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# Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age

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## About the Contributors to *Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age*

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# Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age

## Introduction: The Uses of Interiority in the Domain of Pleasure

Karen Weisman, University of Toronto

1. Theresa Kelley and Thomas Pfau rehearse a debate—I would call it an anxiety—about Romanticism that has inflected culture since its very inception: can the aesthetic, and our critical engagement with the aesthetic, produce meaning that is, well, meaningful? The question begs too many qualifications, of course, not least of which is the often plaintive cry about the contingencies of predication; that is, meaning for whom, for what, and why do we even bother about it in the first place? We cannot predicate sure attributes of cultural purpose because, abstraction that it is, we end in circular claims about the meaning of meaning. We are not quite circus animals chasing our respective tails, I hope, but this problem is consistently played out in the domain of pleasure, or at least of affective responsiveness. For surely we come to ask the question of cultural products only at the point in which we are radically invested in them: we profess in the domain of culture, and few professors in the humanities extricate their own modes of self-understanding from their professional preoccupations. The issue, that is, defines us in banal ways too: after all the debates about the uses of pleasure, what can be said about our status as professional critics and scholars? (This is partly the issue that Thomas Pfau takes up polemically.) And must this question truly be allied with the more conceptually difficult one about the place of affective experience in aesthetic judgment? Both Pfau and Kelley are concerned to define the place of the aesthetic within a judgment that comprehends a relation between that which is meaningful for our interiority and that which is meaningful from the perspective of the socially iterable. Kelley finds reassurance in Hilary Putnam's recent re-thinking of philosophical realism, in which mind and world may be stitched together more thoroughly. But still more questions arise. Does the potential solipsism necessarily inherent in any aesthetic pleasure find a *rapport*, or a reciprocal production of meaning, with the empirical world? If Romanticism has a grasp upon the actual (to recall F.R. Leavis's famous indictment of Shelley) that is not merely weak, how do the actual and the pleasure of that aesthetic "grasp" signify to each other? These are the questions that I hope a brief consideration of Romanticism and philosophy in an historical age might open on to. The essays and counter-responses in this volume represent works in progress by Kelley and Pfau, and we invite our readers' input into their respective polemics.
2. I am fascinated by the problem of affect in the culture of literary criticism, and hope that a few remarks in this regard will help to draw together some of the issues that follow in this volume. For the question persists: can we find a way into poetic formal properties in ways that make contact with the felt experience of our reading *without* reducing those experiences to paraphrase about historical correlation? Instead, I wonder if can we tease out the text's historical reflexivity in a manner that is responsive to its affective yield—to our *experience* of its affective yield. This is a tricky situation, relentlessly vulnerable: for there must be a way of describing "how it feels" that does not reduce a theorized structure of feeling to sentimental recapitulation (that doesn't simply paraphrase attributed emotions here and there). Again, though, as Pfau's concluding polemic makes especially clear, the critical discussion of "feeling" is a ground vulnerable to the worst kinds of misunderstandings. Like Pfau, I do not believe that a deeply felt response is tantamount to a moral response, and I do not believe that a conceptual structure is equal, of necessity, to a principled one. That is, one question I hope we are implicitly asking is, how might interpretive reading move us beyond thematic paraphrase while still locating us within a conceptual structure whose syntax is constitutive of that structure?

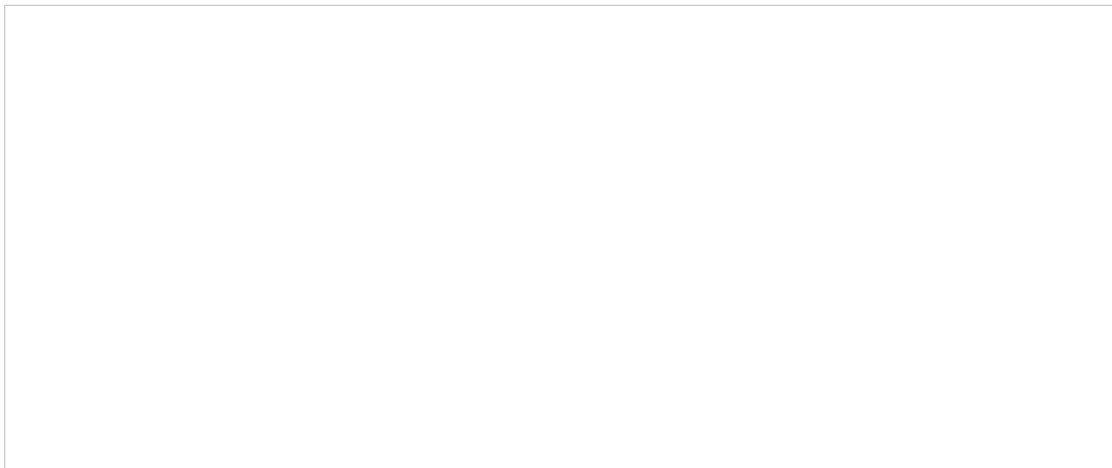
3. It was Foucault, of course, who re-ignited interest in the question, "What is Enlightenment," and the questions, "what is maturity?" and "what is modernity?" followed quick on its heels. But Foucault knew that the "aesthetics of existence" is interrogated precisely in the service of establishing an "ontology of ourselves," and the historicist passage between them must comprehend also the minutiae of expression. We need to know now what a mature reading in this post-enlightenment age of deeply vexed modernity can possibly mean. The ascesis so vital to the final Foucault is an exercise of oneself; and if thought is an activity that yields a "game of truth" by which one undergoes change, then surely an interrogation of the technical "games" of poetics may be said to speak to a vital aspect of human need. Kelley's close analysis of John Clare's poetry is an instructive instance in this regard.
4. If poetic cadence, for example, resonates—or more to the point, if what we believe about the allure of cadence is that it answers to a rhythm essentially held within us—then we are, it is true, treading on structuralist ground: poetics touches us at the level of resonance sounding deep within us. But determining the historicity of formalist norms (this is just one instance of a possible avenue of exploration) is still fecund scholarly ground. What seems to have needlessly polarized the academy, however, is the assumption that poetic resonance must be interpreted as either ideological or, alternatively, structural in an essentialist, naively psychologized manner. But again, how could a psychological resonance not be, at least in some manner, a participation within a dominant norm? Or at least, in what arenas were such assumptions ever challenged? The genealogy of the ideological ground of aesthetic compulsion still needs to take account of an aesthetic history. In this volume, Pfau and Kelley respond to one another partly in the terms of such issues (a response follows each essay). They help us find a way into a cultural context that does not, as it were, forgive the text merely its social determinations on the one hand, or fetishize its historical contingencies on the other. In some respects, what they articulate about Romanticism is nothing less than the uses (variously conceived) of its pleasures.

# Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age

## The Voice of Critique: Aesthetic Cognition After Kant

Thomas Pfau, Duke University

### PART I



1. The following, somewhat speculative remarks constitute part of a larger project concerned with the historical transformation throughout the nineteenth century of something frequently called interiority. More specifically, my aim is to explore how interiority during that period pivots on two fundamentally distinct models of aesthetic experience and, implicit in these, two opposed theories of aesthetic response. As I intend to show in some detail, the dynamics of interiority are dialectically bound up with the operation of aesthetic form, and perhaps nowhere more so than in German culture during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>[1]</sup> While exploring the sociological and political causes of the insistent aestheticization of subjectivity during that period seems tempting and potentially rewarding, this essay is generally limited to a theoretical account of the relation between interiority and form. It presents interiority as the effect of a complex relation between the psychological and formal-aesthetic values. The latter are those conventionally associated with the period's broad (preponderantly bourgeois) notion of "art," and the disciplinary institutions of criticism seeking to articulate the deeper epistemological and historical implications of aesthetic experience.<sup>[2]</sup>
2. An observation perhaps most frequently made by readers of lyric poetry will help to throw the issues before us into sharper relief. It involves the seeming paradox that what we call voice, and as such often wish to regard as authentically expressive of an inalienable subjective state, usually turns out to be far more than that. For quite commonly we also experience voice, even that of the lyric, as something social and iterable, an articulate structure capable of producing a complex and potentially communicable response. Fundamentally, that is, such an experience suggests that voice is the specific form required by the balancing of individual against universal values. Figuratively speaking (and there

really is no other way to speak about it) voice may be understood as a kind of formal half-way house between a basic propositional or expressive content and the exigency of a socially valid form. To the logician, it appears to be a paradox, whereas the rhetorician is likely to ponder its persistent oscillation between the inalienable status of the name and the as yet unrealized authority of the concept. However justified the scepticism of each, neither position quite addresses the most salient characteristic of voice. For in aiming to reconcile, however provisionally, the experience of a deeply significant interiority with an articulation of its social significance, voice itself manifests a unique form of desire. It is what Kant terms a postulate, a notion that entwines materiality and cognitive potential and that aims at redrawing the boundaries between subjective intuition and the discursive, public sphere.<sup>[3]</sup> For however plausible it may be to characterize voice as an outright paradox or as an irreducible trope, the very urgency and concentration with which it manifests itself as an articulate and sustained form gives evidence that what is being negotiated are always values rather than abstractions.

3. Let me now develop further my introductory suggestion that during the first half of the nineteenth century the dialectical relationship between interiority and aesthetic form is conceived in two fundamentally different (and often opposed) ways. The first of these postulates a homology of the work of art's formal composition with that of its beholding intelligence. In this view, aesthetic experience inheres in an essentially dynamic interaction between the work's progressively more complex and reflexive morphological units and their evolving manifestation as a proto-conscious, disinterested pleasure. The other paradigm, by contrast, rests on the premise (already latent in later eighteenth-century aesthetic theory) of a categorical divide between the affective quality associated with aesthetic production and a post-lapsarian consciousness of the discursive world, a welter of discrete, often incompatible interests.
4. This basic opposition in turn gives rise to the question concerning the relation between the form of the aesthetic and the possibility (or impossibility) of giving articulation to its experience: in short, the proposition of criticism as an official discourse/discipline of pleasure. Of seminal importance for so-called political readings of Romanticism, as well as for the recent, intense debate over new hermeneutic developments in musicology (to name only two discourses), the question may also be formulated thus: is the *telos* of aesthetic pleasure that of its critical articulation, its redemption by some kind of discursive intelligence?<sup>[4]</sup> And, if so, does the pleasure that is being held discursively accountable merely constitute the object of the critical practice involved? Or does that pleasure effectively prepare the ground for the subject's epistemological authority? Does pleasure remain inaccessible to the claims and purposes of discourse and signification? Or, conversely, does pleasure conceal from the very subject caught up *in* (and consumed *by*) its experience the critical and social values that so vicariously flow from its experience? Finally, is the (belated) articulation of aesthetic experience, what we call criticism, strictly the "Other" of pleasure, or is it but a more surreptitious strategy for partaking of that pleasure—namely, by continually professing to be on the other side of it (in the manner of Nietzsche's ascetic priest)?
5. Long before (and ever since) Wimsatt's theory of a bipolar interpretive disorder of imitative and periphrastic fallacies, criticism had to confront these kinds of questions and, implicit in them, those of its own epistemological and institutional legitimacy. While concerns of this kind are hardly novel, it may be the case that every generation must redefine the basic relation between the forms of pleasure and the objectives of criticism. To reflect on such matters is to involve oneself in a genealogy of critical thought that seeks to name the specific historical moment when pleasure became a constitutive and official problem for philosophical aesthetics and its subsidiary critical disciplines (e.g. poetics, compositional theory and musical aesthetics). Once the point has been identified at which the idea of interiority became inextricably linked to a particular aesthetic paradigm (thereby becoming detached from older, overtly religious models of inwardness) other issues arise. We may then consider, for

example, how aesthetic production itself began to respond to, or build upon, the growing institutional authority of aesthetic criticism.<sup>[5]</sup> Admittedly, the authority and the boundaries of the kind of critical reexamination here proposed are likely to remain uncertain. Indeed, we may be forced to conclude that critical thought—regardless of whether it is conceived as overcoming the aesthetic or as reaffirming its unimpeachable integrity—can never amount to more than a self-referential and self-confirming pursuit. As my preliminary distinction between the two paradigms of early nineteenth-century aesthetic theory suggests, criticism typically risks succumbing to one of two scenarios (with curiously indifferent theoretical consequences). Either it seeks to cultivate a type of knowledge likely to be perceived as incommunicable, unintelligible, and potentially irrelevant; or it aspires to a propositional style that is destined to fall short of aesthetic experiences, notwithstanding its insistence on their merely proto-articulate character.

## I

6. Precisely this teleological conception of the aesthetic as proto-articulate is key here. For it simultaneously opens up the two paradigms of the aesthetic that I outlined above: that of its eventual redemption *by* criticism and the alternative possibility that critical intelligence, judgment, or cognition might be constrained by the irreducibly contingent grain of the voice that utters them. Both historically and conceptually, Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is the key text for any attempt to determine the basic coordinates for these concerns. As Kant argues in that text, the larger significance of aesthetic judgment inheres in its overall application to what he calls "cognition in general," as well as in its performativity as a distinctive type of utterance. By contrast, the propositional specificity and force of aesthetic judgments appears slight at best. For "in the judgment of taste nothing is postulated but . . . a *universal voice* [*allgemeine Stimme*], in respect of the satisfaction without the intervention of concepts, and thus the *possibility* of an aesthetic judgment that can . . . be regarded as valid for everyone" (§ 8, 50). The pleasure that attaches to aesthetic judgment is not the cause of it, for as such it would be purely sensual enjoyment. Rather, it is a pleasure growing out of the subject's reflexive understanding that its own "subjective condition" at the moment of aesthetic experience amounts to something "universally communicable" (*allgemein mitteilungs-fähig*). The "proportionate accord" (*proportionierte Stimmung*) between the discrete faculties of cognition, Kant argues, constitutes both the cause and the substance of the aesthetic-reflective judgment (§ 9, 54). At its most general, all cognition (*Erkenntnis*) can thus be characterized as a way of being attuned to discrete phenomena, such that their contemplation will gradually "determine" (*bestimmen*) the subject via its affective experience of a "concord" (*Übereinstimmung*) or "conformity" (*Zusammenstimmung*) between the subject's sensory and discursive faculties:

The subjective universal communicability of the mode of representation in a judgment of taste . . . can refer to nothing else than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other [*zusammen stimmen*], as is requisite for cognition in general (§ 9, 52).

For Kant, that is, the concept of pleasure stands for the manifestation of cognitive potentialities at the level of affect. Harkening back to Leibniz's "monads," the aesthetic is conceived as an encryption of the very intelligence that will constitute itself through its interpretive discernment.<sup>[6]</sup> And yet, Kant insists on the strict heterogeneity of the two faculties (viz., imagination and understanding) said to circumscribe any knowledge whatsoever, including all knowledge-of-self. Consequently, "th[is] subjective unity of relation" can never be objectified by consciousness as such but, instead, "can only make itself known by means of *sensation*" [*Empfindung*] (§ 9, 53).

7. With this assertion, however, the *Critique of Judgment* performs an abrupt shift from the abstract,

formal dynamic said to determine our feeling of the beautiful to an inherently empirical and material vocabulary of "sensation."<sup>[7]</sup> Indeed, the text's metonymic slippage from "feeling" (*Gefühl*) to "sensation" (*Empfindung*) imperils the entire transcendental structure of the third *Critique*, and not surprisingly some readers have suggested that Kant's argument (particularly his digression on music) exposes itself to an "intru[sion of] bodily pleasure into the space reserved for thought" (Kramer, *Music as Social Practice*, 4).<sup>[8]</sup> At the very least, the conceptual rupture alerts us to empirical contingencies that lurk within Kant's transcendental argumentation and, consequently, to the precarious balance of the "analytic of the beautiful." Other evidence (as we have already noticed) involves the text's often-critical reliance on various cognates of "voice" (*Stimme*).<sup>[9]</sup>

8. What makes this shift from "feeling" to "sensation" so significant is the simple, albeit crucial fact that all pleasure demands the materiality of sensation. Only then can it appear *for* the consciousness whose epistemic authority it underwrites. Speaking about an analogous crisis in Kant's account of the sublime, Paul de Man goes so far as to characterize all transcendental discourse as a purely "topological system" wherein conceptual advances of any kind are "conceivable only within the limits of such a system." Yet once such topologically conditioned insight is being "translated back, so to speak, from language into cognition, from formal description into philosophical argument, it loses all inherent coherence and dissolves in the aporias of intellectual and sensory appearance" (de Man, 78). Given the sweeping nature of his conclusions, it is perhaps surprising that de Man should have never troubled himself to inquire whether a similar topological strategy of generalization might also be at work in Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful."<sup>[10]</sup>
9. Clearly, there is reason to suspect a pervasive debt of Kant's transcendental argumentation to contingent empirical sensation. For inasmuch as the coherence of Kant's overall critical project depends on a unique feeling of pleasure, the feeling of such pleasure will have to prolong itself in the realm of appearance. Put simply, such a realm of (supposedly) pure affect cannot simply be claimed as a theoretical fact, since the overall coherence of transcendental thought stands or falls with the hypothesis of "feeling," and that always means: its potential detour through the social and material netherworld of appearance and representation. In short, pleasure will have to manifest itself as an appearance at once philosophically pure and materially authentic. Linking the idea of pleasure to the politics of exile, Rousseau had already argued, in the fifth promenade of his *Reveries*, that pleasure rests on an uninterrupted (albeit contingent) empirical sensation:

I would go sit in some hidden nook along the beach at the edge of the lake. There, the noise of the waves and the tossing of the water, captivating my senses and chasing all other disturbance from my soul, plunged it into a delightful reverie in which night would often surprise me without my having noticed it. The ebb and flow of this water and its noise, continual but magnified at intervals, striking my ears and eyes without respite, took the place of the internal movements which reverie extinguished within me and was enough to make me feel my existence with pleasure. (Rousseau, 67)<sup>[11]</sup>

Just as Rousseau contrasts "short moments of delirium and passion" with "a simple and permanent state . . . whose duration increases its charm to the point that I finally find supreme felicity in it" (68), Kant's third *Critique* aims to configure the *punctum* of empirical sensation with the *durée* of an interior feeling. The result of this critical negotiation is a subject capable of "knowledge in general" (*Erkenntnis überhaupt*) or experiencing what Rousseau famously calls *le sentiment de l'existence*—a state at once phenomenally distinct and transcendently pure.

10. It is important here to note how the language that asserts the contingency of sentiment and pleasure on "a uniform and moderate movement which has neither shocks nor pauses" does itself contribute to and



prolong the experience in question. Such uniformity, Margery Sabin observes, manifests itself in "Rousseau's evident satisfaction with his own language of analysis" (113). Similarly, Kant argues that "pure" in a simple mode of sensation means that its uniformity is neither troubled nor interrupted by any foreign sensation, and it belongs merely to the form" (§ 14, 60, translation modified). Consequently, the representation of knowledge (*Vorstellung*) in Kant's critical philosophy is not only founded on a basic "feeling of pleasure," but it effectively aims to prolong that pleasure even where (as in the *Critique of Judgment*) it had been proposed as the object of critical reflection. Inasmuch as the virtual beauty of "harmony" and "proportion" said to prevail between the intellect's discrete faculties is to prove vocal, audible, and lasting, the reflexive operation of critical writing is at least one way of producing that outcome. For the transcendental "disposition" (*Stimmung*) of our intellectual temper always strives to objectify itself through the formal-material continuity of a "voice" (*Stimme*).

11. What renders the trope of the voice so pivotal for Kant is its potential for establishing communication between two otherwise opposed spheres, the contingent world of appearances and their phenomenal experience on the one hand, and the rational claims of formal-intellectual processes on the other. With these concerns on his mind, Kant now supplements "voice" with the further hypothesis that aesthetic experience, far from being something ephemeral, is in essence "contemplative" and therefore invested in its own prolongation:

[T]he pleasure in aesthetical judgments . . . is merely contemplative and does not bring about an interest in the object. . . . The consciousness of the mere formal purposiveness in the play of the subject's cognition . . . is the pleasure itself, because it contains a determining ground [*Bestimmungsgrund*] of the activity of the subject in respect of the excitement of its cognitive powers, and therefore an inner causality . . . This pleasure [of the aesthetic reflective judgment] is in no way practical, neither like that arising from the pathological ground of pleasantness, nor that from the intellectual ground of the presented good. But yet it involves causality, viz. of *maintaining* without further design the state of the representation itself and the occupation of the cognitive powers. We *linger* over the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself. (§12, 57-8; emphases in the original)

In order to accommodate the almost instinctual desire of "pleasure" for self-perpetuation, "contemplation" seeks to recover from the spatio-temporal sphere of empirical *sensation* precisely those formal conditions that support Kant's basic transcendental argument about "cognition in general" (viz. as resting on the proportionate interplay of the faculties). What Kant ultimately requires is the seeming paradox of a pure form that shall become phenomenally distinct as empirical sensation: a "voice" untainted by the contingencies of interest, signification, and context. It is precisely this exigency that connects "voice" with "tone" and, ultimately, with music. For to the extent that the critical significance of pleasure depends on its temporal duration, the "voice" that gave rise to it requires formalization.<sup>[12]</sup> That is, prolonged experience of pleasure is best realized in aesthetic forms of a particularly high degree of internal differentiation. For by reconstituting, in a specific medium, the basic "harmony" (*Stimmung*) that undergirds all critical activity, aesthetic form lends support to the mere postulate concerning the rationality of our representations—that they be internally consistent, verifiable, and communicable.

12. As it proclaims a basic continuum between the realm of pure form and the contingencies of empirical sensation, Kant's notion of voice appears to be indeed little more than a trope—desire masquerading as knowledge. However, given the pivotal role of voice for transcendental philosophy, as well as its palpable connection with music and lyricism, it would be imprudent to dismiss it on the grounds of an absolute, indeed self-privileging linguistic scepticism. Rather we ought to trace the role of voice in post-Kantian theory and take particular note of a possibly increasing emphasis placed on its musical

connotations. Admittedly, Kant's own thinking about musical form seems erratic and revolves around exotic or parochial examples. Yet at the same time, the complex and altogether lucid deployment of *Stimme* and its cognates throughout the "Analytic of the Beautiful" contains all the seeds for the subsequent orientation of nineteenth-century aesthetics toward musical form. Thus we might take note of Kant's stress on the ability of "tone" to operate simultaneously as "sensation" and as a "formal determination of the *unity* of a manifold of sensations" (§ 14, 60; italics mine). Such a claim underscores the prescient, indeed foundational role of the *Critique of Judgment* for the subsequent aesthetic theories of Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Eduard Hanslick among others. Still, the intellectual bequest of Kant's aesthetic theory was almost immediately split up into two competing models of aesthetic production—and, by extension, into two competing models of aesthetic pleasure and criticism. Each of these is premised on its own distinctive, non-negotiable semiology of the aesthetic work, and each produces a response that—in sharp contrast to Kant's central hypothesis concerning the "universal communicability" of aesthetic pleasure—is alternatively conceived as strictly self-referential or as altogether ineffable.

## II

13. Let me now offer a fuller account of the first of these paradigms. Above all, it insists on the epistemological significance of aesthetic experience, that is, on its ability to "attune" the mind and thus prepare the ground for what Kant had called "knowledge in general." The aesthetic, in other words, is being conceived as a formal rehearsal of the subject's cognitive mobility. Thus the subject of aesthetic experience focuses at first on minimal units of observation—say, a musical *motif* in a Beethoven piano sonata or string quartet, a figure of perceptual or intellectual activity in Hegel's phenomenological narratives, or as a temporalized set of morphological differences emerging in Darwin's analyses of the geological record. In all these cases, a listening, reading, or otherwise observing intelligence reflects on the imitative, differential, and recursive relationships of these minimal units so as to extract a developmental pattern. What Kant had identified as the teleological nucleus of empirical "sensation"—viz. as anticipating the form of its eventual, interpretive re/cognition—thus unfolds as a process in which perception and analysis seem inextricably interwoven. Insofar as it gradually refines raw morphological data into narrative textures of increasing formal and semantic complexity, aesthetic experience develops an Enlightenment model of subjectivity whose intellectual and social authority are fundamentally vested in its interpretive competence. At the same time, Kant's decision to summarize the affect associated with that operation in the word "pleasure" also reflects his understanding that interpretive activity is fundamentally designed to "correct" sensation—that is, to redeem the materiality of being from its vagrant and unreflective drift through time. [\[13\]](#)
14. Let me briefly exemplify. Remarking on the striking lack of thematic, much less melodic, substance in

Beethoven's op. 31, no. 2 sonata (also known as "The Tempest"), Carl Dahlhaus notes how that sonata's gradual distillation of its central musical "concept" presupposes a strong dialectic bond between "musical form" and the practice of listening. Both have to be "reflective." In his words, the intelligibility of musical form hinges on "an awareness of the pattern from which it deviates, and through this deviation draws attention to the change in the central category of instrumental music—the concept of the theme. The 'theme' is both an improvisatory introduction and a transitional pattern; instead of being presented in standard exposition, it dissolves into an *ante quem* and a *post quem*" (14f.). Arguably, the dominant models of nineteenth-century musical aesthetics and analysis (Hanslick, Riemann, Schenker) are all premised on an active experience of music, one revolving not around the passive reception of sound but demanding the silent, listening isolation of recursive, imitative, antithetical, or otherwise differential patterns in a given composition. [\[14\]](#)

15. Dahlhaus's notation of the musical "motif" in Beethoven as a purely cerebral, modular unit--"the mere substrate of a process which imparts meaning to the music by providing that substrate with formal functions"--curiously replays Charles Darwin's analogous dismantling of a putatively organic and timeless idea of "Nature" in his *Origin of Species*. "Nature," Darwin contends, is nothing but the "aggregate action and product of many natural laws," and these laws, in turn, are ultimately but a "sequence of events as ascertained by us" (Darwin, 55). As Darwin clearly understood, to take that view is to establish a teleological bond between the apparent narrative sophistication of his evolutionary theory and the hidden complexities of so-called primitive forms of life. Not only does his principle of Natural Selection confirm "the standard of high organisation, the amount of differentiation and specialization of the several organs in each being." It also institutes these axioms of "specialization" and "high organisation" as conditions for disciplinary and formal developments in the realm of human affairs, which eventually will yield highly reflexive theories, such as the account conceived by Darwin himself (Darwin, 83). Darwin's core-reflection has been provocatively extended in Richard Dawkins's now famous, post-Cartesian account of evolutionist thought. As is well known, Dawkins has argued that "the fundamental unit of selection, and therefore of self-interest, is not the species, nor the group, nor even, strictly, the individual. It is the gene" (*The Selfish Gene*, 12). On that premise, the morphological developments mapped by generations of evolutionary biologists and their geological counterparts can never actually be said to culminate in *any* particular form--not even in the particularly recent species of "rational" philosophers or evolutionist thinkers. Rather, each developmental stage is strictly characterized by a modification of inherited, physiological and intellectual traits that responds to prevailing conditions. The psycho-physical reality of the body is not the objective purpose of the development but only the temporary expression of the differential, transitional logic that undergirds all development. As such, the body is but a "survival machine" exclusively dedicated to the transmission/replication of unique genetic information.
16. What biologists have long called *morphé* (in apparent analogy to what, in the humanities, commonly goes under the title of "form"--Grk. *eidos*) should be understood as encryptions of core-information that is distinguished by its capacity for self-replication. Given the self-replicating character of such "information" we may also call it "intelligence," and as such its embodied (formal) constitution aims to facilitate its transmission to those generations particularly suited for ("receptive to") its inheritance and,

again, its future transmission. Not surprisingly, Dawkins draws our attention to how cultural processes unfold in strict analogy to patterns of genetic replication. Indeed, he suggests that the fundamentally imitative logic of culture, really a process of transmission-by-replication, may actually constitute a recent (i.e., over the last three million years or so) evolutionary leap. Speaking of "unit[s] of cultural transmission" (206), which he names *memes*, Dawkins anticipates Bourdieu's arguments about cultural reproduction by remarking on the "survival value" of such mnemonic or cognitive units ("cultural capital" in the widest sense). Compared to the slow and uneven evolution of genes over some three thousand million years, "memes" may be viewed as a dramatic improvement and, possibly, a paradigmatic change: "For more than three thousand million years, DNA has been the only replicator worth talking about in the world. But it does not necessarily hold these monopoly rights for all time. . . . The old gene-selected evolution, by making brains, provided the 'soup' in which the first memes arose. Once self-copying memes had arisen, their own, much faster, kind of evolution took off" (208). <sup>[15]</sup> It

is my contention that nineteenth-century aesthetic theory and musical practice display the operation of self-replicating units whose progressive organization, combination, and reconstitution in/as cultural "work" pivots on correspondingly evolved, "constructive" patterns of reception. Among these rank prominently certain insistently collaborative reading and listening practices aimed at reconstituting the information contained in a specific aesthetic form and, in so doing, replicating the "intelligence" that produced that form. <sup>[16]</sup> In a similar vein, Roland Barthes characterizes

"listening" in the proper, musical sense (as opposed to the mere physiology of "hearing") as "the exercise of a function of *intelligence*, i.e., of selection." <sup>[17]</sup> It is in that sense, too, that we may understand Kant's pointed remark on how "we *linger* over the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself" (§12, 58).

17. To return to musical aesthetics, the formal/morphological paradigm of the aesthetic as an encrypted intelligence emerges with full force in Eduard Hanslick's 1854 treatise *Of the Musically-Beautiful*. Premising early on that "composing is a work of mind upon material compatible with mind" (31), Hanslick formulates his conception of musical form as the *development* of an abstract intelligence, alternately engaged in its composition or in its reconstruction: "Music consists of tonal sequences, tonal forms; these have no other content than themselves. . . . The[se] forms which construct themselves out of tones are not empty but filled; they are not mere contours of a vacuum but *mind giving shape to itself from within*" (71, 30; italics mine). <sup>[18]</sup> Hanslick's formalist approach is succinctly captured by his much-quoted characterization of listening as "contemplating with active understanding," a process that compels us to "rigorously distinguish between the concepts of feeling and sensation" (3, 4). Unfolding in strict analogy to the compositional process, then, "listening" is generative of pleasure precisely insofar as it occasions reflexivity:

To take pleasure in one's own mental alertness is the worthiest, the wholesomest, and not the easiest manner of listening to music. . . . The most significant factor in the mental process which accompanies the comprehending of a musical work and makes it enjoyable . . . is the mental satisfaction which the listener finds in continuously following and anticipating the composer's designs. . . . Without mental activity, there can be no aesthetical pleasure whatsoever. (64)

For Hanslick, interiority no longer comprises any affective experiences in particular. On the contrary, any Romantic conception of "feeling" is quickly repudiated as a mere illusion, an unreflected verbal condensation (or trope) of the intricate structural effects that, in Hanslick's view, define the work of composing and listening. Far from positing some putative emotive or expressive content, Hanslick's post-classical theory conceives of musical composition as an increasingly complex encoding and


replicating of formal possibilities said to have originated in the core *datum* of music—the motif.

18. Eventually, such recursive and differential patterns reach a point where their organizational logic becomes self-conscious: replication yields to reflexivity, thus generating a subjective self-awareness that Hegel's *Encyclopedia* of 1819 had already described as the structural signature of subjective intelligence. Insofar as it merely furnishes the empirical substratum of all affect (11), but no particular affective content, music is pure temporality—"motion" but not "emotion." Like Kant, who had remarked on the tendency of pleasure to reproduce and strengthen over time, Hanslick predicates the "mental satisfaction" or pleasure of aesthetic experience on the complex, self-replicating morphology that allows the listening subject to distill musical form by retracing the temporal organization of all composition. Not surprisingly, the knowledge produced by such listening proves strictly non-propositional and ineffable. As Hanslick puts it: "if we want to specify the 'content' of a theme [*Motiv*] for someone, we will have to play for him the theme itself" (81). In Hanslick's proto-structuralist understanding of musical form, "pleasure" has been absorbed into the cognitive play of an attentively listening, analytic intelligence. Emptied of all affective content, and only incidentally attached to the materiality of sound and tone, musical experience has been pared down to an objective corollary of the analytic processes it sets in motion. What drops out of the picture, to overstate the case but slightly, is the music itself. No longer considered is the material and tonal specificity of music as "sonority" (*Klangbild*) as it is shaped by countless decisions in the area of orchestration, instrumentation, tonal color, to say nothing of the innumerable contingencies that shape a given musical performance. Here, then, Kant's purposely ambivalent conception of pleasure has been intellectualized to the point where the analytic aims of aesthetic experience have altogether erased its distinctive materiality—what Kant had carefully preserved under the heading of "sensation" (*Empfindung*).<sup>[19]</sup>
19. Substantive differences now begin to emerge between Kant's original, cautious balancing of the formal organization and the material mode of appearance of the aesthetic—that is, our "feeling" of the potential determinability of appearances and their "communicability" in propositional forms. For Kant, configuring the material sensation of voice with the transcendental work of representation had always served an ethical purpose: namely, to define the conditions for (and thus work toward) the discursive production of knowledge and, by extension, of community. The Kantian "aesthetic" thus strives to reflect and represent the crucial balance between the subjective "intensity" of *Gefühl* and in its phenomenal origination as *Empfindung*. It pivots on the (ultimately paradoxical) notion of a "pure sensation," a materially concrete, determinate construct devoid of any contingent or discordant features that would compromise its formal compatibility with the postulated, beholding intelligence. For the purpose of this utopian object lies at all times with the "communicability" of our judgment of it. In Kant's argument, "pleasure" unfolds as a metonymic series leading from contingent "sensation" via its contemplative extension to purely formal inwardness of "feeling" to a para-practice better known as the discourse of taste. Some sixty years later, Hanslick's musical paradigm of the aesthetic as an objective and immediate correspondence between the physicality of sound and the psychology of a listening intelligence effectively abandons this Enlightenment objective of "communicability." Thus Hanslick pares down the dynamics of Kantian affect (*Gefühl*) to a purely reflexive formalism that construes music as a total homology between the quantitative notations of a musical score and the "attentiveness" of a listening intelligence: it is a paradigm at once irrefutable, incommunicable, and (almost defiantly) irrelevant.

### III

20. Let me now take up the second, in some ways diametrically opposed aesthetic paradigm. A first impression of it can be obtained by considering the work of the later Keats, particularly the great odes. Though these poems are profoundly intellectual, their emphasis arguably differs from the complex

irony of narrative plot as it operates in "The Eve of St. Agnes" and "Lamia." Forever uncertain as to whether something by the name of interiority might ever be ascertained in that vast gallery of spectacles and commodities known as London, Keats vacillates between ironic abandon and melancholic longing. Indeed, to the author aspiring to a Shakespearean "life of allegory," either position may finally be nothing more than a way of acknowledging the impossibility of the other. Hence the intrinsically equivocal (figural) interaction between the distinctive Keatsian rhetoric of erotic and cultural desire—the prominent sensualism of his Romances, his Odes, and book III of "Hyperion"—and an equally characteristic rhetoric of despair often centered around the motif of vulgar Capitalist materialism.

21. Particularly in the 1819 Odes, Keats appears in search of a sphere of virtual (and no more than temporal) refuge from the cognitive and emotive limbo that is the price of uncompromising radical (self-)irony. Interiority here is sought precisely *not* in the domain of intellectual agility. Instead, the trope of the "heart" is once more resurrected as the essential repository of an abiding, subjective truth. As he promotes that heart as "the Mind's Bible, . . . the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity," Keats also seems to aspire toward an emphatically material aesthetic. Given the latter's incompatibility with any expressly propositional and self-consciously theoretical language, Keats collapses all historically determined reference into a voice at once richly sensuous and altogether beyond the reach (and taint) of propositional and discursive obligation. Often it seems as though the rich imagery of the great odes (capstones of Keats's so-called "objective" aesthetic) was designed to hypnotize the reader, and perhaps also the writer. Keats's elaboration of the material and synaesthetic richness of the image, and his correspondingly thorough elision of all narrative, appears preemptive of conscious awareness. Hence we are perplexed by a persistent, if equivocal, continuity between Keats's familiar idiom of erotic and cultural desire—extending from his earliest sonnets and Romances to the opening of the abandoned third book of "Hyperion"—and his equally distinctive rhetoric of askesis, even despair in the odes.
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22. We recall the pungent still-life of "To Autumn" with its opening imagery of "mellow fruitfulness," "ripeness to the core" and "clammy cells"—a scene suffused with tactile and olfactory sensation. By the third stanza, however, that potentially scandalous plenitude has been subtly assimilated to a chorus of voices whose gradual ascent from the "loud bleat" of lambs to the "treble soft" of the "red-breast" completes the distinctive Keatsian transfiguration of desire into autonomous form with that last, evanescent image of how the "gathering swallows twitter in the skies." "Voice" here serves as the latently embodied sanctuary for anthropomorphic desires whose gradual muting or transfiguration organizes the stanzaic sequence of Keats's odes. In Keats's unique textual and imagistic world, tropes suggestive of natural reference and the aesthetic distillations of a second-order Classicism often appear mutually reinforcing. The result is a poetry in which the *physis* and *mnemosyne*—rerouted through the Keatsian image—ventriloquize his (and, perhaps, our own) deep-seated desire for an existence unburdened by the rigors of philosophical discourse or by the unrelenting ironic awareness of its impossibility. Abandoning his intermittent ideal of a pseudo-Hellenic sobriety, the late Keats thus appears to embrace a palpably simulated interiority—a position referred to as a "system of Spirit-creation" and, somewhat extravagantly, praised by its inventor as "a grander system of salvation than the chryst<e>an religion" (*Letters*, II, 102-3).
23. The most thorough instance of this intellectual position can be found in the writings of Schopenhauer. For him, the aesthetic experience is the capstone of all finite existence in that it facilitates the self-transcendence and transfiguration of subjectivity by means of contemplation. To contemplate is to submit to the mesmeric force of material appearances whose concision and presence leave "the entire consciousness . . . filled and occupied by a single image" (§ 34, 179). Already in its very title, *The*

*World as Will and Representation* reacts to the deeply equivocal implications of Kant's "critical" project. For Kant "knowledge in general" (or, simply, "Enlightenment") pivots on a transcendental condition of a "feeling" (*Gefühl*), a strictly formal, harmonious interplay between the subject's intuitive and conceptual faculties that insures the *a priori* "determinability" and "communicability" of all experience. Precisely because of its exclusive, transcendental status, however, the affective condition of feeling could not be verified (or falsified) by the subject whose representations it was said to ground and authorize as genuine knowledge. For any attempt to authenticate the transcendental condition of "feeling" would have to scrutinize its contingent appearance in the world of empirical "sensation"—a world no longer defined by rational harmony (*Stimmung*) but by the grain, texture, and charisma of multiple styles, tropes, and voices (*Stimmen*).

24. Rather than insisting on an analytic transcendence of such multiplicity, however, Schopenhauer affirms the potential uniqueness of all appearance. Far from qualifying some ultimate epistemological objective, "voice" to him constitutes a presence at once unsuspected, mesmerizing, and irreproducible. His aesthetic of contemplation thus demands an utter transmutation of the inchoate and narcissistic desires of the conscious intellect, or "will," into an aesthetically embodied idea. The Enlightenment ideal of the intrinsic rationality, or transcendental coherence of all representation here gives way to a (Buddhist-inspired) conception of transcendence, a metaphysical ideal that demands *askesis* (Ger. *Entsagung*) and promises *ekstasis*. Both the condition and the reward, however, imply that the subject of aesthetic experience entrust itself altogether to the mesmerizing, sonorous, and material presence of the aesthetic object, thus effectively surrendering all the epistemological and moral objectives that Kant had struggled to balance in his third *Critique*.
25. For Schopenhauer, the aesthetic functions as a sanctuary, a virtual sphere of refuge for the subject forever entangled in an inscrutable and inextricable nexus of pre-conscious motives, analytic claims, and conscious objectives. This inexorable causality—which Schopenhauer efficiently identifies as "the will"—is said to objectify itself exclusively in two forms, both supposedly immediate and hence authentic: music and the body. Arguing that the "will" manifests itself "through [everyone's] actions and through the permanent substratum of . . . his body, Schopenhauer reinstates the Kantian exigency (or paradox) of pure sensation. In its corporeal and musical objectifications, "the will constitutes what is most immediate in . . . consciousness, but as such . . . has not wholly entered into the form of the representation, in which subject and object stand against each other" (§ 21, 109). Reminiscent of the body in early Greek tragic ritual, music is essentially *dithyrambos*, the "immediate objectification and copy (*Abbild*)" (§ 52, 257) of the will. Such an apodictic definition notably forecloses on any accounts of music as generative of discursive meaning or as the transcendental (formal) prerequisite for the production of such meaning:

Music expresses in an exceedingly universal language, in a unique [*einartig*] material, that is, in mere tones, and with the greatest distinctness and truth, the inner being, the in-itself, of the world, which we think of under the concept of the will. . . . Supposing we succeeded in giving a perfectly accurate and complete explanation of music . . . this would also be at once a sufficient repetition and explanation of the world in concepts, or one wholly corresponding thereto, and hence the true philosophy. (§ 52, 264)

Not only is the materiality of "tone" posited as the true locus of aesthetic experience, but the passage also attests to the underlying desire of philosophy to escape itself by embracing the inalienable, positively mesmerizing aura of body and sound as its ultimate sanctuary. In its sheer sonority music is said to absolve us from the inchoate, rough-and-tumble world of conflicting representations. This desire of philosophy to secure absolution for its fallen subjects—at its core a deeply anti-theoretical fantasy—also accounts for Schopenhauer's overtly Platonist notion of the aesthetic "idea." Inasmuch as that "idea" requires ascetic self-transcendence, Schopenhauer sets it in direct opposition to

representation (*Vorstellung*). For only that may qualify as an "idea" which is not afflicted by the partial, finite, and contestable quality of discursive representation. As he puts it, the idea lacks "plurality" or, rather, it precedes all plurality.

26. The aesthetic idea and its embodied appearance thus have become fully homologous. Irreducible to logical propositions and irrefutable in ways that discursive representation can never be, the aesthetic idea, as conceived by Schopenhauer, is *prima facie* a presence: embodied, material, and irreducibly "sonorous." Realized as such by music and the body, this formulation of aesthetics allows post-Kantian theory to realize its most precious dream, that of materiality as "immediate representation." The materiality of the aesthetic thus no longer mediates any epistemological concerns, nor is it any longer restricted to the incidental status of "sensation" as had still been the case in the *Critique of Judgment*. Instead, the proclaimed isomorphism of materiality and idea opens up the last frontier of philosophical writing—namely, to transfigure contingent experience into outright revelation. A precursor of the New Criticism's concrete universals, Schopenhauer's conception of the body and music appears to challenge current critical techniques and hermeneutic methods that promise to restore to the aesthetic productions of the past the supposedly lacking consciousness of their own ideological determinacy. Yet precisely because of its ostensibly antithetical intellectual tendencies, Schopenhauer's *magnum opus* urges us to consider the cognitive and moral claims of our own critical moment (and possible limits to them). Does a theoretically inspired historical critique amount to authentic *action*, or does it merely seek to compensate for the deeper intuition that neither the antagonisms of the past nor those of the present can be resolved by *any* form of action?

#### IV

27. Provided its metaphysical rhetoric is not simply being ignored or preemptively dismissed as a mere phase in the history of philosophy, Schopenhauer's account will be found to contain some important lessons for contemporary criticism. Perhaps it does so all the more because—again like most critical writing today—it altogether lacks the saving grace of Keatsian irony. Above all, there is his extraordinary claim that we may immediately access a world beyond "will and representation," a world of wholly authentic (if mostly tragic) insight that can be reached only through the expressive inroads of the body and music. If such a metaphysical credo lies at the very heart of Schopenhauer's writing, it also seems uncannily prescient of the self-privileging, not to say hedonistic, forms of autobiographical and confessional critical writing that have taken center stage in the humanities during the past dozen years or so. Only very recently has this phenomenon of an "Intimate Critique" and of "Thinking through the Body" (to appropriate but two of the titles in question) begun to receive proper theoretical attention. Thus, in his polemic on *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Terry Eagleton offers a blunt indictment of a professionalized hedonism at the very heart of confessional and autobiographical critical writing. Eagleton here appears to follow David Simpson's slightly earlier thesis that such flamboyantly stylized critical voices are symptomatic of a pervasive methodological uncertainty and a flagging of genuine political commitment across the humanities.<sup>[20]</sup>
28. Of particular relevance for present purposes is Eagleton's insistent questioning of what he calls the "new somatics," specifically the current fetishization of the sexualized and unfailingly "well nourished" body. Indeed, it seems increasingly axiomatic to argue that critical work in the humanities and literary studies can only advance insofar as it is cued by the obliquely glamorous aura of the body—its tantalizing promise of ever-new modes of transgressive and performative sexuality. Like Schopenhauer's twofold essence of body and music, the spectacle (or reality, as the case may be) of an anonymous, strictly physiological conception of the sexual subject thus finds its complement in the unwavering gaze and often sternly disciplinarian voice of postmodern critique. Such a model can presumably only advance by continually intensifying the closeness and reflexivity of its focus on the



embodied subject, an approach that risks appearing coldly analytic, narcissistic-confessional, or as outright invasive. At the same time, the construction of the body as a subject of professional (if esoteric) critique effectively confounds the very values of a humane, liberal society in whose name such writing is being pursued. For the more insistent the "outing" of the sexualized body, the more that body—and indeed the voice of critique itself—appears interchangeable, remote, and anonymous. At the very least, that is, it has become increasingly hard to tell whether the soulless and abject appearance of the postmodern sexualized subject is merely the latest object of critical practice or, perhaps, its unwitting effect.

29. Arguably, in a profession as particularized as the humanities at the end of the twentieth century—a scene Fredric Jameson describes as the "delirious nonstop monologue of . . . so many in-group narratives" (*Postmodernism*, 368)—questions like those raised above may quite likely never be settled. By comparison, it seems rather obvious that the recent view of the subject as almost exclusively determined by its embodied sexuality has eroded even the most basic criteria for verifying or falsifying intellectual claims. At the very least, the strenuously confessional approach to critical writing during the past decade has suspended any serious reflection on the basic conceptual and ethical questions that the Enlightenment (well before Kant) had considered integral to any pursuit of knowledge. Inasmuch as a crudely material focus on the body and a correspondingly self-privileging conception of voice have eclipsed the basic Enlightenment goal of articulating the fundamental connection between the (aesthetic) phenomenon of pleasure and the communicability of knowledge, much theoretical ground has been lost. Thus the postmodern vision of the body as the site of incommunicable, irreproducible, though nonetheless spectacular experiences effectively collapses "pleasure" and "sensation" into one another. In Eagleton's view, the body has become a self-privileging, "stubbornly local phenomenon . . . [that] offers a mode of cognition more intimate and internal than the much scorned Enlightenment rationality" (70-1).
30. Against the Enlightenment paradigm of critical knowledge as the open-ended progression of an intersubjective conversation, this new fin-de-siècle idiom posits a different, overtly subjectivist or self-referential form of small-scale discourse that ventriloquizes critical knowledge in the minimalist form of subjective reminiscence extracted, in turn, from autobiographical experience. Thus, for example, the "Preface" to Marianna Torgovnick's *Crossing Ocean Parkway* already puts readers on notice that, however intense our assimilationist and educational yearning, life "invariably . . . shows me that ethnicity matters." Read in conjunction with the author's preceding stipulation that her text issues "from my special cultural situation: that of a female Italian American professor of English who lives in North Carolina and writes about American society," the reference to ethnic victimization effectively immunizes the book as a whole against all possible dissent. For to take exception with the book's subsequent representation of what it means to be "White, Female, and Born in Bensonhurst" is liable to leave the dissenting voice exposed to charges of incompetence and/or insensitivity (Torgovnick, viii). As David Simpson notes in *The Academic Postmodern*, Walter Benjamin's essay on the "Storyteller" already offered a historical analysis of what can be described as the shift from a diegetic to a transferential logic of narrative:

Story empowers its hearers as it—in Benjamin's phrase—lifts 'the burden of demonstrable explanation' from the teller and makes space for 'interpretation'. . . . Listener becomes teller in the act of retention for the purposes of repetition; interpretation is always deferred; and in the cycle of repetitions our own lives become the story. We voice ourselves into presence, against the grain of a critical-historical analysis—Adorno's or Derrida's, for instance—that tells us that we have no authentic access to such presence. The performed mode of storytelling, in which the burden of meaning is passed on for further passing on, then becomes an act of transference or self-projection as much as an effort at consensus.

Simpson's account of the transferential logic of postmodern storytelling reveals some striking continuities between post-Kantian aesthetics and the recent upsurge of a confessional and autobiographical critical writing—a genre less invested in the cogency of its propositions than in the performative recreation of its embodied subject(s) as a public spectacle. The transferential logic underlying what Bernstein calls "a species of narcissistic activism" is the result of a persistent shift away from public argumentation toward the subtly coercive dramaturgy of subjective reminiscence. Rather than retaining the conscious position of an addressee, that is, readers are being conscripted for an obliquely moral agenda that they may no longer contest without appearing to violate a covenant with the confessional subject. Inasmuch as it sentimentalizes, and ultimately privileges voice over text, disclosure over debate, the genre of confessional criticism reveals a fundamental "tension between a focus upon subjectivity and a construction of identity which is communal rather than individualistic."

[22] Far from constituting some startling epistemological breakthrough, the authority of such affect-centered storytelling pivots on the "sweet enforcement" (to borrow Keats's apt phrase) of that unsolicited covenant with its audience. The ultimate objective, in other words, is not knowledge but a smooth and fully collaborative professional relationship between teller and addressee. Attempting to forge a significantly personal and critical voice, Jane Tompkins expressly foregoes argument in favor of transference: "I'm asking you to bear with me while I try, hoping that this, what I write, will express something you yourself have felt or will help you find a part of yourself that you would like to express" (Tompkins, 28). Yet to lay claim to personal experience in the supposedly unmediated, extra-disciplinary form of confession implicitly collapses cognition into performance and, as a further (and perhaps not unwelcome) consequence, forecloses all possibility of rational dissent. Thus freed from the methodological constraints of intersubjective discourse, the critical authority of the writer's voice now subsists solely on its ability to simulate or conjure the *proton pseudos* of ineffable, contingent experience—itself no longer represented *to* a discrete listener but, instead, transferentially reproduced *through* an identically situated addressee.

31. Another consequence of this development involves the palpable aloofness of criticism when it comes to questions of class. Rather than demanding consideration of the political, social, and cultural antagonisms that variously impinge on a given subject, the confessional voice is accredited almost exclusively by its established or presumptive connections with an audience of materially identical status. These relations, in turn, can be understood as the products of an intrinsically narcissistic pattern of narrative transference and self-replication, an open-ended Lacanian dialectic in which speaker and addressee subsist strictly on the basis of affective claims and an inherently confessional rhetoric. The social (even moral) authority of such claims is typically secured by the speaker's preemptory rejection and indictment of any alternative modes of cognition, such as might still rely on certain principles of evidence, falsifiability, or motive.
32. What we witness here is the final passing of the Enlightenment paradigm of intelligence—with its Kantian postulates of rational, dispassionate cognition and transparent representation. In its stead, we find a postmodern, self-interested, and highly adaptive professional voice whose critical authority depends on its ability to imbue its subjective (and putatively transgressive) subject matter with an aura of public urgency. As Jeremy Bentham observed long ago, to collapse the work of cognition into the spectacle of confession effectively misappropriates the reader's sympathetic potential for purposes of critical coercion. For in and of itself, affect "is not a positive principle itself, so much as a term employed to signify the negation of all principle." Consequently, attempts to predicate the authority of one's voice on a purely subjective state are but "so many contrivances for avoiding the obligation of appealing to any external standard, and for prevailing upon the reader to accept of the author's sentiment or opinion as a reason for itself" (*Principles*, 16-17). To indulge in such an approach for any length of time is likely to replace the inevitably provisional and often disputatious logic of principled discourse with a supple and fluid logic of affective manipulation. The result will likely be an

intellectual environment where critical and social authority is almost exclusively vested in highly particularized forums and in obliquely circumscribed "in-groups."

33. Here, then, any intersubjective and deliberative conception of knowledge has been supplanted by the critical exigency of elaborating a distinctive professional persona and adapting its voice to a carefully mapped discursive environment. The result, as Theodor Adorno notes, is a "mysterious activity that bears all the features of commercial life without there actually being any business to transact." Adorno's prescient 1951 account of a quintessentially postmodern interiority—one defined by the phony transactionalism of hyper-professionalized communities—is worth quoting at length. As Adorno remarks, the "nervous" subjects of this new order

believe that only by empathy, assiduity, serviceability, arts and dodges, by tradesmen's qualities, can they ingratiate themselves with the executive they imagine omnipresent, and soon there is no relationship that is not seen as a 'connection', no impulse [that is] not first censored as to whether it deviates from the acceptable. . . . [T]hese murky connections are proliferating wherever there used still to be an appearance of freedom. The irrationality of the system is expressed scarcely less clearly in the parasitic psychology of the individual than in his economic fate. . . . Countless people are making, from the aftermath of the liquidation of professions, their profession. They are the nice folk, the good mixers liked by all, the just, humanely excusing all meanness and scrupulously proscribing any non-standardized impulses as sentimental. Indispensable for their knowledge of all channels and plug-holes of power, they divine its most secret judgements and live by adroitly propagating them. They are found in all political camps, even where the rejection of the system is taken for granted, and has thereby produced a slack and subtle conformism of its own. ("Fish in Water," in *Minima Moralia*, 23-4)

In Adorno's account, which conceives postmodern professionalism as a thorough adaptation of the subject to its chosen discursive or interpretive communities, the ethical integrity of "voice" has been abandoned—one might say, almost as a matter of principle.

34. Gone is the basic ethical imperative as it had found expression in Kant's master-trope of the "voice" (*Stimme*). The latter, we have seen, postulates an agency at once unmistakably "subjective" yet intensely committed (both in an ethical and teleological sense) to the objectives of cognition and community. Moreover, to the extent that this "voice" is said to manifest itself as the "sensation" and "feeling" of "harmony" (*Stimmung*) it also constitutes the most distinctive and articulate evidence for what the third *Critique* calls "communicability." Kant's ambivalent bequest to aesthetic theory had been to name—in the precise way that the act of "naming" hovers between the creative and the recursive, the tropological and the referential—"pleasure" and "voice" as the non-transcendable conditions for the operation of criticism itself. At the same time, the much larger stakes of Kant's critical enterprise strongly militate against an exclusive, indeed narcissistic reflection that would promote pleasure and voice from a necessary condition for representation to the sole object of knowledge. Arguably, this question of how to conceive of a "voice" (*Stimme*) capable of investing the irreducible experience of "pleasure" with greater social significance undergirds the cognitive and confessional authority of contemporary historicist and "experimental-critical" writing, respectively. As I have suggested elsewhere, these discourses often enough turn out to repeat the logic of their disciplinary object (e.g., Romantic "expressivism," the egotistical sublime), either by promising to overcome it in the supposedly autonomous modality of critical knowledge, or by emulating it in the ineffable dramaturgy of critical confession. [\[23\]](#)

35. A constitutive obligation of critical practice, albeit often unacknowledged at present, is to sustain at all times an acute awareness of its historical origins. As we have seen, the moment when a critical response to the phenomenon of "pleasure" and the aesthetic came to play a seminal role occurs in those decades taking us from the late Rousseau of the *Reveries* to Kant's third *Critique*. Part of that struggle, especially in the *Critique of Judgment*, meant properly locating the voice of critical thought itself. Kant conceives of that voice as the expression of a balance between our intuitive and our rational faculties, between our idiosyncratic orientation toward the uniquely material textures of the empirical world and the crucial, if comparatively mediated, obligation to render that world more permanently inhabitable, or rational. To recognize that there ought to be balance between these two stances—which is the basic ethical demand of the *Critique of Judgment*—is to recognize that aesthetic production and critical knowledge are rooted in the same impulse. Sensibly, Kant chose to leave undetermined whether the voice of critique ought to be understood as an integral component of aesthetic experience or merely as one of its epiphenomenal effects. He did so not because he did not know how to answer the question but because he felt, perhaps intuitively, that it would be the wrong question to ask or, in any event, a fateful one to answer. For any attempt to resolve the issue by pronouncing the work of critique to be wholly isomorphous with the contingent material experiences that gave rise to it or, alternatively, as subsuming (*aufheben*) aesthetic experience into pure abstractions invariably forecloses on the ethical implications of critical practice.
36. For such an embrace of a theoretical solipsism or, alternatively, a mystical or hedonistic materialism, severs the dialectical ties between experience and cognition, either by eclipsing the unique material qualities of aesthetic experience or our capacity for articulating its significance. Inasmuch as a reflection on aesthetic experience seeks to avoid either of these predicaments, it will necessarily have to tread the thin margin between epistemology and ethics. Indeed, a voice of critique so understood ought consider—though not resolve—the delicate boundaries between the social and spiritual dimensions of meaning and, correspondingly, its own precarious location between the spontaneous and the providential, the self-affirmation of its subjective intelligence and its responsiveness to heteronomous material signs and "hints." As Hölderlin had put it in his ode to "Rousseau":

[A]uch dir, auch dir  
 Erfreuet die ferne Sonne dein Haupt,  
 Und Stralen aus der schönern Zeit. Es  
 Haben die Boten dein Herz gefunden.

Vernommen has du sie, verstanden die Sprache der Fremdlinge  
 Gedeutet ihre Seele! Dem Sehnenen war  
 Der Wink genug, und Winke sind  
 Von Alters her die Sprache der Götter.

(*Sämtliche Werke*, 2:i, 13)<sup>[24]</sup>

If "Rousseau embodies the tension between an isolated subjectivity and the imperatives of social life" (Nägele, 171), Hölderlin's strophic reflection on the citizen of Geneva shows how the development of one's own voice necessitates the cautious detour through an Other, even one as seemingly close as Rousseau. If the ode credits Rousseau with having been visited by the "rays" of the "distant sun," such semantic plenitude can be claimed figurally—in what Derrida has characterized as the quintessential philosophical "heliotrope" of light and illumination. Moreover, the knowledge to which Rousseau is said to have been privy can be imagined only *a posteriori*, not by Rousseau himself but only transferentially, with Hölderlin speaking *for* Rousseau. Thus mediated through its own other (Rousseau), Hölderlin's voice establishes itself not in propositional form but, instead, motions toward a revelation that is itself perched between an unverifiable past and an anticipated future. Supported by its

distinctly "paratactic" nature, Hölderlin's poetry here is presented as a type of scripture that expressly foregoes the desire for closure, as evidenced by the carefully open-ended reception of "the strangers' tongue" (*die Sprache der Fremdlinge*) that was "heard . . . comprehended . . . interpreted" (*vernommen / verstanden / gedeutet*).<sup>[25]</sup> The revelation at issue may indeed have come to the "longing" man (*Dem Sehnen*), but it did so only if we believe the Rousseau of the *Reveries* to have attained the perfect ratio of curiosity and restraint. For to discern meaning in a "hint" (*Wink*), that enigmatic sign of the gods, involves more than outright indolence and passivity. It demands a complex echo—what Hölderlin is to Rousseau—whereby the intimations of the Other's voice are being transfigured into the comparative specificity of a text. Hölderlin's aesthetic can thus be characterized as an ongoing attempt to fuse poetry and critique—to "grasp" (*fassen*) and articulate the otherness of his own voice in a provisional "text" (*Fassung*), and thus to achieve an instance of subjective "composure" (*Fassung*) for which Rousseau's repose had provided the archetype.

37. Hölderlin's poetry may be the supreme poetic refraction of Kant's critical project inasmuch as it articulates—in the necessarily transferential, figural recourse to an Other such as Rousseau—the tension between the material and intuitive and the formal-rational dimensions of knowledge. As his poetry ponders the interdependency between a material existence, past and future, conjured by the operation of tropes and images and the simultaneous reflection on the rational, or "critical" truth-value of those images, Hölderlin's voice appears genuinely informed by Kant's critical enterprise. For like the philosophical idiom of late-Enlightenment critique, his poetry shows the dialectic of intuition and concept, as well as the corollary tension between an imagistic and a propositional style, to be necessarily open-ended. Poetry so understood transcends (in a strictly non-teleological sense) the often arid and self-privileging claims of pure theory, yet at its best it also cautions against a hedonistic attachment to one's voice or, for that matter, against the epigone's blind worship of aesthetic tradition. We have yet much to learn from it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Literature on the historical and sociological aspects of an aesthetically conceived interiority in nineteenth-century Germany is obviously abundant. Especially rich on the sociological structure of Germany during the pre-1848 revolutionary period known as *Vormärz* is Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, especially his account of the defensive constitution of the urban middle classes and of the origins of the bourgeoisie, 174-240, and his discussion of the expansion of the sphere of literary production, 520-46. See also Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1800-1866*, esp. his survey of social stratification, minorities, 219-270, and of religious and cultural identity-formation, 403-593. See also James Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866*, 324-87 and 451-587. See also Jürgen Kocka's extensive collection of more specialized research on nineteenth-century bourgeois culture, *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, especially the essay by Koselleck in vol. 2 and those by Kocka and Dieter Langewiesche in vol. 4.

<sup>2</sup> On the supplementarity of such disciplines, see Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading* and, from a more overtly material perspective, Theodor Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions*; my own *Wordsworth's Profession* takes up this issue in the context of Romantic ballad writing, 208-27.

<sup>3</sup> Speaking of morality in the finite world as a matter of "infinite progress," Kant notes that the latter notion rests itself on a further hypothesis, that of the immortality of the soul. Such a hypothesis, he goes on, "inasmuch as it is inextricably linked to the moral law, constitutes a *postulate* of pure practical reason. The latter I define as a *theoretical* proposition, however incapable of proof, that is inseparably

connected to the *a priori* valid practical law. " [Also ist das höchste Gut, praktisch nur unter der Voraussetzung der Unsterblichkeit der Seele möglich; mithin diese, als unzertrennlich mit dem moralischen Gesetz verbunden, ein Postulat der reinen praktischen Vernunft (worunter ich einen theoretischen, als solchen aber nicht erweislichen Satz verstehe, so fern er einem *a priori* unbedingt geltenden praktischen Gesetze unzertrennlich anhängt.) ] Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, vol. 7, 252-53 (translation mine).

<sup>4</sup> On political readings of Romanticism, specifically critiques of that period's widely noted tendency to encode ideological values in aesthetic forms, see Marjorie Levinson's "Introduction" to her *Wordsworth's Great-Period Poems*; Alan Liu's "The Power of Formalism: The New Historicism." Elsewhere I address the conceptual tensions of Romantic Historicism; see my *Wordsworth's Profession*, 120-24, 247-68, and "Reading Beyond Redemption." On the "new musicology," see Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 1-32 and *passim*, and his "Tropes and Windows: An Outline of Musical Hermeneutics," in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*.

<sup>5</sup> In the context of mid-nineteenth-century German literature, some of these questions have been considered by Peter Uwe Hohendahl. See his chapter on "The Institutionalization of Literature and Criticism" in *Building a National Literature*, 104-39.

<sup>6</sup> My conception of Kant's aesthetic form as a proto-articulate entity—or as the "encryption" of the discursive intelligence predicated on the "accord" (*Stimmung*) to which aesthetic experience gives rise—is echoed by Helmut Müller-Sievers. See his account of the epochal shift from theories of "preformation" to "epigenetic" accounts. See especially his accounts of the epigenetic deduction of the "categories" in Kant's first *Critique* and in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment. Self-Generation*, 44-64.

<sup>7</sup> On the uniquely convoluted relation between pleasure and judgment in § 9 of the *Critique of Judgment*, see Stanley Corngold, *Complex Pleasures*, 48-58; Jens Kulenkampff, *Kants Logik des Ästhetischen Urteils*, 81-86; Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 151-74; and Walter Biemel's still significant interpretation of the third *Critique*, *Die Bedeutung von Kants Begründung der Ästhetik für die Philosophie der Kunst*, 122-34. Guyer's scrupulously developed thesis that, in § 9, we witness a "confusion of the origin of aesthetic response with the condition of aesthetic judgment" (174; s.a. 152ff.) ignores, in my view, the dynamic role of aesthetic judgment as a predicative, linguistic act. That is, we may need to stress the hortatory, indeed performative character of the aesthetic judgment as generating—by means of its intrinsically positional rhetoric—a determinate, or at least measurable social effect. In other words, the value of "communicability" and, ultimately, that of community is realized through the persistently self-justifying character of aesthetic predication. Thus, what stands to be inquired into is not an ultimately inscrutable, "logical" ground but, rather, the intrinsically dynamic, sociological activity of "grounding" communicability and community via discursive practice. Similarly, Jens Kulenkampff views the Kantian aesthetic judgment as a type of linguistic proposition that is—by definition, as it were—not verifiable because its very occurrence only establishes the affective, and hence strictly virtual, "ground" for the Enlightenment values of rational discourse and intersubjective verification.

<sup>8</sup> See also Carl Dahlhaus, who comments how the concept of "sensation involves the confluence of sensory quality and affect" ("*Im Begriff der 'Empfindung' fließen Sinnesqualität und Gefühl ineinander.*"). *Klassische und Romantische Musikästhetik*, 295 (translation mine). See also his longer discussion, in that book, of Kant's remarks on the aesthetics of music, 49-55.

<sup>9</sup> Manfred Frank also remarks on the proto-articulate status of the aesthetic: "The purposiveness

opened up by the judgment of taste is by definition only that of an *as if*. In the presence of the beautiful our situation resembles that of Siegfried listening to the bird in the forest: 'I feel almost / as if the birds were speaking to me: / I distinctly seem to hear words'." Even so, the 'sweet stammering' refuses (at least for now) to resolve itself into articulate words—into concepts, that is—and thus we are left with the *as if* of a significant utterance, the conditional anticipation of a *purpose* whose reality continues to elude us." *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 77. Citing a number of Kant's *Reflexionen* (# 605, 288, 822, 712, and 715), Walter Biemel has also remarked on the centrality of *Stimme* and its various cognates for a determination of "pleasure" (*Lust*) in Kant. *Die Bedeutung*, 126-27.

<sup>10</sup> "Contrary to the beautiful, which at least appears to be all of a piece, the sublime is shot through with dialectical complication." De Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," in *Aesthetic Ideology*, 72. Speaking specifically to Kant's formalist account of the aesthetic, and of music in particular, Lawrence Kramer has expressed similar reservations about the restrictive nature of a transcendental knowledge that seems predicated on its incompatibility with linguistic signification (*Music as Cultural Practice*, 3-4). Kramer has since pursued this project of rethinking the rigorous formalist premises of much musicological argumentation and analysis, and he has done so to considerable acclaim. Perhaps as a result of his acutely programmatic approach, however, Kramer (among others) does not attend to Kant's far larger investment in developing a coherent account of epistemological and moral knowledge. To focus strictly on Kant's explicit references to the subject of music is thus to miss the far more subtle and wide-ranging suggestions, scattered throughout the third *Critique*, that all cognition is inherently practical, social, and therefore contingent on the polyvalence of the subject's voice and fundamental disposition (*Stimme / Stimmung*).

<sup>11</sup> Margery Sabin's characterization of "sentiment" in Rousseau's *Reveries* strikingly anticipates the oscillation of Kantian *Gefühl* between a purely formal-transcendental and a phenomenal, material quality. "The word 'sentiment' . . . implies, as it did in the second *Discours*, both sensation and emotion, emotion reduced to the simplicity of sensation, and sensation as diffuse and pervasive as emotion." *English Romanticism and the French Tradition*, 113.

<sup>12</sup> My argument about pleasure's quest for duration runs parallel to Stanley Corngold's recent account of a "circular temporality of self-reflection," which he sees at work throughout the third *Critique*. "The way we should proceed to rethink [temporality] is to recall the kind of analysis that Kant performs on the aesthetic judgment, and we are to endow the aesthetic judgment itself with the temporality that goes with this analysis." *Complex Pleasures*, 55-56.

<sup>13</sup> Such a first, admittedly general description of (aesthetic) cognition as the isolation and retroactive configuration of imitative and recursive patterns also benefits, no doubt, from the entire phenomenological school of philosophy and aesthetic theory. For a particularly apposite instance, see Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, and, building on that proto-structuralist paradigm, Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*.

<sup>14</sup> For an account of transformations in musical theory, specifically the rapid erosion of a traditional, mathematically founded concept of harmony, see Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musiktheorie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. As Dahlhaus explains, it is at the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century that the concept of dissonance yields to that of notes whose presence in the score can only be legitimated by the unique, contextual logic of a given work. See, for example, his discussion of Kirnberger's distinction between "essential" and "accidental" dissonances, 9-13.

<sup>15</sup> Arguably, both Dawkins and Bourdieu (to say nothing of Foucault) appear substantially indebted to Nietzsche's profound, if deeply conspiratorial, argument about the conversion of mnemonic potential

into the pseudo-instinctual, compulsory logic of "conscience." Speaking of an epoch when "all instincts . . . *turn inward*--this is what I call the *internalization* of man," Nietzsche remarks how "man, from lack of external enemies and resistances and forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness and punctiliousness of custom, impatiently lacerated, persecuted, gnawed at, assaulted, and maltreated himself . . . this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of the 'bad conscience'. Thus began the gravest and uncanniest illness, from which humanity has not yet recovered." Like Dawkins, Nietzsche regards the intrinsically flagellatory, moral regime of Western Judaeo-Christian culture as an evolutionary leap—a very recent event on an evolutionist's time-scale. Above all, this shift is characterized by the mobilization of memory against its owner: ". . . the result of a forcible sundering from his animal past, as it were a leap and plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence, a declaration of war against the old instincts." *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 84-5.

<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere I discuss a particular instance of this formal dynamic in the context of the early-nineteenth-century ballad and its structural affinity with the then popular schemes of "monitorial" theories of elementary education.

<sup>17</sup> *The Responsibility of Forms*, 247. As Barthes continues shortly thereafter, "morphologically, on the species level, the ear seems made for this capture of the fleeting index: it is motionless, fixed, poised, like that of an animal on the alert; like a funnel leading to the interior, it receives the greatest number of impressions and channels them toward a supervisory center of selection and decision . . ." (248).

<sup>18</sup> For a nuanced reading of this famous remark, and of Hanslick's theory and "functionalist" accounts of musical form more generally, see Carl Dahlhaus, *Musikästhetik*, 291-318 and *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> For a very lucid account of the ideology of strictly formal listening, see Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music*, 63-6.

<sup>20</sup> One of the more stylized transmutations of mid-career *ennui* with the demands of working in a discipline of continually evolving methodological positions and theoretical debates, can be found in Jane Tompkins's "Me and My Shadow." Suburban languor here masquerades as institutional insurrection as Tompkins informs us that "I'm tired of the conventions that keep discussions of epistemology, or James Joyce, segregated from meditations on what is happening outside my window or inside my heart. The public-private dichotomy, which is to say, the public-private *hierarchy*, is a founding condition of female oppression. I say to hell with it." I would argue that Tompkins's notion of the private is, if anything, only more naïve and narcissistic than the one whose disjunction from a (similarly unexamined) public sphere she so vociferously deplors. How else are we to take her catalogue of wishes: "Would always be in some way a chronicle of my hours and days. Would speak in a voice which can talk about everything, would reach out to a reader like me . . ." (Tompkins, 25, 28). As Susan Bernstein notes: "Although the confessional mode does offer politically transgressive possibilities, its interrogative, even transformative potential is often undermined by critical neglect of the very categories it employs." In Bernstein's words, "Tompkins rehearses a retreat into sameness—"a reader like me"—and an aversion to difference." "Confessing Feminist Theory," 121, 129. See also David Simpson, *The Academic Postmodern*.

<sup>21</sup> Simpson, *The Academic Postmodern: A Report on Half-Knowledge*, 65. See also his account of recent "autobiographical literary criticism" by Jane Tompkins, Alice Kaplan, and others; *ibid.*, 72-91. Other instances of this kind would include Marianna Torgovnick's *Crossing Ocean Parkway* and Eve K. Sedgwick's *Tendencies*, or the anthologies by Diane P. Freedman, *The Intimate Critique*, and by Aram Veesser, *Confessions of the Critics*. As I have argued elsewhere, this recent surge of supplanting an intersubjective and methodologically reflexive type of discourse with extr/overtly autobiographical



ruminations may have grown out of the intense, eighteenth-century debates over the limits and social legitimacy of "self-interest" as it was being waged, for example, in the writings of Shaftsbury, Hume, and Burke (*Wordsworth's Profession*, 263-302).

<sup>22</sup> Rita Felski, quoted in Bernstein, 131. See also Ann R. Jones, who remarks on the "phonocentric emphasis" of autobiographical and critical writing, particularly as it restyles more traditional feminist concerns (quoted by Diane P. Freedman in Veesper, *Confessions of the Critics*, 4). See also Ellen Brown's forthright assurance of her unimpeachable critical authority as a reader of *Jane Eyre*: "The fact is, I'm doing here what I can't do elsewhere: I am speaking in my own voice(s). I am admitting that it is not Bronte's narrative complexity or linguistic skill that attracts me to her book again and again. I am confessing that one of the reasons I keep reading *Jane Eyre*, one of the reasons I like it, one of the reasons I teach it is that it has continued to speak so powerfully to me as a girl, as a woman, as a teacher. . . ." ("Between the Medusa and the Abyss: Reading *Jane Eyre*, Reading Myself" in *The Intimate Critique*, 233). Most revealing, perhaps, is Brown's refusal to consider that the ability of Brontë's novel to "speak so powerfully" might have anything to do with its "narrative complexity or linguistic skill."

<sup>23</sup> See my "Reading beyond Redemption" and *Wordsworth's Profession*, 263-70.

<sup>24</sup> [translation:]

Your crest too, though but once, yours too  
Is gladdened by the light of a distant sun,  
The radiance of a better age. The  
Heralds who looked for your heart have found it.

You've heard and comprehended the stranger's tongue,  
Interpreted their soul! For the yearning man  
The hint sufficed, because in hints from  
Time immemorial the gods have spoken.

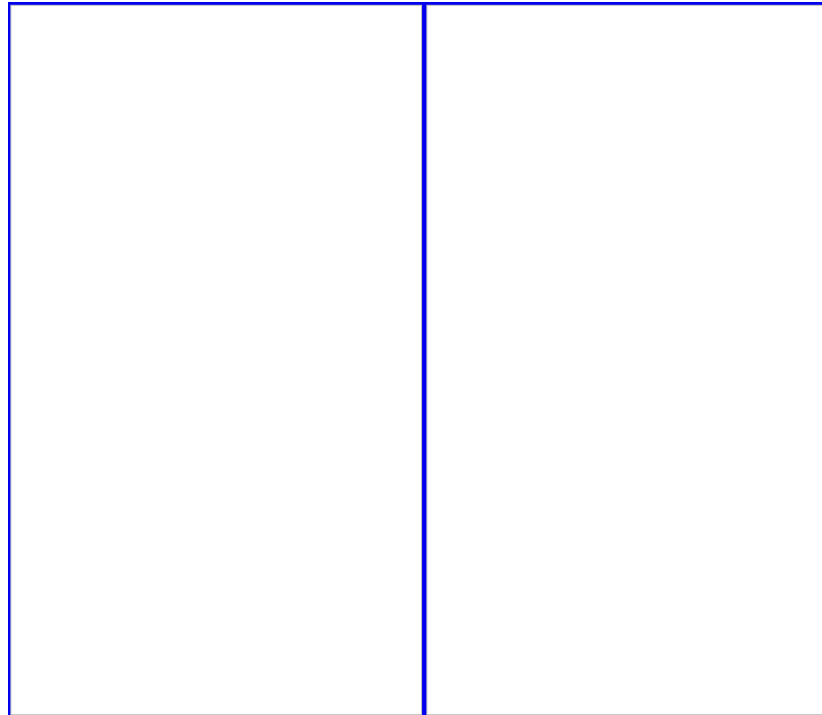
(*Poems and Fragments*, 125)

<sup>25</sup> See Theodor Adorno, "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry." While rejecting a strictly "philosophical" reading of Hölderlin's poetry, such as the one offered by Heidegger, Adorno focuses on the tension between voice and silence that can be noted throughout the later elegies and hymns. "The alien quality [of that poetry] stems from something objective, the demise of its basic content in expression, the eloquence of something that has no language. What has been composed could not exist without the content falling silent, any more than it could without what it falls silent about" (112). The self-reflexivity of the poetic voice—a reflexivity, however, no longer obligated to an overarching *System*—finds its expression in paratactic structures that render "Hölderlin the master of the intermittent linguistic gesture" (119). In so extending the abstract notion of non-closure via the spatiality of a sustained lyric voice, Hölderlin imagines an altogether different type of "genius," one that, as Adorno remarks (146f.), is intimately connected.

# Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age

## Romantic Interiority and Cultural Objects

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James Sowerby: *Arum Maculatum* and *Geranium Pratense*

### Introduction

1. My remarks today consider two Romantic sites where a version of interiority is presented which seems to fall outside the usual way in which we think of Romantic subjectivity—the microscopic impulse in Romantic botanical theory and illustration and the way two Romantic poets, John Clare and Charlotte Smith, use botanic terms for poetic ends. For Clare, those ends include the preservation of a particularity that makes figuration possible; for Smith, they include the inauguration of a subjectivity that seems to be only marginally vested in the rhetoric of self-pity found in her prefaces, notes, and more than a few poems. My hypothesis is that both poets may show us that otherness and resistance are essential terms for understanding Romanticism as a poetic and historical moment.
2. This essay is divided into three parts. The first characterizes the two poles of Romanticism for which I seek a common or interstitial ground—interiority and cultural objects. As I use the term here, *interiority* refers to the status accorded subjectivity or subjecthood by Romantic poets and philosophers, together with their critics. At its most problematic, Romantic interiority has been read as the guarantor of self-absorption or philosophical solipsism.<sup>[1]</sup> At its most celebrated, it has been

identified with the rational and ethical claims of the Kantian sublime, in which freedom and difference from nature disclose why, in Wordsworth's words, the mind is "the haunt and main region" of his and Romanticism's song.<sup>[2]</sup> To present the other pole, Romanticism's cultural objects, I discuss one field of particulars—botanical discovery and its dissemination. Because any assessment of how this field of particulars might constitute cultural objects requires some consideration of mechanisms whereby Romanticism had or acquired a public sphere (or spheres), I also ask how it might be possible to reimagine Habermas's account of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere around or soon after 1750 to accommodate the rather different cultural and historical domain of Romanticism. The second part of this essay is a brief survey—really a series of highlights—of botanical ideas and their dissemination in Romantic culture. The last part considers how Charlotte Smith and John Clare, in prose extracts as well as poems, use botanical information for their own ends. I employ the verb *use* to declare my sense that a broadly imagined intentionality directs the work of both writers as they make the cultural objects of botany into hybrid public-private property. In its parts and as a whole, this essay maps the contours of a larger inquiry and invites scholarly exchange.

## Part I

3. Although I grant that some, perhaps many, critics would disavow the current gap—for some it is an abyss—that separates those committed to historical study from those committed to formalist, poetic inquiry, I argue that this gap exists to the detriment of a sustained and intellectually compelling account of what Romanticism is and why we profess it.<sup>[3]</sup> As critically, because this gap reiterates the Cartesian split between mind and world, it assents to a philosophical claim about reality which Romantic writers—some albeit more pessimistically than others—argued and wrote against. The Romantic counter-argument to this claim—that mind and world are in some way related—is in my view the disputed ground of Romanticism and modernity with which we still struggle. My understanding of this ground from Kant to modernity is particularly indebted to a recent and surprising convergence among contemporary philosophers who represent distinct traditions, in particular Hilary Putnam, Martha Nussbaum, and recent critics and philosophers who are either neo-Kantian or who defend Kantian principles in the name of Romanticism.<sup>[4]</sup> Putnam's new work of the last decade offers a startling reconsideration of his earlier philosophical realism, which once required a quasi-Cartesian separation of mind from world. Putnam now asserts a much stronger regard for a realism that would recognize what binds mind to world, in terms that recall Aristotelian and Kantian efforts to specify how it is possible to do so. This philosophical inquiry is, I contend, of critical interest for thinking about Romanticism and, specifically, for imagining Romantic interiority as allied, perhaps even formally allied, to a material reality that has long been regarded as its Romantic "other." According to this reading of Romanticism, against which I argue here, for good or ill (depending on your critical persuasion) Romantic poets speak for and from a cultivated interiority whose subjectivity is the form of Romanticism. I am fundamentally in agreement with this claim, although I would add this key provision: it is critical to imagine further how what is apparently "other" might be implicated in Romantic interiority. This relation may be most pressing—historically and culturally—during Romanticism precisely because writers of this period tend to acknowledge interiority and subjectivity as the arbiter of imaginative thought. Some—like Byron, Austen, and Peacock—variously bemoan this necessary and binding arbitration. Others, notably William Wordsworth, Helen Maria Williams, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, do not. Whether the objectified Romantic other is the British colonial project in India or, in the examples I discuss here, the miniature, microscopic preferences sustained by botanical discovery and representation between 1780 and 1830, the textual paths whereby it inflects Romantic writing may be helpful to consider as specific instances of a larger field of hypothesized relations.<sup>[5]</sup> I use the work of Clare and Smith, instead of better known or more canonical Romantic poets, to pursue this hypothesis for two reasons. The first is practical—both poets wrote about botany

extensively and in doing so both made strategic use of botanical figures. The second is tactical—if it is possible to show, via the work of these poets, how botany is part of the material and philosophical ground of Romanticism, then we may be able to extrapolate from these and allied instances models for a Romantic binding of mind and world that holds at and for what a traditional account of Romanticism might call its extremities—writing by lesser, less well known, or uncanonical writers. The shape and direction of my present argument would in the end do away with the polarities of center and periphery, mind and world even this formulation assumes. For if, as I will argue, Romanticism is neither all mind, nor all world, then it would seem to follow that our collective investigation ought to be concerned to record how it is both.

4. In making this claim, I do not suppose that mind or world are reducible to each other. To the contrary, my inquiry imagines a productive irreducibility that sustains Romantic subjectivity at a moment in cultural history when the signs of materiality were very much ascendant within the public sphere or spheres. My working understanding of the Romantic public sphere or spheres differs in crucial ways from Jürgen Habermas's influential model. In *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, Habermas argued that the marketplace expansion of the reading public in the late eighteenth century was a necessary precondition for the emergence of the public sphere, as a moment when rationality and communicative action emerged as counter-forces to the absolute authority of the state (Habermas 30).
5. According to Habermas, in private clubs and other gathering places away from the confines of court and state there emerged in late eighteenth-century Britain a new, paradoxically public-private arena. Ultimately participants in this arena learned how to imagine a state that might be responsive to private, individual and bourgeois values. Because this new set of values was influenced, Habermas suggested, by what people read—including novels written by women—literary critics have since used his model to argue that women were significant, if unofficial, players in this public sphere. Despite subsequent criticisms of the historical accuracy of this description, Habermas has continued to defend its principles of rational, communicative action, notably in his *The Theory of Communicative Action* and *The Discourse of Modernity*. Working from a strongly rationalist premise which takes the promise of the Enlightenment to be its core achievement, Habermas's model is (not surprisingly) silent about the impact of "irrational" or less than conscious impulses on and in the public sphere. Indeed, as his critics have noted, these and other seemingly aberrant manifestations of subjectivity are logically excluded from the rational, public discourse that is the keystone of his argument. Critics have objected that this model prefers high or elite cultural forms to low and popular ones—in effect barring carnivalesque agitation from below which might disturb a climate of rational exchange among equals. Others have challenged the extent to which such a sphere was in fact public and open to women or even writing by women, since women did not typically frequent coffeehouses and clubs, where politics as much or more than novels by women was likely to dominate discussion.<sup>[6]</sup> In 1974, Habermas responded to these objections, less to defend his earlier claims about the historical emergence of the public sphere than to offer a definition of what such a sphere might be, whether or not it existed as such near the end of the Enlightenment:

By 'public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest. In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means

for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. . . . We speak of the political public sphere in contrast, for instance, to the literary one, when public discussion deals with objects connected to the activity of the state.<sup>[7]</sup>

Whereas in 1959 Habermas had suggested that the literary circulation of ideas supported political discussion in which the idea of a public sphere took shape, in 1974 he differentiated political discussion from the literary circulation of ideas in the expanding book market of eighteenth-century England. This differentiation answers one group of critics, but another finds it at least as problematic. By looking back from within the institutional framework of modern Western democracies, Habermas adopts a retrospective lens which probably filters out forms of political analysis and behavior that appear to fall outside this institutional framework—like novels, letters, and other forms of writing practiced by women as well as men (La Vopa 102). To specify one example: Wollstonecraft's *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* simultaneously presents itself as a pedagogical book on female education and manners, invokes literary precedents (often to discountenance them), and produces an argument whose premises anticipate Habermas's ideal vision of a public sphere in which all citizens might participate in rational discourse.<sup>[8]</sup> Perhaps the most telling critiques of the Habermasian model have objected to its founding presuppositions: first, that there was or ever is only one "public sphere" instead of competing spheres whereby dissent or, as Steven Goldsmith puts it, "agitation" is inextricable from the effort to define and limit the authority of the state (Goldsmith 753-96); second, that debate in and by the public sphere was disinterested in a Kantian sense—that it existed on a plane above and distinct from that of individual, psychic tensions which Habermas tends to assume must be put aside before rational debate can begin. This cordoning off of individual, psychic material is, briefly put, why the work of psychoanalytic interpretive models is so far off the charts of Habermas's philosophical brief for the role of rational, communicative action in the bourgeois public sphere. Given this array of objections and reservations, Habermas's model seems to present more problems than explanations. Yet even his sharpest critics remain attracted to it—whether or not they agree with Habermas about how, where, and how many public spheres might have emerged or begun to take shape near the end of the eighteenth century. This attraction has in part to do with the sense that—whatever the failings of this model—it recognizes, however imperfectly, what one critic calls "the emancipatory potential of an actual historical moment" (La Vopa 102). If ever there was a time for a public sphere or spheres to emerge, it was the closing decades of the eighteenth century, when the book trade diversified and expanded, in some measure because a sharp increase in literacy and various educational schemes for the middling and lower classes helped to create a more complex reading public. In ways that writers in Britain and on the Continent fully recognized only later, the onset of the Reign of Terror dramatically signalled the termination of the "emancipatory potential" that so many contemporary observers found in the first years of the Revolution—precisely because Robespierre and the Committee for Public Safety made Supreme Reason the arbiter of the Terror. So instructed, Romantic writers and their publics quickly learned to be chary of claims for enlightened reason and the public weal (Thom). Because it very nearly begins with this historical disappointment, Romanticism is marked by new, albeit competing, notions which Habermas would later name the public sphere—an arena of discourse and relation in which actors learn to vest themselves as a public entity with enough ethical clout to challenge the absolute authority of the state. The unresolved dark side of this challenge is already apparent in Rousseau's notion of the general will as the rational outcome of individual wills that move as though in concert toward a common conclusion. To Rousseau and to Habermas, the history of Romanticism and modernity must reply that this consolidation of the common will did not occur then, nor has it since.

6. I understand this impasse in modernity as among the most compelling features of Romanticism. Indeed, as a cultural and literary moment, it is productively constructed out of and on this inherent instability, like a pleasure dome barely sustained above caves of ice and cliffs of fall. The Enlightenment ideals of rationality and equilibrium which inform Habermas's model of the public

sphere are inherently out of sympathy with individual differences, with particularities that work against the desire embedded in that model for a single, argumentative but not divided, public sphere of consciousness and action. The logic of Habermas's model suggests that because these Enlightenment ideals finally imploded with the onset of Romanticism, it must also be the first of many missteps down a slippery slope toward mass consumerism and rampant, irrational subjectivity. However trenchant this critique of modern consumerism and the commodification of the reading public, it nonetheless misconstrues its Romantic ground.

7. For if we look at that ground more closely, we find there evidence of a fractured and contested public sphere or spheres wherein particularity and difference fissure the very effort to define or construct a public sphere. This story belongs less to the Enlightenment than it does to Romanticism as that cultural and psychic moment when difference, particulars, and dissent become the troublesome baggage of representation—literary as well as political.

## Part II

8. From Cook's first voyage in 1768-71 with Joseph Banks, naturalist, and Sydney Parkinson, draughtsman on board, botany was intrinsic to British exploration, discovery and imperial control of the world and cultures beyond Britain. The particularity of botanical collection, preservation, and illustration was, moreover, necessary and strategic to the monumental British effort to know, codify, and possess new worlds. Once Banks returned home with Parkinson's drawings (Parkinson having died during the voyage) and became president of the Royal Society and Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, the British industry of botanizing the world had a home base or, perhaps more accurately, a "center of calculation," where the world's diversity could be charted, sorted, and put to good (whether imagined or actual) economic use.<sup>[9]</sup> Once the Viennese artist and miniaturist Franz Bauer was installed at Kew, he drew plants and anatomies of plant parts with one eye on Linnaeus, another on his microscope, through which he saw extraordinary cell formations, and perhaps a third eye (lodged in Banks's head) on botanical topics of royal interest, like the parts of the bird of paradise, which Banks named *Strelitzia*, after the German title of the Princess, then Queen Charlotte, who drew at Kew, along with her daughters, under Bauer's tutelage. As collectors brought exotic plants home to Britain, where they tried to grow them, or as they exported British plants and agronomic know-how to India and Australia, botany became one arm of the East India Company, which assigned managers to botanical gardens in Calcutta and Bombay, and "supervised" (it is said) the training of native artists in the British conventions of botanical illustration in India and in China. Back in Britain, the rage for botanical information and illustration prompted and was thereafter supported by botanical books and magazines. Most were illustrated, some copiously, with engravings that were hand-colored or reproduced by several of the newly developed and developing engraving processes, including lithography and mezzotint. Robert Thornton's *Temple of Flora*, an elephant folio volume produced between 1799-1806, is a virtual sampler of the engraving techniques by then available for botanical illustration.<sup>[10]</sup> As the first of its kind, and still running two hundred years later, *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* (begun in 1787) is the botanical industry of the Romantic period in microcosm. A series of engraver artists worked for Curtis over the years. One of them, William Graves, supervised thirty people, including women and some children, who hand colored the engraved sheets (indeed, the hand-coloring "factories" supported the *Botanical Magazine* until 1948). Four of Curtis's daughters became skilled in this work, as did many anonymous colorists for this and other botanical works (Desmond 36-73). Some women became engravers and a few more who are listed among botanical collectors and explorers in Africa and Australia extended the geographical and botanical range of inquiry begun by the Dutch botanist and artist Maria Sybilla Merian in the late seventeenth century.<sup>[11]</sup> A very few were experimental botanists. Many more women were artists whose original drawings were never engraved and remain in archives

at Kew and in London and elsewhere, such as Margaret Wood, whose 1805 hand colored drawings of British wild flowers are now archived in the library of the Linnean Society. The fact that women did botanical work probably has much to do with the large number of dissenters—many of them Quakers, some middle or working class—who were keepers of gardens, artists, nurserymen, travellers, and explorers, including James Smith, the first president of the Linnean society and Robert Brown, who inherited Smith's papers and became keeper of the botanical collections at the British Museum.<sup>[12]</sup> Brown's microscopic study of plants led him very soon—as few English botanists were then willing to be led—away from the Linnaean system toward the natural system of classification being developed during the Romantic era by French botanists. Brown discovered "cytoplasmic streaming," now termed "Brownian movement," and established the importance of morphological structure over against sexual reproductive organs in the classification of plants—the crucial issue in the shift from a Linnaean to a "natural" system of classification.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Part III

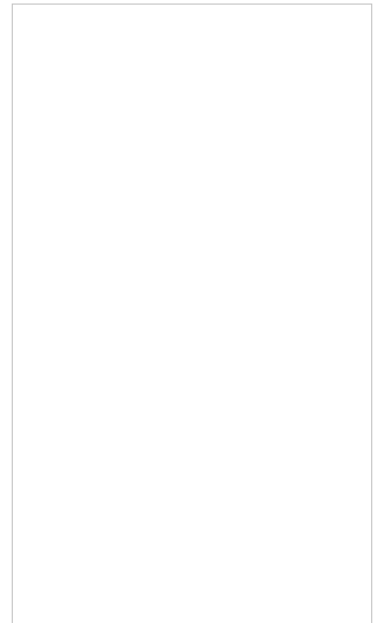
9. Without knowledge of this scientific debate in England in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, John Clare stubbornly resisted the Latinized schematics of the Linnaean "sexual system," as it was then called. His reasons were neither political nor prudish. That is to say, he would have hardly been persuaded by the Rev. Polwhele's diatribe against botanizing women and Erasmus Darwin's poetic-scientific rendition of Linnaean categories in the sexualized personifications in the *Botanic Garden* (Powhele 25-26; Bewell 132-39). And, though Clare was no Jacobin, neither does he appear to have allied the Linnaean sexual system with Jacobin ventures, as Alan Bewell has noted conservative English writers often did. Rather Clare's objection to Linnaean classification, which had a much longer and stronger hold in English culture than it did on the Continent where the "natural" system had begun to evolve before the Revolution, was, like that of Robert Brown, prompted by detailed observation of morphological differences. Brown's more scientific response was to rely increasingly on microscopic evidence. Clare responded by looking closely, even minutely, at local botanical varieties to construct a mental field of differences that in the end constituted his understanding of natural history—whether birds, insects, or plants. As a poet who self-consciously hoarded local words and dialect terms because their variety corresponded in a formal sense to the variety he also found in the natural world, Clare rejected the Linnaean terms for the way they squeezed particularity out of plants to pin them onto what seemed to Clare a mental grid that left no room for species and distinctions suggested by the plants of his own district, and certainly no room for local names. In assorted prose fragments on natural history and the Linnaean system he composed between 1823 and 1825, Clare compares Linnaean claims about female flowers to what he sees in plants and trees and concludes that some trees are "hermaphroditic," and thus do not propagate exclusively by way of a female reproductive organ (Clare *Natural History* 101-2, 108). This account of the Linnaean system looks as though it is grafted onto Darwin's popularization, hardly surprising given Clare's utter impatience with Linnaeus' Latinized nomenclature. In the poem "A Ploughman's Skill at Classification after the Lineian Arrangement," Clare not surprisingly renders the sexual system as the engine of marital bickering: to his haranguing wife, the ploughman replies, if I'm a hog, you're a sow (*Early Poems* 1:211ff). The satiric point of this domestic version of Linnaean classification (very unlike Polwhele's nervous jibes at the "botanic bliss" of sex among Erasmus Darwin's plants) seems to be its verbal and classificatory poverty. I am particularly interested in how Clare as a poet uses botanical names to hollow out a site of resistance to the dominant botanical language of his place and time, a site of resistance that is fundamentally that of poetic figure. In "Recollections after a Ramble," a longish poem he composed before or during 1820, those recollections are crowded with natural history detail about, for example, "the clod brown lark," "the pismires [that is, ant's] castle hill," bees loaded with honey "on their thigh / Yellow dust as fine as flour," and so on and on. In a stanza well into the poem, Clare describes three flowers with bird names in a way that seems to me quite a deliberate effort to create a momentary readerly confusion about what

is being described. Here are the lines:

Some went searching by the wood  
Peeping neath the weaving thorn  
Where the pouchd lip'd cuckoo bud  
From its snug retreat was torn  
Where the ragged robbin grew  
With its pipd stem streakd wi jet  
And the crow flowers golden hue  
Carless plenty easier met. (*Early Poems* 1:57-58)

It is hard not to believe that, in each instance, but especially the first, a bird is not being described, inasmuch as Clare had an enormous knowledge of birds and wrote dozens of poems on birds. Once the reader figures out that she has made a category error—been tricked as it were into a *catachresis*—and that this cuckoo hidden beneath a thorn tree is no thorn bird but a flower, she must slow down and read for detail. The next two "bird-flower" descriptions now attract a reader in the know—that is to say, in the grip of precisely the kind of particular knowledge about the real world, Clare's world, that this poet urges.

10. The "cuckoo" flower is, as Clare explains elsewhere, a variety of orchid—one that is "found in Spring with the blue bells." Its flowers are, he goes on to explain, "purple & freckld with paler spots inside and its leaves are spotted with jet like the arum" (see Illustration to right; *Natural History* 15-16).<sup>[14]</sup> Margaret Grainger, the modern editor of Clare's natural history writings, explains that Clare found many local varieties of orchid and appends a list of them. Although Clare evidently liked this flower—who wouldn't?—I suspect that he makes so much of its name because the orchid's classification was much debated in the first decades of the nineteenth century. At the end of this debate, Franz Bauer's detailed, exquisite drawings of orchid anatomy were published 1830-38, and the more exotic orchids of Mexico and Guatemala were at least as large as life in Bateman's slightly later *Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala* (1837—).<sup>[15]</sup> Clare's "ragged robin" is the flower for which Elizabeth Kent gives the Latin name *galium verum* in her *Flora Domestica*, which Clare mostly admired and also discusses in the same prose letters on natural history from which I have quoted his description of the cuckoo flower (Kent 232; Clare, *Natural History* 20). Two other prose remarks imply Clare's sense of the poetic return to be had from insisting on local botanical and ornithological names. In one passage he describes the "large blue flowerd cranes bill or wild geranium," which his modern editor renders as *geranium pratense* or





"meadow cranes bill" (Clare, *Natural History* 22). Although it is impossible to determine which flower Clare actually saw, it is intriguing that William Curtis's influential folio edition, *Flora Londinensis*, includes the *geranium pratense* among its illustrations (see illustration to left).<sup>[16]</sup> In another natural history "letter" on birds, Clare praises Charlotte Smith's sonnet about what he calls "the fern Owl or Goat Sucker or Night jar or night hawk." Explaining that her poems convey "more from what she had seen of nature than [sic] from what she had read," he suggests that she thereby offers "new images" for poets. Clare remarks further that the fern owl and night hawk differ in key details, then lists the various names natural historians have assigned to another bird, whom he calls in succession "Hay chats straw chats nettle chats &c" (*Natural History* 108). Clare's catachretical fooling with flower names that sound at first like bird names and his tendency to multiply the local names that might be given to a specific flower or bird are linked I believe by a conviction that language, and especially that which arises from the particularities of natural

description, is a word hoard for poetic figuration that matches, in an oddly formal way, the hoard he finds in the local setting that was inside his knowledge. His resistance to Linnaean nomenclature and classification is a resistance staged within the local histories and proliferation of names that work within English botany, just below its apparently Linnaean preoccupations. Like his early poem which begins, "No hailing curry favouring tothers / Muses gins by story" (*Early Poems* 1.15), Clare's botanical names and figures carve a space for Clare (and for the local and the particular) inside Romanticism, with its vaunted preference for the grand scheme, sublime idea, and the monumental.

11. The relation between subjectivity and resistance is more difficult to fix in Charlotte Smith, despite or because she seems to offer an authorial persona that is by turns self-piteous and angry. I am interested in the poetic authority her poems accumulate, perhaps because this activity is half-disguised by her rhetorical appeals for sympathy and sales. Invoking Petrarch and pretending to translate his sonnets in her *Elegiac Sonnets*, she does not in fact translate Petrarch's sonnets so much as write her own. Some of Smith's sonnets assume the voice of another great authority of her age, Goethe's Werther. Briefly, I want to look at how she deploys entomological information in one poem, "To the Firefly of Jamaica, seen in a collection." Like the prose botanical lessons she invents in *Minor Morals and Sketches of Natural History* (1798), the dead insect of this poem has a moral as well as figurative function. In the narrative logic of the poem, it prompts a curious metonymic shift from the insect mounted in a collection to the escaped slave in a Jamaican forest who could now neither hide in terror from the light cast by the firefly when alive nor be guided or momentarily charmed by the insect's light. The narrative then switches again to the "Naturalist" who would be similarly unable to see this firefly among the flora and fauna he records in Jamaica. From these oblique lessons the poem then returns to the firefly, whose lost light suggests how "fugitive your fame" and, by extension, how fugitive the fame of all who trust art or sculpture to preserve their "vaunting Ostentation," in marked contrast to those who are unhonored, unknown, but cherished by friendship, by affection (Smith 204-207). The flickering presence in the poem of its other "fugitive," that escaped slave, throws the speaker's enumeration of images drawn from natural history in the opening stanzas into what seems to me a series of ironies that occur, as it were, off the specified stage of the poem's concluding stanzas about ostentation and the brevity of its fame. For the slave, as for the firefly, the naturalist-poet's leisurely display of knowledge is simply not possible. Both are hunted, captured, or likely to be captured, and both are bounty of another kind.

## Conclusion

12. The interpretive movement between botanical information and figures to poetic strategies which I have sketched in these remarks suggests a way of thinking about realism and subjectivity that is indebted to Hilary Putnam's recent turn from the kind of realism he espoused as a logical positivist to a realism that owes a good deal to Kant and to Aristotle. More specifically, Putnam's new realism makes its return to these philosophers because they help him reject a view of reality that would privilege either mind or world. Briefly, Aristotle's contribution to the kind of realism Putnam now seeks to understand is to argue for the "saving of appearances," not because matter and how it appears are all there is, but because we cannot talk about mind or subjectivity without acknowledging what Wittgenstein called "the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action," or what Putnam refers to as the way our minds are organized to function in the world, as part of a bodily organism.<sup>[17]</sup> As Putnam observes, Aristotle's commitment to this view of phenomena is critical to his understanding of identity and its persistence through local, material changes. This view of mind and body does not claim that the body imprisons soul or mind or even that it houses them. It argues rather that though the body's matter fits its soul/mind, and does its actions, it is not the case that the functions of life can be reduced to body or matter (Putnam 54). Putnam's return to Kant begins with his recognition that even if we cannot discover the precise way in which the dualities that inhabit both mind and world allow us to make synthetic judgments, it makes sense to assume a priori that we do make such judgments in our effort to account for how we "hook" mind to world (Putnam 10). Thus whereas Richard Rorty has recently argued for a radical, putatively "postmodernism" skepticism about claims for any such relation, Putnam defends referentiality not as an absolute about which we know all there is to know, but as a posited view of the world that warrants exploration because it grants what living and acting in the world seem to require of us as thinking beings. Asking why Rorty should be "so bothered by the lack of a *guarantee* that our words represent things outside themselves," Putnam suggests that to be so bothered suggests a craving for absolute reference that is both senseless and deeply human, but one which we must put aside to recover our "ordinary notion of representation (and of a world of things to be represented)."<sup>[18]</sup> As I read Putnam on realism, the terms of his argument remind us that the study of Romanticism must "hook" both mind and world. To pursue one or the other is to assent a priori to a Cartesian view that would make the recovery of a material Romantic culture antithetical to the study of how Romantic literary forms reveal agency and craft. By contrast, botany and what poets did with it may together offer a trenchant instance both of how Romantic culture "hooked" botanical representations of the world and matter, and of how Romantic poets and artists turned those representations into figures. The formal subjectivity made possible by such figures shows how individual poets choose to fit their minds to their place and time. In making these claims, I argue for a formal criticism that is complementary to the cultural critique of Romanticism from without, from our critical present. I also argue for a cultural critique that attends to the interiority of Romanticism's figures and forms as poetic spaces where resistance and agitation take place.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For recent and important versions of this critique, see Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken" 12 and Kinzie, *The Cure of Poetry in an Age of Prose* 25-26. '

<sup>2</sup> Among recent discussions of Romanticism and the sublime, see Kelley, *Wordsworth's Revisionary Aesthetics* 30-33, 44-45; Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* 55-96. For recent philosophical assessments of the Kantian relation between freedom and the sublime, see Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* 159-90; Henrich, *Aesthetic Judgment*

and the Moral Image of the World 77-99; Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* 229-75; and Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime: From Morality to Art* 41-77. '

<sup>3</sup> Recent illustrations and accounts of this gap occur in the "Forum" exchange printed in the March 1997 issue of *PMLA* 257-86, Martin's account in "Teaching Literature, Changing Cultures" 16-22, and Simpson's critique of subjectivity in the person of the academic "postmodern." '

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, recent essays by Putnam, one co-authored with Nussbaum, in Putnam, *Words and Life* and Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* 3-42, 160-87 and "Taking the Law into Our Own Hands: Kant on the Right to Revolution," in Reath, ed. *Reclaiming the History of Ethics* 297-328. '

<sup>5</sup> Pascoe identified this aesthetic impulse in "Female Botanists and the Poetry of Charlotte Smith," in Hafner and Wilson, ed., *Revising Romanticism: British Women Writers 193-209*. '

<sup>6</sup> For a summary of these and other critical objections to Habermas's model, see La Vopa's review essay of its English translation, "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe" 98-114. '

<sup>7</sup> Habermas, "The Public Sphere," *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49; quoted by Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* 289. '

<sup>8</sup> See Baker's astute comments on Habermas and Wollstonecraft, "Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France," in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* 181-211. '

<sup>9</sup> For an important account of Banks's position in scientific, particularly botanical, discovery and collection, see Miller, "Joseph Banks, Empire, and 'Centers of Calculation' in late Hanoverian London" (21-37); Mackay, "Agents of Empire: The Banksian Collectors and Evaluation of New Lands" (38-57); Bewell, "'On the Banks of the South Sea': Botany and Sexual Controversy in the Late Eighteenth Century" (173-93) and other essays collected in Miller and Reill, ed., *Visions of Empire*. '

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed overview of these Romantic developments in botanical illustration, see Blunt and Stearn, *The Art of Botanical Illustration* 211-72. '

<sup>11</sup> See Ann Shteir's analysis of women in botany from the late eighteenth century through the Romantic era, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science* 53-145. '

<sup>12</sup> For a brief overview of these and other Romantic careers in botany, see Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists*. '

<sup>13</sup> Brown, "On the Natural Order of Plants, called PROTEACEAE," *Transactions of the Linnean Society of London* 10: 15-226; Morton, *History of Botanical Science* 373-76. '

<sup>14</sup> Margaret Grainger identifies this arum as "Arum Maculatum" or "lords-and-ladies"—one common name Clare chose not to use, for reasons that are easy to infer. Numerous species of arum—both exotic and domestic—were frequently discussed and depicted in British botanical magazines in the early decades of the nineteenth century. '

- <sup>15</sup> Bauer, *Illustrations of Orchidaceous Plants*, 2 Parts Folio (London, 1830-38). Bateman, *The Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala*. (London, 1837-43). '
- <sup>16</sup> Curtis, *Flora Londinensis* 2: plate 265. '
- <sup>17</sup> See James Conant's introductory essay for Putnam's *Words and Life* for a discussion of Putnam in light of Wittgenstein's remark (lxii). '
- <sup>18</sup> *Words and Life* 299-300; Putnam refers specifically to Rorty, "Putnam on Truth" 416. '

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# Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age

## Thomas Pfau: Reply to Theresa Kelley's "Romantic Interiority and Cultural Objects"

Thomas Pfau, Duke University

1. Theorizing about Romanticism—arguably one of the more insistently (and more quizzically) reflexive periods of cultural production in a very long time—is tricky business. In reading Theresa Kelley's essay on "Romantic Interiority and Cultural Objects," I am struck to see how acutely the historical belatedness, the conceptual intricacy, and the often uncertain objectives of critical writing today resonate in the most commonly chosen form of critical practice today: the essay. We recall how Adorno (himself responding to and moving beyond Lukács's reflections on essay writing), notes a basic epistemological rupture that can be read off in the generic shift from the foundational faith of the philosophical treatise to the contingent theorizing of the essay form: "The essay . . . does not seek the eternal in the transient and distill it out; it tries to render the transient eternal. . . . It also testifies to an excess of intention over object." Having "abandon[ed] the royal road to origins," as Adorno puts it, the essay can merely "deal with objects that would be considered derivative, without itself pursuing their ultimate derivation" ("The Essay as Form," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. I, p. 11). What prompts me to invoke Adorno here is a striking analogy between the intellectual aspirations of the essay form—one that tends to betray, in more or less apparent ways, the irremediable epistemological abjection of its author—and the particularist structure of poetic figuration that Kelley explores in such intriguing ways in her reading of John Clare. Like the essay, that is, Clare's poetic figures (as I take Kelley to conceive of them) seek to advance their elliptic, nearly irreducible particularity as a logical alternative to the vagaries of lexical reference and grounding concepts: once again the word is to become flesh, thereby reaffirming our purchase on the world, albeit not as proposition but as name.
2. What certain of Clare's poems aspire to (however unself-consciously)—namely, the utter commensurability between the poetic word and its respective object-sensation—is being retraced, descriptively, by the late-twentieth-century critic, albeit with that quantum of Socratic reserve, hesitation, even wariness so evocatively portrayed by the young Nietzsche in the *Birth of Tragedy*. The Socratic critic wants to remember the dreams of others—something akin to dreaming with one eye open—and the price of that hesitation means that we must write essays, not poems. Kelley's account of "Clare's catachretical fooling with flower names that sound at first like bird names and his tendency to multiply the local names that might be given to a specific flower or bird" intrigues. Indeed, I feel genuinely sympathetic to Kelley's view of a Romantic interiority that subsists precisely in the "local and particular" space "carve[d]" by the talismanic power of articulate form, such as the "botanical names and figures" in many of Clare's poems.
3. That point having been made, however, other questions invariably begin to press upon us. What does it mean, here and now, for us to reconstruct this apparent convergence of psychological and material values in the radically figurative words/names of Clare's poetry? Kelley's persuasive thesis that Clare's "poetic ends . . . include the preservation of a particularity that makes figuration possible" and that, in encountering his catachretic style, the reader "must slow down and read for detail" bears within it the seeds of an epistemological crisis from which Clare's poems, but not her essay, may claim immunity.

For Clare's strategy of articulating meaningful psychological values through an onomastic style implies precisely that he will forgo any larger epistemological claims. Indeed, no other poet seems more pleased with the referential limitations of poetic utterance and the sharply circumscribed bounds of his "knowledge" than Clare. Already the poetic strategy of Charlotte Turner Smith (of which a somewhat fuller discussion than the sketch offered by Kelley would have seemed desirable) presents itself again in far more generic terms than the rigorous local knowledge conceived in many of Clare's poems after 1821.

4. Yet, to recapture my point, Kelley's critical rearticulation of Clare's project now unfolds within the altogether differently situated medium of the essay, a form intricately bound up with a whole network of critical discourse, and thus under stern intellectual and professional obligation to remain self-questioning and mindful of its inherently provisional status. To be sure, the epistemological authority of the essay appears just as sharply delimited as that of Clare's local tropes and figures. Yet as the added obligation of sustained disciplinary and methodological reflexivity makes clear, the knowledge produced by the essay is governed not merely by the intuitions of its writer, but just as much by an inherently cosmopolitan and aggregational logic that connects virtually all disciplinary and cross-disciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences today. Kelley's essay struggles with precisely this basic tension between topic and occasion, between the object and the form of knowledge. Forging a transition between an aesthetic as emphatically particularist as Clare's and the question of that aesthetic's relevance to our own disciplinary and intellectual moment is no doubt difficult. I genuinely sympathize with Kelley's eagerness to negotiate formal and historical values and, in overcoming the gap frequently observed to separate one from the other, to grope toward "a sustained and intellectually compelling account of what Romanticism is and why we profess it."
5. Kelley also intimates that any plausible account of Romantic interiority needs to be imagined as "allied, perhaps even formally allied, to a material reality that has long been regarded as its other;" and, she continues, "it is critical to imagine further how what is apparently other might be implicated in Romantic interiority." Here Kelley's argument succumbs to one of the basic problems of classical dialectical thought. Consciousness or "interiority" is posited (sensibly enough) as intrinsically heteronomous—its own other, so to speak. But even as the critic conceives interiority to depend on a delicate (even unconscious) nexus of object-relations, the objects in question—though understood as irreducibly particular in their own right—are immediately flattened out into an abstraction no less hazy than the generic interiority which they (allegedly) support. The common word for that abstraction, of course, is "materiality." Kelley's use of that term, and sometimes also her syntax, reveal how quickly specific objects (and their correspondingly unique experience) lapse back into a state of "equivalence" or "indifference" (the German *Gleichgültigkeit* appropriately signifies both): "Whether the objectified Romantic other is the British colonial project in India or, in the examples I discuss here, the miniature, microscopic preferences sustained by botanical discovery and representation between 1780 and 1830, the textual paths whereby it inflects Romantic writing may be helpful to consider *as specific instances of a larger field of hypothesized relations*" (italics mine); and, shortly thereafter, Kelley hints that "if it is possible to show, via the work of [Clare and Smith], how botany is part of the material and philosophical ground of Romanticism, then we may be able *to extrapolate from these and allied instances* models for a Romantic binding of mind and world" (italics mine). Yet to do so, I'd argue, is to reconstruct Clare's studiously local and particularist aesthetic once again as mere *exemplum* or synecdoche (precisely what Clare wants his poetry *not* to be) in which capacity it is to serve in altogether different and, evidently, far more sweeping theoretical debates.
6. The strained commerce between the example of Clare and Kelley's larger theoretical aspiration of furnishing an account of the relation between formal and material, psychological and historical values, emerges in the (to me unpersuasive) introduction of Habermas's theory of the public sphere. In fact, Kelley's own reading of Habermas is fraught with so many qualifications and misgivings (all of which I



share) as to deny his account all genuine relevance to a context as specialized and, at least from Clare's perspective, localized as the semantic potential of botanical figures and concepts. After all, Kelley herself remarks that "the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and equilibrium which inform Habermas's model of the public sphere are inherently out of sympathy with individual differences, with particularities that work against the desire embedded in that model for a single, argumentative but not divided sphere of consciousness and action." I fully agree. And even if it can be graciously said that Habermas succeeded, long ago, in drawing our attention to "the emancipatory potential of an actual historical moment" (qtd. by Kelley), both the Romantics and most scholars of Romanticism have surely always known *that*. Indeed, for lucid articulations of that "emancipatory potential," and especially for evidence of its intrinsically rhetorical character, we would be better advised to reread Novalis, F. Schlegel, Hegel, Coleridge, Shelley, or Edmund Burke.

7. Still, sometimes a negative example such as Habermas's flawed account of the public sphere may produce dialectical rewards. Alternatively, though, an attempt at bridging the gap between a monolithic theorizing about the public "sphere" and an specific, radically particular Romantic idiom (such as Clare's) might begin by rereading Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* and its autotelic conception of a "sphere" or "interiority." Such a reading would put one on track to studying, next, Novalis's dialectical response to Fichte's Idealism in his *Fichte Studien*, a text that offers a very cogent account of the irreducibly partial (because tropological) status of *any* articulation of the material world and ones experiential relation to it. To be sure, the idiom of Jena Romanticism poses difficulties of its own, but writers like Novalis and F. Schlegel have certainly proven the possibility of writing a criticism that remains sensitive to the local particularities and idiomatic differences of Romantic writing without lapsing into an outright antithetical stance toward that period. Kelley's essay certainly rehearses for us the difficulties of adapting our larger critical purposes to the particularities of aesthetic form and to the contingencies of material experience of which such forms as Clare's nature poems are expressive. Seen in this light, her account offers serendipitous insight into the quintessentially Romantic intention of the essay form: to allow us to witness—in the inherently textual sphere of critical practice—a persistent dialectic between the expansive agendas of our critical present and the rhetorical and material self-containment of our inherited aesthetic objects.

# Romanticism and Philosophy in an Historical Age

## Response to Thomas Pfau's "The Voice of Critique: Aesthetic Cognition after Kant"

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1. My response addresses the implications of Thomas Pfau's discussion of the concept of interiority vis-à-vis Kantian and post-Kantian discussions of pleasure and criticism by mapping, then commenting on, key turns in his argument.
2. As Pfau traces the modern history of interiority, its authenticity depends on a paradox: that "voice" is at once inalienable and socially iterable. For this reason, the notion of interiority names a complex dialectical relation between 1) formal-aesthetic productivity in the work of art and 2) the array of modern disciplines that seek to describe or, as Pfau puts it, "secure," the epistemological and historical consequences of formal productivity. Further, this dialectical relation takes two forms according to Pfau. In the first of these, the form of the work of art is homologous with its beholding intelligence—a position I take to be roughly assimilable to Romantic claims about organic form. In the second, there is a divide between the work's affective quality—which is identified with aesthetic production—and a post-lapsarian consciousness of the discursive world and "its often incompatible interests." As I imagine it, this second form is philosophical kin to the consciousness Schiller ascribed to the sentimental, as opposed to the naïve, poet.
3. Pfau productively (and polemically, as it turns out) links his inquiry to modern, critical questions about the telos of aesthetic pleasure. Is the formal trajectory of such pleasure its critical articulation or is pleasure instead the basis for the perceiving, experiencing subject's claim to have cognitive acuity and therefore social authority? What, in brief, is the operative relation between aesthetic pleasure and criticism? If pleasure exceeds the range (and grasp) of critical discourse, then what we do is pointless to the exercise of art. If pleasure deludes the subject (be that subject artist or reader) by concealing from subjective gaze implicit critical and social values, criticism might be thought of as the "other" to pleasure—a mental spy, as it were, who discloses what the work of art conceals. The relevance of these alternatives to recent critical debates about Romanticism is clear. Pfau suggests that even before Wimsatt's influential attack on assorted critical "fallacies" pleasure had become a "problem" to be solved (or not) by philosophical aesthetics and its "subsidiary" disciplines, such as "poetics, compositional theory and musical aesthetics." I would query this application of the term "subsidiary," which makes those disciplines that are more practically concerned with art forms less, rather than more, authoritative about such forms. In one sense, making philosophy prior rightly imagines its centrality to all questions—modern and ancient—about the work of representation. But in another, putting philosophy first may put the materiality of art objects, including poems, below the horizon of criticism.
4. If, as Pfau suggests, the aesthetic is somehow "proto-articulate," it is so either because it is redeemed by criticism or because the "voice" of the aesthetic inevitably constrains or limits criticism. Pfau finds an instructive resolution of this question in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Kant supposes that pleasure arises from the subject's reflexive understanding of its own subjective condition in the moment of

aesthetic experience. Imagined in this way, aesthetics is "an encryption of the very intelligence that will constitute itself" in and through the act of interpretation. The confounding wiggle in Kant's claim has of course to do with the corollary he offers for this argument—that such aesthetic experience is "universally communicable." Thus Kant is a key source for the paradox of interiority with which Pfau began. His interrogation of this familiar Kantian difficulty turns to consider his conviction that sensation conveys to the subject the contingent unity of relation thus established for the imagination and the understanding. Pfau astutely characterizes Kant's abrupt turn in his analytic of the beautiful from "a purely abstract, formal dynamic said to occasion the 'feeling' of the beautiful to the ostensibly empirical and material vocabulary of 'sensation'" as a "conceptual tremor" in the third *Critique*—one that de Man generalized as having to do with Kant's "purely tropological system."

5. Pfau chooses instead to pursue options suggested by Kant's reliance on "voice." Recalling that Rousseau links pleasure to continual sound—the ebb and flow of water "continued but magnified at intervals" (quoted by Pfau)—Pfau sketches the philosophical implications of duration, particularly that of music, wherein duration makes form—as harmony, as tonal proportion, as design—possible. This assessment is in many ways the most crucial moment in this argument, for it asserts that aesthetic experience is, as Kant insisted, "contemplative"—and, as such, invested in its own prolongation." As the contemplation of the beautiful strengthens and reproduces itself" (says Kant), we gain and thereby recognize our interiority. We need sensation, in other words, to inaugurate the prolongation for which musical duration is a trope as well as key instance.
6. In modernist aesthetics, Kant's legacy takes the two forms described above. Either the aesthetic provides "a formal rehearsal of the subject's cognitive mobility" or (in the view of its critics) it evokes feeling that is empty of cognitive ground—as though, to return to the musical examples that make Pfau's analysis particularly instructive, to bathe the listener in a emotional soup of sound that refuses or blocks contemplation, as does Andrew Lloyd Webber's score for *Les Misérables*—my choice of a representative instance of what Pfau calls (by way of other examples) "evacuated liturgy." His more detailed exposition of these alternatives invites analysis and some queries. The first requires a subject who is on the lookout for ways to exercise cognitive mobility, whether that exercise involves tracking a motif in a piano sonata, a figure in Hegel, or fossil and geological evidence of evolution. In each case, Pfau argues, the "empirical practice" of an "observing intelligence" reflects and, in doing so, discerns (Pfau uses the more agent-directed verb "to extract" to characterize this work) "a developmental pattern." What troubles me about this account is the form of pleasure it is said to produce—a species of pleasure that understands itself as correcting sensation, as "the formal device that aims to redeem the materiality of being from its vagrant and unreflected drift through time." Applied to music, this model presupposes a listener who is potentially more aggressive than reflective. Imagine for a moment singing polyphonic music: the subjective pleasure of this activity surely has to do with sustaining, however briefly, tonal patterns and as surely this pleasure must increase with a singer's greater awareness of the inner structure of the polyphony. But it is delusory to imagine that one can redeem the materiality of sounds thus produced. Perhaps more to the point, I understand the pleasure of such song as experienced along side the recognition that the sounds so essential to this pleasure will fade, even when the mind remains conscious of the contrapuntal pattern thus achieved. This double recognition is in part why fading musical notes grip singer and listener. When Pfau suggests that this aesthetic approach involves a "consciousness eager to reaffirm its cognitive authority by isolating recursive, imitative, antithetical or otherwise differential patterns," I balk at the implied generalization of this description. The evolutionary example Pfau offers for this model, Darwin by way of Richard Dawkins's brief for the "selfish gene," is similarly pitched toward contest and victory over time and evolutionary change. What, I wonder, would an evolutionary biologist like Stephen Jay Gould make of presenting evolutionary patterns as this tightly focused and monitored? Pfau's point here is that such a model conveys the first of the two modern approaches to aesthetic pleasure that emerges from Kant and which Eduard Hanslick extends in the mid-nineteenth century. But does he? When Hanslick says that to

specify the "content" of a motif for someone, "we will have to play for him the theme itself" (quoted by Pfau), this statement does not as I read it mean that pleasure "has been absorbed into the cognitive play of an attentively listening, analytic intelligence" (Pfau). Why would pleasure and sensation be put aside by such musical attentiveness? The difference between Kant's communicable aesthetic judgment and Hanslick's closed circuit model of sound and a listening intelligence is, as Pfau notes, not good news, for it ushers in a model in which tight little mutually confirming and essentially narcissist relations between speakers and addressees obtain.

7. The second model of a listener/subject absorbed in sensation and pleasure and for this reason unable to scrutinize or evaluate aesthetic experience is worse. For Pfau as for Charles Rosen, Keats (that is, "To Autumn") and Mendelssohn (of the large symphonic pieces) offer formal brilliance without content—that world of sensation that the young Keats once declared he wished to have. This characterization of Keats looks very peculiar and certainly partial to a certain way of reading this poem and this letter. It would not, I think, stand up well to other examples, say *Lamia* or the *Hyperion* poems. Yet it would perhaps be unfair to distract attention from Pfau's larger historical theme by disputing instances. That theme traces a diminution of Kantian (and Enlightenment) knowability and communicability into Schopenhauer's presentation of feeling and sensation as untainted by thought, the other, or thoughts about others. So construed, the aesthetic becomes co-extensive with the motives of will and thus the body at the expense of cognitive work. For Pfau, this model offers an experience of music in which its "sheer sonority is said to absolve us from the contingent"—from the world of representation as we know it in modernity. I assent wholly to Pfau's sense of the self-deception of this rendering of aesthetic experience and subjective response, though I do not necessarily assent to the examples he offers. The anti-theoretical and anti-selfconscious impulse of this model of aesthetic response produces meaning that depends on "transference or self-projection" as much as "consensus." Against this model, we can perhaps array a different genealogical project in modernity, akin to that indicated at the end of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. There passing on or not passing on—the verb Pfau uses to talk about aesthetic genealogy—the story of *Beloved* is provocatively and ironically enmeshed in the act of story-telling and listening. This is not a story to pass on, Sethe warns, and it is precisely the story that the novel does pass on, but without a comfortable fit between teller and addressee.
8. In its larger gestures, Pfau's argument seeks to discover a modern ground for the ethical imperative of Kant's notion of "voice" as at once interior and communicable. That ground, he suggests, might be found where acts of naming (such as poetic figures) "hover[ ] between the creative and the recursive, the tropological and the referential." It is not sufficient to read Romanticism as wholly expressive, immersed in the young Keats's "world of sensation rather than thoughts." Neither is it sufficient to oppose the inventive and non-recursive features of Romantic writing to its culture as a field of references from which Romantic tropes are then said to deviate. What is needed instead is a criticism flexible enough and ironic enough to move between these poles of aesthetic response—within and without Romanticism.