As Foucault notices, the patient’s position in the Classical Age is paradoxical:

If one wishes to know the illness from which he is suffering, one must subtract the individual, with his particular qualities: “The author of nature,” said Zimmermann, “has fixed the course of most diseases through immutable laws that one soon discovers if the course of the disease is not interrupted or disrupted by the patient.”⁷⁹

The Classical idea of confinement from which Bedlam is born actually serves the purpose of simultaneously rejecting and making the distortion, the disease, visible as another’s, as the Other, and, needless to say, satire and irony are perfect tools to achieve this paradoxical and double task. In their reading of the grotesque body in the carnival Stallybrass and White look to Macherey to solve the dilemma:

Precisely because the suppression and distancing of the physical body became the very sign of rationality, wit and judgement, the grotesque physical body existed as what Macherey calls a “determining absent presence” in the classical body of Enlightenment poetic and critical discourse, a raging set of phantoms and concrete conditions to be forcefully rejected, projected and unacknowledged.⁸⁰

The determining absent presence also governs the absent presence of man in ‘Classical’ discourse. The already mentioned “degree zero” writing of a Richard-

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 166.

⁷⁹ M. Foucault, *The Birth...*, p. 14.

⁸⁰ P. Stallybrass, A. White, *The Politics...*, p. 105.

son or a Defoe also serves this purpose: to write an absolutely objective account of a case in such a way that the individual case's singularity is undermined by the absolute stylelessness of writing, by the transparency of writing and by the case's potential similarity to all others. An excess of individuality, an excess of style or dressing, is from the Classical perspective unthinkable and inhuman, a certifiable case. Despite his love towards individuals Swift mocks the too individual way a puritan Jack dresses in *A Tale of a Tub*:

In Winter [Jack] went always loose and unbuttoned, and clad as thin as possible, to let *in* the ambient Heat: and in Summer, lapt himself close and thick to keep it *out*.⁸¹

Other people dress naturally, and Jack's style clearly contrasts with their natural, and hence actually transparent style. Jack uses his clothing self-referentially, as Jakobson could say. In 'Classical' discourse this feature of literariness, the poetic function, is as yet nonexistent as a positive category, and Jack is simply mad. Language never points to itself in the Classical Age, and if it is excessively used, the excess points directly to the unbalance of reason, to the deviant reasoning whose expression can only be deviant as well. Jack cannot simply dress in a strange way, for there must be some equally strange motivation for his deviant style, and Swift offers us both the description and the motivation in one sentence. Normal, natural, or reasonable style must be plain and transparent, it must directly point to the ordered reality beyond the letter, to the reality of man and the world bound to be written by means of some generalized writing untouched by the individuality of style whose programmatic plainness translates it into an indexical sign unmistakably pointing to some pre-discursive reality. Such "enlightened" language, as I have pointed earlier, is no longer simply *there* in the world along with other things, but it becomes the things' surface, the facade which is simultaneously thing's identity and extension, the signified and its signifier which distorts the meaning only as long as it is too visible, too different.

The visible texture of the world, what we perceive of it with our eyes, is thus also a kind of writing, a natural language under whose particularity there is hidden some truer but equally natural reality, some pre-established order of a grammar. Where Milton talked about the book, Bishop Berkeley talks quite literally about language:

[...] there must be time an experience, by repeated acts, to acquire a habit of knowing the connection between signs and things signified; that is to say, of understanding the language, *whether of the eyes or of the ears*. And I conceive no absurdity in all this.⁸²

⁸¹ J. Swift, "A Tale...", p. 112.

⁸² G. Berkeley, *Works on Vision*, C. Turbayne, ed. (New York, 1963), p. 110.

There are actually two languages that one has to master in order to perceive the truth of the world: natural language which speaks to our eyes, and human speech which we use in the world's absence. "We learn to see just as we learn to speak and read," says Voltaire elucidating Berkeley's idea.⁸³ Yet the two languages are not really different or independent things to learn. In order to master the human language one has first to master the language of the world. The latter is clearly a matter of decoding, but by learning that language one also learns how things are perfectly and naturally encoded and one finds in it the perfect matrix for the secondary, verbal, rendering of things. The ideal is to make the two languages equivalent, and thus one of them redundant. But since the obvious consequence of such an equivalence is that they are also interchangeable, the only place they can be of any use is the "grand Academy of Lagado" where one really has to carry the world about oneself in order to communicate it to others. Human perception hinges upon this paradoxical situation. The programmatic transparency of language is ideally the program of Lagado, but since the absurdity of the program is only too obvious, the distinction between the two kinds of language is maintained with human language treated as imperfect, secondary, falsifying but still corrigible. The necessity of its transparency, as Anthony Easthope notices,

is advanced in such terms as "clear," "natural," "easy." But since, as ever, there is no signified without a signifier, another set of terms points to the "decorum" in which signifier is to be held onto signified ("fit," "proper," "apt").⁸⁴

Human language is thus the decorum which is acceptable only if the natural language of the world ideally adheres to it. Human language must be both natural and artificial, but its artificiality must be regulated by nature. This is made quite plain in what Hobbes wrote in his *Preface to Homer*:

For the order of words, when placed as they should be, carries a light before it, whereby a man may foresee the length of his period, as a torch in the night shews a man the stops and unevenness in his way. But when placed unnaturally, the Reader will often find unexpected checks, and be forced to go back and hunt for the sense, and suffer such unease, as in a Coach a man unexpectedly finds in passing over a furrow.⁸⁵

In the eighteenth century the status of language is not different. The "true Expression," as Pope had it, of Augustan poetics clearly follows this pattern of language, of representation which elegantly renders things, but never introduces changes or inventions, which "gilds all Objects, but *alters* none" (*Essay on*

⁸³ Cf. E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1951), p. 112.

⁸⁴ A. Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (London, 1983), p. 112.

⁸⁵ T. Hobbes, "Preface to Homer", in J. Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1908), Vol. 2, p. 69.

Criticism). Just as seeing and hearing are aspects of some universally ordered language, so the difference between prose and poetry is merely quantitative. As Donald Wesling notices, "Poetry and prose, literary and ordinary language, can be changed one into the other by addition or subtraction of a certain repertoire of sociable signs."⁸⁶ An inadequate expression is immediately visible like clothes that do not fit the body (or the weather, as in Swift's Jack), an extravaganza or singularity which Dr Johnson finds "in its own nature universally and invariably displeasing."⁸⁷ Novelty in language, and this can also be said about the novelty of the novel, is accepted because this novelty does not posit anything new, anything different from the order of nature, anything too original. To quote Donald Wesling once again:

Originality is welcome, provided that in all cases it includes its contrary, familiarity; so Samuel Johnson's definition of wit as that "which is at once natural and new," typically understands verbal invention as repatterning of existing counters.⁸⁸

Form and content are always separate, even though what is wished for is to make the two adhere so as to produce an elegant and pleasurable artifice whose appropriateness makes it understood as natural by not being "too dissimilar." The signifier, the writing, is thus reality's property constitutive of it and yet indexicalized, marginalized as an extension whose artificiality must remain invisible.⁸⁹ So too man is distinguished, says Samuel Johnson in *Idler* 51, "by external accidents or intrinsic qualities." But beneath these "accidents" there is something already familiar:

[...] the same wants, the same pains, and, as far as the senses are consulted, the same pleasures. The petty cares and petty duties are the same in every station to every understanding, and every hour brings some occasion on which we all sing to the common level. We are all naked till we are dressed, and hungry till we are fed; and the general's triumph, and sage's disputation, end, like humble labors of the smith or a ploughman, in a dinner or in sleep.⁹⁰

As regards the novelty of the novel, Ian Watt notices that it is the authenticity of epistemological observation which is being "conducted" and not the particularity or "reality" of the subject that constitutes the main part of the novelist's job.⁹¹ The apparent attention paid to the individual and to the

⁸⁶ D. Wesling, *The New Poetries: Poetic Form Since Coleridge and Wordsworth* (Lewisburg, 1985), p. 40.

⁸⁷ *Adventurer* 131, Quoted in P. Fusell, *The Rhetorical...*, p. 56.

⁸⁸ D. Wesling, *The New...*, p. 42.

⁸⁹ Cf. A. Easthope, *Poetry...*, p. 42.

⁹⁰ Quoted in P. Fusell, *The Rhetorical...*, p. 60.

⁹¹ I. Watt, "Realism and the Novel", in S.P. Rosenbaum, ed., *English Literature and British Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 70—71.

particular can thus hardly be called, after Watt, “the rejection of universals, and the pursuit of truth through the particulars of individual experience”⁹² because despite its role as the foundation of all perception the particular experience is in fact rejected. It exists solely to confirm the universal and familiar, to present it by representing it in such a way that it actually presents itself. Hence the particular cannot be different from the general, it cannot be too particular — a singularity pointing only to itself. Watt admits that the novel “is in itself formless [...]; since the recording of individual experience is its primary aim, no formal conventions about the way it is done are necessary, or even possible.”⁹³ Yet this formlessness, this transparency of writing, is obviously a formal convention. Along with the particularity of the signifier, along with the style of the novel, it is also the unique individuality of its “subject” that is kept in check, “corrected into” a generality of the already familiar. Writing “degree zero” gives birth to individuals of an equal degree. What is universal is what is not different, what is not too particular, and it is here that man, general individual, can only be located upon the Popean “isthmus of a middle state,” between what is either too high or too low, always at some distance from what is, generally, too individual.

6. The G(u)arden

The proper individual is thus a matter of balance, and as such he can only function within a well balanced surrounding. Domesticated in the home of his “hospital” and securely hidden in his not too dissimilar body, he will open the windows, or his eyes, only to see his own extension, equally well ordered and domesticated. In 1699 Addison wrote to Congreve:

I am however so singular as to prefer Fontaine-bleau to all the rest. It is situated among rocks and woods that give you a fine varietie of Savage prospects. The King has Humoured the Genius of the place and only made use of so much Art as is necessary to Help and regulate Nature without reforming her too much.⁹⁴

Neither too wild nor too regulated, Fontainebleu presents itself to Addison’s gaze as the image of royal generosity. King’s authority does not tyrannize nature but helps her show herself in her not too much “re-formed” a form. The garden grows here by itself, naturally, just like Milton’s temple. The King’s authority does not transgress the order of nature because the “Genius of the place” controls itself from within by means of a general form of order. The absolutist power of the king is thus elegantly restrained by the power of nature to order

⁹² Ibid., p. 72.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 71.

⁹⁴ J. Addison, *The Letters of Joseph Addison*, W. Graham, ed., (Oxford, 1941), pp. 10–11.

itself, and the king lets the plants grow freely, intervening only where they demean themselves, like Milton's books. Such a king is a good king.⁹⁵

In Shotover Park (completed in 1718) near Oxford there is a gothic temple which faces the house at the other end of the canal. No doubt the temple is visible through the house's classical windows. The mirror of water separating them makes one the image of the other. The whole landscape looks so artificial to the modern eye that it is impossible to precisely decide where the garden ends and "nature" begins. If anywhere, it is beyond the visible horizon, in the hazy hills difficult to make out from clouds. Nature seems to be a garden itself within which human gardens are not so much built or constructed as enclosed, confined as domains (dominions) of property, of the ambiguous property to which we constantly return, and which, as making gardens, is shared, but whose individualizing economy builds the walls separating what is shared. Interestingly, only a fragment of the wall can be seen there, and it can only be seen from the outside, and not through the windows of the classical house.

Quite remarkably, David Streatfield notices that the 1712 English translation of Dezallier d'Argenville's *La théorie et la pratique du jardinage* (1709)

is chiefly notable for containing the first published reference to the ha-ha. [...] The ha-ha, which Walpole called "the capital stroke, the leading step to all that followed," made it possible, by eliminating boundary walls, to look out from the garden to the vistas beyond, "as if the adjacent country were all a Garden." What Walpole did not recognize, however, was that the true revolution, which did not occur until considerably later, was to make the garden itself look like the country outside.⁹⁶

A seed of "the true revolution," and as it seems not only of that in gardening, is contained within the view of Shotover Park. The house, the supposed centre of the household, has its mirrored double in the canal and in the gothic temple.⁹⁷ It is from this already split centre that the order of the garden is both emanated and visible, is both produced and seen as natural. The garden's identity is ideally

⁹⁵ One might stop here and say that gardening and what is called politics are two different things, two different genres which should not be mixed, an impossible task in itself (cf. J. Derrida, "Le Loi du genre", *Glyph* No. 7 (1980), pp. 176—201). But if one looks at the changes in garden design in England and the passage of the enclosure acts the connection will become only too explicit (cf. D. Streatfield, "Art and Nature in the English Landscape Garden: Design Theory and Practice, 1700—1818", in *Landscape in the Gardens and the Literature of the Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles; W.A. Clark Memorial Library, 1981, p. 10).

⁹⁶ D. Streatfield, "Art and Nature...", p. 14.

⁹⁷ The Gothic temple, according to Streatfield, "invites exploration of the association of nature with politics. Colonel James Tyrell, the scholarly owner, believed that there is a natural law which governs the actions of men by limiting the power of government and had worked assiduously to prove that the Saxon Witan was the basis of English democracy. The Gothic Temple, therefore, was intended to celebrate a glorious period in England's past, not to evoke the gloom of the Gothic period". *Ibid.*, p. 11.

co-identical with its surroundings, with the outside which thus also invades the inside. This predicament actually denies the possibility of there being a wilderness, a disorderly place, or space, outside the cultivated area of one's garden, one's mind, one's home. The outside whose *horror vacui* still threatened Marvell⁹⁸ becomes an already domesticated space of an interior whose limits are discernible only from the outside. Seen from the inside, the open space loses its hostility of the Other, of the alien. The split centre, its division, confines the horizon always from the inside. It translates the visible into a home, into a closed space from which one's gaze can easily and safely extend its own domain, the domain of *domus*. Man, the gardener, is thus not the absolute centre, the organizer of the space in which he dwells because it is also the space which regulates itself, confines itself within the invisible limits of the garden. The gardener regulates nature only in so far as nature needs or wants regulation.

Too much regulation makes the garden artificial and eccentric, but it is also the gardener whose eccentricity is thus marked as well. Too little regulation, on the other hand, opens up the hostile space of the Other. This constant necessity of well measured improvement and correction, of remaining and being reminded of the natural, translates human activity into that of a copist or a painter who represents, creates or recreates something already given, written or painted. Alexander Pope, whose interest in garden design is well known, wrote to his friend in 1736: "[...] my Garden like my Life, seems to me every Year to want Correction and require alteration."⁹⁹

There is no master in Pope's life or garden whose will or whim has the power to shape either. Life and the garden await Pope's correction "every Year," in accordance with the rhythmical changes of nature. Yet, it is in his power to judge what they demand of him as of their *proprietor*, as the one who appropriates his own properties, simultaneously censors and presents them. In this sense man is the property of man, his own extension which must be carefully watched and cultivated, like a garden. As he who sees, as the locus of Milton's "vigilant eye," Pope can never see himself except as his own extension, as his own property, and as his own, already written, history. "My Garden" and "my Life" can be corrected only in the act of simultaneous copying and censorship of the already written autobiography, of the already painted landscape by someone who looks at himself at a distance, by someone whose essence must remain invisible, whose existence depends on his extension, on his properties which defer the essential *him* from what is *his*, *I* from *mine*. It is for this reason that what is represented as the subject is actually the object looked upon, investigated and corrected. The "I" that sees is always absent, erased by the very act of perception which is actually an

⁹⁸ Cf. T. Sławek, *Wnętrze. Z problemów doświadczenia przestrzeni w poezji* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1984), p. 50.

⁹⁹ *The Correspondence...*, IV, 40.

act of censorship and representation, an act of seeing only what can be seen, and of eradicating what cannot. There is nowhere from where to see what sees, no space for the seeing subject whose absence, whose invisibility is the only thinkable mode of his being. Foucault explores this invisibility in his reading of *Las Meninas* as Velasques' representation of representation:

It may be that, in this picture, as in all the representations of which it is, as it were, the manifest essence, the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing — despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, portraits.¹⁰⁰

The lesson of Swift's hospital speaks to us rhetorically about this withdrawal of man into the realm of sight, of seeing without being seen, into the place from which the garden of the world is ready at hand, and in whose landscape one discovers and incessantly corrects one's vision of self. It is by this withdrawal, by this presence-absence, that some sort of epistemological security of position is grasped and guarded by the vigilant eye which controls and supervises its adjacent territory.

7. The Eye

In the world whose essence is seeing and light all one can really say is "there is" rather than "I see." The "I" must step back and become a function, a mechanism of reception, an organ independent of the "I" — an eye that receives the light and, ideally, writes down the light itself. Swift's strange experiments reported by Pope are quite interesting in this respect:

As for the methods of passing his time, I must tell you one which constantly employs and hour about noone. He has in his window an Orbicular Glass, which by Contraction of the Solar Beams into a proper Focus, doth burn, singe, or speckle white or printed Paper, in curious little Holes, or various figures.¹⁰¹

It is difficult to decide whether this sort of writing was the destroyed original manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels*, but Lemuel Gulliver might be called, with little risk of misinterpretation, the proper name of an all-seeing device sent into the world: an eye of Swift's hospital at Latcombe — a vicarage where he was "professing detachment" and experimented with his Orbicular Glass.¹⁰²

It is exactly a "Pair of Spectacles" and a "Pocket Perspective" that Gulliver

¹⁰⁰ M. Foucault, *The Order...*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ *The Correspondence...*, I. 234.

¹⁰² P. Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century Encounters: Studies in Literature and Society in the Age of Walpole* (Sussex, 1985), p. 4.

held back from the Lilliputans, the fact which in Pat Rogers' reading of the story makes Gulliver "the first bespectacled hero in English literature."¹⁰³ Gulliver observes the world to which he does not belong and he can never be called a participant in it. As Rogers observes, Gulliver retreats into observation:

Now Gulliver's typical mode of withdrawal is through retreat into observation. The word *observe* and its derivations occur some 140 times in the work: the frequency increases steadily from twenty-five in the first voyage, thirty-four in the third, to forty-five in the fourth.¹⁰⁴

The word seems to be quite popular in eighteenth-century writings. *The Spectator* of March 1st 1710 begins with the words "I have observed" written, this time, by Addison who lives in the world "rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species."¹⁰⁵ Addison is so concerned not to be "in the game" of the world that he never opens his mouth in any "Cluster of People." He is all-ears and all-eyes. He withdraws from what he writes in order to make the writing a spectacle whose authorship remains in obscurity. Just as he never takes part in the world so his name does not show itself in the text:

[...] very material points which I have not spoken to in this Paper, and which [...] I must keep to myself. [...] I mean an Account of my Name, my Age, and my Lodgings. [...] They would indeed draw me out of the Obscurity which I have enjoyed for many Years, and expose me in Publick Places.¹⁰⁶

If Addison appears in public places as a nameless face which only masks his identity, Swift disappears from the public scene as the author of the *Travels* and simultaneously obscures Gulliver as a human subject. He actually launches Gulliver in order to register the world there, in order to make good use of his pocket perspective. Even when Gulliver occasionally gets involved in the world, sometimes in quite an unpleasant way, his ability to perceive and analyse what he perceives never fails him, he, Pat Rogers notices,

measures everything down to the Brodbringnagian hailstones that fall on him — he is always *computing* (a favourite verb) — yet he has very little moral identity. He has been too preoccupied by watching to receive any direct impress from life.¹⁰⁷

The "direct impress from life" Rogers talks about is also one of the epistemological dilemmas, and paradoxes, of 'Classical' discourse. To properly

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ *The Spectator*, No. 1, Thursday, March 1 (1710), in R. Allen, ed. *Addison and Steele. Selections from 'The Tatler and The Spectator'* (New York, 1961), p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

represent means, among other things, not to impose our ideas, which can always result from a misperception or a prejudice. For the true perceptions of the world are communicated by direct impressions upon our senses. Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas, and his desire not to mix them, is quite exemplary here. In his *Treatise* (1739) he wrote:

Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.¹⁰⁸

There must be an impression before it reaches its representation, however faint, in the idea. The name "impression" itself is also an idea just as an impression which has already entered the mind. The impression itself must remain outside the text in which only ideas are possible and hence it is necessary for Hume to withdraw from what he wrote (the *Treatise* was published anonymously) in order to "detextualize" the idea of an impression, to objectify it by the withdrawal of the author, to depersonalize it, but also to make it discernible outside the text which can only communicate what is already an idea. This latter withdrawal is thus communicated not by the text, but between the text and its outside, in a footnote, in the space where impressions can still be communicable. For impressions do not belong to the text, they do not become ideas any more than "all the perceptions excited by the present discourse."¹⁰⁹ In the footnote we read:

By the term of impression I would not be understood to express the manner, in which pure lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves; for which there is no particular name either in the *English* or any other language that I know of.¹¹⁰

Just as Hume wants to name what he presents as unnameable, so too Swift's Gulliver has to render the report from his travels as an imperfect copy of the lost, actually "all destroyed," manuscript of the original version, of the original impressions from his voyages.¹¹¹ The true report from his travels, the original, can only remain in the sphere of an idealized writing which directly presents his impressions, and what he offers us can only be imperfect, it can only be an imperfect copy of what preceded this imperfect, erroneous scribbling. In this predicament Gulliver's "I see" is thus always already an "X see;" he must erase his presence as the perceiving subject, and yet remain within his text as he who perceives and registers the world's writing, the impressions he receives from the world. But since this world is also, as in Milton, a book, the impressions

¹⁰⁸ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford, 1981), p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2, footnote 1.

¹¹¹ Cf. T. Rachwał, "Jacques Derrida...".

eventually turn out to be ideas. Impressions are beyond his grasp just as he himself is only conceivable as an idea, as a secondary (faint) imprint of the originary impression.

Classical man is an impression, an impression of the self which as such cannot be expressed, and in actually attempting to express himself he makes the representation a "faint image" of that impression, a fiction of the self. Like Swift's beloved John, Lemuel Gulliver, as a proper name, as something properly named, is not a man pure and simple, but a being always transgressing his own presence, the paradoxical reality of the named irrevocably announcing its own absence, its own death. If *Las Meninas* is about representations, if it represents representations, *Travels into Several Remote Countries of the World...* is a book about remoteness of what seems to be familiar, about the inevitable estrangement from one's home, or country, about the estranging (and thus for Russian formalists essentially literary) effects of all representation.¹¹² In this sense it is a book about fictions, it fictionalizes fictions and thus it cannot really be about something. To fictionalize fiction is actually to make fiction and the world always already fictional and fictitious. It is to make both the written and the unwritten invented. It is thus also to make mimesis unthinkable and the world to be "mimed" an artefact.

The beyond of an appearance, the substance of the world, towards which Tarquin directed his gaze in Part I in order to "see through" words declines and opens up the space of what the contemporary "anti-psychiatrist" R.D. Laing labels "ontological insecurity" where the "line between self and other may be indistinct and shifting, and other persons, things, or natural processes may seem as unreliable or insubstantial as the self."¹¹³ Lemuel Gulliver is equally improbable as his visions, and neither can actually be called reliable. The text questions and fictionalizes the fictions of the world as well as the fictions of man, of the observer and the observed. These fictions can always be looked upon not only through (or in) a perspective, but also through either of its ends, thus magnifying or diminishing what seems to be there. As a result we witness what Frederic Bogel calls

a loss of confidence not simply in the meaningfulness of reality but in its very solidity, an incapacity to experience one's world and oneself as the robust and substantial presence we normally require them to be.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Cf. for instance L. Matejka, K. Pomorska, *Readings in Russian Poetics* (Edinburgh, 1973). An interesting account and discussion of the Russian Formalists can be found in Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, pp. 2–8.

¹¹³ Quoted in F. Bogel, *Literature and Insubstantiality in Later Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1984), p. 25.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Insubstantial man in the insubstantial world — a realm of ghosts and spirits — the Enlightenment.

The term *substance*, etymologically what stands beneath and supports the qualities of things and thus grants them ontological security, declines as a philosophical concept, as Bogel notices, exactly at the time when the experience of insubstantiality gains importance in the eighteenth century. From Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, he says,

to Berkeley's assertion that primary qualities, no less than secondary, reside in the perceiving mind rather than the perceived object, and that material substance therefore does not exist, to Hume's further denial of spiritual substance... and thus of the basis of personal identity, the history is one of the slow but inevitable decline of the concept.¹¹⁵

Swift's (and Gulliver's) withdrawal from the world is thus not so much a matter of choice as a matter of necessity of finding a space in the world secure enough to observe and remain invisible, a "here" to which one returns after a journey through stormy seas, from a travel *to* the world; a home with its garden from which the world outside seems to be the garden itself. Yet in the world without substances such a "here" is equally insubstantial. In such a world, in the profusion of signs which only refer to themselves, the only order possible is in a sense semiotic, it is the order in which the ontological security is founded not upon the world's substantiality, but upon the proper representation. Ontology becomes here a dictionary, or better an errata to the book of the world whose corrupt language calls for correction.

Gulliver not only learns all possible and impossible languages easily, but he even more easily translates them into the language whose main error is that it is human, into the language bound to mistake Houyhnhnms for horses and the Yahoos for men. It is this ability of Gulliver's to speak many languages that promotes his survival in the world in which he is always a stranger, in which his body is as grotesque as the bodies he sees are for him and us. In order to report his vision properly Gulliver has to question his own language as the language whose names have lost the property of being proper. The body of human language, its signifier, is a sight (or a sound) so disgusting for Gulliver that he has to buy himself a pair of horses to talk to.¹¹⁶ Houyhnhnms are the object of his admiration because their language is as natural as their ideas. They do not even have a name for "pride," he informs us, for the key mechanism of human degeneration.¹¹⁷ Human nature needs correction and improvement because it is as wild as the nature of the Yahoos. To speak human language is actually to name the unnamed, to name the dangerous Other of the "too natural," of the

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Cf. J. Swift, *Gulliver's...*, p. 339.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

unregulated outside of one's garden which it is better not to see at all. There, between nature and wildness, between balance and deformity dwells a Lemuel Gulliver, a civilized Yahoo returned from the Houyhnhmland and now residing at Home, among uncivilized Yahoos who can speak, but whose erroneous language is actually no language at all.

Gulliver seems to be the point where Pope's *concordia discors* can reconcile the extremes — the "isthmus" which is man. But having once withdrawn from the world, having started the travel with perspective in his pocket and thus having distanced himself from what he could see, Gulliver cannot simply return to any secure space, to any garden. He cannot even return to and reunite with his Penelope:

I began last week to permit my wife to sit at dinner with me, at the farthest end of a long table. [...] Yet the smell of a Yahoo continuing very offensive, I always keep my nose well stopped with rue, lavender, or tobacco leaves.¹¹⁸

8. The Regulation

Gulliver would rather transform the world into the land of Houyhnhnms where

*Temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness, are the lessons equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes.*¹¹⁹

In the fragment about universality of certain human activities I quoted earlier, Dr. Johnson does not mention any "dirty" aspects of human bodily experience. Men eat, drink and rest — all these things having something in common with labor and its reproduction, as Marx would have it. Human regulated activity is as constitutive of man as idleness is not. Too much sleep, dreaming and enthusiasm, are dangerously close to, and actually constitutive of, unreason and madness in the Classical Age.¹²⁰ Dr. Johnson does not want to be a horse any more than he wants to be a wolf (cf. footnote 1 to this chapter), and yet Houyhnhnms' temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness seem to appeal to him as well. On Easter 1761 he wrote in his *Journal*:

To avoid Idleness.
 To regulate my sleep as to length and choice of hours.
 To set down every day what shall be done the day following.
 To keep a Journal.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 345.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 317.

¹²⁰ Cf. M. Byrd, *Visits to Bedlam: Madness and Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (University of South Carolina Press, 1970), chapter I.

¹²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 101.

Although “a Journal” ends this sequence, it is inscribed into each of Johnson’s resolutions as the structure upon which his life is to rest. The journal of one’s life eventually ends up as a book whose regularity only parallels the evenly measured (edited) events of life.¹²² “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals,” it “fabricates” (*fabrique*) them, says Foucault in *Surveiller et Punir*, and the ambiguity of “fabriquer” is quite telling here.¹²³ Individuality is not so much a matter of positively categorizing oneself, but a matter of repressing one’s unregulated aspects, of actually writing a text¹²⁴ whose seeming wholeness regulates both the signifier and the signified. The body of language must be as regulated as human body in order that the two might be called human. Since what finds expression in this regulated language is supposed to be a reality, the reality of human body is also a matter of regulation and discipline rather than of any ultimate, self-present existence. All this predicament can give birth to is a Gulliver, who not being a Yahoo cannot become a Houyhnhnm, and who self-banishes himself from the world in order to apply the disciplinary practices of Houyhnhnms to his Yahoo body. It is by this “self-punishment” that the individual is fabricated as an empty space between the wilderness and the artefact. The space which, according to Thomas Vaughan (whom Swift quotes in *A Tale of a Tub*), is a middle “between both Extremes, and not that which actually unites the whole together.”¹²⁵ And in order to remain invisible within this middle both Gulliver and Johnson inflict upon themselves the corrective exercises in order not to transgress the equally invisible borders, or fences, beyond which it would be others who would discipline them.

The eighteenth-century disciplinary systems, says Foucault, favour “punishments that are exercise — intensified, multiplied forms of training, several times repeated.”¹²⁶ Self-discipline is actually a kind of self-punishment whose task is to constantly survey oneself from the outside in a society of Gullivers who, in the gesture of misanthropy, withdraw from the “low” Yahoo-like world, who stand up from the sty, like parson Adams, and say: *Nihil habeo cum porcis*,¹²⁷ at the same time, in the gesture of benevolence, teaching the world how to stand up and

¹²² In his reading of Pepys’ Diary Francis Barker says: “Not too verbose, barely literary; after all that rhetoric that preceded it, a breath of fresh air. With the verbal excess of the Renaissance behind us, not to say *sotto voce* those other excesses of the recent revolution, we emerge at last into a clear, known world of facts and events, of business and leisure, and into a discourse appropriate to that world”. *The Tremulous...*, p. 4.

¹²³ M. Foucault, *Discipline and...*, p. 170; *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Gallimard, 1975), p. 172.

¹²⁴ “‘Text’ goes back to the root *teks*, meaning ‘to weave’ and also ‘to fabricate’”. H. Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 1.

¹²⁵ T. Vaughan, *Antroposophia Theomagica* (1650), pp. 38—39.

¹²⁶ M. Foucault, *Discipline...*, p. 179.

¹²⁷ H. Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (New York, 1980), p. 123.

withdraw, how to fabricate one's individuality along with one's proper name. And though, it seems, we have travelled quite a distance from the secure space of home and garden, we have in fact hardly left it. We return there along with Gulliver, who will obviously not invite us there, but will bid us farewell at the gate:

I here take a final leave of my courteous readers, and return to enjoy my own speculations in my little garden at Redriff, to apply those excellent lessons of virtue which I have learned among the Houyhnhnms, to instruct the Yahoos of my own family as far as I shall find them docible animals, to behold my figure often in a glass, and thus if possible habituate myself by time to tolerate the sight of a human creature.¹²⁸

9. The Benevolent Misanthrope¹²⁹

Unlike Timon of Athens Gulliver does not withdraw to complete solitude, and neither is his hatred of mankind so indiscriminate. According to Thomas Preston, the traditional figure of the misanthrope — like Timon or Alceste — “functioned in literature [...] as ‘satirist satirized,’” that is to say, as a satirist and the object of satire at the same time.¹³⁰ The satire — “the fearsome Nemesis of vice” — which satirizes the satirist, him who sees and opposes vice in any form, translates satire into vice itself and places misanthropy among vices. As a result, the misanthrope becomes the object not only of satire, but of exclusion as well. What is excluded is the misanthrope's self-exclusion, his withdrawal from the centre of the world. Shakespeare's Apemantus says to Timon:

The middle of humanity thou never knewest,
but the extremity of both ends. When thou wast
in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for too
much curiosity. In thy rags thou know'st none,
but are despised for the contrary. (IV. iii)

There is vice and virtue in the hierarchically organized pre-Cartesian world and, good or bad, man is an important element in God's plan of the world. He who withdraws from this world threatens and transgresses the established order of things by positing a space outside the domain of God and his order. He withdraws from God, and this withdrawal is a banishment, or, better a damnation. “The middle of humanity” Shakespeare talks about is not an empty space

¹²⁸ J. Swift, *Gullivers...*, p. 345.

¹²⁹ The term used by Thomas Preston in *Not in Timon's Manner: Feeling, Misanthropy and Satire in Eighteenth-Century England* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1975).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

from which extremities are kept in abeyance, but the centre unthinkable without the extremities. In Timon's misanthropy this centre is denied, and since there is no space for improvement or correction he can only be read as full of hate and destructive.

Swift, on the other hand, admits that he despises the world, but "not in Timon's manner." The doubtful status of man in the Classical Age makes it possible to see misanthropy in a more positive light. With Descartes a break occurs in the world of words and things, a break between them. This gap, this middle is filled in by an ego or an "I" whose pursuit preoccupies the discursive practices of the period. Needless to say, Cartesian doubt is a misanthropic gesture in itself, a gesture which says "no" to the world as an already constituted and familiar thing. This break contains the promise of a new world and a new humanity, its improvement, correction and development however misleading the promise will prove to be. Gulliver's withdrawal from the world can actually be rightly called, after Preston, a benevolent misanthropy. Gulliver says "no" to the world and himself at the same time, but he also promises two things: the instruction of the Yahoo family, and the future acceptance of what he says "no" to, of his Yahoo body and the Yahoo body of the world. By means of temperance, industry, exercise etc., Gulliver and his family will form, or better develop, a new sort of virtuous creature; not simply man, but man transformed by himself. The general change of attitude towards misanthropy in the eighteenth century¹³¹ turns around the centre, the middle, whose construction or fabrication demands the denial of the vices of the world, their repression from within. In Rousseau's defence of Moliere's *Alceste*, for instance, it is asserted that misanthropy is indispensable for the goodness of mankind, that those who do not think like *Alceste* are, willy nilly, enemies of mankind and humanity.¹³² This sort of thinking, under which Swift's signature is obviously visible, boils down to saying that the annihilation of mankind is necessary for its benefit and for its new shape. Swift's "drown the world" is a hope for a second Flood to come, not from God, but from ourselves. Man defines himself negatively, by stepping back from the marginal sphere of the Other, from the "dangerous supplement," as Derrida would have it, into the safe space of the main text, into the middle, the centre from which the evils are visible beyond the horizon of perception. Dr Johnson's desire to be busy, his "disciplinary technology," to use Foucault's term, developed in order to regulate the day and the body, is not so much a desire to construct an object, but rather not to allow the entrance of unregulated nature into the domain he occupies, into the domain of his properties. If what some critics call the "bourgeois self" is born within this discourse, it is born from the fear of the improper rather than from the desire to have properties. Man without

¹³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 49—55.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

properties is thus not a man because he is defenceless in the face of, and paradoxically offensive to, the emergent order of things. Since he lacks any "extension" by property, since he lacks the domesticated space of the garden, he comes dangerously close to brute nature, to nature which is too natural, to a nothingness. The character of this nothingness is governed by what John M. Ellis compares, talking about the non-identity of literature, to the non-identity of weeds in one's garden. Weeds are not particular kinds of plant, but they are defined by what a gardener does not want in the garden.¹³³ What constitutes property, on the other hand, must be moderately "gilded" and properly named. Property is not an originary secret beyond veils. It is constituted by these veils, by their proper arrangement. To rape a Lucrece meant (in Shakespeare) to see through and eventually destroy "the lock" between the eye and the treasure. Here it means to take that lock, to Steal Belinda's ornament. Lucrece's ornaments "spoke" in her defence, while Belinda's carefully cultivated ones are the objects of a desireous gaze. Their only defence is the evanescent world of Sylphs, and actually of the reflections of light in the air.¹³⁴

10. The Coffee-House Society

If we look through Gulliver's perspective once again we shall see that the only things visible through it are actually grotesque, and hardly any other world is offered us to see. Too big or too small, too wise or too stupid men are invariably grotesque. Those who inhabit Houyhnhnmland are like animals, but in order not to be animals they must become horses. One evidently needs a hospital in such a world. Swift's hospital for the despisers of the world finds its institutional realization in the establishment of the closed space of the coffee-house, of the place which Swift, in his *City Shower*, imagined as "the heaven where the saunter can escape the stink and inconvenience of the street and complain in comparative comfort."¹³⁵ Stallybrass and White read the rise of coffee-houses in Europe as the moment consonant with the establishment of the middle-classes. As the place independent of the interventions of the state, and as an instrument of the regulations of manners, coffee-house was opposed to the chaos of a fair or carnival, to the filth of the street, to the drunkenness of the alehouse. The importance of this new institution was, according to Stallybrass and White,

¹³³ Cf. J. Ellis, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 37—42. His "weed" theory is discussed in T. Eagleton, *Literary...*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Cf. Canto I, 39—92.

¹³⁵ P. Stallybrass, A. White, *The Politics...*, p. 107.

that it provided a radically new kind of social space, at once free from the “grotesque bodies” of the alehouse and yet (initially at least) democratically accessible to all kinds of men — though not, significantly, to women.¹³⁶

With no women around, with food and drink never in excess, the coffee-house was a decent place to go. The grotesque bodies, sexuality, obscene talk, nonsense or ribaldry were left outside in the street or in the tavern. As rational creatures, men spent their time in coffee-houses, comfortably seated and conversing with others. One really wonders if these were places to go *out* from home if one reads Montesquieu’s opinion about them:

It is a merit of the coffee-house that you can sit there whole day and half the night amongst people of all classes. The coffee-house is the only place where conversation may be made to come true, where extravagant plans, utopian dreams and political plots are hatched without anyone leaving the seat.¹³⁷

One must also sleep and, it seems, the other half of the night was devoted to that activity. The sterility of the place is so complete that it is difficult not to see there an image of heads engaged in thinking and talking, as if ideas are the only things to be born, or “hatched,” from that sort of relationship, from this gathering of talking heads whose lower bodily parts have been left outside along with the women.

Having thus withdrawn from the unregulated world and from equally, as we shall see, unregulated women, men form what might be called a brotherhood or fraternity. The society as family — king, the father, is inseparable from his wife or country which is his body; “what God hath conjoined then, let no man separate. I am the husband and all the whole Island is my lawful wife; I am the head and it is my body”¹³⁸ — gives way to society as fraternity, the society of sons, of equals independent of any earthly fathers.¹³⁹ Locke, for instance, wrote:

The state of Nature has a law to govern it, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions; for men being all the workmanship of one omnipresent and infinitely wise Maker, all the servants of one sovereign Master, sent into the world by His order and about His business, they are His property.¹⁴⁰

The figure of the monarch ceases to be the mediator between God and people, and the communication between the two spheres becomes a matter of reading

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹³⁸ N. Brown, *Love’s Body* (New York, 1966), p. 135.

¹³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 130–140.

¹⁴⁰ J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (London and New York, not dated), pp. 119–120.

from the book of the law inscribed within our minds and reason. Reason is the only legacy left to us by the Father, and we all have an equal share in that legacy as equal brothers. Yet Locke grants every brother a possession, a property which, as God's property as well, cannot be owned exclusively by a man. Since men are also owned by God, this sort of sonship, as Norman O. Brown notices, is a species of slavery.¹⁴¹ The freedom of brethren can thus only be granted by a distance from the father, from the originary principle which, paradoxically, makes the very idea of brothers possible. The contradictions can only be done away with if the figure of the father completely disappears from the scene thus making the idea of legacy and property impossible. One, quite recent, futile attempt at doing just that decided to replace fraternity with comradeship and said the father and the property dialectically erase themselves with only a little help from a temporarily necessary regime¹⁴². In the society of brothers that Locke seems to be talking about, God is not completely denied, but relegated to a region from where he watches his people with an indifferent eye. And it is by this gesture that the absolute authority of the king, and of the earthly father, recede from the world. There is no authority which determines what is whose or who is who. The legacy is left to some "semi-orphans" of sorts who, thus liberated, distribute and use the legacy by themselves. The royal will and generosity are replaced by economy, by property and its exchange. But since property does not come immediately from the father it must be redefined as well, it must be constructed anew, out of a new sort of chaos, created by individuals left to their own devices, and who are no longer involved in the patriarchal primogeniture. Ian Watt's *homo economicus* is now ready to begin his explorations. His property is the world, and this is what is shared, but before he can possess this world he must first possess himself, he must be his own master. Locke writes:

Though the things of Nature are given in common, man (by being master of himself and proprietor of his person, and the actions and labour of it) had still in himself the great foundation of property.¹⁴³

There is a foundation in man upon which he is going to construct his new sort of identity. He is not only his own proprietor but also a producer, his own father, as it were. The topography of monarchy which granted subjects their proper positions in the sovereign body now leaves them dispersed and actually forces them to rebuild the same construction as if from the inside, on the basis of the "great foundation of property." Milton's Temple of the Lord I wrote about in

¹⁴¹ N. Brown, *Love's...*, p. 6.

¹⁴² Brown is more explicit when he says: Marxism, in succession to Locke, picked up the cause of brotherhood. The history of Marxism shows how hard it is to kill the father; to get rid of the family, private property, and the state (*ibid.*, p. 8).

¹⁴³ J. Locke, *Two...*, p. 138.

Part II is a construction which builds itself because its self-disciplined parts are carved in the stone without any external plan or designer, and yet shape themselves into parts that fit the glorious whole. The process of social formation in *Areopagitica* is concomitant with self-formation, and it is the self-formation that provides the foundation of the building. Yet this foundation is itself founded upon man's property to have property, as we saw in Locke.

It is on the basis of this foundation of property that *homo economicus* is thinkable only as a middle class representative. The middle class which has the industrious individual as its basis emerges in the Classical Age not as a social class already conscious of its economic and political ends, but as a discursive formation which can install itself only in the middle of *concordia discors*, in the only space which grants epistemological security of position. We have already encountered this middle in the figure of the hospital, the garden or the coffee-house. This middle was formulated by means of Macherey's "determining absent presence," by means of the simultaneous denial and desire of the "improper," of the low, the grotesque, the filthy along with the "upper," the royal, the authoritarian.¹⁴⁴ Both spheres are made visible or in some sense present only as transgressive, as already improper and actually not really different from each other. In Pope's *The Dunciad*, for instance, Dulness is simultaneously a royal figure and the "Smithfield fairground spirit, [...] the regal and the lumpen promiscuously compounded," as Stallybrass and White put it.¹⁴⁵

Saw ev'ry Court, ev'ry king declare
His Royal Sense of Op'ra's or the Fair;
The Stews and Palace equally explore'd,
Intrigu'd with glory, and with spirit whor'd; (IV. 312—315)

Dulness is also a queen, a woman left outside the coffee-house. Raised high, she partakes in both spheres, the bodily and the royal. Improper and dangerous, she clears a space, a middle, reserved for male identity and male society of the coffee-house. The centre becomes the insubstantial sphere, purified and refined, which in order to exist has to be, as it were, parasitical. It has to breed upon what it wants to be absent. This public scene, say Stallybrass and White,

¹⁴⁴ Writing about Augustan satire Stallybrass and White notice that "the production and reproduction of a body of classical writing required a labour of suppression, a perpetual work of exclusion upon the grotesque body and it was that supplementary, yet unavoidable, labour which troubled the identity of the classical. It brought the grotesque back into the classical, not so much as a return of the repressed as a vast labour of exclusion requiring and generating its own equivocal energies. *Quae negata, grata* — what is denied is desired: Augustan satire was the generic form which enabled writers to express and negate the grotesque simultaneously (*The Politics...*, pp. 105—106).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

carved out a domain between the realm of kings and the world of alley-ways and taverns and it did so by forcing together the high and the low as contaminated equivalents, somehow in league with each other and part of conspiracy of exchange and promiscuity in which the low was ebbing higher to flood the court and the court was sinking into the filthy ways and pastimes of the low.¹⁴⁶

If this society of the middle denies and desires the head of the king which it symptomatically cuts off, only to restore some seventeen years later, it also denies and desires the low, the grotesque, the unregulated upon which it looks from the inside of the coffee-house where heads, without crowns and without the lower bodily parts in their minds, decently talk about something else.¹⁴⁷

11. The Woman

In the world where man can be his own father one might be tempted by the hypothesis that he is also his own mother, that man is a woman. Terry Eagleton quite convincingly writes about this possibility in his book about Richardson's *Clarissa*.¹⁴⁸ Since the problem of sexual identity seems to be important in the construction of human identity and subjectivity I shall problematize it at the outset and begin with the hermaphrodite.

In an essay on feminism and the Augustans, Penelope Wilson notices that

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁴⁷ The coffee-house, Stallybrass and White inform us, "had a habit of metamorphosing into professional or business institutions. The English Stock Exchange started in a coffee-house; having originally met at Jonathan's in 'Change Alley,' it moved to a room in Sweetings Alley which subsequently became known as Stock Exchange coffee-house. It was Garraway's coffee-house that the Sun Fire office, one of the earliest insurance companies, transferred in 1711. Lloyd's began as a coffee-house [...] some time around 1688 and gradually moved into marine insurance (ibid., pp 99—100).

¹⁴⁸ There is actually no "real" in woman, just as there is no "real" of meaning in writing. For Eagleton "The 'real' of *Clarissa* — the point around which this elaborate two thousand page text pivots — is the rape, yet the rape goes wholly unrepresented, as the hole at the centre of the novel towards which this huge mass of writing is sucked only to sheer off again. [...] Lovlace's sexual climax is also the novel's great anticlimax, a purely impersonal act of violence which refuses entry into a discourse and brusquely unveils language for what it is: a ceaselessly digressive supplement which, *pace* Richardson's own ideology of the sign, will never succeed in nailing down the real. On the other hand, the non-representation of the rape highlights the centrality of discourse: in a view of sexuality more typical of women than of man, it suggests that without sympathy and affection the physical act itself is relatively trival. The violated body of Clarissa slips through the net of writing to baffle representation; as Lovlace's frantic assault on the very scandal of *meaning*, the rape defies signification for reasons other than those of literary decorum. Lovlace's post-structuralist fictions stand revealed in their true gratuitousness: they are powerless to inscribe the 'real' of the woman's body, that outer limit upon all language" T. Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 61).

Early in 1715 Pope wrote, for decency's sake in the guise of their "brother," to Martha and Theresa Blount, describing a visit with a doctor and a divine to inspect "the most reigning Curiosity in the town," currently a hermaphrodite. The account is in Pope's rakish mode, a set-piece of the *risqué* rather than a personal reaction: the priest has to imitate the method of the apostle Thomas, seeing and feeling, and the Doctor opines that "upon the whole it was a woman; whatever might give a handle to think otherwise, was a trifle."¹⁴⁹

The professional has no doubts as to the sex of the hermaphrodite. If it is not a man, it must be a woman. The "trifle" is not read as a male defect but the anomalous whole is read as a woman. This whole, in fact, goes unnoticed, it disappears as the object of an interested gaze which corrects what it looks upon in order to see something orderly and normative, something which can and must be classified. If the Renaissance, according to Stephen Greenblatt, "tended to acquire an understanding of the order of things through a meditation of the prodigious"¹⁵⁰, that is to say, saw the most bizzare anomaly (hermaphrodites, monsters etc.,) both as

violating the most basic natural categories, and a sign of the deep, underlying structure of natural order, the structure enabling the very generativity that produced the anomaly,¹⁵¹

the eighteenth-century gaze marginalizes it, ignores it as constitutive of any reasonable order. All forms of monstrosity are subversive. They subvert the order based on a system of proper classification. They are either to be confined and cured, or looked upon from a distance, publically displayed as curiosities. Sunday visits to Bedlam in order to see madmen in their cells are exactly the same kind of curiosity.¹⁵² Monstrosities can be seen in the world only in order to be rejected by it, to be censored. Milton is quite plain about it in *Areopagitica* when he criticizes pre-publication censorship. He says that before the Inquisition

no envious *Juno* sate cros-leg'd over the nativity of any mans intellectual off-spring; but if it prov'd a Monster, who denies but that it was justly burnt, or sank into the Sea.¹⁵³

Sterne's intellectual offspring, Tristram Shandy, is in a sense a monstrous creature that wonders, as Ralph Flores notices, whether anything at all can be born and not be monstrous.¹⁵⁴ As it seems to be obvious from the epigraph

¹⁴⁹ P. Wilson, "Feminism and the Augustans: Some Readings and Problems," *Critical Quarterly*, Nos 1, 2 (1986), p. 80.

¹⁵⁰ S. Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," in T. Heller, M. Sosna, D. Wellbery, eds., *Reconstructing Individualism* (Stanford, 1986), p. 36.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁵² Cf. M. Byrd, *Visits...*, chapter 2.

¹⁵³ J. Milton, *Areopagitica*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁴ R. Flores, *The Rhetoric...*, pp. 120—134.

opening this chapter, for Locke the line of division between human and inhuman as regards the body is actually nonexistent, and what is regarded as human is only the “habitant within” the body, the reasonable reason. Locke excludes the body from his considerations of humanity and says that a creature like Shandy, “squashed in his nose and possibly elsewhere as well,”¹⁵⁵ can be a man provided that he thinks, that it has opinions. Since the opinions must be somehow represented it is the body of the opinions, a kind of writing, which constitutes man. When this body turns out monstrous, the habitant within is regarded as equally distorted, as inhuman. It is thus not so much a human body or its physiognomy that reflects humanity, but the ability to control this physiognomy, the ability to write one’s own body. This kind of writing might be called conduct, behaviour or manners. The bodily distortion which accompanies madness (cf. Hogarth, for instance) is not the lack of some physiological parts, it is not the dissimilarity of bodies, but the mark of that internal discipline called behaviour. In Hogarth the creatures which supposedly lack reason are quite like human beings but they all behave as if they were alone in their chambers despite the presence of other people around.

Seeing a hermaphrodite as a woman rather than as a man is thus an ambivalent gesture. Beyond the monstrosity there might be some reasonable creature or reason, but since the matter of sex is no longer a matter of degree, as it used to be, but a matter of stable categorization into mutually exclusive genres, the creature is classified as woman.¹⁵⁶ Paradoxically, however, the size of the “trifle” whose insignificance seems to render the inside of the body no longer ambivalent turns out to be an important part of that inside. Despite the fact that the defect is merely physiological, the woman within this body, as we learn from the same letter, is split. She is both masculine and feminine inside, and the decision as to her being a reasonable creature can only be ambivalent as well:

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁵⁶ Before the Classical Age, according to Stephen Greenblatt, the difference between the sexes was a matter of quantity rather than quality, and man’s domination over woman was protective rather than regulatory. Woman was a weaker sort of the same species, of the same sex (“the phallic”). If she lacked the penis it was because she was too weak to “externalize” it, and had to keep it hidden within the body. Since Galen, Greenblatt notices, “it had been believed that the male and the female sexual organs were altogether comparable, indeed, that they were mirror images of each other. [...] ‘Turn outward the woman’s, turn inward, so to speak, and fold double the man’s, and you will find them the same in both in every respect.’ Weaker and colder than man, woman simply could not give birth to genitals and thus failed to reach “nature’s goal: a penis.” Here Greenblatt quotes from *On Monsters and Marvels* by Ambroise Paré (1573): “For that which man hath apparent, that women have hid within, both by the singular providence of Nature, as also by the defect of heat in women, which could not drive and thrust forth those parts as in men. “Woman constituted a separate species only by accepting a certain “debility,” an underdevelopment which entailed her submission to man, but since the dominance of male “seed” over female in an individual was never absolute there was always something female about man, and vice versa. S. Greenblatt, “*Fiction and...*”, pp. 39 and 40.

As for the Party's temper of mind, it appears to be at most even disposition, partaking of the good qualities of both sexes. [...] Of how obliging and complaisant a turn appears by this, that he tells the Ladies the Inclinations of a Gentleman, and that she tells the Gentleman she has the *Tendre* of a Lady.¹⁵⁷

Woman is not a single creature inside, but always a double one. Although women are more inconsistent within than men, women are, Penelope Wilson notices in her reading of *To a Lady*, more uniform in their general character, they are more uniform in their inconsistency. Man can be either good or bad, woman is *both*.¹⁵⁸ Two kinds of writing, both in abundance in the Classical Age, parallel this paradox: satires on women and conduct books for women.¹⁵⁹ Constantly ambiguous, woman cannot easily identify or self-control herself and she must be helped by those who can. Conduct books for women were handbooks or instruction books designed to educate women, to teach them temperance, manners, ways of behaviour and virtues essential to a wife and mother. I shall have something more to say about this genre.¹⁶⁰ Satires on women, on the other hand, ridiculed women's non-identity, their lack of properties and stability in the absence of male guidance, in the absence of the vigilant eye of self-discipline. Robert Gould's fierce attack upon women in *Love Given O're* (1682) is an interesting example of this kind of writing. He suggests the following image of women on their own:

How, when into their Closets they retire,
Where flaming Dil__s does inflame desire,
And gentle Lap-d__s feed the am'rous fire:
Lap-d__s! to whom they are more kind and free,
Than they themselves to their own Husbands be.
How curst in Man! when Bruits his Rival prove,
Ev'n in the sacred Bus'ness of his Love.¹⁶¹

Bruits themselves, women have bruits for their lovers, while men having spent "whole day and half night" on serious conversation in a coffee-house begin to feel unsafe seeing their women so unrestrained. The "sacred bus'ness" men think they are involved in is changed into the profane bodily pleasures of her body, into the pleasure which is the pleasure of bruits because so "lewdly unconfined."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ P. Wilson, "Feminism...", p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. F. Nussbaum, "Introduction" to *Satires on Women* (Los Angeles: The Augustan Reprint Society, 1976). An ingenious reading of conduct books for women can be found in Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and...*

¹⁶⁰ Cf. N. Armstrong, *Desire and...*, p. 89.

¹⁶¹ R. Gould, "Love Given O're," *Satires on Women* (Los Angeles: The Augustan Reprint Society, 1976), p. 5.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

The amorous fire is so insatiable in that monstrous creature that in the absence of a man she always playfully finds a substitute for Pope's "trifle," be it a dildo or a lapdog. They are inconstant in all the senses of the word:

No more the Wind, the faithless Wind, shall be
A Similie for their *Inconstancy*,
For that sometimes is fixt; but Woman's mind,
Is never fixt, or to one Point inclin'd.¹⁶³

To be inclined to more than one point does not only mean to be unstable, but also to lack the point, the centre around which identity is organized. This is also in a sense the point Gould's woman enjoys herself with in her chamber, and to play with that point is to make the serious philosophical problem of identity into enjoyment and pleasure, to transgress the "fixt" order of things (and words). Gould is not alone in this idea of the feminine. It is enough to read the first lines of *The Rape of the Lock* to see who wakes up with Belinda in her bed.¹⁶⁴ "Inconstant" also means that a woman's body is not a unity, but an amalgamation of detachable objects which only have an appearance of some solid whole. Swift's Corinna dismantling her body before going to bed (and the lap-dog is there too, his name is Shock) is only too well known an example.¹⁶⁵ Woman's inconstant mind cannot keep her body in check, it is not really a mind that she has, but only an unregulated substance which needs some reason and authority to guide it, a body without a head.¹⁶⁶

The motive of headless woman appears in the text which only cautiously could be called a satire against women, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Let us have a look at some of its fragments. In Paradise, before the Fall and before the transgression, Milton's Eve seems to be already inferior to Adam:

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ *The Rape of the Lock*, I. 12—15:

Sol thro'white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
And ope'd those eyes that must eclipse the day:
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake.

¹⁶⁵ This woman makes an appearance in Swift's *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*.

¹⁶⁶ Richard Ames some time before Crusoe dreams of an island without women:

Oh! were there but some *Island* vast and wide, [...]
We'd Live, and could we Procreate like Trees,
And without *Womans Aid* —
Promote and Propagate our *Species*;

"The Folly of Love," *Satires on...*, pp. 26—27.

For well I understand in the Prime end
 Of Nature her the inferior, in the mind
 And inward faculties, which most excel;
 In outward also her resambling less
 His image who made both. (VIII. 540—544)

Eve's mental inferiority is thus also marked upon her body in some as yet secret way. Eve obviously accepts Adam's superiority and wisdom. If she does not, she at least says that she does:

O thou for whom
 And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,
 And without whom am to no end, my guide
 And head, what thou hast said is just and right. (IV. 440—443)

If we read these lines to the letter we can see Eve has a body without a head, the sort of body which quite definitely is "to no end." What further seems to justify this misreading is that the first description of our parents in the poem separates the two in a peculiar manner. We first see Adam's face and hair:

His fair large front and eye sublime declared
 Absolute rule; any hyacinthine locks
 Round from his parted forelock manly hung
 Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad. (IV. 300—303)

Here Adam ends and Eve begins:

She as a veil down to her slander waist
 Her unadorned golden tresses wore
 Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets waved
 As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
 Subjection [...] (IV. 304—308)

What remains of Eve's head is her hair which partly belongs to Adam (and which originates in him), and her reason which has probably much the same status. She is the mindless body, the "lower bodily stratum," as Stallybrass and White would have it, and if she has any thoughts at all, they can only be wanton, like the part of the hair which belongs to her.¹⁶⁷ This fact is sufficient for Hillis-Miller to interpret Milton's Eve as fallen before the Fall.¹⁶⁸ Eve's subjection is the head's idea which she has to accept since she cannot have her own ideas, and her words seem to be Adam's words obediently repeated by her. She cannot have her own voice, she cannot speak by herself (she has no mouth) and her words only seem to be hers. Adam does occasionally converse with Eve in the poem, but it is always possible

¹⁶⁷ Cf. P. Stallybrass, A. White, *The Politics...*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁸ "How Deconstruction Works," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 9 (1986), p. 25.

to translate the dialogue into Adam's "internal monologue," into a desperate discourse with himself on the weakness of his body which he accuses of a lack of self-control. It is his fault of putting his mindless body on trial that turns out to be responsible for the Fall. Adam knew the danger in advance and yet, in his blindness, trusted that this headless, unreasonable flesh could be able to repel the Serpent's temptations. Able as it was, the question of guilt can never be resolved. Eve quite evidently lost her head while Adam was fast asleep, but it is exactly the head's job to keep in check the mindless, desirous body, the job Adam neglects and falls prey to his own carelessness. Having eaten of the forbidden fruit Eve says:

Being as I am, why didst not thou, the head,
Command me absolutely not to go,
Going into such danger as thou saidst? (IX. 1155—7)

It turns out neither of them separately can be guilty of transgression. It is the separation, the short lasting divorce (in defence of which Milton wrote earlier) whose effects are so disastrous for man. Book IX of *Paradise Lost* suspends the decision as to who was guilty and renders it as an endless discourse between the two extremes:

Thus in mutual accusation they spent
The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning,
And of their vain contest appeared no end. (IX. 1187—9)

Interestingly enough *The Argument* of Book X begins with the words: "Man's transgression known" thus seemingly reconciling the opposites in the general term man, but actually opening up the empty space where man has as yet to find himself, the space between the two sexes whose identity can only find some closure in a struggle, in the quarrel of the sexes contained within one body.

This struggle is still discernible in the text both chronologically and, as it seems, thematically distant from Milton. Fanny Hill, the woman of pleasure, in her various and numerous encounters with men is not only fascinated by the sizes of male organs, but always remembers to define them in terms of the female antagonists.¹⁶⁹ For John Cleland, the extremes are reconciled in the act in which Ovid's Hermaphroditus lost his voice and identity. Written by a man, Fanny

¹⁶⁹ "[...] the young gentleman had changed her posture from lying breadth to length-wise on the coach: but her thighs were still spread, and the mark lay fair to him, who, now kneeling between them, display'd to us a side view of that fierce erect machine of his, which threaten's no less than splitting the tender victim." J. Cleland, *Fanny Hill; Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (Granada Books, 1979), p. 43.

Hill's *Memoirs* (1749) render feminine pleasure as an act of being subjected to man, to the phallus which in the book is described very often as an instrument, tool or machine. Fanny Hill, like Eve, accepts this sort of subjection, she does not mind being continually subjected to application of the tool to her body. Concealing the "unconcealed" sexual organs of our parents' body as "those mysterious parts" (IV. 312) Milton seems to be less "genital" than Cleland, nevertheless the instrumental role of the male part, whatever it is, is a theme which runs across the two, and not only the two, texts.¹⁷⁰ Since female subjection to the male point is voluntary, since she accepts the guidance and education from this point, she actually elects or chooses to be thus educated, she as it were elects the head of her state and thus accepts the dictatorship as her own. We are obviously back to the theme of regulation and exercise constitutive of one's identity. Man produces himself by inscribing subjection into his less disciplined part and thus establishes the masculine domination over the feminine as what she desires or wants in the manner in which Pope's garden "wanted" correction. What gains some identity here is not, paradoxically, man, but the feminine as the object of censorship, control, education, domestication etc. In attempting to regulate the unregulated feminine, in positing the possibility of there being a female subject as a positive category, 'Classical' discourse actually created the *pattern* for the construction of identity in general, the pattern for the construction of the self-disciplined individual who watches himself in order to constantly ward off the monstrous, chaotic Other, who constantly *provides himself* with the proper properties. There is an economic man and a domestic woman whom he provides with all sorts of properties contained within one and the same person. This man is a woman who cannot be left on her own. He is a man on the hostile island which simultaneously welcomes him and wants correction.

12. The Island

It is not just Defoe's whim that Robinson Crusoe, from the very beginning of the novel, is not exactly Robinson Crusoe, and hence *Robinson Crusoe* is not exactly about Robinson Crusoe either. But let us use this name for the sake of convenience. The themes of the proper name, of fraternity with the father at a distance, of one's withdrawal from the world, of the feminine and of the singular identity seem to at least take part in this story which, as Crusoe swears, is both allegorical and historically true:

¹⁷⁰ The head/phallus relationship in the Classical Age is explored by Norman O. Brown in his *Love's Body*.

I, Robinson Crusoe, being at this time in perfect and sound mind and memory, thanks be to God, therefore [...] do affirm that the story, though allegorical is also historical.¹⁷¹

If Crusoe's life is allegorical, what does it allegorize? What is the true history that it tells us if the story is an allegory?¹⁷² A plausible explanation could be that it is a story of an "I" whose name is Robinson Crusoe in which the name is always already an allegory. By this paradox, and simultaneously postulating the absolute plainness of style (see above), Defoe may be telling the readers that all writing is a matter of rhetoric, that the seemingly plain name is already a "mis-name," an allegory of something truer, of an "I." Yet the namelessness of the "I," the impossibility of its identification makes its history equally impossible. Hence it is also impossible to decide whether *Robinson Cruose* is fact or fiction regardless of whether there was an Alexander Selkirk or not. The story is both the true and allegorical history of "I, Robinson Crusoe" where "I" and "Robinson Crusoe" are not quite interchangeable terms.

The history of Crusoe's disobedience and withdrawal from his father and family begins with the dissatisfaction with his family name whose proper version should be Kreutznaer:

[...] by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe; and so my companions always called me.¹⁷³

It is also on the first page that we learn there is nobody to execute the will of Crusoe's "very aged" father, since of the "fraternity" of three brothers one is dead and the two others (including Robinson) disappear not informing their parents where they can be found: "What became of my second brother, I never knew, any more than my father and my mother did know what was become of me."¹⁷⁴ It this way, in addition to distancing himself from his corrupt name, Crusoe distances himself from his family, and in a sense also represents this small fraternity. Some fatal "propension of nature" drives him away from the father and from the corrupt English language to sea and then to the hostile nobody's territory upon which he will arduously erect his property ("my island as I now call it") and will educate Friday, "his man," whose attachment to the master is at least ambiguous. Let us have a look at this attachment.

Like Milton's Eve, Friday voluntarily accepts Crusoe as his Master and prefers to die rather than to part with him:

¹⁷¹ D. Defoe, *Serious Reflections... of Robinson Crusoe*, G.H. Maynadier (New York, 1903), p. ix.

¹⁷² Lennard Davies answers these questions in a different way and more exhaustively in his *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York, 1983), pp. 155—177.

¹⁷³ D. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 1957), p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

“Yes, yes,” says he, “wish be both there; no wish Friday there, no Master there.”¹⁷⁵

Eve speaks somehow more sophisticated syntax, but what she seems to be saying is that Paradise is wherever her Master goes. Still in the garden of Paradise, but just about to leave she says:

But now lead on;
 In me is no delay; with thee to go,
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
 Is to go hence unwilling. (XII. 614—117)

Friday and Eve seem to be also linked by the fact that they both knew what should not be eaten, and yet ate it — Eve of the fruit, and Friday of human flesh.

Eating is an important theme in Defoe’s story. Crusoe’s defence of Friday is also a defence against being eaten himself and, punningly, a defence of Christian lenten Friday as the day when one should abstain from eating meat. By saving Friday’s life Crusoe interrupts the meat-feast (*carne levare*) of the savages and accepts Friday as his man only because he voluntarily distances himself from the feast, escapes from being eaten as if the taboo of eating human flesh had been inscribed within him, and as if he knew that there was some more civil space where he could find shelter. Unlike the rest of the savage tribe, Friday is thus not quite savage but already formed as a material ready for some proper education. He is natural but not too natural, and all he needs is the hand of a gardener who will help him emerge the other world without “regulating him too much.”¹⁷⁶ Crusoe accepts Friday as his property because the Indian does not represent the dangerous Other, but is himself a creature with the potentiality of having proper properties, of becoming a man. It is this link of the “proper” that makes their relationship possible. The other savages lack this property and they must be kept at a distance. Crusoe’s contact with the hostile savages getting ready for the feast is only visual. Like Gulliver, he observes them through a perspective and himself remains invisible. Having prepared his guns for defence he

clambered up to the top of the hill [...] as usual; standing so, however, that my head did not appear above the hill, so that they could not perceive me by any means. Here I observed, by the help of my perspective glass, that they were no less than thirty in number [...] dancing round the fire.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁷⁶ Friday’s body testifies to his already civilized nature as well. He “had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surely suspect; he seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of an European.” The colour of his skin “had in it something very agreeable.” D. Defoe, *ibid.*, pp. 179—180.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 175—176.

As a guard of his territory, of his property, Crusoe has no doubts as to the necessity of killing the two savages chasing Friday. Friday's escape from the savages is a run towards the space within Crusoe's home which already welcomes him while the run of the other black figures is momentarily interpreted as an attack and transgression. Friday will become a voluntary servant and follower of Crusoe's regulations while one of the savages, the one who was "knocked down" but not killed by Crusoe, is defined on the side so absolutely alien and hostile to both Crusoe and Friday that the idea of saving his life and accepting him if only as a captured slave goes unmentioned in the text. The foe gets killed while Friday receives a name and gets, as it were, "de-foed." The allies, Friday and Crusoe, understand each other so perfectly as to the necessity of annihilating the enemy that no words are needed to communicate this necessity, and the words that are actually said only make Crusoe think about the pleasure of communicating with others by means of language:

[...] I pointed to him, and showed him the savage, that he was not dead: upon this he spoke some words to me, and though I could not understand them, yet I thought they were very pleasant to hear; for they were the first sound of man's voice that I heard, my own excepted, for above twenty five years¹⁷⁸.

Then He gives Friday his sword with which

he runs to his enemy, and, at one blow, cut off his head so cleverly, no executioner in Germany could have done it sooner or better.¹⁷⁹

Friday's executive power serves the legislative power of Crusoe from the moment of their encounter, and he understands the laws dictated by the Master in a twinkling, with Crusoe's gesture as their only letter.

The killing of the savage seems to be a part of Crusoe's routine work, a part of his day to day duties he had to plan and perform by himself before Friday's arrival. The killing is quite explicitly referred to as "more work to do yet."¹⁸⁰ The work is done by the servant whom Crusoe equips with the sword, with the means of "production," and whom he sees as a potential servant during his escape from the cannibals:

It came now very warmly upon my thoughts, and indeed irresistibly, that now was the time to get me a servant, and perhaps a companion or assistant.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 177.

Friday becomes a servant before he even sees Crusoe, and it is already as a servant that he begs the white man to accept him as a faithful slave and to never leave him on his own. Crusoe replies to this oath by promising that he will never send his Friday away as long as Friday is willing to stay.¹⁸² As a result of this convoluted promising Friday actually has no choice. If he wanted to leave, he could only be sent away — the decision as to where Friday should go or whether he should go is Crusoe's regardless of his generous offer of freedom. Within this contract, for Friday to depart without Crusoe's signature would be a sort of disobedience, and the only independent decision he can make is to become Crusoe's subject. He makes this decision willingly and communicates it twice to his Master: by "laying himself down [...] upon the ground," and by setting Crusoe's foot upon his head, both gestures being, for Crusoe, "the signs [...] of subjection, servitude and submission."¹⁸³ Friday is the soil, the territory under Crusoe's foot asking for his masterly guidance.

What Ian Watt calls Crusoe's capitalism is not a simple expansion of his property, a desire to have whatever there is to be possessed, but a contract of sorts, in which what he wants also, like Milton's Eve, wants him.¹⁸⁴ The ideal is to work in a garden which, again like Pope's, wants correction, where production means a constant activity or work whose task is to see and represent some order. The gesture which represents the order is also the gesture which erases disorder, which pushes it to a distant background or the margin of the orderly scene. Order seduces man to work because in order to exist this order has to be displayed in a gesture of simultaneous seeing and writing, of seeing what is written and writing what is seen. The moment the work ceases, human identity is threatened by being eaten by the savages or by some beasts, by being devoured by the too natural with no order inscribed, or written, within it. This work of writing and defence is yet another trace of the Derridean *objet pointu* of style, of the *stiletto* that attacks and defends.

To represent order one has to annihilate the savage world, or at least distance oneself from it, and without some pointed object this activity seems to be impossible. Without this means human identity has nothing to write itself with and nothing to ward off the margin of the unwritten which, paradoxically, makes this writing possible, provides it with a space or, more precisely, a territory. Writing in this sense feeds upon the unwritten, upon what makes it thinkable. Without the *stiletto* of style no part of the unwritten can be carved out in order to feed that writing with some sense or meaning. When he safely lands upon his island, Crusoe is helpless because, as he informs us

I had no weapon either to hunt and kill any creature for my sustenance, or to defend myself against any other creature that might desire to kill me for theirs¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁸⁴ I. Watt, *Narodziny powieści* (Warszawa, 1973), p. 77.

¹⁸⁵ D. Defoe, *Robinson...*, p. 40.

Despite the desperate situation, Crusoe clearly classifies the creatures into the ones that can be eaten, and to the hostile “any other.” There is at least something that already awaits him on the island, and it is not quite true that he has nothing to defend himself:

In a word, I had nothing about me but a knife, a tobacco-pipe, and a little tobacco in a box. This was all my provisions; and this threw me into such terrible agonies of mind, that, for a while, I ran about like a madman.¹⁸⁶

This juxtaposition of the danger, and fear of death, with madness, which results from the paranoia of having nothing, seems to be founded upon a fear of idleness, an inability to act dangerous to one’s economic welfare, but also to one’s mental balance, to the security of one’s identity. With only a knife at hand Crusoe’s fear of the inability to act drives him to a short period of madness. Idleness as the opposite of activity cannot be in any positive sense productive of anything but death or a hysterical “running about.”¹⁸⁷ Idleness results in either immobility or in disordered mobility — both frustrating the subject’s industrious activity which is only possible if one has some means to provide oneself with some property, to mark the limits of the proper. The mad and the dead stand for one another in the Classical *episteme*, both are feared as inarticulate, as the Other.

Crusoe soon recovers from his lapse into idleness. Since the “ravenous beasts [...] always come abroad for their prey,” he must find himself a home, a secure confinement from which he will be able to observe the “foreign affairs” and to keep the enemy away. His first home is actually a small arsenal of pointed objects which he finds ready at hand: “All the remedy that offered to my thoughts, at that time, was to get up into a thick bushy tree, like a fir, but thorny.”¹⁸⁸ The first thing the island *offers* him is all he needs “at that time,” a place as if made, or produced, for a natural hideway from nature, a place supplied with thorns which now only needs some more work on the part of its master to become even more useful:

I went to the tree [...] and having cut me a short stick, like a truncheon, for my defence, I took up my lodging; and [...] I fell fast asleep.¹⁸⁹

On close examination, at least a part of nature is always, like Friday, subjected to Crusoe. In his seemingly hostile surroundings he gradually uncovers something familiar and useful that helps him extend his fortress (or home), the territory of his secure being and identity — his “I-land” and “is-land” on the ocean of the Other.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ I am trying to avoid the psychoanalytic arsenal of pointed objects but let us note here that Crusoe’s (female?) hysteria results from some sort of castration, from the lack of the pointed object.

¹⁸⁸ D. Defoe, *Robinson...*, pp. 40—41.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 41.



Rit Smart's Writing

“Have I diagnosed your case, my Christopher?”¹

Here there is a language-barrier (*Un mur de langage*) opposed to the Word, and the precautions against verbalism which are a theme of the discourse of the “normal” man in our culture, merely serve to reinforce its thickness.

(Jacques Lacan, *Symbol and Language*)

1. The Batty

Man as a “spur of sorts (*éperon*). Like the prow, for example, of a sailing vessel, its *rostrum*, the projection of the ship which surges ahead to meet the sea’s attack and cleave its hostile surface,”² man as a ship in the midst of stormy seas seems to be a frequent motif in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.³ In Barclay’s translation of Brant — *The Ship of Fools* (1509) — we read:

I wyl aduertise you that this Boke is named the Shyp of foles of the worlde: For this worlde is nought els but a tempestous se in the whiche we dayly wander and are caste in dyuers tribulacions paynes and aduersities: some by ignoraunce and some by wilfulness: wherefore suche doers ar worthy to be called foles syns they gyde them nat by reason as creatures resonable ought to do.⁴

The art of life is the art of navigation, of sailing without losing one’s route or sinking. The reason why Barclay sends his *Ship of Fools* to the seas, why he “hath ordeyned vpon the se of this worlde this present Shyp to contayne these folys of

¹ R. Browning, *Parleyings with certain people of importance in their day* (London, 1887), p. 84.

² J. Derrida, *Spurs...*, p. 39.

³ Cf. M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Classical Age*, trans. R. Howard (New York, 1973), pp. 3—37.

⁴ S. Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. A. Barclay (New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 18.

ye worlde, whiche ar in great nomber”⁵ is at least twofold. One is to separate the well navigated ships from those ships whose captains “gyde them nat by reason.” The latter, floating on the surface, function as an example of folly, of the danger which might befall anyone and without which it would be impossible to look at oneself, at one’s “secrete dedys” without the risk that they always might turn out to be foolish. In the *Prologe* by James Locher we read:

Therefore let euery man beholde and ouerrede this boke: And than I doute nat but he shal se the errors og his lyfe of what condycyon that he be. In lyke wyse as he shal se in a Myrrour the fourme of his countenance any vysage: And if he amende suche fautes as he redeth here wherein ke knoweth hymself gyilty, and passe forth the resydue of his lyfe in the order of good manners.⁶

Classical man changes the ship into an hospital, into a confined space from which no voices will reach the public scene. “No longer a ship but a hospital,” Foucault says.⁷ “By a strange act of force,” he goes on, “the Classical age was to reduce to silence the madness whose voices the Renaissance had just liberated, but whose violence it had already tamed.”⁸

The story of this reduction and confinement is again the lesson of the Cartesian *Cogito*. In the first *Meditation* madness is not even an illusion, an error of the senses, but the very opposite of thought. “A man can still be mad; but thought cannot.”⁹ The question of madness is thus the question of the thought itself, the question which questions the very essence of thought and reason. In the *Encyclopédie* it is a certain blindness that characterizes madness:

To deviate from reason knowingly, in the grip of a violent passion, is to be weak; but to deviate from it confidently and with the firm conviction that one is following it, is to be what we call mad.¹⁰

We can never be sure whether the reasoning is mad or not since it is always possible that we are blind to its madness and think that we follow the path of reason. A Cartesian thinker says “I am not mad and therefore I am,” and in this way, says Shoshana Felman, “the being of philosophy is thenceforth located in non-madness, whereas madness is relegated to the status of non-being.”¹¹ The threat of madness is so close to all human activities that its ways may always turn out to be the ways of reason. Hence the necessity of confining and translating

⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷ M. Foucault, *Madness...*, p. 35.

⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

⁹ S. Felman, *Writing and Madness: Literature /Philosophy/ Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, New York, 1985), p. 39.

¹⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

madness into invisibility so that what remains is reason itself. The link between unreason and the mystery of the world is broken and *the wall* (cf. the epigram) is erected beyond which there is nothing, the absence so dangerous that it really needs a wall to keep it away. Madness is a signifier which denotes nothing, the signifier which does not represent a presence, but only itself, its own surface without an inside. Madness is confined to the word which confines it, to the word "madness" which only demarcates the Other. This confinement is absolutely necessary in order that reason can function undisturbed and in fact exist. Reason without confinement, with no constraints, is momentarily invaded by madness and turned into unreason. The enclosure of madness is thus an ambiguous space that keeps within what makes without unthinkable. Madness is what reason cannot think and which it must think unthinkable in order to be a reason. The ambiguity of this, as of any, enclosure (whose abyss Dr. Johnson explored and never resolved in *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*) makes it both a *hortus conclusus* and a *cul de sac*.¹²

Thomas Tryon, quite symptomatically, has problems separating reason from madness in his *A Discourse of the Causes, Nature and Cure of Phrensie, Madness or Distraction* (1689) and solves them by installing a court inside the human mind. He distinguishes between outward (or grosser) senses such as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling, and five "inward Senses of the Soul, whence the outward senses do arise."

Now when the five inward senses of the Soul are weakened or destroyed, then they can no longer present before the Judge the *Thoughts, Imaginations or Conceptions*, but they are all formed into *words* as fast as they are generated, there being no control or room for Judgement to censure what are *fit*, and what are *unfit* to be coyn'd into Expressions."¹³

Madness is not exactly a disturbance of thinking here, but a disturbance of a "linguistic competence," a matter of some internalized censorship. Some echoes familiar from Chomsky's Standard Theory quite evidently reverberate in the above quoted fragment. The mechanism which neatly categorizes our thoughts into proper strings simply fails, and a madman's speech is some disorderly flow of noises which only distantly resemble human speech. The role of the "Court of Reason," of the "Voice of Wisdom," of "the Judge, which keeps its Court, and the Seat of Justice, in the Centre of Life"¹⁴ is to keep in constant check the yet inarticulate imaginations transported by the outward senses to give them some proper (grammatical) structure and to let the structure surface as an acceptable "Expression." Madness is non-language and non-representation; in

¹² Cf. F. Bogel, *Literature and...*, p. 60.

¹³ T. Tryon, *A Discourse of the Causes, Natures and Cure of Phrensie, Madness or Distraction* (London, 1689), p. 253.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

a sense it is also the natural voice of nature, of the too natural nature in need of correction. There are quite evidently two kinds of thinking in Tryon: natural (or mad) and linguistic (or reasonable), the latter being the one censored and restrained by the inward senses. It is the inward senses which actually *are* thinking and which function as a matrix that allows for the expression of thoughts already inscribed within it. Without this matrix one is mad, and thus one does not think. The properly functioning matrix confines madness to absence and chaos which will never find any articulation. Reasonable talk or thinking is limited to the pre-written scenario of what one can possibly say engraved upon the matrix. Paradoxically, however, Tryon seems to sympathize with madness, at least with what he considers to be its more innocent species:

[...]when men are so diverted of their *Rational Faculties*, then they appear naked; having no *Covering, Veil, or Figg-leaves* before them, to hide themselves in, and therefore they no longer remain under a Mask or Disguise, but appear even as they are, which is very rare to be known in any that retain their *Senses* and Reason.¹⁵

One might say that all this boils down to saying that the world before the Fall was mad — natural, unmasked, unveiled. The “figg-leaves” begin the era of representation. Yet, such a leaf does not conceal “those mysterious parts” of Milton’s Adam and Eve, but exposes them in representation. Such a leaf is a language which, paradoxically, represents and presents, but simultaneously covers, hides and veils. Why have that language? Why not be mad (innocently)?

Madness is, for Tryon, where humanity comes from, its origin and root. All people are mad before they are reasonable and it is the matrix of reason that in a sense stabilizes their otherwise chaotic, absurd or incoherent ideas. Hence we read that if the constraints of the Court of Reason

were not more or less observed, would not every man in the world seem to be *Mad* or Distracted? For what wild, incoherent absurd, ridiculous notions should we hear from the most serious people, if they should continually Speak, and form into words the various Imaginations that do continually arise.¹⁶

Tryon’s gaze seems to be once again that of a simultaneous denial and desire. Bare truth is attractive, but it lacks a decently coherent and clad body. This lack of clothing and coherence makes it too naked, too natural and hence inarticulate. The truth of madness reflected in the unrestrained, continual speech, in the speech with no simple beginning or end is actually the language of God, the distant voice always beyond the grasp of human reason. Those whose speech is unrestrained speak the unspeakable, the things which

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 259.

continually arise from the *Magic or Generating Wheel* of the seven *Forms of Nature*, which never standeth still, or ceaseth from working and generating; the Soul of man, and all the Faculties thereof, being a compleat Image of its Creator, *who slumbereth not, nor sleepeth*, but his generative, and wonderful creative power is always active.¹⁷

Two motifs characteristic of the Classical attitude to madness are discernible here: that of God's language and that of sleep.¹⁸ Madness seems to be a physiological failure of the lack, or disturbance, of the already mentioned self-censoring mechanism in one's mind (or of one's mind), of the mechanism which in reasonable creatures stops functioning only in sleep. A madman actually never wakes up, and like Tryon's God, continually speaks the uncensored flow of whatever comes to his mind. "Madness seems to be a Watching or Waking Dream," says Tryon.¹⁹ Despite his overt sympathy for the naked truth of madness Tryon silences this truth, he makes it into an absent potentiality that might befall anyone unless his reason functions properly. The language of dreams, just like the language of God, is not man's proper language. The realm of God is also the dark realm of the Other, the language of "the hidden original" which "if its mighty property were not captivated, darkened, and as it were chained in the Clouds of gross flesh, and dark Powers of the outward and corporeal Nature, it would do wonders."²⁰ The corporeal nature is dark and cloudy, it is dreamy and vaporous,²¹ and it can do wonders only if brought to light by the language of reason otherwise remaining "chained," like a madman in Bedlam to the walls of his dark cell. "The children of reason fear the darkness."²²

Max Byrd says about *The Dunciad* that it is a poem in which the whole world goes to sleep.²³ Pope's satire is a text in which what Tryon still sympathized with, and which he, paradoxically, silenced, is carefully looked at and ridiculed. The paradox of *The Dunciad* is that the text does not say about madmen, but about the sane, thus transforming the "supposedly sane world into Bedlam."²⁴ If all people are at least potentially mad for Tryon, Pope's text attempts to treat and cure them by making the patients visit their own hospital. They are admitted there not exactly for a penny²⁵ but by the very act of reading the irony in which what the text seems to be saying is simultaneously rejected.²⁶ In this sense the text erases what it talks about and forces the reader to construct a reasonable text which as it were censors and keeps at a distance the Bedlam of Pope's poem, the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 259

¹⁸ Cf. M. Byrd, *Visits to...*, ch. II.

¹⁹ T. Tryon, *A Discourse...*, p. 249.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 260—261.

²¹ Cf. M. Byrd, *Visits...*, p. 22.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁶ Cf. W. Boothe, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, 1974), p. 1.

crowd immersed in the worship of Dulness. The access to the language of God, to the continual production of images Tryon talked about, is reserved for the mad figures of a divinely inspired poet or a prophet:

Hence, from the straw where Bedlam's Prophet nods,
He hears loud Oracles, and talks with Gods:
Hence the Fool's Paradise; the Statesman Scheme
The air-built Castle, and the golden Dream. (III. 7—10)

Talking with Gods, just as any visitation or inspiration, is a matter of serious suspicion for the Augustans. It is dangerously close to Tryon's "corporeal Nature," to chaos, but also to filth and excrement. Hence the straw upon which the prophet's slumber takes place is also the final destination of his "productions." The prophet's talking is actually a sort of excrementation.²⁷ Prophecy exceeds what might be called human, and, as such, is cast away, renounced. We are again in the middle (or means) of the *concordia discors* which bans the extremes as one and the same nothing, and eventually renders both the excremental and the divine as mad. Sir William Temple, for instance, does not say that divinely inspired poetry is madness, but he says that poetry should not come from the areas close to divinity:

I can allow [poetry] to arise from the greatest excellency of natural temper or the greatest race of native genius, without exceeding the reach of what is human, or giving it any approaches to divinity.²⁸

Inspired poetry is not poetry for Temple not because of its formal deficiencies, but because it is not human, because it is beyond the reach of what is human. If a text declares any contact with the divine it actually means that its author is mad along with his text.

It seems quite appropriate to say that the Classical man is mad about not being mad, that his life, as Byrd says, "verged on obsession with the negative meanings of irrationality; by no coincidence, obsession itself is the most familiar Augustan definition of madness."²⁹ This obsession, or madness, actually breeds upon the questions of human identity and individuality. Confined within the irrational, forced outside the sphere of Man, madness becomes the only way by means of which an epistemologically safe space for man could be cleared up. Madness has to be publically annihilated, made momentarily visible on some sort of scaffold in order to confirm its nothingness and nonexistence. Hence Pope's or

²⁷ An interesting reading of Artaud in this respect can be found in J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago, 1978), pp. 181—182.

²⁸ Quoted in M. Byrd, *Visits...*, p. 21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Swift's irony, hence Johnson's self-discipline, hence Defoe's island or, to step back a little, Milton's self-censorship. It is the Other that constitutes man by the necessity of its cancellation. That this disappearance is effected by constant seeing and watching is exactly the paradox of this discourse. Meant to be an empty enclosure in the midst of London, Bedlam threatens the whole city with the possibility of being mad. The Ship of Fools harbours in the city — it cannot be simply sent to seas, and its crew is not simply a different race of men. It is the enclosure of the Other whose transgression deprives of property and identity, which devours and turns to nothing, into an animal chained to a wall or to a bed, unclad and unclean. The vision of madhouse penetrates so deeply into the society in search of its potential customers that in the middle of the eighteenth century it is enough to denounce a person as mad in order to have her or him confined. One desperately needs an identity to survive within this society. One of the aspects of Foucault's power of discourse is the epistemological fear of the Other institutionalized in the authority of the physician, a self-censorship reinforced by the power to impose that self-censorship.

The Other is a very general term, one might say, but so too is, and was, madness. Psychiatry is a recent invention and it still has its problems. What was mad for the Augustan eye could hardly be included in a complete list, but such a list would quite evidently verge upon the generality of the Other. Max Byrd includes in his list an inspired poet and a religious enthusiast, obsession and idleness but also poverty, dreaming and imagination. Those whom the age confined beginning with the establishment of the Hospital Général in 1656 are, according to Foucault, "to our eyes [...] strangely mixed and confused."³⁰ The insane and criminals, blasphemers and libertines, spendthrift fathers and prodigal sons, prostitutes, syphilitics, alchemists ... All of them stuffed in an institution which was both a hospital and a prison, a place that corrected and confined, cured and punished.³¹ He who transgresses the law is as mad as he who transgresses the order of language or taste. It is only gradually that the prison separates itself from the clinic, both institutions sharing a number of tactics and methods of surveillance even today. The treatments applied in the places of confinement in the eighteenth century were a mixture of punishment, purification and cure, and the methods used there were also a mixture of whippings, penitence, confession and medications.³² The confinement of unreason had thus a moral aspect to it. By separating man from the world, by erecting a wall between truth and falsehood the Age of Reason also erected, as Racevskis notices, "the boundaries between good and evil — thus confusing from the very

³⁰ M. Foucault, *Madness...*, p. 45.

³¹ Cf. K. Doerner, *Madmen and...*, p. 15.

³² Cf. K. Racevskis, *Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect* (Ithaca and London, 1983), p. 44.

beginning its *ratio* with its *ethos* by elevating knowledge to the privileged position of morality.”³³ To be unreasonable was as immoral as to be a criminal, a prostitute or simply poor. To be unreasonable was to be unable to productively work and poverty was treated as an obvious result of the idleness of the insane. As a result the “dispropriated” man, the madman who had no properties — those attributes of humanity — who owned nothing and had no identity was excluded by the moral codes of the social order. If anything, the madman could only be an animal, a beast vegetating outside the sphere of the social — and hence of human — order. Max Byrd rightly calls Bedlam a human zoo:

[...] the animality that the madman displayed — and which was forced upon him — removed him from the category *human* and dumped him within a wild beast’s cage.³⁴

To quote but one of the numerous examples of writing about madness Byrd gives in his book (from Ned Ward in *London Spy*):

Some lay round the Fire almost covered with Ashes, like *Potatoes* Roasting, with their Noses in Conjunction with one another’s A—s, like Hogs upon a Dunghill.³⁵

This lack of human properties in madmen is responsible for the denial of property in the sense of estate to them. The easiness with which one could be confined facilitated the abuse of the asylum and triggered the establishment of numerous private institutions in which the penitents were often kept in much worse conditions than in St. Luke’s Hospital or in Bedlam. Confinement seems to have been a popular way of getting rid of undesirable people:

Wives confined their Husbands that they may enjoy their Gallants, and live without the Observation and Interruption of Husbands; and Husbands put their wives in them that they may enjoy their Whores, without Disturbance of their Wives; Children put their Parents in them, that they may enjoy their Estates before their time.³⁶

This sort of procedure still has some followers in modern societies although its ends seem to be different. “In our own time,” says Byrd, “political dissidents have been silenced in mental institutions in the Soviet Union, but the English Augustans[...] seem always prepared to strip their victims of both sanity and property at once.”³⁷ The therapy in the places of confinement was simultaneously that of exorcism and punishment. The insane were subjected to a simultaneous

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁴ M. Byrd, *Visits...*, p. 45.

³⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

exclusion and recuperation. To recuperate one's sanity was an effect of the "sanitation" of the Other. The goal of all the interventions was to recreate the penitent's self-discipline and hence identity and properties of his own. The patient was to be made aware of his status as a subject by constant observation and by sometimes very cruel punishment/treatment. It was not exactly the guilt that the asylum punished. According to Foucault it did more, it

organized that guilt; it organized it for the madman as a consciousness of himself ... it organized it for the man of reason as an awareness of the Other, a therapeutic intervention in the madman's existence. In other words, by this guilt the madman became an object of punishment always vulnerable to himself and to the Other; and, from the acknowledgement of his status as object, from the awareness of his guilt, the madman was to return to his awareness of himself as a free and responsible subject, and consequently to reason.³⁸

The alleged recuperation of reason is made possible by the internalized exclusion of madness which reduces it to one's Other, and actually to a nothing which is absolutely ignored despite all appearances of its being looked upon and studied. The cure is not based upon any knowledge of madness but on a mastery over it, on a mastery which utilizes a range of tactics similar to that constituting one's sane identity. The mastery over the mad is simultaneously domination and guidance, it is an art of reinstalling the broken inward senses, of "fixing a hole" through which the world gets into one's mind in its too natural shape. Hence the role of confinement, on top of making madness invisible, was also to make the world invisible to a madman in order that there is nothing his ill senses can actually perceive and distort. The world is replaced by the authority of the physician in whose power it is to recreate the patient by offering him whatever seems appropriate to the doctor.

William Battie M.D. (from whose name the word "batty" is derived³⁹ wrote in his *Treatise on Madness* (1757), in the chapter entitled "The Regimen and Cure of Madness:"

The Regimen in this is perhaps of more importance than in any distemper. It was the saying of a very eminent practitioner in such cases that *management did much more than medicine* [...] Madness then [...] requires the patient's being removed from all objects that act forcibly upon the nerves, and excite too lively a perception of things. [...] Even unruly appetite must be checked, every fixed imagination must if possible be diverted.⁴⁰

From Dr. Battie we also learn that the place of confinement should be at some distance from the patient's home. No people, friends or enemies, should be allowed to visit the patient there.⁴¹ In a word, everything should be regulated and

³⁸ M. Foucault, *Madness...*, p. 247.

³⁹ Cf. P. Rogers, ed. *The Eighteenth Century* (London, 1978), p. 182.

⁴⁰ W. Battie, *A Treatise on Madness* (London, 1757), p. 68.

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 69.

rationaly rationed — air, food, amusement and employment.⁴² Without these steps, we learn, all other methods would be “ineffectual.” The regime of the asylum must grant the physician absolute control over the patient’s body because it is this animal body that must eventually learn to control itself. The reason is first offered to this body as a limit whose transgression is severely punished as long as the limit is not internalized, made into the patient’s (penitent’s) moral, ethical or logical code whose external authorship disappears. Seemingly natural, the limit actually becomes the invisible writing Descartes’ pen inscribes in the air:

While I am writing, I understand that at the same instant when the letters (*singuli characteres*) are inscribed one after the other on the paper, it is not only the lower part of the pen that is moving, but that there cannot be any movement however slight in that lower part, which is not simultaneously taking place in the whole pen.⁴³

Descartes’ singular character arises slowly, gradually, in the confinement of his chamber, carefully watched by Cartesius, the physician, who looks for the space where the character of his ego is clean, unspoiled by the always misleading form, by an ill perception, by madness. The method

is normally nothing other than a constant observation of an order, whether it exists in the thing itself, or whether it be excogitated with subtlety: as if we wanted to read a writing hidden in unknown characters (*ignotis characteribus velatum*); though no order is manifest there, yet we forge one (*figimus*)⁴⁴

In order not to be feigned, not to be false or mad, one really has to be two persons — one that sees, and the other that judges and decides whether the perception, the reading, is really proper, the person which authoritatively gives the perceptions the status of truth.

In Battie’s *Treatise* it is precisely the lack of this authority that selects truth and distinguishes it from fiction, from falsehood that makes a person “properly” mad:

[...] that man alone is properly mad, who is fully and unalterably persuaded of the Existence or of the appearance of any thing, which does not exist or does not actually appear to him, and who behaves according to such erroneous persuasions.⁴⁵

The mad person is he who is one, that is to say, he who listens to the persuasions of the Other (like Eve) and makes them public without consulting the censor, or dictionary, or authority to confirm the truth of his language, of his writing. The

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴³ Quoted in J-L. Nancy, “Dum Scribo,” *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1978), p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ W. Battie, *A Treatise...*, p. 6.

mad person is he who writes. The sane is he who constantly censors out the writing, who constantly erases the writing which is always loaded with the possibility of an error. Hence the only safe way of perceiving the world, of knowing it is not through the eye, through the representation alone, but through the mind,⁴⁶ through that censorious organ where the written becomes unwritten. The true order of the world, its sane order, is “antigraphic” and yet the Cartesian method consists in giving “the order and figure of writing to the antigraphic order of truth,” says Jean-Luc Nancy. “To conceive well,” he goes on, “we must be helped by the supplement of a figure — for antigraphy is still a-graphy, and the naked truth is always already sealed.”⁴⁷ One has to write with one’s whole body, with one’s every gesture and carefully control that writing. Descartes offers his readers an ideal pattern of that sort of writing, a guide to sanity and proper identity in which writing and being are absolutely synchronized, like in the being of a pen. Jean-Luc Nancy playing the Cartesian text writes:

Attentive readers of my Book, you have already conceived all this industry, if your concern for truth has but carried you, in reading me, to write yourselves. While you are writing, now, you understand, you gather [...] the pen-like movement of your body. You see that calamus that you are, every part of it contiguous, tracing in the upper air characters — your characters — of the book you are writing and for as long as you are writing [...] *scribo*, I write, I am writing (*je suis écrivain*), pen-man (*homme de plume*) and wax figure.⁴⁸

There are good and bad pens in the world and those who do not copy the cards of Descartes are out of the game. If they do not copy his text they will be provided some space to write it by themselves, they will be offered the seclusion of a Bedlam, and their pens will be guided by those who know the method by heart, and who actually do not know that they know it.

There are, however, two subspecies of bad pens. Those whose ability to write properly has only been forgotten and disturbed by some external cause, and those for whom the discipline of the Cartesian text has been alien for no reason, without a cause. The former subspecies will be cured and returned to society from the Bedlam of their second nativity while the latter will be denied the return and will remain within the walls, in invisibility. Dr. Battie clearly distinguishes the two kinds of madness:

The first is solely owing to an internal disorder of the nervous substance: the second is likewise owing to the same substance being indeed in like manner distorted, but distorted *ab extra*; and therefore is chiefly to be attributed to some remote and accidental cause. The first species, until a better name can be found, may be called *Original*, the second may be called *Consequential Madness*.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cf. R. Flores, *The Rhetoric...*, p. 68.

⁴⁷ J-L. Nancy, “Dum Scribo,” p. 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ W. Battie, *A Treatise...*, p. 20.

Battie leaves the cure of the Original madness entirely in the hands of God. Since he prerequisite of the cure for madness is

removing or correcting its causes ... it is impossible by any thing like judgement or previous design to answer the first intention, viz. to remove the immediate necessary and sufficient cause of Madness, which cause lies out of reach even of our imagination.⁵⁰

The only space where an Original madman can write his text, his too original text of his madness, is in the invisibility of his confinement, on the wall of his asylum.

2. The Case of Smart

Dr. Battie probably considered Christopher Smart, the poet, as an Original madman. The case was so hopeless that in May 1758 Battie decided to discharge Smart from St. Luke's Hospital after a year's stay at the institution writing that "from the present Circumstances of his Case there not being sufficient reason to expect his speedy Recovery."⁵¹ Kit Smart soon returned to a madhouse, probably somewhere in Chelsea, to spend another couple of years there (probably 1759—1763), to be released and then to die in the King's Bench Prison for debts in 1771. Between his confinement and his death, on April 8th 1763 Smart's *A Song to David* was published by Fletcher. *Monthly Review* (April 1763) spread the rumour that the poem

was written when the author was denied the use of pen, ink, and paper, and was obliged to intent his lines, with the end of a key, upon the wainscot.⁵²

A remark on *A Song to David* in *Critical Review* of 1763 informs us that the poem "is a fine piece of ruin."⁵³ About the same time William Mason wrote to his friend Thomas Gray: "I have seen his *Song to David* and from thence conclude him as mad as ever."⁵⁴ Before his repeated confinement Christopher Smart enjoyed a much more favourable reputation. He was the "ingenious Mr. Smart" whose poetry possessed "a strength of genius," and who was to be ranked "with Gray and Mason, with the first of the present age in spirit, in fire, and true poetic genius."⁵⁵ He was also famous for winning the Seatonian Prize at Cambridge

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵¹ R. Hunter, I. Macalpine, *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535—1860: A History Presented in Selected English Texts* (London, 1963), p. 403.

⁵² Quoted in S. Blaydes, *Christopher Smart as a Poet of His Time: A Re-Appraisal* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1966), p. 22.

⁵³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Ch. Devlin, *Poor Kit Smart* (London, 1961), p. 137.

⁵⁵ Cf. S. Blaydes, *Christopher...*, p. 21.

four times in five years.⁵⁶ Robert Brittain summarizes Smart's literary career as follows:

The story of Christopher Smart's reputations is one of the oddest chapters in English literary history. In the first half of his career, during which he spent his energies almost entirely on hack work, he was regarded as an ingenious and pleasant, if minor poet. In the latter part of his life he published volumes of poetry, much of it first rate, but because he had had the misfortune to lose his mind for a time this later poetry was assumed to be inferior by his contemporaries and they scarcely bothered to read it at all.⁵⁷

Once confined, Smart could not reappear upon the public scene of the eighteenth century and was bound to remain confined in a silence along with his numerous writings which saw the light only after his release from the asylum. Critics did occasionally write about him, but it was as if they were visiting him in the madhouse — to see and notify his madness:

[...] indeed some unhappy circumstances in this gentleman's life seem to have given this latter writings a peculiar claim to a total exemption from criticism. Accordingly we choose to be silent, with regard to the merit of the present publication.⁵⁸

The above is *Monthly Review's* response to the publication of Smart's *A Translation of the Psalms of David* (1765). All the succeeding volumes were generally treated in the same way, they were pointed to and simultaneously erased. Some of Smart's "well-wishers" still noticed glimpses of genius in his writings, particularly in *A Song to David*, but the tone of their comments was usually that of sympathy with his mental disorder. In July 1763 Boswell wrote to Sir David Dalrymple:

I have sent you Smart's *Song to David*, which is a very curious composition, being a strange mixture of *dun obscure* and glowing genius at times. I have also sent some poems which he had lately published. His Genius and Imagination is very pretty. The other pieces have shivers of genius here and there, but are often ludicrously low. Poor man, he has been relieved from his confinement, but not from his unhappy disorder. However, he has it not in any great hight. He is not the poet of the first rank.⁵⁹

Smart's confinement, despite his release from the actual institution, continues within the society at large he tries to rejoin. As we have seen, it is difficult to find a space for madness outside the asylum in the Classical Age. "La folie," to quote Foucault again, "appartenait aux régions du silence."⁶⁰ Smart's critical reputa-

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ R. Brittain, ed., *Poems by Christopher Smart* (Princeton, 1950), p. 3 ("Introduction").

⁵⁸ Quoted in S. Blydes, *Christopher...*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Quoted in R. Brittain, ed. *Poems...*, p. 45 ("Introduction").

⁶⁰ M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paryz: Gallimard, 1972), p. 535.

tion seems to testify to this. Writing about madness and literature Shoshana Felman notices:

In relation to philosophy, literature is [...] in a position of excess, since it includes that which philosophy excludes by definition: madness. Madness thus becomes an overflow, that which remains of literature after philosophy has been subtracted from it. The History of Madness is the story of that surplus, the story of a literary residue.⁶¹

Literature is silent in the eighteenth century because, like madness, it is repressed by the generalized representation, by the programmatic transparency of writing. A text was considered "literary," Eagleton writes in his *Literary Theory*, not because it was creative, imaginative or estranging but because it "conformed to certain standards of 'polite letters' [...] it meant the whole body of valued writing in society: philosophy, history, essays and letters as well as poems."⁶² There is no room for any excess of literariness in the eighteenth century because it is exactly this excess that gets censored, controlled and denied. The plainness of style discussed in Part III is the requirement which not only defines the literary, but which also reduces it to the ideally unwritten, to the Cartesian "antigraphy" which, paradoxically, always turns out a "-graphy" to be struggled with. Descartes, says Foucault, "dans le mouvement par lequel il va à la vérité rend impossible le lyrisme de la déraison."⁶³

Letters inscribed upon the wall quite evidently are not "polite letters" to the Classical eye. Smart was in fact allowed to use pen and paper in his confinement, and the rumour spread by the *Monthly Review* (and still believed in 1959)⁶⁴ was a gesture which rhetorically erased Smart's writing as an object of any reasonable interest. One who writes on the wall must be guided by some sort of inspiration. His compulsion for writing can only come from some other world and, as a result, the writing can only be dictated from the outside of reason, like Tryon's continual, inarticulate language of God. Smart is simply the one who "talks with Gods" and Bedlam, where Smart has never been, the only proper stage where this talking can be performed. Such a language (and writing) is obviously excessive for Pope and others, there is an "overflow" in it which characterizes Felman's literature. Symptomatically, *Moethly Review* finds *A Song to David* "irregularly great" and adds: "We meet some passages, however, in this performance, that are almost, if not altogether, unintelligible."⁶⁵ The voice from heaven can only be unintelligible to a Cartesian ear, and it is already in the first stanza of the *Song* that we hear that voice:

⁶¹ S. Felman, *Writing and...*, p. 51.

⁶² T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 17.

⁶³ M. Foucault, *Histoire...*, p. 535.

⁶⁴ Cf. C.S. Carpenter, *Eighteenth-Century Church and People* (London, 1959), p. 169.

⁶⁵ Quoted in S. Blaydes, *Christopher...*, p. 22.

O Thou, that sit' st upon a throne,
 With harp of high majestic tone,
 To praise the King of Kings;
 And voice of Heav'n-ascending swell,
 Which, while its deeper notes excell,
 Clear, as a clarion, rings: (I)⁶⁶

King David was one of those who spoke with God, and who actually spoke the language of God: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His Word *was* in my Tongue" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1,2). King David must have been at least suspected of enthusiasm which was one more symptom of madness. Dr. Johnson defines enthusiasm in his *Dictionary* (1755) as "vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favour or communication." Then he quotes Locke for whom "*Enthusiasm* is founded neither on reason nor divine revelation, but rises from the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain." Interestingly enough the reason why Smart was confined was exactly enthusiasm, or a religious mania as some critics say.⁶⁷ Mrs. Piozzi (Thrale) informs us that Smart's madness

showed itself only in a preternatural excitement to prayer, which he held his duty not to controul or repress [...] So that beginning by regular address to the Almighty, he went on to call his friends from their dinners, or beds, or places of recreation whenever that impulse to prayer pressed upon his mind.⁶⁸

Dr. Johnson's opinion is very well known:

My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any unusual place. Now although rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question.⁶⁹

Johnson does not say that Smart's enthusiasm is not madness and he actually talks again about the regulated middle, about the balance in which sanity dwells, and which it is difficult to keep in the world endangered by extremities. On some other occasion Johnson remarked that Smart simply

insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it. [...] I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ All textual references to *A Song to David* are to John Broadbent's edition (Cambridge, 1960).

⁶⁷ Cf. R. Brittain, ed. *Poems...*, p. 39 ("Introduction").

⁶⁸ Quoted in Ch. Devlin, *Poor Kit Smart* (London, 1961), p. 80.

⁶⁹ Quoted in R. Brittain, ed., *Poems...*, p. 39 ("Introduction").

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Seemingly sympathizing with Kit Smart Johnson does not fear the madman but his madness. He seems to identify with Smart, but simultaneously keeps him at a distance; he would do the same and yet do something different, he would pray but not insist on people, he does not like “clean linen” but does not notice that the phrase he uses literally is also a figure of fecalization.

A similar gesture is repeated by Johnson’s Imlac in *Rasselas*. Imlac responds to the obsessions of the mad astronomer (ch. 42) saying that “All may suffer his calamity.” And yet Imlac distances himself from the madness of the astronomer not by mocking him like Pope, but by providing us with the whole arsenal of the rhetoric of self-discipline, regulation and control:

All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such we can controul and repress, it is not visible to others. [...] it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action.⁷¹

I have already said that Johnson seems to identify with Smart, just as Imlac seems to identify reason with a “degree of insanity.” This identification, according to Max Byrd, is unthinkable in the case of Pope’s *The Dunciad* or Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub*, and it is in Johnson, he says, that “fecalization [...] gives way to sympathy and identification.”⁷² Yet the sympathy and identification seem to be at least ambiguous. Sympathizing with Smart Johnson, like Imlac, does not say: I am mad, but he only says that he is not quite like Kit Smart simultaneously saying that he is a little like him. Neither does he say that Smart was mad, but only mentions Smart’s infirmities. The whole statement seems to be not so much about Smart as about Johnson and madness, about reason and its opposite, about “I” and its Other. Fecalization does not give way to a sympathy pure and simple, but is confined outside the “polite letters” of Johnson’s proper writing and it can only become visible as the excessive rhetoricity, as the overflow of madness which is, for Felam, constitutive of literature. “I have no passion for clean linen” is really a polite way of saying that poor Kit Smart shits himself in the night. Sympathy and identification function here exactly as exclusion and silencing of the excess. Without any irony, without making madness robustly visible, Johnson excludes it and points to it, and says that *there* is madness (identifies it); it can be *here* only as long as it is, precisely, *there*, with Kit Smart who is sane as long as he prays like Johnson, but who is mad because he does not. Johnson identifies himself only with that part of madness which is not mad. This kind of repression of madness is both necessary and impossible. It actually turns out that the very idea of control over madness is an example of madness. The

⁷¹ S. Johnson, “The History of *Rasselas* Prince of Abyssinia,” in P. Henderson, ed., *Shorter Novels of the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Everyman, 1967), p. 81.

⁷² M. Byrd, *Visits...*, p. 96.

madness of the astronomer from Imlac's story consisted in the fact that he thought he could command rain to fall, that he was endowed with the power of the "regulation of the weather." Talking about control and government of some "airy notions" of one's mind as the mode of being reasonable Imlac identifies reason with madness. The ability to be sane is the ability to control and govern the *vapours* within one's mental climate, to keep them in check, to let some rain fall when it should and where it should. This is the lesson of Swift's irony in *A Tale of a Tub*:

[...] as the Face of Nature never produces Rain, but when it is overcast and disturbed, so Human Understanding, seated in the Brain, must be troubled and overspread by Vapours, ascending from the lower Faculties, to water the Invention, and render it fruitful. Now, altho' these Vapours [...] are of as various Original, as those of the Skies, yet the Crop they produce, differs both in Kind and Degree, meerly according to the Soil.⁷³

He who cannot control the weather of his mind, the "airy notions," is mad, but so is he who, like the astronomer, declares that he does so. All perception is thus in danger of being a misperception and the idea of a *tabula rasa* is the idea of there being a kind of "soil" whose universal quality grants the growth of proper thoughts and ideas without being distorted by too much or too little rain. This can only be granted if the seed which the soil, or the mind, receives is genuine. Only then can the ideas in our minds grow from the seed and not come from the outside as received or innate.

What is innate, what is not the product of that growth whose progress⁷⁴ can be gradually, step by step, verified and controlled is thus refused any positive role in understanding or perception. The innate is the voice of the Other, something which infiltrates our thinking, something which comes from beyond as God's voice or writing which spoils the unwritten, blank slate. He who desires a contact with that voice, who, like Smart, prays too much and says that the world is, or should be, a kind of prayer inscribes God's word upon the slate and criticizes the idea of *tabula rasa* as, as we shall shortly see, atheistic. In the discourse which fears innate ideas as unreasonable, the reason of him who says so cannot be quite reasonable.

In his confinement, in what is now called *Jubilate Agno*,⁷⁵ Smart wrote:

⁷³ J. Swift, "A Tale of..." p. 115.

⁷⁴ Cf. N. Keoheane, "The Enlightenment Idea of Progress Revisited," in G. Almond, M. Chodorow, R. Pearce, eds., *Progress and Its Discontents* (Los Angeles and London: The University of California Press, 1977).

⁷⁵ The text was first published by William Force Stead in 1939 as *Rejoice in the Lamb. A Song from Bedlam* in New York. The edition was based on large fragments of the text which Stead attempted to arrange chronologically. William Bond (a later editor: *Jubilate Agno: Christopher Smart*, London, 1954) "perceived the original structure as an attempt to adapt the antiphonal or responsive character of Hebrew poetry to English verse. He arranged the parts, whenever possible, so

For Locke supposes that an human creature, at a given time may be an atheist, i.e. without God, by the folly of his doctrine concerning innate ideas. (B 396)

Sophia B. Blaydes says that Locke, besides innate ideas, did not value impressions because to him only substance was real, while to Smart the impression, something already perceived, was reality. This fact serves as evidence of Smart's kinship with Berkeley's philosophy.⁷⁶ According to Blaydes, Smart has some elaborate philosophical system expressed in his religious poetry and that system is "clearly" in agreement with Berkeley. In proof of this she quotes Berkeley from his *Principles*:

Ideas imprinted on the senses are real things, or do really exist. [...] we deny they can subsist without the minds that perceive them [...] since the very being of a sensation or idea consists in being perceived. [...] the things perceived by sense may be termed *external*, with regard to their origin, in that they are not generated from within by the mind itself, but imprinted by a Spirit distinct from that which perceives them.⁷⁷

Smart is less explicit about his idea of impressions:

For my talent is to give an impression upon words by punching, that when the reader casts his eye upon'em, he takes up the image from the mould which I have made. (B 404)

He "expanded this theory," as Blaydes puts it, in the introduction to his translation of Horace (1767) saying:

Impression then, is a talent or gift of Almighty God, by which a Genius is empowered to throw an emphasis upon a word or a sentence in such a wise, that it cannot escape any reader of sheer good sense, and true critical sagacity.⁷⁸

Yet there seems to be a difference between Berkeley's philosophy and Smart's writing. Smart accuses Locke of atheism despite Locke's demonstration of God's necessity to being and knowledge⁷⁹ and he would probably also say Berkeley was "without God" despite his idea of a language by means of which God speaks to

that they could be read in conjunction, making the whole work much less chaotic than before (F. Anderson, *Christopher Smart* (New York, 1974), p. 71). Bond also tried to reconstruct the original division into *Let* and *For* verses, and classified the portions of the text as Fragments A, B1, B2, C and D. Karin Williamson in her edition of the text (*The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart* (Oxford, 1980)) rearranged Bond's classification into A, B, C and D Fragments. This last edition is used in the discussion of *Jubilate Agno*.

⁷⁶ Cf. S. Blaydes, *Christopher...*, p. 63.

⁷⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁹ William Bond finds this accusation unfair. Cf. *Jubilate...*, p. 98.

our eyes. If Berkeley's "Divine language" is a language to be decoded, a language whose reality is thinkable only if it is being perceived, Smart's language seems to be a matter of writing. Smart's *impression* is not a matter of passively reading what the "Spirit" imprints upon one's senses, but a matter of participating in the very act of that printing, a talent to imprint which is of "Almighty God." Hence, to Smart, the spirit that imprints, or writes by "punching," cannot be exactly distinct from that which, or who, perceives. Berkeley *reads* God's voice⁸⁰ while Smart talks, or writes, *with* God, adds a writing to God's writing in order to continually be with Him, in order never to be an atheist. One cannot contemplate Smart's God and simply admire Him or His Word, but he has to join Him and rejoice in His name, in His word by punching and moulding the words that seem to be stable and given, by "de-forming" them. In Smart's writing which are no words as wholes, but words always already punched, hollow words are forms (moulds) always open to anybody who wants to join Smart in the prayer of his writing, in the prayer which must *prey* upon the word, use and abuse the Word which is also a sword:

For the word of God is a sword on my side — no matter what other weapon a stick or a straw.
(B 20)

Smart's God dwells in language and the art of prayer. The art of ADORATION which Smart propagates both in *A Song to David* and in *Jubilate Agno* can only be a practice whose method, according to Geoffrey Hartman, "is indeed accumulative, additive, rather than calculating and accounting. Double the "d" in "adoration" and the pun becomes visible."⁸¹

Smart's God dwells in language as a pun. In one of his exercises on the alphabet in *Jubilate Agno* Smart writes:

For L is love. God in every language. (B 523)

He thus inscribes God within love and language as the letter L, as the Hebrew *El* (God) and *lamed* which inscribes God everywhere (cf. B 477—491). One communicates with God only through language, but not through a language which can be simply used to communicate some presence or meaning. This language must be practiced and used as a weapon (cf. B 20 above) to fight *in* the name of the Lord:

⁸⁰ "Alciphron: [...] But, to cut short this chicane, I propound it fairly to your conscience, whether you really think that God himself speaks every day and in every place to the eyes of all men." G. Berkeley, "Alciphron," C. Turnbayne, ed., *Works on Vision* (New York, 1963), p. 112.

⁸¹ G. Hartman, "Christopher Smart's *Magnificat*: Toward a Theory of Representation," in *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago and London, 1975), pp. 87—88.

For I have the blessing of God in three POINTS of manhood, of the pen, of the sword, and of chivalry. (B 129)

The“POINTS” might well be the Masonic points of entrance for those who qualify for the Second Degree, as we read in the annotation to this line, but they are also reminiscent of the Derridean pointed object which hides and protects the truth behind the veils. In his chivalry Smart protects the Word, the writing, by the effusion of writing, by the production of words in which, in all of them, there is God. Beyond the words there is the devil, the adversary, the foe, the “without God,” the atheist philosopher who, like Locke, wants to philosophize without God:

Let Chloe rejoice with the Limpin — There is a way to the terrestrial Paradise upon knees.
For the method of philosophising is in the posture of Adoration. (B 268)⁸²

Only in prayer and ad(d)oration does one philosophize, and the philosophy which forgets about the word, which erases God’s writing from our minds is atheist and comes from the adversary. Smart’s adoration, his unceasing use of the word protects the word against the silence of the unwritten, against presence without representation. If there is a philosophy in Smart, as Blaydes thinks, it is a philosophy of writing and hence a philosophy against philosophy.⁸³

For I am inquisitive in the Lord, and defend the philosophy of the scripture against vain deceit. (B 130)

Smart inquires into God’s affairs by participating in His writing and by defending the scripture against the void, the blank page of a *tabula rasa* in a manner the cuttle fish deters its enemies:

Let James rejoice with the Skuttle Fish, who foils his foe by the effusion of ink. (B 125)

This kind of writing, this peculiar kind of prayer both in defence against the adversary, and in adoration of the Lord has been forgotten by man. It is Smart’s mission to revive it:

For by the grace of GOD I am the Reviver of ADORATION among ENGLISH-MEN. (B 332)

In *A Song to David* the word “adoration” is played with extensively and punningly, e.g.

⁸² Hunter reported that “Mr. Smart, in composing the religious poems, was frequently so impressed with the sentiment of devotion, as to write particular passages on his knees.” Cf. annotation to lines B 177—179 in Williamson’s edition.

⁸³ Cf. R. Rorty, “Philosophy as...”

Praise above all — for praise prevails;
 Heap up the measure, load the scales,
 And good to goodness add:
 The gen'rous soul her Saviour aids,
 But peevish obloquy degrades;
 The Lord is great and glad. (L)

Adoration is thus not only “adding” but also an *aid* which makes the Lord *glad*. In stanza LII “adjust” and “attract” are added to the list. This revived adoration is also to be a loud *oratorio*, a prayer in a language which is musical, which plays and prays at the same time. Man must “speak HIMSELF from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet” (B 228). To this voice and echo must be added, the echo which arises in the “hollow places,” in the moulds made upon words by Smart’s punching:

For ECHO is the soul of the voice exerting itself in hollow places[...]
 For ECHO cannot act but when she can parry the adversary[...]
 For ECHO is greatest in Churches and whwer she can assist in prayer. (B 535—537)

It is this ECHO that protects the voice from disappearing in the silence which is the passive adversary who does not speak or sing, but can only whisper:

For all whispers and unmusical sounds in general are of the Adversary[...]
 For “I will hiss saith the Lord” is God’s denunciation of death. (B 231—232)

Hissing and silence breed pestilence. Smart only says a word, or claps his hands — “For applause or the clapping of the hands is the natural action of man on the descent of the glory of God” (B 233) — and the sound thus produced joins the chain of all other sounds and words in a *semiosis* whose beginning and end is the practice of prayer, the ad(d)oration of the Word. This Word has different names, it is not something given once and for all, and it is the names that we add to this word as ornaments, as *adornment*, as a surplus that constitutes the only possible mode of its being. If L is God so is G (B 519), but God is also “hope” which Smart finds in the peculiar spelling of the letter X and in a proper name:

For **ᄀG** is hope — consisting of two check G—God be gracious to Anne Hope. (B 534)

The “two check G” occupies the position of X in Smart’s alphabet, but he reads it as three letters in one, and thus as the Trinity and God:

For X has the pow’r of three and therefore he is God. (C 15)

Greek X is read here as *chi*, the symbol of Christ, but there is also lambda (λ) and gamma (γ) hidden in it, and, eventually, X stands for *Christ*, *El*, and *God*

simultaneously. Smart's word is its own beginning and end, and the very idea of there being a complete name which names only one thing is unthinkable, illogical, and blasphemous. We can say the Word only by saying quite different things, by using sounds and letters in the activity which is always, inevitably, *addressed to God*:

For Christ Being A and Ω is all the intermediate letters without doubt. (C 18)

Whatever we say, we say Christ — the Word — but whenever we say it we say something else as well, and thus add something to the Word, we *magnify* it:

Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name together. (A 3)

Language is not meant to name God because God is also a name and the only way to be *with* him is by words, by *being words*, signifiers. God as the Word is not a signified which all signifiers ultimately represent, rather he is a signifier, a letter G which is not one but always already magnified:

Foe **∂G** begineth not, but connects and continues. (B 559)

From the annotation we learn that **∂G** resembles the connection between the links of a chain. This **∂G** is also a link in the chain of being, a link which cannot exist by itself or in itself. Man cannot be without God but neither can God be without the ad(d)oration of the Word. Smart's idea of atheism is that of the broken chain of language, and of being, in which the Word is separated from man in the way signifier is separated from the signified. Smart's signified belongs to the sphere of the adversary, to the sphere of the silent, or whispering "truth" outside the Word, and what his adoration is to revive is not only the immediate link between man and God, but also the link between man and beast.

Man and beast are linked by Smart in most of his *Let* verses in which he usually puts together a proper name (usually a Biblical one, but there are also names of people he knew, and names taken from death reports) and the name of an animal or a plant, and makes the two "rejoice." They rejoice occasionally so punningly that one really feels *Finnegan's Wake* is an easy book to read. Hartman's reading of one of the lines can be quite exemplary here:

What is one to do, even today, with verses like "Let Lapidoth with Percnos the Lord is the builder of the wall of CHINA — REJOICE" (B 97)? The marvelous thing here [...] is the poet's total, consistent, critical rather than crazy, attack on the attenuated religious language of his day. "Percnos" is a bird of prey, like the Persian "Roc," punningly associated with the "Rock of Israel" in a previous line [...] while "Lapidoth" (Judges 4: 4) is linked to "Percnos-Roc" by an etymological pun which gives the Hebrew name a Latin root that means "stone" (*lapis, lapidis*).

Add the "Wall of China" as the greatest stone work in the world, and the line as a whole is seen to "give glory to the Lord." It says, in effect, "Let Rock with Rock, the Lord is the Rock of Rocks, rejoice."⁸⁴

Man and beast, Lapidoth and Percnos, become the Rock which is Christ in one line, they stand quite literally in a single continuous chain of the being of the sentence. Since percnos is a bird of prey we may expect it to engage in an act of prayer as well. I have already pointed to the prey/pray pun above, and Smart seems to be exploring it both in *Jubilate Agno* and in *A Song to David*. In stanza LV of the *Song* we read:

For ADORATION beasts embark,
While waves upholding halcyon's ark
No longer roar and toss.

In 1765 edition of the *Song* Smart added the following footnote to these lines:

There is a large quadruped that preys upon fish, and provides himself with a piece of timber for the purpose, with which he is very handy.

The fish is also Christ⁸⁵ and the beasts which embark for adoration will quite evidently prey upon Christ simultaneously spreading the gospel as the apostles — fishermen.⁸⁶ It is the manner in which the "quadruped" preys upon fish which is the manner of Smart's adoration. The beast uses the piece of timber as a boat and in order to prey upon fish it has to embark, it has to begin a journey across some waters or seas.⁸⁷ The "halcyon's ark" refers to the legend that kingfishers rest on the sea for a fortnight before the winter solstice, when it is always calm. This, equally punningly, introduces the theme of Christ as fish. Christ is simultaneously the "royal" object of worship and the prey which nourishes and allows to survive, but in order to catch (up with) him one has to build a boat or an *ark*. In *Jubilate Agno* "prey" and "prayer" are quite overtly put together:

Let Bedan rejoice with Ossifrage — the bird of prey and the man of prayer. (B 54)⁸⁸

The vessel that pairs, made up of a human being and a beast, board is obviously an ark, but it is neither simply a version of Noah's Ark nor that of the Ark of the Testimony. The theme of the Ark of Testimony appears in A 16:

⁸⁴ G. Hartman, "Christopher..." p. 82.

⁸⁵ Cf. annotation to line B 206.

⁸⁶ Cf. annotation to line B 123.

⁸⁷ "For in my nature I quested for beauty, but God, God hath sent me to sea for pearls" (B 30)

⁸⁸ Cf. I Sam. 12: 11.

Let the Levites of the Lord take the Beavers of y^e brook alive into the Ark of the Testimony.

As Moira Dearnley notices, “it is entirely characteristic that Smart should have cheerfully complicated this theme with a pun on ‘ark’.”⁸⁹ The Ark of the Testimony, “the priestly Ark of the Covenant and the seaborne Ark of Noah,” says Christopher Devlin, “were both for him one image of the true Church.”⁹⁰ The Levites (and the beavers) are supposed to go into the Ark, while Noah is asked to “do homage” to the Ark along with his company in order to create the “jubilant assembly described in Psalm 24.”⁹¹

Let Noah and his company approach the throne of Grace,
and do homage to the Ark of their Salvation. (A 4)

Smart makes the two Biblical themes confluent just as is the case with the conflation of man and beast, and the Word with the words he uses. The Covenant, one’s being with God, seems to consist in floating upon the surface of waters in an ambiguous Ark which both saves life and is carried to Mount Sion by the Levites accompanied by the rejoicing voices of men, beasts and words; creatures that are at the same time “passengers” of the Ark. In this way the poem itself becomes the Ark in which sentences are made into pairs “rejoicing” with each other in the antiphonal structure of Hebrew poetry whose study by Robert Lowth — *De Sacra Poesi Hebreorum* Smart knew.⁹² Words, like sentences, are also paired in the text:

For the relations of words are in pairs first.
For the relations of words are sometimes in oppositions.
For the relations of words are according to their distances
from the pair. (B 598—600)

There have been a couple of theories about Smart’s theory of language contained in these lines.⁹³ I shall not develop any here. Let us only note that Smart writes about relations *of* words in their various configurations, and not about the relations *between* anything. What Frederic Bogel calls Smart’s “binary mania”⁹⁴ is actually an attempt at making any duality into a relation, into a unity of an endless chain of *semiosis*. This repeated Peircean term seems to be motivated by Smart’s dislike for dualities and binary oppositions:

⁸⁹ M. Dearnley, *The Poetry of Christopher Smart* (London, 1979), p. 139.

⁹⁰ Ch. Devlin, *Poor...*, p. 107.

⁹¹ M. Dearnley, *The Poetry...*, p. 139.

⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹³ Cf. for instance G. Hartman, “Christopher...”, p. 92.

⁹⁴ Cf. F. Bogel, *Literature and...*, p. 38.

For there is a mystery in numbers [...]
 For One is perfect and good being at unity in himself [...]
 For two is the most imperfect of all numbers [...]
 For everything infinitely perfect is Three [...]
 For the Devil is two being without God. (C 19—23)

Two is contradictory for Smart because there cannot be two perfect unities. There is only one perfect unity which is three. Two does not consist of two ones, but it is the emptiness, the hissing of the Adversary, a zero which Smart does not even mention in his catalogue of numbers. Following this seemingly strange logic one might conclude that Smart's three cannot be a simple sum of two and one (there is no room for the Devil in the Trinity), and that it actually is one — three without two. There, quite evidently, is a mystery in Smart's numbers.

Smart exorcises dualities by making them into unities (ones) which are, as it were, triadic (threes). A unity which is three is obviously paradoxical, it is a one which is more than one, a one to which something has been *added*. What has been added cannot be simple unity either, and it also must be more than one. This paradoxical logic is at work throughout all the lines and themes of *Jubilate Agno*. The pairs of antiphonal sentences are in this sense unities because the *For* verses are responses to the *Let* verses, and they inevitably and up as unitary structures separately being imperfect or incomplete. "The Lord and the Lamb" form the first line of the text also follows this "two-in-one" pattern, as Hartman calls it. To rejoice in the „Lord and the Lamb," he says, "is to rejoice in the hope that the Judge (Lord) will turn out to be the Comforter (Lamb)," that is to say, to rejoice in the hope of the two being one.⁹⁵ This one is in fact three because the duality is not dialectically sublated into the third related but independent term but remains within the third element, partakes of it as a trace or a *restance*, as Derrida could say.⁹⁶ The duality is thus dissolved; its constitutive parts are no longer unities but as it were incomplete parts of the unity which now consists of three undecidables, of three elements which are more than unities: The Lord who partakes of the Lamb, the Lamb that partakes of the Lord, and the link which makes this partaking possible and which also partakes in the Lord and in the Lamb. None of the three can be simply itself.

Men and beasts that are to enter Smart's ambiguous Ark are neither men nor beasts either. They are also to be the one which is three. Patricia Spacks follows too logical a logic when she says that

Smart's concept of man as a totality whose activities, however diverse, are part of a single activity of devotion, parallels his concept of the universe as a single entity in which the most bizzare components join to praise the Lord.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ G. Hartman, "Christopher...", p. 83.

⁹⁶ Cf. J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 8. The word is coined from *rester* — to remain, and is supposed to mean "the fact or act of remaining or being left over."

⁹⁷ P. Spacks, *The Poetry of Vision* (Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 130.

It seems, however paradoxical, that it is the very concept of unity or totality pure and simple that Smart always looks upon with suspicion. Smart's "one" is always ambiguous and it quite clearly means "someone." The Devil is "two," but it is by this duality that a simple unity, a simple "one", becomes thinkable as difference, as the absolute opposite of some other positive category. Smart does not affirm that there is a singularly present man, beast or God. Perhaps Frederic Bogel is not quite right when he writes that

In *Jubilate Agno* [...] Smart is arguing neither that God exists nor that He is good (these are Smart's metaphysical presuppositions) but that He is present, that the physical world reveals not simply the wisdom of God in the Creation but the manifest and substantial presentness of divine being.⁹⁸

In Bogel's reading of the poem the physical world is a language which *reveals* some otherwise uninterrupted presence, a language which only demonstrates or makes manifest, in its dispersion, the originary unity beyond it, a God who, at some point, is without word, the creator who has withdrawn from his creation. For Bogel, God is substantially present in the creation, but there remains his insubstantial part somewhere beyond the world and the Word, in the sphere of a metaphysical presupposition. The problem with Smart's text, however, is that if it argues anything, it is that God without the Word, a metaphysically present God, would actually be a God "without God," the atheistic God Smart finds in Locke. Smart's covenant is not a covenant between God and Man, between two easily identifiable entities, but it is only the covenant that interests him, only the "between" in which nothing simply is but in a sense more that is,⁹⁹ the sphere where all identities are necessarily transgressed in the act of prayer, in the linguistic performance in which the Word is not confined to what it means, but becomes productive or creative of itself. The Bible, which Smart supplements with a number of non-Biblical names and creatures, is not the Word, it is not the Text in which everything has been said and now we only have to find what it reveals. It is not the text which, as in some Kabbalists, alludes to the original text whose true arrangement will be revealed to us,¹⁰⁰ but a text to which we have to add in order to extend the creation, the writing, to infinity, to the infinity of language which, as Hartman notices, is the only thinkable covenant.

"Gird up thy loins now, like a man, I will demand of thee and answer thou me," God thunders at Job (Job 38:3). [...] I will demand of thee and answer thou to me, means for Smart, girding up the loins of language and meeting the challenge of the divine text. The Bible is less a proof text than

⁹⁸ F. Bogel, *Literature and...*, p. 56.

⁹⁹ Smart's "Isis" in B 181 can, in addition to Hartman's ingenious reading of it ("Christopher..., p. 94), be also read as a double "is" — a double affirmation or more than affirmation.

¹⁰⁰ T. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin...*, p. 116.

a shame text; and to escape this shame which affects, preeminently the tongue, he must become David again and restore the Chain of Inspiration. "Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues [...]" (A 1)¹⁰¹

God has to be returned to the horizon of man and it seems it is the vertical aspect of the chain of being, the hierarchy of creation that in Smart's prayer has to be overcome. Language is linear, and Smart's covenant can only be horizontal, a communication without the gap or the obstacle of metaphysical thinking with which the hierarchy is always introduced. As Hartman notices, "The Great Chain of Being is honored not on account of order and hierarchy but only as it continues to electrify the tongue and represent the creature."¹⁰²

The lack of this being with God in language, the lack of contact is the mark of human degeneracy to Smart. The degeneracy consists in the fact that man became only himself, that he became confined to his identity, and thus made the division between himself and his others thinkable. In the past God and man had at least one thing in common, a "pointed object" which functioned both as the extension and as a means through which God and man were constantly in touch. The object, according to Smart, is the horn about which we read in Habakkuk 3:4 and in Exodus 34:29.¹⁰³

For in the day of David Man as yet had a glorious horn upon his forehead.
For this horn was a bright substance in colour and consistence of the nail of the hand.
For it was broad, thick and strong so as to serve for defence as well as ornament. (C 119—121)

For it was taken away at once from all of them. (C 124)

Without the horn man lost the possibility of ad(d)oration because this ornament and weapon did not simply disappear from the world, but began to be regarded only as an adornment, as style which no longer brought man closer to truth or God. It became an obstacle which separated God from man. Where there used to be a horn now there is a hat, the elegant surrogate which only introduces distance:

For it is not good to wear any thing upon the head.
For a man should put no obstacle between his head and the blessing of Almighty God.
(C 133—134)

For a hat was an abomination of the heathen. Lord have mercy upon the Quakers.
For the ceiling of the house is an obstacle and therefore we pray on the house-top. (C 135—136)

¹⁰¹ G. Hartman, "Christopher...", p. 87.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁰³ In *Exodus* "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone." Smart's idea derives from the Vulgate description of Moses descending from Mount Sinai, "cornuta essat facia sue ex consortio sermonis Dei." This is also the source of Michaelangelo's statue of Moses with horns (cf. annotation to C 119).

Without the horn we are without the Word, and hence, like Locke, without God:

For we are amerced of God, who has his horn. (C 143)

The horn was the visible mark of the covenant — God within us as an extension of our bodies and ourselves, the thing that made us more than ourselves. Deprived of the horn, man's body degenerated physically as well, it lost its strength and diminished in size. Without the horn (without God), the body became "naked of offence,"¹⁰⁴ exposed in its singularity to the Devil that is also sickness — the word which hisses and does not pray:

For degeneracy has done a great deal more than is generally imagined.

For men in David's time were ten feet high in general. (C 90—91)

For the head will be liable to less disorders on the recovery of the horn. (C 137)

For it is a strong munition against the adversary, who is sickness and death. (C 139)

Smart's prayer is to revive the horn, just as it is to revive the adoration. "Horn" is something which is added, but it is also a musical instrument which can add to the glory of the Lord. "Horn" is also the substance that produces protective shells in creatures as well as nails and claws. Smart quite obsessively explores the theme of shells and nails as kinds of protective horns. The theme of protection appears in his punning on "roc" and "rock" I have already pointed to. In stanza xlii of *A Song to David* he writes:

Open, and naked of offence,
Man's made of mercy, soul, and sense
(God armed the snail and wilk);

As "naked of offence" man seems to be inoffensive, open and frank, but, as Patricia Spacks notices, "'open' and 'naked' also evoke an image of man as unprotected."¹⁰⁵ The shells of the snail and whilk are not only a protective armour, as Spacks reads it, but also, punningly, an armoury, something the creatures have been armed with. Unlike a hat or a ceiling which do not grow from the body and thus separate from God a shell does not separate because it in a sense is and is not its bearer, it comes from the body like nails which remind Smart of the lost horn (cf C 120). A shell protects the body from the outside as a house or a fortress, but it also grows like the claws of the beasts of prey which swarm in *Jubilate Agno*. Snail's shell as nail and as a version of the horn is linked with the word/sword pun both by the theme of sharp claws and by the pun on "nail" which is also the nail with which Jael killed Sisera in *Judges* 4:

¹⁰⁴ Cf. stanza xlii of *A Song to David*.

¹⁰⁵ P. Spacks, *The Poetry...*, p. 127.

Let Barak praise with the Pard — and great is the might of the faithful and great is the Lord in the nail of Jael and in the sword of the Son of Abinoam. (A 30)

In A 26 Smart says that the unicorn is “the spear of the Lord mighty in battle.” The number of “horny” creatures entering Smart’s Ark is quite inspiring, and if all beasts with claws or nails count as horny as well it will be difficult to find a single one that does not follow the pattern.

Another theme connected with horns is that of healing and wounds. A horn or a nail as sword cuts through the body, but it also heals the wound thus made. The horn is a sharp tool and a bandage at the same time. Creatures without horns, men without God confined to what they are, without anything added are like open wounds, they perish in the hands of the silent adversary who is sickness and death. When king David was in danger of perishing from the hand of Absalome he was saved by Barzillai (2 Sam. 19:32), and Smart makes use of this story in an interesting way:

Let Barzillai bless with the Snail — a friend in need is as the balm of Gilead, or as the slime to the wounded bark. (A 59)

The snail not only has his shell, but it continually produces a protective substance, a “balm” or a “slime” without which it would be alone, without a friend to keep it alive. It actually produces the slime in a manner the wounded tree does it. Without this substance added to it the snail would be a snail, but it would perish without the substance as if it were wounded, and in order to exist it must constantly heal the wound by adding to itself, it must be something more than it is.

He who adds, the “adder,” is an ambivalent creature in Smart as well — a snake that bites, but also something that heals:

For the bite of the Adder is cured by its grease [...] (B 118)

Not a single line of *Jubilate Agno* presents us with something pure and simple. It seems that it is some sort of impurity that Smart’s writing constantly produces; the impurity or undecidability of genres or genres he lists which goes hand in hand with the various “bodily substances” they produce. It is not very far from nails, horns or slime as a certain bodily effusion to excrementation. In “considering” his cat Jeffrey Smart writes:

For he rolls upon prank to work in it.

For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself. (B 702—703)

Although Smart “seems more wary of mentioning excrement than of mentioning the devil,” Hartman notices that

“Having done duty” may refer to Jeffrey’s sunrise worship, but it could also be a euphemism, especially when followed by a lengthy description of a cat cleaning itself.¹⁰⁶

Hartman’s reading of the cat’s duty would probably be regarded as blasphemous by any prayer book or devotional manual. In *The Whole Duty of Man*, a devotional manual said to be written by Richard Allestree and published in 1659, which Smart made use of in his *Children’s Hymns*, this sort of duty goes unmentioned. It is difficult, however, not to read Smart’s poem as a devotional manual of sorts which suggests some new kind of adoration and duty. It is also difficult not to read *Jubilate Agno* as a prayer, as a devotional act itself, as a practice of a theory included in the practice. Sophia Blaydes, who reads *Jubilate Agno* as a draft of *A Song to David*, notices that it is also the *Song* that

exemplifies that which it expresses. It is defining the function and purpose of music, prayer and adoration, while at the same time it is fulfilling that function, since it is a musical prayer of adoration.¹⁰⁷

The same might be said about Smart’s earlier poem (from before the confinement) *Hymn to the Supreme Being* (1756) in which he glorifies God for recovery from a serious illness. Smart reads his recovery as God’s gesture of *charity*, that is to say, as a gesture through which God gives man something that is properly His, and thus as if extends or transgresses Himself in sharing his godliness with others. God generously gives what is His because He is all charity, all generosity, and what he offers man as a property is also, paradoxically, charity, the ability to forgo one’s property. “For God nevertheless is an extravagant BEING and generous unto loss” (B 380), says Smart, and in the next line we read that “generosity” and the “generation of man” are one and the same thing because nobody “profits” from them (“For there is no profit in the generation of man”). God made his charity known, He “confest” it by generously offering us His son. In the *Hymn* we read:

See! on the right, close by the Almighty’s throne,
In him she shines confest, who came to make her known.¹⁰⁸

God made His charity known, but he has also sown it within us:

Deep-rooted in my heart then let her grow,
That for the past the future may atone;
That I may act what thou hast giv’n to know,¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ G. Hartman, “Christopher...,” p. 89.

¹⁰⁷ S. Blaydes, Christopher...,” p. 111.

¹⁰⁸ Stanza xvii in R. Brittain, ed., *Poems by...*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.

The message and offer of charity has now to be “acted,” it has to be performed as the act of giving oneself in prayer, in the words which not only express the charity but are the charity. The heart in which Smart’s charity is rooted is not a metaphysical heart, a centre where the pure secret of truth is hidden, but a heart in which the truth is planted. It is not the heart of the matter, but the heart whose inside or essence comes from the outside, the heart whose inside is only a source or potentiality of growth, a potentiality of activity, a soil which can be generous only if it is generously offered a seed. The passive presence of the seed or the Word, the faith alone, is a non-activity which Smart detests as something atheistic, as the sluggishness and silence which comes from the Devil. The only covenant possible is that of activating the growth of charity in virtually everything we say and do and the ideal prayer seems to be the constant activity of an ant (“Go to an Ant, thou sluggard learn to live, And by her wary ways reform thy own”).¹¹⁰

Smart’s idea of growing a beard as a way of magnifying the name of the Lord is an economical way of putting together the themes of growth, activity, horn, the Rock, nails and claws.

For I prophecy that all Englishmen will wear their beards again.

For a beard is a good step to a horn.

For when men get their horns again, they will delight to go uncovered. (C 130—132)

Growing a beard is Smart’s prayer in the same manner *Jubilate Agno* is. Smart wants his words to grow like a beard or a horn which God once gave us in his charity as the Rock upon which (or *in* which, like a coney)¹¹¹ one finds security and shelter. But God also gave us the Rock *as* charity, as the property of generously giving away one’s property to the point where there is nothing but the charity, nothing but the activity of prayer in which, to quote Paul de Man out of context, “I cannot say I,”¹¹² but always already something more. Smart’s chain of being seems to be a metonymic chain, a chain of parts which never consolidate into a whole. In this way man really “gives himself for,” like woman in Derrida’s *Spurs* (cf. Part I). Nothing remains for him because nothing fully belongs to him — he who prays must prey upon himself. The act of prayer renders existence as “ex-istance” or as “existimation,” as Smart has it in B 3. This “existimation” is the memory of existence, its memoir which, as we have seen, always denounces the present. Nothing can be simply present, because what seems present to the man “amerced” of the horn has been offered us as the future. We had been offered biographies before we were able to say “I.”

¹¹⁰ *On the Omniscience of the Supreme Being*, p. 89.

¹¹¹ Cf. stanza xxv of *A Song to David*.

¹¹² P. de Man, “Sign and Symbol...,” p. 768.

When in my mother's womb conceal'd I lay,
 A senseless embryo, then my soul thou knewest,
 Knewest all her future workings, every thought,
 And every faint idea yet unform'd.¹¹³

What we are seems to be what we will have been. Smart reads the doctrine of predestination to the letter and once more repeats that the idea of a non-innate idea is unthinkable and atheistic. This reading of the doctrine obviously subverts the idea or concept of time as a linear sequence of events at which we can either look back by means of memory, or look forward to by means of imagination, or clairvoyance of the cause-effect mode of thinking. It subverts the concept of time for which *the present* is absolutely necessary as its foundation. In Smart, the present becomes a future in the past, the kind of time in which nothing exists in itself but is always a relation of past to future (and of future to past) without any conceivable stillness of the present. "For TIMES and SEASONS are the Lord's — Man is no Chronologer," he writes in B 340 (cf. Acts 1:7) and in B 575—576 he plays with the ambiguity of "æra" (both a period of time and a kind of rye-grass) and says:

For æra in its primitive sense is but a weed amongst corn.

For there is no knowing of times and seasons, in submitting them to God stands the Christian Chronology.

The weed obstructs the growth of corn just as our idea of time (of eras) obstructs the growth of "the Christian Chronology." Era as a period of time hinges upon the idea of presence, upon the idea of something happening at some time carved in the eternity of the Word as Something finite or present. For Smart, there is no possibility of confining this eternity to what is present because the eternity itself is not an eternal presence which was, is, and will be, but it is a constant activity and growth. In Isaiah 40:8 "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth but the word of our God shall stand for ever," while for Smart nothing stands, but only "increases" and "endures."

Let Iddo praise the Lord with the Moth — the writings of men perish as the garment, but the Book of God endureth for ever. Let Nebuchadnezzar with the Grasshopper — the pomp and the vanities of the world are as herb of the field, but the glory of the Lord increaseth for ever.
 (A 68—69)

The words man says as his own, the atheistic words without the Word of God will be eaten up by the moth (Isa. 51:8), they will vanish in silence like the lost books of Iddo (Chr. 9:29) because they come from the Devil who is amerced of the Word. The glory of the Lord is a matter of weariness and suffering (endurance) as

¹¹³ *On the Omniscience...*, p. 94.

well as a matter of growth (increase) in the ad(d)oration. We cannot confine the Word to the past and treat it as something given and complete, but as something that also grows from us as the past sown in us as the future, like the horns of which we have been amerced, but which we shall regain when we realize that they are innate — not simply given, but actually produced in the process which Smart ambiguously calls “innatation” (B 346).

The story of Nebuchadnezzar is quite illustrative of how Smart writes about horns and claws without writing about them. Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment was to eat grass and to live with “the beasts of the field.”

[...] and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagle’s *feathers*, and his nails like birds’ claws (Daniel 4:33).

Along with the “hairs” Nebuchadnezzar regains the horn, the ability to praise the Lord. In his prayer, Smart obviously refers to the Bible, but he also adds words to the Bible and thus makes the Word grow like the hair of Nebuchadnezzar’s grows into a protective shell of feathers by eating the “herb of the field.” Smart also invites Nebuchadnezzar to his Arc as the man whose “pair” is an eagle, the bird of prey. This “epiphany in echoland” never points to the Word — the Word cannot be said within human chronology. The Word’s eternal growth is activated without a foundation, without the first word from which the chains of metonymies spring. Saying “roc” we say “the Rock,” saying “Lamb” we say “God,” but we also say “the Rock” and “roc” and innumerable other things. We “magnify His Name” never knowing that name. We magnify it clapping our hands and in doing so we momentarily receive horns or claws from a clapperclaw:

For applause or the clapping of the hands is the natural action of a man on the descent of the glory of God. (B 233)

For Clapperclaw is in the grappling of the words upon one another in all the modes of versification. (B 630)

Clapping our hands on the descent of the Word in (Smart’s) prayer we grapple the words and thus magnify (there is also a cat with its claws in MAGNIFICAT, cf. B 143)¹⁴ them simultaneously magnifying the glory, and never identifying the Word. Clapping our hands we also as it were *clap-our-claws*, we regain the horn, the shell which grows from us, but which as something grappled, or added to us renders our identities always already transgressive.

It seems to be in this inevitable transgressivity of all simple wholes, of all words and things, that Smart’s writing departs from philosophy, from the discourse for which there must be truth, some stable entity to be mastered. Where

¹⁴ Cf. G. Hartman, “Christopher...,” pp. 90—91.

there is a clapperclaw there is no room either for a simple and singular man, or for God whose ideality renders Him so silent as to be almost absent. The only creatures thinkable in the world of clapperclaws are those that are “impair,” as Hartman calls them, creatures which stick out or should stick out,¹¹⁵ the horny creatures which, let us repeat, more than are, like Christopher Smart, the name of a single person split into a “Christ-bearing (Christopher) wit and wound (Smart).”¹¹⁶ The unconfined word offered us in his writing, the word free from the closure of any final meaning and hence from the snares of philosophy is the word of literature, and thus the word of madness (cf. Felman). According to Hartman,

The tropes of literature, or similar kinds of imaginative substitution, could as easily be said to pursue that “presence” which “identifies” all creatures, as to defer it. Perhaps it does not matter which, since both pursuit and deferment are endless. That the identifying moment, like a snapshot, is too deathlike or ecstatic; that movement of troping must begin again; that the acute self-consciousness must be transcended by an act of what is commonly called imagination — all this is part of the psychopathology of ordinary life, or of that principle of “clapperclaw” which “joyces” language in Shakespeare, Smart and even Derrida.¹¹⁷

Whatever coincidence there is in Hartman’s putting Smart between the pillar of literature and the debunker of philosophy it is a telling one. In Shakespeare language could be mastered by a wise ruler, but it could serve man, like Ariel, only to a point where it was to be set free. Without this partial mastery of language no order or justice could be thinkable. It is already outside the stage that Ariel will dance to no purpose without Prospero’s guidance. In Derrida it is Prospero, the prosperity of the proper signified, that *exeunt* leaving the stage to Ariel’s unrestrained dance, to the dance of the signifier. The “identifying moment” Hartman talks about is deferred in Shakespeare’s “joyced” language, put it is simultaneously pointed to as the order or truth to be pursued behind the stage. Derrida defers that moment without the nostalgia for a presence, he makes this deferment (or *différance*) the only conceivable movement of language. By inscribing the divine within the earthly Smart attempts to overcome the binary opposition of the *concordia discors* by making the extremes co-identical. As a result the idea of a single or simple identity of any creature is undermined. The earthly (the material, the signifier) transgresses itself because its opposite turns out to be its constitutive part. In this sense Smart deconstructs the idea of the “identifying moment,” of the presence of the signified independently of the signifier. God dwells in all words and things, and He cannot present Himself outside or beyond them. No mastery over language can make the Word present

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

in its totality and the only way of being with the divine is by “taking part” in the material, by the prayer which is not addressed to God, but in which He also takes part.

The paradox is that *Jubilate Agno* is not only a prayer, the activity in which one is engaged, but also, as I have said, a “devotional manual” of sorts, and, as Frederic Bogel notices, its “explanatory mode [...] constantly affirms the poet’s distance from that divine reality whose immediacy he strives to demonstrate, affirms a separation instead of a union.”¹¹⁸ The poem, in other words, declares that there are two separate realities, and thus separates them and affirms what the movement of the text, its textuality, deconstructs. The residue of madness which constitutes Felman’s literature is thus both signalled and renounced. The impossibility of a closure and identity activated by the infinite punning and riddling of the prayer is also the declaration of a programme. Not publishing *Jubilate Agno* Smart confined its residual madness in a silence. He published *A Song to David*, the poem whose “chief fault,” he admits, is “the EXACT REGULARITY AND METHOD with which it is conducted.”¹¹⁹ Smart chooses to publish the more regular version of his programmatic prayer to hide the madness of the non-declarative language in the form which will cancel or hide his metonymies, the madness (and thus the literariness) of his punning prayer and ad(d)oration under an elegant hat. In doing this Smart seems to have conformed to the Classical episteme which organized itself as the movement of warding off the extremities, the Other, and in which there was no room for literature as a separate “institution” of writing. Yet Smart pointed to the possibility of there being a contact between the extremes, of there being a hidden absence in man, a certain depth where the “innate” voice of the Other could be located. It is Modernity for which this depth offered itself as the object of interest, as the locus of Kant’s moral law, of Hegel’s Geist, of the psyche, the conscious and the unconscious. It was in this depth that the essence of humanity began to be searched for. The establishment of literature in the nineteenth century seems to be a part of the same story.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ F. Bogel, *Literature and...*, p. 57.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in S. Blaydes, *Christopher...*, p. 21.

¹²⁰ The establishment of literature and its relations to the rise of gendered (female) subjectivity are discussed in Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. Cf. also chapter 1 (*The Rise of English*) in Eagleton’s *Literary Theory*. Homer Obed Brown’s book in progress — *Institutions of the English novel in the Eighteenth Century* — argues that “the institution or genre of novel as we now think of it was composed [...] around the beginning of the 19th century and the history of its ‘rise’ now widely accepted, the one that begins with Defoe did not become institutional until the middle of our own century” (p. 1, ms.).



ostscript (A Conclusion)

In fact, the autonomy of the university, as well as of its student and professor inhabitants, is a ruse of the State, “the most perfect ethical organism” (this is Nietzsche quoting Hegel). The State wants to attract docile and unquestioning functionaries to itself. It does so by means of strict controls and rigorous constraints which these functionaries believe they apply to themselves in an act of total auto-nomy.

(Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*)

The Classical subject is the writing subject and the subject of writing. He writes himself and simultaneously denies his written status, he denies the surplus of writing, the rhetoricity of his presence in favour of a prior, plain writing which is to eventually represent him. His mode of being is by way of saying “no” to the improper (the mad, the Other), by way of confining the falsity of the word’s rhetoricity in invisibility, and of confining the word *to* property. The paradox is that the property itself, or in itself, remains unspeakable. The rhetorical, the creative, the imaginative, the fictitious — in a word the literary — all belong to the sphere of the dangerous Other, they are dangerous to individual identity and hence to the social order. They are not “polite letters,” and as impolite they are also unwelcome by polity which thus demands and produces the polite subject.

We have embraced literature — the literary — as a positive category not because we have eventually discovered what we are and thus found an unquestionable epistemological security of position, but by gaining some mastery over the Other. We no longer deny (openly) the Other, but we locate it within an analytic space and find laws, rules and regularities which provide the other with some sort of identity and sameness. We theorize it and thus actually posit objects of our own theories. Man exists now both as subject and object of theory, as he who can theorize himself, and say, without any doubt, that he must

be a something (or someone) in this world because there are sciences of man for which there must be a man to theorize. In other words, if there are sciences of man, there must be something called man which they are the sciences of. This last, conditional, sentence about the sciences of man is what Terry Eagleton says about literature in the first sentence of the Introduction to his *Literary Theory*, an academic book:

If there is such a thing as literary theory, then it would seem obvious that there is something called literature which it is the theory of.

The fact that he is not quite sure whether literature exists (he declares in the book that literature, in a sense, does not exist) does not mean that Eagleton is an Oxford anarchist who wants to deprive a number of professors of their jobs, but rather that the obviousness of any presence, of any category is always a theoretical construct dictated by discourse (or ideology), and that it is always possible to look at things without that theoretical bias, without the assumption that what we are looking at is necessarily what it is. This does not mean that all theory must be abolished or destroyed, but only that it always, when paid enough attention to, deconstructs itself. Professors are necessary, theory should be taught, but in teaching it one has to be in a sense more than one person, one must be a teacher who questions the authority of one's teaching, a teacher who, while teaching, constantly teaches himself to notify the work of theory in what he is doing, in his very presence in the classroom, and to thus question this theory. As Derrida, a professor, put it in quite an "a-Derridean" way in an interview with Imre Salusinszki (1985):

You have to train people to become doctors or engineers or professors and at the same time to train them in questioning all that — not only in a critical way, but I would say in a deconstructive way. This is a double responsibility: two responsibilities which sometimes are not compatible. In my own teaching, in my responsibilities, I think I have to make two gestures simultaneously: to train people, to teach them, to give them a content, to be a good pedagogue, to train teachers, to give them a profession: and at the same time to make them as conscious as possible of the problem of professionalization.

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Tadeusz Rachwał

SŁOWO I ZAMKNIĘCIE
PODMIOTOWOŚĆ W DYSKURSIE KLASYCYSTYCZNYM

Streszczenie

Przedmiot tej pracy — choć słowo “przedmiot” (*object, subject*) jest także przedmiotem jej uwagi — stanowi głównie piśmiennictwo angielskiego klasycyzmu w metodologicznym kontekście dekonstrukcji Jacquesa Derridy i “genealogii” Michela Foucaulta; w kontekście, najogólniej, poststrukturalistycznym, w którego podstawową problematykę wprowadza czytelnika *Wstęp*. Część I pracy, także wstępna, jest próbą odczytania Williama Shakespeare’a poprzez “Williama Shakespeare’a,” poprzez książkę, w której Terry Eagleton usiłuje przekonać nas, dosyć zawile, iż obok Freuda, Marksa czy Wittgensteina jest on także jednym z mistrzów chętnie czytywanych przez Williama Shakespeare’a. Równocześnie, głównie na podstawie analizy poematu “Lukrecja,” zostaje ukazany w tej części pracy “przełom epistemologiczny,” pewne dążenie do zamkniętej w imieniu własnym podmiotowości klasycystycznej przy jednoczesnej konieczności zachowania tradycyjnego uporządkowania świata, “uratowania” świata monarchii. “Lukrecja” zostaje tu odczytana jako próba oskarżenia monarchy (Tarkwiniusza) bez konieczności stawiania go przed sądem. Postawienie króla przed sądem stanie się możliwe dopiero kilkadziesiąt lat później, a możliwość ta zostanie “ukoronowana” procesem i egzekucją Karola I. Część II pracy poświęcona jest rozprawie o cenzurze, czy też z cenzurą, dokonanej przez Johna Milтона w *Areopagitice*, gdzie dokonuje on zarazem symbolicznego “ścięcia głowy króla,” zastępując ograniczającą wolność druku, tyranię cenzury prewencyjnej, autocenzurą rozumu, który sam, dobrowolnie, spali wszelkie monstrialne i szalone księgi podszeptywane przez Szatana “nierozumu.” Część III stanowi pewien “tekstualny obraz klasycyzmu,” w którym poprzez fragmenty pism Swifta, Pope’a, Hume’a, Hobbesa, Berkeleyya i kilku jeszcze innych pisarzy staramy się wyłonić główne wątki epistemologiczne stanowiące o tożsamości podmiotu, o sposobach kształtowania się tej tożsamości jako autora, edytora, autobiografa w bezpiecznych, zamkniętych sferach domu, ogrodu, klubu, imienia własnego. Część IV jest wyjściem z owych bezpiecznych sfer ku domenie szaleństwa na przykładzie “kariery” i twórczości Christophera Smarta, “szalonego” poety zapomnianego przez wiek osiemnasty za pragnienie otwarcia słowa, ukaranego za to wieloletnim zamknięciem w domu dla obłąkanych. Szaleństwo to omawiamy w kontekście rozmowania rodzącej się psychiatrii, w kontekście traktatów o szaleństwie Tryona i Battiego.

Tadeusz Rachwał

LA PAROLE ET LA FERMETURE LA SUBJECTIVITÉ EN DISCOURS CLACISSISTE

Résumé

L'objet de cette thèse — bien que le mot "objet" (*object, subject*) y soit aussi traité — constitue en principe la littérature du clacissisme anglais dans le contexte méthodologique de déconstruction de Jacques Derrida et de la "généalogie" de Michel Foucault; dans le contexte poststructuraliste dont la problématique principal présente l'*Introduction*. La I^{ère} partie de l'étude, aussi introductive, est l'essai de la lecture de William Shakespeare par l'intermédiaire de "William Shakespeare," par l'intermédiaire du livre dans lequel Terry Eagleton essaie de nous convaincre, de façon assez confuse, qu'à côté de Freud, de Marks ou de Wittgenstein il est aussi un des maîtres lus volontiers par William Shakespeare. En même temps, surtout sur la base de l'analyse du poème "Lucrèce," on présente dans cette partie de l'étude "le tournant épistémologique," une tendance à la fermeture à son nom propre de la subjectivité classiciste avec la nécessité simultanée de la conservation de l'ordre traditionnel du monde, au "sauvetage" du monde de la monarchie. "Lucrèce" y est lue comme l'essai d'accusation du monarque (Tarquin) sans nécessité de le mettre devant le tribunal. La mise du roi devant le tribunal ne sera possible que quelques dizaines d'années plus tard et cette possibilité sera "couronnée" par le procès et l'exécution de Charles I^{er}. La II^{ème} partie de l'étude est consacrée à la discussion sur la censure ou à l'explication avec elle faite par John Milton dans *Areopagitica* où il fait "la écapitation symbolique du roi," en remplaçant la liberté limitant d'impression, la tyrannie de la censure préventive par l'autocensure de la raison, qui, elle-même, volontairement, brûlera tous les livres monstrueux et incensés soufflés par le Satan de la "non-raison." La III^{ème} partie constitue une certaine "image textuelle du clacissisme" où, grâce aux fragments des oeuvres de Swift, Pope, Hume, Hobbes, Berkeley et d'autres écrivains, nous essayons de faire apparaître les fils épistémologiques principaux disposant de l'identité du sujet, des modes de formation de cette identité en tant que l'auteur, l'éditeur, l'autobiographe dans les zones sûres et fermées de la maison, du jardin, du club, de son nom propre. La IV^{ème} partie est la sortie de ces zones sûres vers le domaine de folie à l'exemple de la "carrière" et de l'oeuvre de Christopher Smart, un poète "furieux" oublié à travers du XVIII^e siècle pour son désir de l'ouverture de la parole, puni de la fermeture de plusieurs années dans une maison d'aliénés. Cette folie est présentée dans le contexte du raisonnement de la psychiatrie naissante, dans le contexte des traités sur la folie de Tryon et de Battie.

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