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Book Reviews

Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection, by Julia Kristeva, translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. Pp. 248. \$19.95.

Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, by Julia Kristeva, edited by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Alice Jardine, Thomas Gora, and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. Pp. 336. \$20.00.

"L'Abjet d'amour." *Tel Quel* 91 (Summer 1982), 17-32.

Kristeva's latest work to be presented in English—*Desire in Language* and *Powers of Horror*, published in 1980 and 1982 by Columbia University Press—displays the contestatory force of "semiotics" as she has succeeded in defining it (since *La Révolution du langage poétique*, in 1974): as the analysis of "signifying practices" conceived to include psychical processes and literary style as well as language and ritual. In addition to a long-standing commitment to the study of literature, Kristeva has specialized technical competence in linguistics and psychoanalysis. Her semiotic approach consists in making each of these commitments displace and redefine the others. Strikingly, it is the commitment to literature, or, in the Russian Formalists' phrase, to "poetic language"—rather than the analytical and demystificatory discourses of linguistics and psychoanalysis—that turns out to be most disruptive. Kristeva unsettles some habitual assumptions about the value of literature and literary study. In "The Ethics of Linguistics" (*DL*, p. 25), she writes, "we must analyze those elements of the complex operation that I shall call poetic language (in which the dialectics of the subject is inscribed) that are screened out by ordinary language, i.e. social constraint. . . . The term 'poetry' has meaning only insofar as it makes this kind of studies acceptable to various educational and cultural institutions. But the stakes it entails are totally different; what is implied is that language, and thus sociability, are defined by boundaries admitting of upheaval, dissolution, and transformation." Far from ensuring the endurance, through historical change, of values grounded in conditions of meaning determined by the nature of language, literature testifies to the instability of the conditions of signification: the fragility of the Symbolic order itself, the instability of the structuring of the symbol or sign as a vertical, hierarchical relationship between signifier and signified—the very condition of language and meaning.

It should be stressed that more than avant-garde literature is at issue here, although for Kristeva it is the writing of authors such as Lautréamont, Artaud, Mayakovsky, Beckett, Céline, and Philippe Sollers that best exemplify poetic language, and Céline is the subject of the second half of *Powers of Horror* as well as a key chapter in *Desire in Language*. Discussions of infantile language in chapters addressing Melanie Klein and Freud and of the novel in a chapter on Bakhtin make it clear that the signifying processes Kristeva seeks to evoke characterize not just avant-garde writing or poetry, but language as such. For critical purposes, Kristeva distinguishes signifying practices she

calls "translinguistic" from the narrowly conceived "language" of a linguistics focused on the stable hierarchical sign. Literature exposes the instability of "language" and the heterogeneity of the signifying process.

Literature means the crisis of meaning. Kristeva puts this conception bluntly: literature entails crisis for social political institutions as well as for the speaking subject: "by its very economy," Kristeva asserts, "poetic language borders on psychosis . . . and totalitarianism or fascism" (*DL*, p. 125). Instead of leading her to turn away from literature, however, to the authority of theoretical discourses claiming to analyze and diagnose (not evoke or exemplify) "the horror," this acknowledgment rather leads Kristeva to try to make psychoanalysis and linguistics (if not anthropology and political theory) responsive in their very foundations to the significance of that which it is the privilege of literature to signify: "the meaning as well as the power" of horror (*PH*, p. 208).

Horror, or the more complex phenomenon of "abjection," becomes Kristeva's subject as she undertakes to describe the *subjective experience* of the primal process of separation that underlies and undermines the differentiations of fully constituted language and society. Like Bataille, who focused on the horror and desire evoked by the undifferentiated, Kristeva interrogates horror as a primary force of separation between the human and the non-human. Bataille noted that the taboo on excrement is so fundamental a division between the human and the animal that it is never even classified as a taboo (*L'Erotisme*, p. 239). Kristeva begins an account of religious ritual with an interpretation of rites surrounding defilement, which replay "the demarcating imperative," the imperative to build up dividing lines between society and nature "on the basis of the simple logic of excluding filth" (*PH*, p. 68). Kristeva had argued (in *La Révolution du langage poétique*) that the Symbolic process (the establishment of sign and syntax, of grammatical and social constraints) takes place in dialectical conflict with a process prior to it, "the semiotic," a "mapping" of the instinctual drives, which persists in the rhythmical and phonic dimensions of language. This primal differentiation is first of all the mapping or zoning of the infant's body by the mother, into a territory having surfaces, orifices, and insides. Language is based upon this primal mapping and always risks collapsing into it. Defilement rites serve to keep paternal law distinct from maternal authority, to keep the Symbolic order distinct from the semiotic order in which it is rooted but which it must repress so as to impose the primacy of the condition of meaning proper, the vertical dimension of the sign.

Kristeva's argument here is congruent with Derrida's analysis of the role of disgust in Kant's system of taste (and moral judgment), where the disgusting, alone, is excluded from the possibility of becoming beautiful in a representation; disgust serves to defend us against a more irremediable decomposition of identity and the power of identification. Thus it goes along with that power, as *its* "other." In these essays, Kristeva is not only stressing the otherness of abjection but also analyzing, like Derrida, the complicity between disgust and "the hierarchizing authority of the logocentric analogy" (Derrida, "Economimesis," *Diacritics* 11:2 (1982), 25). Three chapters in *Powers of Horror* describe Hindu, Jewish and Christian ritual as functioning "to effect an abreaction of the pre-sign impact, the semiotic impact, of language" (p. 73).

Finally, defilement rites may be said to be a kind of *writing*—insofar as “they parcel out, demarcate, delineate an order, a framework, a sociality, without having any other signification than the one inhering in that very parceling”; and writing can be seen as “a second level rite, at the level of language”: a process “which causes one to be reminded, through the linguistic signs themselves, of the demarcations that condition them and go beyond them” (pp. 74–75), the semiotic order associated with maternal authority.

The imagination of writing as *rite* exemplifies Kristeva’s “translinguistic” approach, requiring that linguistics take into account the speaker’s existence in the realms marked out by anthropology and history. At the same time she asks that anthropological data be made to address a psychoanalytic question: “what *effects* and especially what *benefits* accrue to the speaking subject from a precise symbolic organization”? “What desiring motives are required to maintain a given social symbolics”? (PH, p. 67) What aside from institutionalized force makes a given form of patriarchy hold up? To feminists, Kristeva’s answers may look dangerously like an apologia for the foundation of culture upon the suppression of women; the “benefits that accrue to the speaking subject” may seem to accrue overwhelmingly to subjects who are male. But while Kristeva follows Lévi-Strauss in conceiving of social structures as symbolic systems linked to the universal order of language, she distinguishes between any particular “social-symbolic system” and the signifying process as such, “the only concrete universality that defines that speaking being” (PH, p. 73). Kristeva’s focus on “desire in language”—on *desires* sustaining a social-symbolic system—is designed precisely to emphasize any such system’s mutability as a “*possible variant* within the signifying process,” to stress in any form of patriarchy its historicity and susceptibility to change, not its identity with an immutable linguistic order.

What makes Kristeva’s argument problematical as *feminist* theory is her commitment to analyzing “the speaking subject”—a sexual subject, yet one related only through the most complex mediations to gendered persons filling social roles. She means to describe both the subjective and the social—as a *symbolic system* that corresponds to a specific structuration of the subject within language. That conception of subjectivity is not easily linked to “subjective experience” in the ordinary sense of the thought and feeling of a person in a particular situation, and indeed *this* social-subjective dimension is left out of account, in what seems a crying omission, to a feminist reader, particularly in the key chapter on ritual, since the social practices it interprets (the taboo on incest, the taboo on menstruation) impinge so differently on men and on women. Kristeva seeks rather to describe the feminine, the maternal and the paternal as they are symbolized by any speaking subject in a particular social-symbolic order. Thus the multiple ambiguity of her subtitle—“An Essay on Abjection”—is not resolved but determinedly sustained: she writes at once of the *action* of casting off or rejecting, the action of degrading or abasing (as psychic and as social mechanism), *that which* is cast off or rejected, and the *state* of being cast off or abased.

The “*abject*” is what is not, or not yet, an object. Kristeva’s interpretation of the social and psychological phenomenon is in fact based on a psychoanalytic argument, on a critique of object-relations theory. Kristeva rereads Freud—on phobia, narcissism, and identification—to describe processes prior

to the constitution of an object or a subject. For Kristeva as for Lacan, relations to objects are secondary to symbolization, to a relation toward language. Hence she sets out to examine the economy of narcissism and of phobia "in the elaboration and practice of the symbolic function" (*PH*, p. 63). Here Kristeva's reflections are largely a critical rethinking of the theories of Melanie Klein. Klein departed from Freud not only in affirming the existence of the ego and of objects for the infant's drives and defenses from the very beginning of the infant's life; she also focused attention on the all-importance in this earliest phase of the mother, marked already by a third term (as in the Oedipal phase), the mother's desire, fantasized by the infant, for the phallus. Kristeva offers her own account of this structure—as the infant's primary differentiation of an *abject*, rather than rapport with an object—in an essay published last year in *Tel Quel*, "L'Abjet d'amour."

Chapter two of *Powers of Horror* challenges object-relations theory by examining the link between the object and fear. Kristeva rereads Freud's "Analysis of a Phobia of a Five Year-Old Boy" (the case of "little Hans") to suggest that phobia arises, ultimately, not from the fear of an object but from the fear of the loss of object, the fear of *drives* which exceed any object. Little Hans's fear of horses "becomes a hieroglyph that condenses all fears, nameable and unnameable"; it is "a metaphor taxed with representing *want itself*," rather than the want of a particular object (*PH*, p. 35). The phobic's metaphor is inadequate, strained, and insufficiently metaphorical—partly object, partly sign. Freud's treatment consists in substituting another metaphor which reinforces the symbolizing agency productive of metaphors: he emphasizes how little Hans is ruled by love and fear of his father, and interprets his fear of horses as fear of castration. Kristeva's point is that the law of the Father at the basis of the Symbolic order is fragile and forced. But it is necessary for generating metaphors, the relief for fear. The phobic's feared objects are hieroglyphs or a "proto-writing," objects as signs; "the *writer* is a phobic who succeeds in metaphorizing" (p. 38), and all writing is a language of fear, not a relation to objects but a writing of *want* as such.

Here as in the chapter on defilement rites we find Kristeva's characteristic move: examining a social or psychical mechanism, she recognizes it as a kind of language or writing, and redefines language in terms of the specific signifying function this mechanism has disclosed. Such a proceeding does evoke the disparate and conflicting functions that enter into language or signification, the "heterogeneity" that Kristeva makes it her goal to describe. Yet this heterogeneity is evoked most exactly, in fact, where her reflections do not complete this movement—where they stop short of redefining language so as to include a peculiar psychical or social mechanism—because it is in terms of language alone, or more exactly in the terms of rhetorical theory, that certain functions would have to be described. Kristeva does not have recourse to rhetorical terms in her interpretation of narcissism, but her psychoanalytic critique of the notion of "immediate identification"—common to Freud and to Hegel, she suggests—leads in that direction. For this reason as well as for its clarity on the constitution of the maternal as the abject, one wishes that the essay "L'Abjet d'amour" could be included as an appendix in *Powers of Horror*, though it was not part of the original book.

"L'Abjet d'amour" describes the psychical process from which all manifes-

tations of abjection would derive, the infant's identification of the maternal as "abject" in the moment of identifying with the paternal function or the phallus which is the mother's desire. Such a preoedipal triangle is outlined by Melanie Klein. But Kristeva differs with Klein in dwelling upon Freud's naming and placing of this moment: as "primary narcissism," situated after auto-erotism and before any object-cathexis. Freud distinguishes narcissism from auto-erotism by its introduction of a "new psychic action"—a third term added to the auto-erotism of the undifferentiated two, infant and mother. Primary narcissism, then, is the first institution of a Symbolic (triadic) order. Kristeva shows how the most contested premise of psychoanalytic theory, the primary status of narcissism (rather than object-relations or Girardian "mimetic desire") converges with the most radical premise of linguistic theory, the constitutive status of the bar or the gap between signifier and signified and between sign and meaning (rather than the mimetic or referential dimension of language), or what is known since Saussure as "the arbitrary nature of the sign." Kristeva makes the psychoanalytic premise provide an answer to the question posed by the linguistic one: How is the gap constitutive of meaning psychically sustained? The answer will be, by means of primary narcissism, the advent of which establishes and screens over the first gap or difference, between what is not yet an ego and what is not yet an object, between the *infans* and the "abject."

Kristeva exposes the tension as well as the complicity between the linguistic and the psychoanalytic account of the primary condition for relations of meaning. She draws attention to the typical features of Freud's explanation of how the crucial gap is sustained. An account of that primary psychic structure prior to any object-relations appears in a key paragraph in chapter three of *The Ego and the Id*, describing the origin of the ego ideal in "the individual's first and most important identification" (Standard Edition, XIX, p. 31). This is a "direct and immediate identification"—not, like later identifications, the outcome of an object-cathexis. It is the individual's "identification with the father in his own personal prehistory." Thus what "On Narcissism" led one to conceive as the identification of a *gap* now gets described as an identification with the *father*.

Kristeva seeks to explain, rather than to interpret, the disparity between the two accounts. But she zeroes in on the claim that the identification is "immediate." This is not a *coup de force*, an imposition of an *a priori* ("AA," p. 21), comparable to the move Heidegger interrogates in "Hegel and the Concept of Experience," the assertion of the subject's immediate knowledge of the immanent presence of the Absolute. Freud's text, Kristeva suggests, makes this "immediacy" susceptible to analysis. For the "Vater der persönlichen Vorzeit" means, in psychoanalytic terms, the father whom the infant inherits (not the father he comes to know): the phallus or the Imaginary Father whose image is relayed by the mother's desire for something other than mother and child. The "immediate identification with the father," a concept vital for Freud's interpretive constructions, for an account of the emergence of the ego and the super-ego, is dependent upon this elaboration of the function of the preoedipal mother.

To see what lies implicit in Freud's concept of "immediate identification" is to see the derivative and improper status of the leading terms of this account,

Kristeva argues. Neither an "object" nor "identification" is properly in play in this primary transformation, the separation of being and desire and the constitution of that separation as an absolute. A more adequate term—still Freud's—would be "transference." Kristeva's essay, which sets off from a re-reading of the same passage in the third chapter of *The Ego and the Id* cited by Melanie Klein in "The Origins of Transference," ends up by rewriting that reading as "Transference at the origin." What is the significance of this reversal, whereby the term that usually refers to a repetition (a carrying-over into a later relationship of the desires and defences that characterized an earlier one) has to be employed to designate the *first* relation? (In this reading, the ego *ideal*, moreover, emerges prior to the ego itself.) Kristeva writes, "A not-yet identity (that of the infant) transfers, or rather displaces, itself to the site of an Other which is not libidinally invested as an object (it is precisely its not entailing object-investment that justifies, it seems to me, the term *displacement* rather than *transference* for this primary identification), but which nonetheless remains the condition for an ideal of the ego" ("AA," p. 22). Kristeva's hesitation between the terms "transference" and "displacement" recalls Freud's at first sight unsystematic alternation between the two terms (*Übertragung* and *Verschiebung*) in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where "transference" refers, not to the patient's relationship to the analyst, but to the displacement of psychical intensity from one idea to another. The term "transference" appears instead of the term "displacement" when Freud describes the displacement of intensity from an "unconscious" to a "preconscious idea," or from an "important" idea to a "trivial" one (as when Freud describes repressed ideas' "need for transference" onto the "day's residues"). Transference, that is, refers to the displacement from one "idea" to another of *a different order*: it is a displacement between signifier and signified, in the vertical, hierarchical structure of the sign (§). Such "transference" is necessary, writes Freud in *The Interpretation*, for ideas to enter consciousness at all. "Unconscious ideas" are those subject to the primary process of sheer displacement (*Verschiebung*)—an S.. S.S...; consciousness requires the primary repression whereby one site is deemed superior to another, made to stand as the signified of a signifier. In Kristeva's terms, the semiotic is repressed in favor of the Symbolic. It is here that the "arbitrary nature of the sign" emerges: in the primal *repression* with which primary narcissism—of the ego *ideal*—coincides.

But more interesting here than the coherence of Kristeva's argument are its hesitations, its alternations among the terms "identification," "transference," and "displacement" to characterize accession to the possibility of signification. These make up a system, as Freud's usage suggests. In using the same word, transference, to refer to the displacement of intensity among signifiers and to the displacement of authority among parent-figures (from parent to analyst, or in Lacan's phrase, among *sujets supposé savoir*), Freud implies the inevitability by which the latter is invoked to guarantee the former—for sheer displacement is not as such, it must be *deemed* to be, symbolization (as Freud deems the "preconscious" idea, or signifier, "trivial," the "unconscious idea," the signified, "important"): sheer juxtaposition or enumeration must be *deemed* to be trope. And this takes place together with a personification: the consolidation, as an agency or power, of that violence that inscribes a displacement as a sign.

Kristeva is led to describe a *transference* at the origin by a necessity whereby the language of rhetoric comes to be the precise terminology, and the most rigorous referent, for descriptions of the very accession to the possibility of signification. What Kristeva, following Klein, is describing here as the infant's earliest approach to identity is none other than the laying down of a rhetorical system, a system linking personifications with tropes. Another word for "transference" would be *metaphor* (*meta-phorein*, to carry over or across). Another word for "displacement" would be metonymy, the trope that merely substitutes one thing for another of the same order—the trope into which a metaphor must not collapse. And the imagination of the primary identification with the *gap* as an identification with the *father* is an anthropomorphism, entailing (as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) the personification of a proper name (the name of the father), the conflation of an inscription and a person. Kristeva has reconstructed, in effect, a Freudian account of the subject's accession to meaning that makes up a narrative version of the answer Nietzsche gives to the question "What is Truth?": "A moving army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms." Her juxtaposition of Freud's texts reveals the disparity and the conflict among these functions: anthropomorphism enforcing the identity between metonymy and metaphor, between separation and signification. Kristeva would maintain the heterogeneity of the signifying process against its reduction to symbolization. But paradoxically, this heterogeneity is evoked most compellingly where she confronts a problematic that might be thought to be internal to symbolization: where she engages (as in her interpretation of narcissism) in a rhetorical analysis of an epistemology which reveals itself to be a theory of rhetoric. "Poetic language," as she recurrently rediscovers, is the widest—and most mistakeable—field of investigation.

Derrida's essay "Freud and the Scene of Writing" revealed in the metaphors of writing in Freud's texts the disclosure of an originary "psychic writing," an originary repetition. Kristeva's rediscovery of a "transference" at the origin reveals the same logic. The emergence of the psychic takes place as writing, or "poetic language," not only in its material character as inscription and erasure (emphasized by Kristeva and by Derrida) but also in the other dimension of writing exacerbated by poetic language: its rhetorical character, its existence as trope and as persuasion. The "immediate identification" with the Imaginary Father would be the first "persuasion" as well as the first trope. Kristeva's *Essay on Abjection*, together with her essay on the constitution of the maternal as the object, rediscovers the "multiplicity of agencies or origins"—displacement, transference, and personification; maternal relay, paternal metaphor—evoked in these terms by Derrida: "A two-handed machine, a multiplicity of agencies or origins—is this not the original relation to the other and the original temporality of writing, its 'primary' complication: an originary spacing, deferring, and erasure of the simple origin, and *polemics on the very threshold of what we persist in calling perception?*" (*Writing and Difference*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 226).

Kristeva would trace the polemics of the "repudiation of femininity" ("bedrock," for Freud), the rhetoric of anti-Semitism (in particular, Céline's), and that of other phobias and rituals, back to this "polemics," this rhetoric, "on the very threshold of perception." But she would also disentangle them.

She interrogates, for example, the social and cultural as well as personal interests served by Freud's central discovery, the Oedipus complex. It came to light during the self-analysis Freud undertook in the wake of his father's death and the end of his own fathering of children, in 1897: it was this conjunction that "led him to that telescoping of father and child resulting in none other than Oedipus" (DL, p. 275). Kristeva proposes reading Freud's discovery as "the discourse of mourning for his father's death": she asks, "could the discovery of the Oedipus complex . . . have been produced through an inverted Oedipus complex?" But in a more far-reaching move, Kristeva goes on to suggest that Freud's father's actual death in 1897 was not a decisive factor. Could the conception of the Oedipus complex, rather, be "the negative of the guilt experienced by the son who is *forced by the signifier* to take his father's place"? The Oedipus complex is invented in response to the effect of a linguistic law; it serves as a narrative figure to explain effects of the proper name—to explain and account for the guilt that supervenes upon the subject's accession to language through the name of the father. And the conception of the Oedipal child has not only an explanatory but also a legitimating function. It makes the father's role of prohibiting desires appear essential and inevitable. "The Freudian conception of the child would thus provide the basis for paternal discourse, the solid foundation for the paternal function, and consequently the guarantee, both present and ultimate, of socialization": it is "lucidly presented to support the inevitability of the symbolic and/or social code" (DL, pp. 274–75). Kristeva's analysis opens to attack the way the Oedipus theory has worked as a rationalization and psychologization of the effects of a linguistic imperative: the inference it encourages from the key function of the name of the father to the notion that father-figures and actual fathers must play a dominant symbolic and social role.

Situating the emergence of subjectivity in the identification with (the mother's) feminine desire, Kristeva makes it possible for us to see the emergence of symbolization through paternal prohibition as a "possible variant within," rather than as the foundation of, the signifying process. The paintings of Giotto and Bellini are among the texts she reexamines for what they testify about the significance, within a tradition always supposed to repress it, of maternal *jouissance*: joy of desire, intimation of meaning. As Leon Roudiez observes in the glossary in his helpful introduction to *Desire in Language* (which includes "Giotto's Joy" and "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini"), here Kristeva can call upon the workings of the signifier, for *jouissance* sounds as *j'ouïs sens* (I heard meaning). Kristeva argues that the subordination of forms to "the infinitesimal division of color and space" in Bellini's Madonnas suggests that the joy in pictorial representation arises as a painting provokes in us the primary narcissism or repression, the originary identification with *division*, which is focused by maternal desire.

The translators of *Desire in Language* and *Powers of Horror* have produced texts which do not smooth or flatten Kristeva's difficult prose, yet at moments manage elegance. The translators' interpretive decisions seem scrupulous and reliable. For example, the rendering of the key word "manque" as "want" rather than "lack" catches Kristeva's distinctive stress on the psychological rather than simply the structural dimension of language. These trans-

lations are valuable work. Their publication makes more available to us a provocative rereading of a diverse and crucial canon.

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Representations of Revolution (1789-1820) by Ronald Paulson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. Pp. 416 + 100 halftones. \$29.95.

A four-hundred-page commentary on one hundred fascinating illustrations, Ronald Paulson's *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* follows the destruction of the body politic through representations of its dismemberment. Paulson proposes a theory to account for the historical, psychological, and aesthetic content of the art and literature of 1789-1820 and in so doing has expanded the notion of revolution to include the betrayal of family and love and the betrayal of genre in art.

In the final chapter on Goya and the Spanish Revolution Paulson contrasts what is probably the most horrifying image in painting, Goya's Saturn eating his offspring in the *Deaf Man's House* (1820-23), with Rubens's Saturn of 1636-37. Rubens's Saturn bends over the infant, taking the plastic breast into his bewhiskered mouth. The soft infant head lolls backwards to appeal to the spectator from upside down. The Rubens is disturbing enough as an image of patriarchal authority: yet in Goya's Saturn Paulson is able to align the historical and psychological problem of authority even more suggestively in what he calls the oral-anal pole of representations of revolution. This Saturn is not a bewhiskered old man with a staff but a grotesque monster, somewhere between the human and bestial, nightmarishly reminiscent of too many atrocities. He is the father devouring the son, the people devouring the French king, and the ceaselessly revolving Spanish revolution devouring itself. The offspring here is not an infant but a grown man (Paulson says a king), whose head and one arm have already disappeared into the gaping black hole of the monster's mouth. The stump of the remaining arm is thrust into the giant's mouth like a bloody phallus. Before its restoration, Goya's Saturn apparently supported a monstrous erection, and still the effect is that he eats himself.

It is this absent head, lost in the vacuum of the destroyed fatherland, that Paulson seeks in the images of cuckolded husbands, unfaithful wives and daughters, and dismembered legions: an absent head that is also the lack of aesthetic precedent. "The problem to be explored is: How does a writer or artist represent something he believes to be unprecedented—hitherto unknown and unexperienced?" (1). The revolution in France—representations of it at home (David) and in Spain (Goya) and representations of *repressions* of it in England (Blake, Rowlandson, Gillray, Lewis, Godwin, Wordsworth)—is one testing ground, and the other is what may be called the aesthetic Unconscious. That is, the latent content of a representation of revolution may well be about the artist's revolt against the artistic traditions of the past.

This book is therefore about revolution as something that subsumed—or adapted—certain aesthetic categories and types of progression. But it

is also about the relationship between these aesthetic categories and the psychological categories to which they may refer. For if we can clear away all the detail . . . we see . . . two basic interpretations of the phenomenon of revolution in the period, or perhaps in any period. One is oedipal and the other is oral-anal. In one the son kills, devours, and internalizes the father, becoming himself the authority figure, producing a rational sequence of events [e.g., Blake's progression from innocence to experience to a higher innocence, Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Keats's *Hyperion*]. . . . In the other the revolution is seen—in practice, in the very midst of it—as merely a regression to earlier stages of being, an ingestion that produces narcissism [as in Rowlandson, Gillray, Goya]. . . . In one the effect is sublime or a progression . . . from sublime to beautiful, in the other grotesque, moving toward the undifferentiation of tyrant and oppressed [8].

Whether or not one wishes to quarrel with the psychoanalytic categories, there is little question of the significant difference between the two representations of revolution: Goya's grotesque, looming, shadowed Saturn barely differentiated from the offspring he eats (on the front of the dust jacket, the oral-anal interpretation) and Blake's sublime Orc in a sunburst, or "Glad Day" (on the back, the oedipal interpretation).

As the quotation above suggests, Paulson also reconsiders genre, and this with an eye for gender. Early on, for example, it became clear that political repression included sexual and gender repression; so in chapter 3, on the debate between Burke, Paine and Wollstonecraft on the Sublime and the Beautiful, the Sublime is represented by the powerful woman and the Beautiful by the weak Marie Antoinette. Thus the Queen's execution functions as the end of the Beautiful as an aesthetic category. In chapter 5, on the comic/picturesque and filled with Rowlandson's truly disturbing pictures of cuckolded fathers, energetic young lovers, and wives/daughters, Paulson asks, "For the question remains: Is the sexual-sensual act only a sublimation of revolutionary urges? . . . Or when [the author/artist] was thinking of revolution, was he in fact thinking only of drinking and lovemaking?" (150). If the picturesque is a function of time, organic change, decay, and collapse (as in the old husband), the grotesque filled up the vacuum around representations of history. This plenitude or excess, a horror vacui, disrupted Rowlandson's work and became the mark of the ambivalent political caricaturist Gillray (chapter 6). The Gothic (chapter 7) begins in the tension between freedom and compulsion or revolution and tyranny, but it ends in a similar lack of differentiation, and Paulson here finds useful Girardian theories of reciprocal violence. Rowlandson depicted the violence succeeding upon undifferentiation (between old husband and young lover); Gillray's political cartoons omitted Rowlandson's object of desire, the woman, and left only a Pitt and a Fox in senseless violence against John Bull; and Godwin entirely levels the master and the servant, or Frankenstein's monster functions as "the ultimate in the mergers we have seen of man and woman, father and son, master and servant, oppressor and oppressed, violence and victim: an amalgam that in-

cludes Victor Frankenstein, the monster's creator and double" (247). At the heart of the *Prelude* (chapter 8), that marvelous piece of secondary revision or repression, narrative historicizing and final triumph over Miltonic epic (the ancien regime of poetry), are Wordsworth's revolutionary love (and counter-revolutionary abandonment) of Annette Vallon, the revolution itself, his disobedience to his father, and the making of a poet. Here Paulson historicizes Bloom's anxiety of influence as a formula more thinkable after the Revolution than before it. In Goya (chapter 9), the historical/personal/aesthetic parallels become equally manifest: the historical non-progression of the Spanish revolution; Goya's breakdown, deafness, and betrayal by the Duchess of Alba; and the striking "modernity" of his work.

Predictably, shifting from aesthetic to political to psychological grids is not always smooth and convincing. Similarly, amid Paulson's wealth of detail from high and low art one cannot always see the forest for the trees and one occasionally wonders where all this sex, scatology, atrocity and iconoclasm is going to lead, or whether, like the Revolution, it will all just degenerate into an undifferentiated mass of literary criticism, art history, sociology and psychology. Another problem, as Paulson well knows, for he is the great problematizer of it, is the relationship between image and text—between the illustrations and Paulson's "readings" of them and between his selected artists and authors. One may not find representations of women and vacuums as threatening as he does; nor, for that matter, do I find his representations of representations of women as probing as some recent treatments by women of revolutionary art in *Representations* and *History Workshop Journal*.

But then perhaps Paulson's obvious and absolute authority in his field stands in his way, for certainly it is his voice, an eloquent, mature, *comfortable* voice, which rises above the mass of revolutionary data. In fact, it is the voice of the father, one of the fathers of "new" eighteenth century studies, which is everywhere demonstrated by the myriad courtly footnotes. With its wealth of image and text (horror vacui?) and despite its subject matter, Paulson's is a very civilized book. On the other hand, as Paulson watches the scholars, and the wives and daughters, and the brutish monsters, and the young men, and the abysses, the comfortable voice is perhaps a veneer only—over revolutionary impulses, for the horror vacui also fills up the space with imaginary monsters.

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The Hegelian Aftermath. Readings in Hegel, Kierkegaard, Freud, Proust, and James by Henry Sussman. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982. Pp. 260. \$22.50.

Commencing with a reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and proceeding through a series of nineteenth and early twentieth-century texts, Sussman is concerned with neither the personal influences of intellectual history nor with the pressure of social forces on cultural production. Instead he presents the Hegelian work as a compendium of metaphors and tropes which struc-

ture and delimit the rhetorical activity of the subsequent authors. Hence Sussman's assurance that "the moving force in this history is not persons, authors or cultures but rather the limits of discursive possibility" (p. 3)—a statement which indisputably captures the author's exclusion of biographical and social history from his close readings but which still slightly misses the mark. For this "history" has no "moving force," it does not move at all, tracing instead the structures of literary and philosophical writing during the "romantic-modern" period extending from Hegel to Proust and James. During this period, no substantive progress, development or change occurs; rather the tropic possibilities and disjunctions inherent in the *Phenomenology*—"bifurcation, inversion, lateral displacement, the interiorization of the exterior, the exteriorization of the interior, reciprocity, the establishment of reciprocity out of difference, the introjection of difference into reciprocity, and the circularization of linear sequences" (p. 20)—are played out in a rich variety of combinations. Thus the *Phenomenology* is divorced from its ostensible content, the history of consciousness, and approached instead with reference to the "possible conditions" of its own textuality, leading to a "Kantian reading" (p. 21). Given this formalist limitation, Sussman is able to avoid engaging in a polemic with the traditionally understood Hegel of absolute spirit and irresistible, dialectical progress. On the contrary, he directs his attention precisely toward the unresolved impasses, where the strategy of perpetual sublation is called into question; the *Phenomenology* is recognized as a polyphonic text constituted in the rhetorical tension between an omniscient narrative voice and the fragmentation of certain tropes. This immanent crisis within the Hegelian text sets up the space in which anti-Hegelian criticism is subsequently generated, most notably in Kierkegaard. "The structure of interlocation [in *Repetition*] is more important than the 'identities' of the characters themselves" (p. 85), and that structure becomes Kierkegaardian irony, which for Sussman is as indebted to the Hegelian rhetorical forms as it is intentionally hostile to Hegelian conceptualism (p. 101).

Sussman goes on to trace the continuity of Hegelian tropes in modernist texts, and this continuity is considered more important than the clamorous insistence on some break with the nineteenth-century legacy: "Even if, following vorticism, all of modernism were to effect a decisive shift from substance to movement, from stasis to dynamic flow, like Ernst Fenallosa's ideograms, the lines of force revealed in the modernist current derive from the Hegelian physics. Despite its pervasive aura of newness [...], modernism does not revolutionize. At most it displaces and transposes the energy lines that prevailed in nineteenth-century speculation to the surface of poetry, prose and plastic material" (p. 209). Sussman attempts to demonstrate this transposition with reference to Proust's *Recherche* and with an especially compelling account of James's *Turn of the Screw*. Hegelian doubling and bifurcation explain the governess's visions, treated as "the schizoid mutuality of the relationship between the subject and the image" (p. 235). While remaining within the Hegelian order, the modernist text pushes at its limits by transforming the inherited tropes into aesthetic objects and, due to an explicit problematization of writing, by decentering the narration so as to anticipate post-modernist discursive activities.

Despite its exciting textual explorations, Sussman's project does not escape

some fundamental problems, which are not his alone but those of a whole critical school. First, the thorough exclusion of socio-historical material divorces the texts from their historical context; romanticism and modernism apparently have nothing to do with the French Revolution, capitalism or the experience of urbanization. The new critical denigration of extrinsic factors as less important than intrinsic form seems endearingly tolerant in retrospect, when compared to the radical anti-historicity of deconstruction. Nor would a historical approach to the texts at hand necessarily imply a great leap, say, from Hegel to the Battle of Jena. The important recent work on the institutional settings in which literature is produced and received could cast important light on the problem of the rise of modernism.

This idealism, which severs all links between tropic textuality and social being, is compounded, secondly, by a further idealism, which asserts the priority of a whole over concrete diversity. The catalogue of tropes in the *Phenomenology* is presented as an exhaustive map of subsequent textual rhetoric in the course of the "aftermath." The permutations and combinations of romantic-modern writing are all already embedded in the original text where they await an eventual exfoliation. Thus Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelianism is inserted into the Hegelian rhetoric, just as the modernist texts, which, as Sussman shows, problematize the inherited tropic forms, are subsumed by that inheritance. Similarly curious is the treatment of Walter Benjamin as a follower of Hegel which makes sense only on a level so abstract as to ignore fully the implications of the controversy with Adorno. After Hegel, it seems, nothing qualitatively new can occur, at least not during the romantic-modern period, because there is no outside to the epistemic structure and because the complexities of lived historical experience are disqualified as historical.

Although Sussman's Hegelian tropes provide a rhetorical constitution of the period, it is interesting, if somewhat pedantic, to note how many likely candidates for a Hegelian reading are overlooked: Heine, Keller, Dilthey, Lukács and, conspicuous by his absence, Marx. Need it be pointed out that, beyond the arguments regarding Marx's substantive appropriations of Hegel, a remarkable rhetorical continuity can be observed, especially between the *Logic* and *Capital*? However, Sussman refers to Marxism only briefly when he introduces Baudrillard's critique of productivism (pp. 6-7), which he adapts in a telling manner. If Baudrillard denounces nineteenth-century Marxism's projection of contemporary productive modes onto the past, Sussman transforms the anti-productivism into an accusation of sterility directed against the romantic-modern period during which, allegedly, nothing new emerges. Yet this lack of innovation has less to do with the historical material than with a critical orientation toward synchronic structures and a frozen stasis, unperturbed by the restlessness of subjectivity. The modernist crisis of production, thematized, for example, in *Doctor Faustus*, is projected—a surprisingly Hegelian trope for contemporary criticism—onto the pre-modernism of the romantic nineteenth century.

This projection is deeply implicated in the literary periodization put forward by Sussman. The envisioned reconciliation of romantic and modern writing implies a deemphasis of the normally asserted break around the turn-of-the-century. Modernism is thereby robbed of many of its emancipatory claims and, pushed back toward the nineteenth century, it is also implicitly

declared obsolete in the name of a post-modernism which begins to take shape at the conclusion of Sussman's book as the successor to the Hegelian episteme. Subjectivity, consciousness and history play as small a role in it as they do in Sussman's own post-modern account of modernism.

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T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History by Gregory S. Jay. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983. Pp. xii + 256. \$27.50.

"Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot ruined us all." So writes Fausto Maijstral in the eleventh chapter of Thomas Pynchon's *V. Now*, with his own power and influence spreading, Pynchon is doing some ruination of his own, imposing his particular madcap archaeologies and heavily marked absences on the contemporary literary landscape. Literature as a curse, an invasion: this aperçu rightfully belongs to the last fifty years, though—what with Baudelaire and others—it is by no means unique to them. It is now being institutionalized both in literary theory and in poetry such as Ashbery's and fiction such as Pynchon's. Shakespeare, Eliot, Pynchon: "invaders" who dispense, in contemporary critical terms, a simultaneous power and paralysis, power as great as it is *because* it is paralytic in its effect. To quote that exemplary Modernist, Erik Satie: "Experience is one of the forms of paralysis."

Gregory Jay's book on T. S. Eliot studies the processes by which Eliot wrung poetry out of paralysis brought on by an appreciation of past poets who had in some sense invaded him, taken him over. It goes without saying that such an invasion is also a deferral of one's own self, so that Eliot, in Jay's view—I am paraphrasing—never becomes "himself" at all. He is endlessly something else, a field, to put it in falsely allegorical terms, on which the past sends forth its troops. From what I have outlined here it should be evident that Jay has a second goal in mind: namely, to make Eliot an unofficial poet again, to strip him of the false logocentric authority he sometimes has seemed to project. The official Eliot (nostalgic for origins, yearning for Presence, setting down norms, a gatekeeper) is, according to Jay, too contradictory ever to be able to embody the Presence he yearns for in any form at all in his work. Eliot is thus, in this agenda, stripped of his medals and made safe for deconstruction.

Jay's efforts here in deconstructing Eliot's work seem intended to restore the poet to the place of theoretical importance from which he has been dislodged by Pound, Williams, and Stevens, who can be viewed as poets of the Modern period who began to free poetry of its hunger for transcendence and sublimated absolutes. In Jay's version of these events, Eliot's "failure" to overcome his daemonic influences or to achieve consistency or "originality" makes him—surprise—a pasticheur or bricoleur worthy to be placed alongside those masters of scissors-and-paste, Pound and Williams. What would be and is in Harold Bloom's terms a failure on Eliot's part turns instead into a success and makes Eliot into a kind of proto-Ashbery, whose efforts to achieve poetic authority are constantly undermined by history's refusal to be-

come organic. Eliot, like Ashbery, ends up sounding like a man dressed up as a general, but who is not a general because there is no army.

I should say at the outset that Jay's book is highly intelligent, thorough, and absorbing. It is rewarding reading for anyone concerned with pivotal issues in modernist and postmodernist poetry and critical theory. I am, however, more concerned with the problems it raises and the manner in which it does so; its reach and quality clarify these problems. I will take the second and less important issue, its style or manner, first. Early on in this book it becomes clear that Jay has been invaded by his own ghosts: Derrida, Riddel, Lacan, and others. The book is written in a style of orthodox deconstruction. But there was never supposed to be a style of "orthodox deconstruction"; the whole process was meant to throw master-concepts into question, not to create new ones as reference points. Nevertheless, throughout the book, one comes upon sentences such as the following: "What occurs, then, is both a dissemination and a coherence, since all the disparate re-marks from different genres belong nevertheless to their own corporate genre, that of textual indicators that signal the presence of a genre and its historical corpus" (159). Or: "What is recalled, the original moment of ecstasy, was itself double at the origin, originating and original precisely because it was beside itself and was the product of another time" (223). These sentences have been, as they always say, taken out of context, but they are justly representative of the style of the book as a whole.

In the first sentence, the magisterial "then" out of Riddel, the Derridean "dissemination," the Heideggerean and Derridean loosening of the prefix in "re-marks," the Lacanian play over "corporate" and "corpus" signal considerable corporate anxiety on the writer's part, especially since the sentence questions coherence only to reaffirm it. The second sentence characteristically plays, as Riddel tends to do at length, with the conjunction of "doubles" at the "origin," a way of saying that "origin" and "originality" are power-words that do not mean what humanist commentators thought they meant. But notice how "original" in the second sentence is employed in such a way as to magically (Jay says "precisely") re-emerge from under erasure to hold, if somewhat ironically, the place it has always already held. Time and again, Jay's prose seems to dismantle the reifications of traditional criticism, only to reinstall them in a slightly shifted place. For all its intelligence, Jay's prose is programmatic, the style of an acolyte. By being written in the way it is, Jay's book in effect *accepts* full authority, accepts such categories as "dissemination" as powerful givens, even as it denies the transcendental function of these givens.

Look at Jay's final paragraph on *Four Quartets*:

The rose garden is on fire. The desire for unity, consummation, bliss, the eternal recurrence of the Same, undergoes its last askesis. Polysemous, the emblem of the rose unites nature's Eros with poetry's theology in order to refine the longings and delusions of both. As a knot of fire, the rose becomes an eternal flame of enlightened disillusionment, a process of love that gains energy from its losses of identity and grows strong in the repetition of other times it heatedly ingathers. Love, as the overcoming of self-consciousness and the repetition of an ancient

pattern in modern figures, renews itself just as the poem is renewed by entwining itself with its precursors. Purged of its illusions, the rose dances in the "tongues of flame" that repeat and inspire it, re-marking the measures of poetry and love (248).

This is closer to *The Cloud of Unknowing* than to *Of Grammatology*. I have rarely in recent criticism seen so many poker chips thrown on the table as are here scattered in one paragraph. At the far point of dismantled metaphysics, deconstruction rediscovers the sublime. It is like finding Derrida at a séance. The accepted authority of the prose leads, it seems to me, to exactly this point of transfiguration and apotheosis.

This points to what is, perhaps, a more fundamental problem in the book, the would-be deconstructor's unease with Eliot's literary-political views in such books as *After Strange Gods* and *The Idea of a Christian Society*. Jay is at pains to indicate that Eliot's poems do more than reveal an empty center (contrasting his position with that of William Spanos); they disclose "the delicate fabric of feeling that this disclosure occasions in a particular imagination, in a particular place, at key moments in that imagination's life" (218). Thirty-two pages later, Eliot has "stolen" Yeats' and Dante's "authority and then makes it speak in his own measure, in the passage where Yeats' dancer moves in Dante's 'refining fire'" (240). This talk of the imagination and delicate fabrics of feeling and of stealing authority is the language of power, and it is political, although Jay doesn't apparently see it that way.

The trouble is that you can't have it both ways: you can't simultaneously empty the language of Eliot's poetry of its logocentric impulses and then reify the figure of the poet, giving him a position of authority distinct from, as Jay says, "mere versifiers" (242). In effect, you do not throw into question pivotal concepts by treating them as if they were tokens of consciousness alone and ignoring the way they served or are serving political ends; after deconstruction, the privileged terms go on serving the same political ends. Jay does not (and cannot) deconstruct *After Strange Gods*; that book, like Pound's *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, is so deeply embedded in the myths of cultural authority that deconstructing the text would leave it unaffected. One might as well deconstruct *Mein Kampf* or *The Gulag Archipelago* or Churchill's memoirs, for all the good it would do. The languages and modes of deconstruction do not easily examine the mechanisms of power because intellectually the method is microscopic in its approach, held in a deathgrip to "texts." Gayatri Spivak's and Michael Ryan's recent efforts to align deconstruction with politics have produced techno-jargon of a very high order, mystifications so violent and intense as to qualify as terrorism. Jay's scanting of political power in a book with "history" in its title is characteristic of the failure of the followers of Derrida to come up with a coherent language to deal with aesthetic power in its relation to cultural power. Aesthetic power can still be seen as power, but it must be seen in its relatedness. In making this charge, I am not blaming Jay, whose book on its own terms I often find admirable; rather, I am repeating a charge that has been directed at deconstructionists before and which needs to be raised every time another statue of another logocentric giant comes crashing down into the city square. Jay's "literary history" seems at time to take place inside Eliot's famous test tube filled with

oxygen and sulphur dioxide; it rarely seems to be one (integral) manifestation of the flow of the world's power from one place to another.

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