

Notes

Introduction

1. Van den Berg's theory of metabletics understands the unconscious as by no means a universal, transhistorical aspect of human nature, but the byproduct of a sudden population surge in Europe at the dawn of the nineteenth century. This entailed a shift in the texture of experience from what he calls "social density" (in which contacts can be readily placed, either by social station or prior acquaintance) and "numeric density" (the characteristic anonymity of the big city) (*Divided* 104). The unconscious, in his hypothesis, arises as "*the index of nearness or remoteness in one's relationship with other people*" (*Changing* 177, emphasis in original).
2. After Dickinson, the great expositor of the No is Kenneth Burke, who sensibly points out that "The negative begins not as a resource of definition or information, but as a command, as 'Don't'"—"though we can't have an 'idea of nothing,' we can have an 'idea of no'" (*On Symbols* 63, 64). Burke, with his characteristically subversive precision, delivers with almost audible mockery of humanist institutional rhetoric his definition of human being:

*Man is
the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal
inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative)
separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making
goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)
and rotten with perfection. (On Symbols 70, italics in original)*

One The Murmur: Modernist Alchemies of the Word

1. Blanchot dedicated a section of *L'Espace littéraire* to Breton's exhortation, "Le caractère inépuisable du murmure" (*Space* 181), focusing on the point at which power becomes powerlessness, inspiration stasis, wealth poverty. The baroque intricacy of Blanchot's *topoi* suggests that his is a diagrammatic practice in which

a number of themes (death, solitude, plural, limit, fragment) intersect with a network of authors (Kafka, Rilke, Mallarmé, Hegel, Nietzsche, Bataille, Heidegger) by means of certain focal strategies enabling him to approach authors and themes simultaneously but from different directions. The periodic encounters with Breton, in this light, are not repetitions of a single topic, but remobilizations of an *ars combinatoria* or even a cubist criticism.

2. In Foucault's estimation, "literature is appearing more and more as that which must be thought; but equally, and for the same reason, as that which can never, in any circumstance, be thought in accordance with a theory of signification" (*Order* 44). Julia Kristeva elaborates: "poetic language has deserted beauty and meaning to become a laboratory where, facing philosophy, knowledge, and the transcendental ego of all signification, the impossibility of a signified or signifying identity is being sustained. If we took this venture seriously—if we could hear the burst of black laughter it hurls at all attempts to master the human situation, to master language by language—we would be forced to reexamine 'literary history'" (*Desire* 145). Or, succinctly put by Roberto Calasso: "Literature grows like the grass between the heavy gray paving stones of thought" (*Literature* 183).
3. *Détournement* is the transference of an object to a new context. It is necessarily "a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression," Guy Debord says, but its "peculiar power . . . stems from the double meaning, from the enrichment of most of the terms by the coexistence within them of their old senses and their new, immediate senses" (Knabb 55).
4. Parenthetically, Schwitters indicates "Der letzte Vers wird gesungen" (199). But what is it that he says should be sung? Is the "last verse" the final line, "Cigarren"? The word—the only word in the poem—appears seven times in all. The first and last lines consist of the word itself, while the variants in between span several lines each and undergo spelling permutations.
5. Blanchot locates this improbable imperative in Surrealism, for which "literature is not only illegitimate, it is also null, and as long as this nullity is isolated in a state of purity it may constitute an extraordinary force, a marvelous force. To make literature become the exposure of this emptiness inside, to make it open up completely to its nothingness, realize its own unreality—this is one of the tasks undertaken by surrealism" (*Gaze* 22). Blanchot's fidelity to Surrealism may seem surprising, but the most affirmative moment in his work is the culminating commemoration in *L'Entretien infini* of André Breton (who figures significantly in the opening pages of the book as well), where Blanchot exalts the Surrealist quest for its "concepts escaping every conceptualization," and offers a rare perspective on the Surrealist expulsions and reprisals as something more than literary politics. Rather, it's an ethical obligation to make way for the discontinuous even when (or especially when) it brings on trauma. Every repudiation or excommunication by which Breton secured the perimeters of Surrealism couldn't help but disclose a limit, a failure of imagination, on the part of Surrealism itself. But the founding truculence

of Surrealism, to be honored, had consequences: its success made it official, so it had to undermine itself in its own officiating capacity. It had to submit to the drama of every successful revolution in order to face its ongoing revolutionary animus. For Breton, brandishing the arbitrariness of power was a calculated exercise in Surrealist tactics, not a crude administrative necessity. By dividing the Surrealist world into official and unofficial components, Breton energized something that would suffocate itself by being unitary. It's not enough for Georges Bataille, for example, to be constituted by Breton as one of Surrealism's excremental discards; he devotes his life to elaborating a theory of the rem(a)inder. In Blanchot's terms, "The more useless it becomes, the more it needs an end to make something useful out of this uselessness. It is its gratuitousness that makes its placement 'in the service of the revolution' inevitable" (*Work* 94). It's as if Bataille secretly celebrates his exclusion from the inner sanctum of Surrealism as a gift, a "mode of relating or of holding oneself in a relation . . . where relation is 'impossible'" (*Infinite* 208). The revolutionary gesture thrives in the insistence on a breach that is not rhetorical flourish but ethical challenge.

6. The translator neglects to indicate that the phrase "rhythmic scansion of life" is by Mallarmé.
7. The equation of "murmur" with *spanda* is mine, not Foucault's; nor is it made by Deleuze, who is, however, sensitive to numerous links between Foucault and Blanchot. "Foucault echoes Blanchot in denouncing all linguistic personology and seeing the different positions for the speaking subject as located within a deep anonymous murmur. It is within this murmur without beginning or end that Foucault would like to be situated, in the place assigned to him by statements. And perhaps these are Foucault's most moving statements" (*Foucault* 7). In fact, Foucault dreamed of being Blanchot early in his career ("A cette époque, je rêvais d'être Blanchot") as well as crediting him with having made discourse about literature possible: "Il est vrai que c'est Blanchot qui a rendu possible tout discours sur la littérature" (Gregg 188).
8. Along the same lines, in a striking inversion of familiar assumptions, Leo Bersani suggests that "Mallarmé's inaccessibility is his most serious claim to social relevance"—a point requiring nuanced elaboration:

There is no contradiction between the occasional nature of nearly all his writing and his scorn of the immediate. Mallarmé is perhaps as "activé par la pression de l'instant" as his contemporaries, but he deprives the instant of its immediacy. For immediacy is an ontological error; the immediacy of sense perverts the nature of thought. The opposite of such immediacy is not "profound" or non-contingent sense, but rather the moving sense of a thought continuously proposing supplements to the objects abolished by its attention. (74–75)

Bersani's insight evokes, in effect, the movement of mind transposed to a medium seemingly distinct from text, something more like a sketchpad, in which erasure fertilizes propagation.

9. In *Children of the Mire*, Octavio Paz presents a sustained meditation on the role of analogy, “the true religion of modern poetry, from Romanticism to Surrealism” (55). As he elaborates, “If analogy turns the universe into a poem, a text made up of oppositions which become resolved in correspondences, it also makes the poem a universe. Thus, we can *read* the universe, we can *live* the poem. . . . The poetic image shapes a reality which rivals the vision of the revolutionary and that of the religious. Poetry is the *other* coherence, made not of reasons but of rhythms. And there is a moment when the correspondence is broken; there is a dissonance which in the poem is called ‘irony,’ and in life ‘mortality.’ Modern poetry is awareness of this dissonance within analogy” (56). At its level of generality, this may be the most comprehensive theory of poetry produced by a modern poet.
10. Such a prospect has a history, in fact, going back to George Puttenham, who introduced diagrammatic lineation to depict verse forms in his *Arte of English Poetry* (1589), a procedure taken up again by the eighteenth-century prosodists John Walker and Peter Walkden Fogg, having been proposed for general semiotic theory in the seventeenth century by John Wilkins. After a long dormant period, Ernest Fraenkel resumed the practice in his attempts to graph *Un Coup de dés*. Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers produced an edition of Mallarmé’s text replacing its lines with lines of his own, printed on transparent pages so that all the lines overlap, inducing a blurred vision of the entire poem seen in a glance. Finally, several literary critics have reactivated Puttenham’s legacy in their heuristic application of geometric lines to lines of verse (John Hollander, Henry Sayre, Stephen Cushman, and Richard Bradford). Insofar as these lines efface the lines of text by standing in for them, the explicit practice of *effacement* by Man Ray and Bob Brown contributes to this constellation; and, by the same token, so does the overpainting of artist Tom Phillips in *A Humument* and the erasures of *Paradise Lost* undertaken by Ronald Johnson in *RADI OS* and extended by Jen Bervin to Shakespeare’s sonnets in *Nets*. Cy Twombly’s blackboard graphisms hover nearby, marking that space where the act of erasure leaves its own smudge. The interplay of space and graphic symbol is a feature of Armand Schwerner’s poem *The Tablets* and artist Najdu’s edition of Heraclitus. The line in drawing is kindled into calligraphic invitation by Masson (“semiograms” Barthes calls them [153]); and the line as staff for musical notation is given a specifically poetic application in the eighteenth century by Joshua Steele, later by Futurist Francesco Cangiullo, and more recently by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer. For examples of much of this material, see Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*.
11. Nevertheless, Nebel was alert to the satirical force of transpositions, using metathesis to pillory a critic: “Der Neffe Adolf verhält sich zum Affen Nedolf wie der Ahne Bedolf zum Adolf Behne”: “The nephew Adolf is to the ape Nedolf as the forefather Bedolf is to Adolf Behne” (Jones 254). As to the title, “unfeig” means *uncowardly*, but I hear resonances with *fig* (Feig), so a plausible translation (given poetic license) might be *Un-fig-leafed*.

12. In the first Canto, Pound renders in archaic English an episode from Homer's *Odyssey* via Andreas Divus' Latin translation of 1538, creating a palimpsest of linguistic options. In doing so, Hugh Kenner proposes, Pound "recapitulates the story of a pattern persisting undeformable while many languages have flowed through it" (*Pound* 149).
13. "To make two bald statements: There's nothing sentimental about a machine, and: A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words. When I say there's nothing sentimental about a poem I mean that there can be no part, as in any other machine, that is redundant" (256).
14. The context is more complex in terms of Parisian literary politics. When this issue of *391* appeared, André Breton's post-Dada group was undergoing its *vague des rêves*, and one of its key members, Paul Eluard, had mysteriously vanished (embarked, it turned out, to Indochina in a ménage-a-trois with his wife Gala and Max Ernst). Surrealism was on the horizon, but under contention. The Alsatian poet Yvan Goll was mobilizing friends of the late Apollinaire, who had coined the term "surréalisme" in the preface to his play *Les Mamelles des Tirésias* (1917), and the fruits of Goll's efforts appeared in October 1924, as the journal *Surréalisme*. Breton's first manifesto of surrealism also appeared in October, followed in December by the inauguration of *La Revolution surréaliste*, obliterating any chance for Goll's less doctrinaire group to retain the banner of surrealism. Back in May, when Picabia issued *391* #16 with "superréalisme" blazoned across its cover, the term was still up for grab; but he clearly recognized the symptoms of a spurious authority in Breton's penchant for concocting genealogies of predecessors. Accordingly, this issue of *391* depicts the appropriation of the "thermomètre Rimbaud" by the aspiring surrealists, pointedly depicting the abducted poet with a thermometer inserted into his rectum.

Two Drawing a Blank: Episodes in the Poetics of Unworking

1. This poem was Pound's contribution to *391*, edited by his friend Francis Picabia, whose wit he highly esteemed. In *391* the designated translator is "Christian" (with quotation marks), suggesting that Pound himself may have rendered "M. Stairax" as "possesseur d'un vast domaine et de muscle opulents" (Picabia 84).
2. Inasmuch as *Un Coup de dés* was inaugurated by the poet as a dispersal, it's fitting that a century later it achieved multimedia diffusion as an interactive installation, "Red Dice" by Bill Seaman, at the National Gallery of Canada in 2000. As the viewer/reader/user engaged the text (French or English) with an electronic tablet pen: touching a word in the poem with the pen activated navigational icons, prompting in turn video, sound, and musical constellations that effectively submersed Mallarmé's poem in the milieu of the "desiring machine" theorized by Deleuze and Guattari (Seline 9).
3. Pater's famous dictum is in a chapter on the Venetian school of Giorgione, in whose work "life itself is conceived as a sort of listening" (96). This synaesthetic remark is predicated on Pater's view that art always strives for a union

of subject and form. In music these are inherently identical, while in the other arts “it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it” (86)—the *it* in question being ostensibly the distinction between form and content, but Pater actually does favor a potential obliteration of “mere intelligence”—which art must surmount in its quest “to become a matter of pure perception” (88). In “Voice Inverse,” Yopie Prins identifies a perceptual equivocation at the heart of such yearnings: “Is the humming of Victorian poetry something we ‘almost cannot hear’ or is it something we almost hear, but cannot?” she wonders (45). At the core of any work that deploys material means to manifest purportedly spiritual matters, the *matter* persists as residue. In Prins’ summary of Watts-Dunton’s poetic theory: “Instead of giving voice to ‘the poet’s soul,’ poetry articulates ‘the countless shifting movements of the soul’ in abstract metrical form, asking us to read motion as ‘the vibrations of emotion’” (56). The contact point between *motion* and *emotion* was of considerable interest to Gertrude Stein as well: “the cinema has each time a slightly different thing to make it all be moving. And each one of us has to do that, otherwise there is no existing. As Galileo remarked, it does move” (179). Stein, too, felt the synaesthetic pressure: “I began to wonder at at about this time just what one saw when one looked at anything really looked at anything. Did one see sound, and what was the relation between color and sound, did it make itself by description by a word that meant it or did it make itself by a word in itself. All this time I was of course not interested in emotion” (191)—emotion having been displaced by motion.

4. Hopkins appears to have been refining his observations of hydraulic action at this period. Journal entries of the previous year, 1872, are comparably meticulous: “The shores are swimming and the eyes have before them a region of milky surf but it is hard for them to unpack the huddling and gnarls of the water and law out the shapes and the sequence of the running: I catch however the looped or forked wisp made by every big pebble the backwater runs over” (*Journals* 223); “The overflow of the last wave came in from either side tilting up the channel and met halfway, each with its own moustache. When the wave ran very high it would brim over on the sloping shelf below me and move smoothly and steadily along it like the palm of a hand along a table drawing off the dust” (225). Again, the world seems eerily silent amidst the tumult of breaking and reforming waves.
5. Edward Dimendberg’s sagacious essay on the film notes the geopolitical backdrop of *The Song of Styrene* (a primary ingredient in napalm, among other things), suggesting the political stakes by quoting Queneau’s definition of Oulipo: “Oulipians: rats who build the labyrinth from which they propose to escape” (88).
6. Will Bray was a pseudonym of Matthew Josephson, who duplicates the passage in his 1962 memoir, *Life Among the Surrealists*: “We must write for *our age* . . . the poets should be no less daring or inventive than the mechanical engineers of wartime; our literature should reflect the influences of the cinema . . . the saxophone” (125). On the same page he quotes extensively from Apollinaire’s 1918 essay “L’Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes.”

7. Barzun emigrated to the United States in 1920, where he promoted Orphism as an educational program befitting the land of Whitman. In his later years he issued a series of publications documenting his activities, which he represented as a kind of free-floating educational institution.

These oversize volumes constitute a substantial alternate history of modernism, as Barzun deftly interweaves his own accomplishments into a familiar panorama of major figures, implying that he was at the center all along. Because they were self-published, Barzun effectively consigned himself to oblivion. Very few copies are in libraries, and all the ones I've seen are personally inscribed: clearly these books were Barzun's calling card, though he never managed to secure a professional affiliation, and in any event his career was played out under the lengthening shadow of his son's accomplishments.

8. In 1914 Apollinaire wondered why Barzun persisted in claiming as a poetic advance the basic resources of theater. He was by then exasperated with Barzun's behavior: "he is a very bilious character. His obsession about having invented everything is equal only to the haunting presumptuousness with which he boasts about it" (645).
9. "Art," declared Pessoa, "is sensation multiplied by consciousness" (*Always* 35), and multiply it he did by way of his heteronyms. As the contents of his extraordinary trunk in Lisbon have gradually revealed, the heteronyms clamored for a phone book of their own. But the major poets remain Alberto Caeiro ("I'm the Argonaut of true sensation," he declared, "sailing downriver without permission from metaphysics" [*Little* 43, 65]), Ricardo Reis ("Let's construct a voluntary fate / Above ourselves, / So that when it oppresses us, it is we / Who'll be our oppressors" [92]), Álvaro de Campos ("What an advantage to have a soul that's inside out!" he exults; "the song is a straight line drawn crookedly inside me" [232, 189]), and Pessoa "himself" ("A wanderer through my own being," who sagely advises, sensing the clamor of his heteronyms, "Open your door to the man who doesn't knock!" [308, 345]).
10. In Book Two of *De rerum natura* Lucretius introduces his term (adapted from the *parenklisis* of Epicurus' Letter to Herodotus) to refer to the minimal swerve of atoms in laminar flow. Lucretius consigns all natural creation to this unprovoked swerve; but most provocatively for our concerns here, he likens atoms in the body to letters in words, commemorating sequential dispersion as the animating principle of language.
11. Ronell's thesis is more substantial than such a pithy formulation might suggest:

At about the same time as Romanticism turned it into the seriousness of *oeuvre*, literature initiated the experience of its own substance: organized by a concept of work, it soon came to know play's gravity. Such gravity exposed the work to experiences of peril and experimentation, obligating literature to map out a toxicology—an imaginary place where literature could crash against its abysses and float amid fragments of residual

transcendancy. The engagement with its essence threw literature off any predictably legible course but also created the mirage of a genuine autonomy. (31)

In its most succinct form, Ronell's thesis is that "Drugs make us ask what it means to consume anything, anything at all" (63). In general, *Crack Wars* proceeds under the cardinal prodding of Nietzsche: "Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotica?—It is almost the history of 'culture,' of our so-called higher culture" (3).

12. Allen Ginsberg was appreciative of Olson's support for Leary, as in the following paragraph from a 1971 flyer, *Declaration of Independence for Dr. Timothy Leary*:
 Bay Area Prose Poets' Phalanx takes note of the public viability of the formulation proposed by the late poet Charles Olson, friend of Dr. Leary, that now "Private is public, and public is how we behave." We affirm that Dr. Leary has the literary right to make his private opinions known publicly, and to engage unpunished in public literary activity. Poet Olson, 1961 Cambridge, addressing Professor Leary: "When the police come after you, you can stay in my house." (*Prose* 116)
13. The passage cited above is from the typescript, reproduced in *Olson* #3, p. 58. The specification "with mushroom eyes" was removed when it appeared in *Maximus IV, V, VI* (*Maximus* 202).
14. My translation contracts the poem considerably for this context. The original, in quatrains, was memorably imprinted on my consciousness by the impromptu recitation of my professor Norbert Fuerst at Indiana University in 1971.
15. It's important to recall here Benn's brief association with the Nazis in order to retain some sense of the ambiguous legacy of the archaic with which the model of the phenotype might easily be mistaken. For the historical episode encompassing the proto-Fascism not only of Benn but also writers like D.H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound, Ernst Jünger, Heidegger, and cultural theorists like Ludwig Klages and Carl Jung, the most telling summation can be found in a section title in Ernst Bloch's book *Heritage of Our Times* (1935), "Ungleichzeitigkeit und Berauschung," noncontemporaneity and intoxication. In an auspicious essay, "Nach dem Nihilismus" (1932, on the verge of his ill-fated alliance with the Third Reich), Benn identified tendencies in psychoanalysis, Expressionism and Surrealism suggesting some *biological* reawakening of myth (*Werke III* 402). As if anticipating his disillusionment with political opportunism, Benn emphasizes the regressive characteristics of this "*bionegative*" drive—by which he means the kinks and quirks of modernist art with its strategies of "Versteigerung und Verdichtung" (enhancement and concentration), its tendency to create by means of destruction or negation (401). By valorizing this bionegative tendency with artists, Benn was effectively removing it from collectivist options, affirming his "primal vision" as an artistic prerogative antithetical to political interests.

Three Poetry's Voice-Over: Techniques of Inspiration

1. Robert Lamberton describes the “comic and brutal” relationship between poet and Muse in terms of debasement: “This Boeotian hillside is a spiritual landscape whose apparent heirs in the tradition are the plain of La Mancha and the anonymous wasteland in which Samuel Beckett’s marginal tragicomic figures pursue the implications of their humanity. The divine messengers have us at their mercy, and any attempt to see beyond the inadequacy of the world, to perceive anything but the hungry gut, is an act of faith dependent on an act of grace” (58–59).
2. Echo is the nymph besotted with Narcissus. In Ovid’s account, she’s punished by Juno for concealing Jupiter’s trysts. The punishment deprives her of speech; so her attempts at professing her love for Narcissus result in the senseless repetition of everything *he* says. My synoptic reference above neglects the more nuanced implications Amy Lawrence derives from Echo’s plight as necessarily related to Narcissus, whose self-absorption she sees predicated on the elimination of dialogic exchange. “And so Echo fades away, unable to contact Narcissus once he ceases to speak, sound’s absence established as a precondition for the image’s irresistible allure.” Lawrence takes the tale as an instructive parable about gender hierarchy: “The man’s tragic obsession with the image is more important than the woman’s problems of expression, her death simply preparation for the grand climax of his death. Woman and sound are allied on the ‘weak side’ of the story” (2).
3. The word Fitzgerald translates as “tales” is *kléos*, a term of some complexity, in that it’s not simply a literary term but a cultural value. “*Kléos* is that for which the heroes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* fight,” writes Simon Goldhill, making it “a fundamental element of the intricate competitive value system presented in the Homeric poems, a fundamental aim of both military and other action, a fundamental function of the poetic enterprise” (70, 71).
4. At issue is not simply writing, but all forms of media and mediation, brilliantly outlined by John Durham Peters in *Speaking into the Air*. For a different primal scene retaining some of the anxious provocation of the Muses, consider the predicament confronting St. Augustine, for whom “the appearance of God to humans is essentially a media problem,” suggests Peters. “For how could God, he asks, ‘appear’ to the patriarchs and prophets when God has no appearance or physical form? If God appeared to appear, he was resorting to deception, donning a disguise to meet the crudity of human sense organs. Theophany is either deception (of humans) or debasement (of God)” (71).
5. Sewell proposes an Orphic lineage investigating two related questions: “*What power and place has poetry in the living universe?*” and “*What is the biological function of poetry in the natural history of the human organism?*” (4). The “main people” of this tradition of enquiry, according to Sewell, are Bacon, Shakespeare, Milton, Hooke, Vico, Linnaeus, Swedenborg, Erasmus Darwin, Goethe, Novalis, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Emerson, Renan, Hugo, Mallarmé, and Rilke (5).

6. David Farrell Krell's remarkable treatise *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the Verge* employs the figure of the "verge" as a means of developing Merleau-Ponty's hints about accessing a past that has never been present. "His invocation of a 'hollow' in visibility and in subjectivity, a kind of space where time is made, and from which we—unlike Augustine—do not dream of escaping; his depiction of the past not as a tableau but as a horizon, margin, or atmosphere of my present; and his insistence that one can approach one's past only step by step, little by little, like those fledgling weavers, the animal spirits, in accord with a *tempo* not of one's own choosing—these were the first rudiments of a new way to think about memory and reminiscence" (103). It's almost irresistible to characterize these insights as Orphic, particularly in their suggestions (*tempo*, step by step, and a hollow in space where time is made) of music. An equally fascinating reading of memory as implicated in a musical emplotment of temporal zones is Blanchot's essay "The Siren's Song," which considers that signal event as playing havoc with time while also imposing temporality as measure.
7. Blanchot's thought in general may be said to constitute a poetics of erasure (as does that of Levinas: "Taken at the level of erasure, the association of ideas thus becomes a thought that lies beyond the classical categories of representation and identity." [*Reader* 146]). There's a chapter on "Forgetful Memory" in *The Infinite Conversation* venturing the hypothesis that "Forgetting is the very vigilance of memory, the guardian force thanks to which the hidden is preserved"—and that for the realization of this power in poetry "it [must] cease being a function and become an event . . . it must escape our mastery, ruin our power to dispose of it, ruin even forgetting as depth, and all of memory's comfortable practice" (315, 316). These Orphic ruins verge on divine Dionysian intoxication.
8. By stressing this Orphic dimension of cosmic order, Meschonnic adamantly distinguishes "rhyme" from social convention. "To imitate the manner in which poets of the past had understood and heard rhymes is nothing. But one continues to listen to them as to Mozart" (94). "Modernity is not a simple snag in metrics. A bad moment for the traditionalists to live through" (97). On the contrary, our advantage over the traditionalists, Meschonnic suggests (in what could pass for a summary of Mallarmé), is that "Modern poetry has generalized, diffused rhyme to the entire mass of saying and said. The disappearance of rhyme at the end of a line is a passage toward the rediscovery of rhyme. For poetry and for all language" (95). Accordingly, "Understanding rhyme assumes that one stops opposing poetry to ordinary language" (92).
9. The Dogon myth works in concert with the Greek myth of Psyche's tasks, a necessarily dark subordination as in Robert Duncan's "Poem Beginning With a Line by Pindar." The ants, those paradigms of minute detail, come to the aid of those like Psyche who "must follow to the letter / freakish instructions" (65). Duncan's insect also responds to Pound in detention at Pisa ("an ant's forefoot shall save you" [*Cantos* 533]).
10. Grivel's link between phonography and death is shared by Adorno in his speculations on the apocalyptic momentum of the artistic impulse. The primitive

- belief “that artworks only become ‘true,’ fragments of the true language, once life has left them” culminates in the gramophone, a portent “whose formulations capture the sounds of creation, the first and the last sounds, judgment upon life and message about that which may come thereafter” (280).
11. Monitor/Minotaur: the near homonym invites reflection on the sorts of transgression involved in migratory lusts, and Daedalian transpositions. The Minotaur was offspring of an unholy union between Pasiphaë and a bull, a copulation Daedalus arranges by prosthetic means, in which Pasiphaë occupied the hollow interior of a bovine mannequin of sufficient attraction to the bull. The ghost in such a machine, being a flesh and blood woman, gives birth to a monster who ends up being imprisoned in a labyrinth—which is exactly what a microchip looks like.
 12. This autoerotic longing is also famously depicted in “Song of Myself”: “I believe in you my soul . . . the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice. / I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning, / How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn’d over upon me, / And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart” (192).
 13. Mandelstam also notes that Dante wrote with a quill, and would have been mindful of the winged materiality of such an implement. “A pen is a small piece of bird’s flesh. Of course Dante, who never forgets the origin of things, remembers this. His technique of writing in broad strokes and curves grows into the figured flights of flocks of birds” (40).
 14. As I’ve chronicled elsewhere, we’re all babes in the media nursery. When I wrote “Nietzsche in the Nursery” I was not aware that Wyndham Lewis had preceded me by almost sixty years in *The Doom of Youth* (1932). In E.W.F. Tomlin’s summary, Lewis predicted that “systematic exploitation of youth was the means to its destruction, and of much else besides. If not merely youth but age too had to be young, then society would be reduced to a condition of juvenility all round, and the world, though grown up, would become ‘a vast nursery’ for which a special amusement industry would cater” (Lewis 234–235).
 15. The voice I have in mind is that of Westbrook Van Voorhis, narrator of the Fox Movietone series “The March of Time,” which dominated the 1930s and reached its zenith during the war. Van Voorhis was officially known as “The Voice of Time,” but acquired the colloquial moniker “The Voice of God” (Kozloff 29). Baritone authority was ideologically coded into the technical features of broadcasting equipment. Public distaste for female announcers was prevalent in the early days of radio, the explanations for which ranged from the supposition of a natural inferiority in women’s voices to technical deficiencies in the transmitters (McKay *passim*). As Amy Lawrence puts it: “Evidently the ‘problem’ of the woman’s voice is always a tangle of technological and economic exigencies, each suffused with ideological assumptions about woman’s ‘place’” (32). Interestingly, Adorno identifies woman and mechanism as symbiotic partners in deficiency: “Wherever sound is separated from the body—as with instruments—or wherever it requires the body as a complement—as in the case with the female voice—gramphonic reproduction becomes problematic” (274).

16. “We may now see that in the judgment of taste nothing is postulated but such a *universal voice*, in respect of the satisfaction without the intervention of concepts, and thus the *possibility* of an aesthetical judgment that can, at the same time, be regarded as valid for everyone (for that can only be done by a logically universal judgment because it can adduce reasons); it only *imputes* this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule in respect of which it expects, not confirmation by concepts, but assent from others” (Kant 50–51).
17. Wallace Stevens quotes this quip by Braque in *The Necessary Angel*, where it is preceded by a reference to Picasso’s famous formulation: “Does not the saying of Picasso that a picture is a horde of destructions also say that a poem is a horde of destructions?” (161).

Four Gendering the Muse

1. The difference is at once precarious and foundational. Luce Irigaray in *Marine Lover* writes an echolalia of Nietzsche, reiterating his charms and in the process unveiling his text: “The most powerful effect of women: to double for men, sublime souls.” Remember that Irigaray here *is* Nietzsche (her project involves ventriloquism), but with that gendered *difference* intact. “To give body—and with no difference—to their ideals. And as those ideals are the gods of the language: to give them voice, foundation—material for transcendental productions.” However, “The empire of the word cannot do without the ear and the voice if it is to reproduce itself. But those still fleshly mediums are to be left to woman. Who, since she doesn’t understand much about truth, faithfully doubles the ante, always adding to the pot” (109).
2. “Opposite pairs such as inside/outside, the raw/the cooked, or life/death appear to be merely derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage,” in de Lauretis’ view, and “all these terms are predicated on the *single* figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter” (119). De Lauretis’ thesis derives from a reading of Oedipus and the Sphinx, via Freud, which tempts her to overstress the binary and misconstrue some of its attributes. The power of metamorphosis invested in myth—Greek or otherwise—is by no means an exclusive male prerogative. One might with equal plausibility contend that masculine singularity is balked by a feminine aptitude for transformation.
3. Clayton Eshleman’s poetic investigation of the Paleolithic focuses on hominid perturbation as creative resource. Commenting on an earlier draft of my project, he wondered whether we might regard “breath [as] an upper displacement, a mental appropriation of a conjunction that was initially involved with the lower body?” If the Muse marks the threshold between upper and lower body

- functions (Bakhtin), the received account of the Heliconian Muses dictating to Hesiod specifically aligns Muse-resource with consciousness, breath-spirit-pneuma, and Christian sublimation. To go the other way into the lower body stratum, however, also means going back in time, to take in the Paleolithic continuum, and also to probe shamanistic traditions in general. One result, as Eshleman insightfully put it, is to see that “A muse is also a bagpipe, a musette, probably related to muzzle, or animal mouth” (personal communication, November 21, 1993). Redgrove and Shuttle cite the ancient injunction that, “in order to enter the temple precincts one has to be transformed into an animal,” and they link this motif to the catábasis tradition of subterranean descent—specifically the Homeric *nekyia* involving a blood ritual they associate with menstruation (313–314).
4. Lacan’s late seminars reopen the Freudian question, what does woman want, with a vengeance. He overturns the sense of lack associated with *want* altogether, putting woman in the position of a *jouissance* like that inhabited by mystics. “It is clear that the essential testimony of the mystics is that they are experiencing it but know nothing about it” (*Feminine* 147). To be fully incarnate is to be so coincident with the source of knowledge that it amounts to a sublime unknowing. Lacan ends up seeing the entire Symbolic order suffused with the support of woman (“why not interpret one face of the Other, the God face, as supported by feminine *jouissance*?”). So deeply are we besotted with dualism, however, that such unities are seen as self-cancelling; or worse, as signs of infamy, which Lacan effectively conveys by means of a pun: *dit-femme/diffâme*, speaking female/infamy (156).
 5. As Goux points out, filiarchy defies both patriarchy and matriarchy in its disavowal of all forms of symbolic reproduction. This violent detachment from the sanctioning imperatives of the ancestors “is the driving impulse that defines Western civilization as history” (204). Oedipus, then, is the prototype of a “man who creates his own laws in a scandal of autonomy and humanism that at once opens up the possibility of an auto-institution of the social in an absolutely sovereign community (*autonomous, autodikos, autoteles*) and also allows the emergence of the individual”—albeit as orphan (203, 204).

Five Medusa’s Gaze: Deep Image, or Traveling in the Dark

1. Dante has exerted uniquely insistent claims on modern poets, from Pound, Eliot, Mandelstam, Montale, Borges, and Auden to Lowell, Duncan, Merrill, and many others. In *The Poet’s Dante*, a four-hundred-page compendium of twentieth-century responses, a compass is provided by Seamus Heaney’s characterization of Dante as “the aquiline patron of international Modernism” (Hawkins and Jacoff xvi). English translations of the *Commedia* in part or whole, which were plentiful throughout the twentieth century (Norton, Binyon, Sayers, Sinclair, Singleton, Ciardi, Musa, Mandelbaum), have mushroomed in recent years (Pinsky, Merwin, Carson, Sisson, Palma, Kirkpatrick, O’Brien, Durling, Esolen, Hollander).

**Six “When the Mind Is Like a Hall”:
Places of a Possible Poetics**

1. The exquisite case of neurologist Geoffrey Sonnabend is to the point here. Recovering from a nervous breakdown in the hinterlands of Paraguay, the scientist attends a Lieder recital by Madalena Delani, whose voice was said to be “steeped in a sense of loss” (Museum 58). It’s not clear whether Sonnabend was aware of speculations that the singer “suffered from a form of Korsakov’s syndrome, with its attendant obliteration of virtually all short- and intermediate-term memory, with the exception, in her case, of the memory of music itself” (5). In a sleepless night following her recital, Sonnabend conceived his three-volume opus *Obliscence: Theories of Forgetting and the Problem of Matter*, setting forth his conviction that memory was illusory, since forgetting was the sole outcome of experience: “We, amnesiacs all, condemned to live in an eternally fleeting present, have created the most elaborate of human constructions, memory, to buffer ourselves against the intolerable knowledge of the irreversible passage of time and irretrievability of its moments and events” (Museum 64). The saga of Delani and Sonnabend is on display (or one could say, given the moral of the tale, under localized curatorial anaesthesia) at the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles.
2. Wodiczko’s Porte-Parole, especially in its ambulatory applications, suggests a distant kinship with the Bomarzo Gardens created by Pier Francesco Orsini in the sixteenth century (which Robert Harbison thinks was designed “to memorialize an intense disgust,” “to preserve bitter and fugitive sensations” [*Eccentric* 10]). Long since overgrown, the remaining statuary is all the more monstrous for being obscured by vegetation. Mouth images abound, from the table with teeth for seats to the gaping mouth of the ogre (with steps leading up to it) bearing the inscription “Ogni pensiero vo” (every thought flies) (Naomi Miller 51).

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