Erik Swan

Professor Duncan

English 190

May 16, 2014

# Scientific Literalization: Realizing Sympathetic Extension through the Reincorporation of Ancient Feeling

## I. The Unity of Feeling and Knowledge

"To be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern, that no shade of quality escapes it, and so quick to feel, that discernment is but a hand playing with finely ordered variety on the chords of emotion – a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge" (223). Ladislaw's profound claim of feeling and knowledge in George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* lays the foundation for the project of sympathy in her subsequent novel *Daniel Deronda.* The idea of feeling as an "organ of knowledge," that flashes knowledge back from feeling in an instant, without conscious effort or reflection, outlines the genius of the poet to mediate feeling with language. But the poet is only the first step, the representative of an ancient and original connection with feeling and mythology. The scientist—and the special unifying ability of science—arises in *Daniel Deronda* to literalize the imaginative connections of the poet and overcome the boundaries of primitive feeling.

As a text that engages deeply with emotion, nature and the medium of language, Eliot's often subtle injections of contemporary thought in *Daniel Deronda* creates an expansive and capacious world through which primitive feeling can explore the methods and mediums of

science. Charles Darwin's seminal books on evolution, *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, serve as objects of contemplation in Eliot's fiction, who takes on board many of the terms surrounding the contemporary naturalistic sciences. Darwin's influence by Whewell's notion of the scientific imagination and the production of technical language, and its interaction with a mythology inspired, in part, by Friedrich Creuzer, gives a compelling model of sympathetic extension in *Daniel Deronda.*

Through this interaction, Eliot complicates the nature of Deronda's improved variation of humanity. The main feature that defines Deronda's progression is his advanced sympathy, which Darwin posits as the moral telos of mankind. But though she uses these contemporary scientific considerations and liberal amounts of technical language, she couches it in mystical and magical events, with Mordecai's mysterious transference of character and the strange power of premonition that the novel constantly refers to and empowers. Through a mixture of Creuzerian mythology and Darwinian sympathy, Eliot allows Daniel to modify and improve primitive feeling; and the foundation of this modification is the relationship between literal and figurative language, which serves as the method to reincorporate inheritance and ground a sociable intercourse between past, present, and future.

Primitive mankind expressed its unity with feeling through naturally figurative language, though this soon gave way to the materialized mythology that expressed itself literally and indicated a fragmentation of this initial unity. Science, while also progressing from figurative to literal language, instead provides a model of synthesis, where the fragmentation of feeling and knowledge can be brought into a unity analogous to primitive mankind. Eliot thus casts science as the redeemer of feeling—what was lost to Creuzer through a process that inevitably dissolves

and breaks apart can have its effects inverted, resulting in a modified and atavistic unity of feeling, sympathy and knowledge, which accomplishes Eliots moral vision for the future of humanity.

## II. Mythology and Affect

In the early 19th century, Friedrich Creuzer made a controversial claim about mythology, making a crucial distinction between symbol and myth. Symbol, the direct apprehension of a unified divinity, appearing in a primal revelation, preceded the myth, here produced as the medium of symbols of many cultures, but especially the Greeks. The symbol as the foundation of spirit reveals the development of imaginative representation and the necessary unity of the corporeal and the spiritual in the primitive man. Imagination and the figure are thus "nothing else than the impress of a form of our thinking, a necessity that the most abstract and weighty soul cannot escape from" (395). In primitive man, his inward combinations, his turmoil and reverence were "all the rays of being" that collected "in him as a microcosm" (395). Imagination, in all its capricious, roiling whirlpools of affect, was, in a profound way, nature itself, and language was its distinct figural medium.

For Creuzer, primitive man connected with nature through a system of uncontrollable personification. Primitive man had in common the "ruling belief in the life of things. The primitive world, especially, grasped all with naïve and direct thought, was still unacquainted with the separation between the corporeal and the spiritual so familiar to us" (394). Here is where one first receives the outline of Creuzer's model of history as one of a degeneration from a unity between mankind and nature, premised on a unity of the cognitive and affective faculties, to

fragmentation. Primitive man was so unified in the corporeal and the spiritual, that he could not distinguish any "active force" with an unintentional, deterministic gesture of reality. This projection gave primitive man such a vitality of affect that figurative language developed as result. But if one thinks of nature and mankind as united in the way that Creuzer suggests, then figurative language takes a complicated position. As Creuzer explains, "Man knew nothing else than to sense nature through joy and pain and to express his feelings in speaking images. The death of a loved one and admired hero was mourned by the very soil of the fatherland as much as by the people" (395). For primitive man the expression of all emotions was done figuratively.

But in this natural figurative representation, "the path divides. Here, word-syllables and finally alphabetic writing are born, with the first efforts to depict sounds. There, the invisible and incorporeal is gradually portrayed as a corporeal image to the eye of the soul" (394). Figurative representation became so abbreviated, and with "a thousand earlier reasons," that the incorporeal became materialized or "corporeal." Writing language, which is necessarily an aural form, becomes important typological quality for Creuzer. "In letters," he writes,

> there is the image of a sound, and in hieroglyphs a visible image of a concept...the symbol and figure differ not only in degree but generically from kyriologic writing. The whole of figurative representation [*Ikonismus*] can be divided into two essential orders whose centers, however one tries to reconcile them, remain apart. We mean the kyriologic order and the symbolic order. (394)

Words are an "image of a sound," whereas the unabbreviated pictographs, the symbols, are images of a concept. And it is with this essential connection and fragmentation that the symbol and language emerge as complicated mediations of primitive man's affective relationship with

the world. To Creuzer, it is a process of spiritual and corporeal unity – an outgrowth of the intrinsic "symbol" – that is mediated through language to become a method of separation. Language perverts the sensual image into sound and the spiritual symbol into something fully materialized.

## III. Science and Affect

Darwin, like Creuzer, sees this intensity of feeling as not something that has been achieved through the advancements of cognition or the progressive march of civilization but as something naturally accompanying humanity and all social creatures from their inception. The sympathetic sense, as Eliot keenly puts it in *Daniel Deronda*, would have began as a "sweet habit of the blood," not something that resulted from "sentimental effort and reflection" (22), or, in other words, through conscious workings of the mind. Rather, Darwin imputes physical weakness in *The Descent of Man* as the primary factor in the selection of the sympathetic and other social instincts:

> An animal possessing great size, strength, and ferocity, and which, like the gorilla, could defend itself from all enemies, would not perhaps have become social; and this would most effectually have checked the acquirement of the higher mental qualities, such as sympathy and love of his fellows.

The natural physical strength of many animals that allows them to survive independently would have kept them from intentionally socializing with their fellow creatures, who were also their fiercest competitors, attempting to occupy the same limited ecological niche. "Hence," he concludes, "it might have been an immense advantage to man to have sprung from some

comparatively weak creature" (84). Thus the deterrents to social interaction would have been overcome, and with the development of communities, the higher faculties would develop. From the flourishing of these communities does the strong social instinct, and thus sympathy, emerge.

That cognition would come before morality seemed to be a natural conclusion, as expressed by the "greatest happiness principle" of some contemporary philosophers, which set the foundation of morality on a selfish faculty of reason. This conclusion is, however, troubled by instinct. If, as Darwin claims, there are moral acts that occur "impulsively, that is from instinct or long habit, without any consciousness or pleasure" (144), then idea that every moral action results from a conscious reasoning of potential pleasures and displeasures, and thus that every moral action is a calculated reflection on what may most benefit *me,* is no longer tenable. But to say that Darwin performs a simple inversion of this sequence is not wholly correct, as reason still plays an important role.

It is an intuitive objection that self-sacrifice would be selected against by nature if it relied purely on inheritance through reproduction, as selection often takes shape in the cases of animals without reason. "It is extremely doubtful," he explains, "whether the offspring of the more sympathetic and benevolent parents, or of those who were the most faithful to their comrades, would be reared in greater numbers than the children of selfish and treacherous parents belonging to the same tribe" (155). Instead, this process of morality is built upon the sympathetic instinct of praise and blame. Darwin traces this history, concluding that "primeval man, at a very remote period, was influenced by the praise and blame of his fellows" (157). The way that moral actions then spread, to Darwin, is by the purely sympathetic sensitivity to the judgments of others—a person would sacrifice themselves, failing to pass on their heightened

sympathetic impulses directly through genetics; but he or she would by "example excite the same wish for glory in other men, and would strengthen by exercise the noble feeling of admiration" (157). This would cause those affected to develop their own sympathetic habits, teach it to their children, and through generations transform the habit into an inheritable trait. Thus morality works on inheritance indirectly and through the ever-present social instinct of sympathy.

From allowing morality to affect inheritance, the sympathetic impulse, which started with filial connections, could eventually spread to all beings while still retaining the status of instinct. Reason thus has a crucial bearing on the propagation of sympathy. As humans progress and can more finely conceive of the nuances of every moral action and their effects on the greater good, then "the simplest reason," being that cooperation of all increases the welfare of all, "would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races...Sympathy beyond the confines of man...one of the noblest [virtues] with which man is endowed, seems to arise incidentally from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings" (147). It is here that Darwin outlines the moral telos of all mankind, which is the path that Deronda takes that pushes humanity forwards—indeed, it is precisely the word "diffusive" that Eliot uses to describe Deronda's sympathy (364). What began as simply parental or filial affections, "since the social instinct seems to be developed by the young remaining for a long time with their parents," (129) extends itself to society, and should be expected to extend itself eventually to all sentient beings. Beyond this initial extension, which Darwin claims "may be attributed in part to habit, but

chiefly to natural selection" (129), the extension to all sentient beings must be done through reason, habit, and the indirect imprinting of habit onto the sympathetic instinct. What began as a conscious effort to feel is combined into an effortless, "sweet habit of the blood," where its initial circumstances or reasons have either been forgotten or discarded.

The character of sympathy, however, in an important crossover with Creuzer, is primarily one of projection. Darwin refers to Adam Smith and Mr. Bain's claim that "the basis of sympathy lies in our strong retentiveness of former states of pain or pleasure" (129), though he rightfully points out a strong objection; namely, that this does not explain "the fact that sympathy is excited, in an immeasurably stronger degree, by a beloved, than by an indifferent person" (130). Darwin goes on to say that "the explanation may lie in the fact that, with all animals, sympathy is directed solely towards the members of the same community" (130). Sympathy works through an initial state of reflection and feeling. A person will see someone suffer and imagine themselves in that person's position—they will project their own feelings onto another. In a moment of self-sacrifice, a person will overcome their instinct to survive in order to help another. This action will cause approbation in the community, which, through previously inherited social instincts, will cause others to develop habits that imitate those of the self-sacrificing person. This will continue until these habits are independent of reason or reflection, until they've become an inheritable trait that does not act through conscious decision. This is why the sympathetic impulse will be directed only towards the community—the mechanism of sympathy is public opinion, and this will only work when the object of a self-sacrificing action is a member of the community. Thus projection and inheritance put innate boundaries on sympathetic extension.

This process of sympathetic inheritance is the same as the process of inventing scientific

language described by William Whewell, which gives sympathy a distinct relationship to uses of language. In his *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, he outlines the way that form relates to objects:

> But yet a little consideration will show us that an activity of the mind, and an activity according to certain Ideas, is requisite in all our knowledge of external objects. We see objects, of various solid forms, and at various distances form us. But we do not thus perceive them by sensation alone...Such knowledge is inferred from what we see:—inferred by conceiving the objects as existing in space, and by applying to them the Idea of Space...And thus Ideas, as well as Sensations, necessarily enter into all our knowledge of objects: and these two words express, perhaps more exactly any of the pairs before mentioned, that Fundamental Antithesis, in the union of which, as I have said, all knowledge consists. (27)

All knowledge begins with an essential fragmentation—the "Fundamental Antithesis"—of objects and ideas. One perceives objects and applies to it thoughts that put it into form. This, as Whewell says, is what consists of all knowledge, and these ideas that scientists must inevitably draw on are always tinged by some feeling or some association:

> In common cases too, knowledge usually does not occupy the intellect alone, but more or less interests some affection, or puts in action the fancy; and common language, accommodating itself to the office of expressing such knowledge, contains, in every sentence, a tinge of emotion or of imagination. (479)

Knowledge is always "tinged" with feeling, the same aspect that Ladislaw praises to Dorothea. Language itself accommodates this purpose, so that at a fundamental level, the purpose of

language is expressing knowledge through a figurative, metaphorical form. Genius and passion are siblings. It is this initial state of language that the scientist must contend with:

> But when our knowledge becomes perfectly exact and purely intellectual, we require a language which shall also be exact and intellectual;—which shall exclude alike vagueness and fancy, imperfection and superfluity;—in which each term shall convey a meaning steadily fixed and rigorously limited. Such a language that of science becomes, through the use of Technical Terms. (479)

Thus "Technical Terms" grow out of the figurative. And through this process of growth into the literal, *Ideas* and *Things* are united. The feeling that filtered and colored the original imaginative act in conceiving the hypothesis is made transparent, and the material can be apprehended in a refined and fixed sense. The spread of sympathy functions in just the same way. An initial imaginative act of sympathy, filtered by an anomalous vitality of feeling, works itself on the minds of others, convinces them to act the same, and repeats itself until it becomes a habit feeling and fancy. It is through this act that sympathy can be inherited, though it relies on the initial mutation, the original genius. The literal register of language becomes important to combat the fragmentation of feeling that Creuzer outlines.

In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin recognizes the significance of this act of literalization and identifies it as one of the profound elements of his revolution in science. He writes in his conclusion,

> The other and more general departments of natural history will rise greatly in interest. The terms used by naturalists of affinity, relationship...&c., will cease to be metaphorical, and will have a plain signification. When we no longer look at an

> organic beings as a savage looks at a ship, as at something wholly beyond his comprehension...how far more interesting, I speak from experience, will the study of natural history become! (423)

Now that the imaginative work of previous naturalists, expressed in an emotionally tinged and figurative terminology, has been verified through rigorous applications of observed data, the terms can unify their purely intellectual parts with their material ones. Now that these terms are unified, and feeling can exist as a transparent habit, they can be fully communicated, utilized, and incorporated. An explanation of how these questions of inheritance, sympathy, and register connect both science and Creuzerian mythology in *Daniel Deronda* must follow an analysis of the text itself.

## V. The Shifting Registers of Figurality Between Daniel Deronda and Sir Hugo

These investments in figurative and literal language as foundations for inheritance and unity expresses itself in *Daniel Deronda* through the double status – or the vacillating nature – of figurative phrases. When talking to Daniel Deronda, Sir Hugo Mallinger says that "the best horse will win in spite of pedigree, my boy. You remember Napoleon's *mot – Je suis un ancetre*" (162). The note in the Penguin Classics edition explains that "the ascription to Napoleon is erroneous...the sense is that a man who rises to distinction in his own lifetime need not worry about his lineage; he himself becomes an 'ancestor'" (802). This saying could be taken figuratively at first to say that a person can overcome any disadvantages of pedigree through his or her own effort – that any useful variations, to put it in Darwinian terms, would substitute for

the value of inheritance.

Daniel's response, however, troubles this reading. Daniel ambivalently says to Sir Hugo, with an air of slight annoyance, that “I am not sure that I want to be an ancestor...it doesn't seem to me the rarest sort of origination” (163). Daniel's use of the word “rare” is ambiguous. Does he mean that the origination is not of the most excellent kind, or that it is not the most uncommon? In either case, Daniel's response is puzzling. He seems to be looking for an uncommon, if not excellent “origination,” and by doing this, he seems to echo many of the concerns and natural repulsions of Darwin's critics. By taking on his ancestry and embodying it, and by having this direct connection with his progenitors, his origin is somehow diminished or made common. It is a separation between oneself and one's ancestors that seems the most flattering. Daniel seems to be buying into existing structures of power (i.e. that pedigree is what defines one's worth). But Daniel, however, is seeking his ancestry—he greatly desires a closer connection with it—and he becoming his own ancestor in a literal sense is precisely what he does in the novel. Daniel is, somewhat perversely, taking Hugo literally.

If one follows the allusion to Darwin's theory of evolution in the words “ancestor” and “origination,” words that will continue to appear throughout the novel, one will find how the literal register for Sir Hugo Mallinger's saying can be understood. In *The Variation of Plants and Animals under Domesticaiton,* Darwin offered an interesting model of inheritance in order to fill the gap in knowledge and explain observed phenomena. With what he calls the hypothesis of “Pangenesis,” he suggests that “gemmules”--discrete units that carry the blueprint of a cell—would be produced by every cell in an organism's body throughout its life. With this hypothesis, certain modifications or changes through habit could change genetic information, as the newly

produced gemmules would have the ability to be expressed in the young. Whether certain traits are expressed “depends on the presence of gemmules thrown off at each period of life, and on their development, at a corresponding period, in union with preceding cells” (404). A profound aspect of this hypothesis—and crucial to the claim here being made about literalization—is that the gemmules that express themselves in the child are of the same body and are outgrowths of the parent, not completely discrete:

> The child, strictly speaking, does not grow into the man, but includes germs which slowly and successively become developed and form the man. In the child, as well as in the adult, each part generates the same part for the next generation. Inheritance must be looked at as merely a form of growth, like the self-division of a lowly-organised unicellular plant. (404)

The gemmules that spur the growth of parts of the child's body are the same that spurred the growth in the parents, and the same with his or her ancestors that came before. In children lies the building blocks of many of their ancestors, which may lie dormant and express themselves at a later time. This “depends on the transmission from the fore-father to his descendants of dormant gemmules, which occasionally become developed under certain...conditions...Each animal and plant may be compared to a bed of mould full of seeds, most of which soon germinate, some lie for a period dormant, whilst others perish. ” (404). In a moment of strange coincidence, Darwin seems to echo Creuzer's langauge when he explores the implications of this hypothesis: “each living creature must be looked at as a microcosm—a little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms, inconceivably minute and as numerous as the stars in heaven” (404). Just as “all the rays of being” gathered in man in the figurative sense for Creuzer,

the sum of many of one's ancestors lies in a single individual. This project of literalization—though done unwittingly with Creuzer—occurs just sentences before with a figurative expression. “When we hear it said,” Darwin writes, “that a man carries in his constitution the seeds of an inherited disease, there is much literal truth in the expression.” This highly imaginative work on behalf of Darwin is a point of convergence with Creuzer, as well as the groundwork for many of the literalizations found in the novel, a key insight by Ian Duncan (33).

If one imagines that Eliot is working with this hypothesis of inheritance—no large jump of the imagination—then Hugo's saying easily takes on a literal register. If one takes it in this light, Daniel's response makes more sense, and one sees that this is, indeed, how Daniel himself took the comment. If it is taken in a figurative sense, it feels unsatisfying. If one takes the word “rarest” to mean “excellent,” then the response is flat-out contradictory. To become one's ancestor, in the figurative sense, implies the most excellence. One rises to distinction on the very merit of one's excellence – one does not have the pedigree with which to stand on. If one takes it to mean “uncommon,” then it seems equally insensible – rising to distinction is certainly more uncommon than the swathes of old money aristocrats. If, however, one takes the saying literally, then Daniel's response seems an interesting critique. To “become” one's own ancestor – to literally become the expression of latent ancestral traits – would be to abdicate his individual variations. He would become less “rare” – he would be a redundancy. To become one's ancestor could also be seen as diminishing one's excellence. It would be a regression of a kind back to a more primitive state, if Daniel saw his evolutionary process as one of progression and not degeneration. It should also be noted that Hugo's implied disconnection between pedigree and becoming one's own ancestor does not contradict this interpretation. If one becomes an ancestor,

then one no longer needs a pedigree – it is written on your body and in the fabric of your organism. You *become* the pedigree, therefore eliminating the pedigree it. Daniel, it seems, takes Hugo literally, or at least expresses himself in such a manner that the literal interpretation is more legible.

Sir Hugo Mallinger's saying is thus reflexively shifted into the literal sense. And this process in the philosophy of the inductive sciences, according to Whewell, is the companion to a process of fragmentation to unity. Once one has successfully made this transition into the literal, people

> can no longer easily restore [the invented terms and the things themselves] back to the detached and incoherent condition in which they were before they were combined. The pearls once strung, they seem to form a chain by their nature. Induction has given them a unity which it is so far from costing us an effort to preserve, that it requires an effort to imagine it dissolved. (52)

It may not seem intuitive that this process of literalization, as it is found in science, can so directly be applied to the literalization one finds in *Daniel Deronda*. The invented term, the metaphorical phrase that the saying began in, is easy enough to identify. But what is the object with which this saying is unified? Perhaps it is easier, at first, to identify what is discarded by this process. In this instance, it is Daniel's implied acceptance of existing structures of class power based upon inheritance. As a man whose origins are hidden from him, it would seem odd that Daniel would have made this investment to begin with. But what is also discarded is the disconnection from his ancestors that the figurative version implies. With the literal saying, the implication that Daniel is an embodiment of all previous generations, with the intrinsic risk of

those qualities expressing themselves at any stage of development, is solidified in his understanding. The possibility of reversion, atavism and regression goes from whimsical metaphor to looming threat.

So even though act of reseparation takes a work of the imagination, it is instructive to do so. The initially metaphorical term is the suggestion that a person could, in an a priori sense, start a new species. What this metaphorical term is unified with is the observable fact that no organism is disconnected from its inheritance. This metaphorical phrase ceases to be merely symbolic, and thus signifies the observable fact that humans embody their line of ancestry, and that the traits of all former organisms are forever written on the hearts of every person. This reading makes Daniel's interaction with Mordecai more legible, as well as outlining the process with which science will guide reunification with primitive feeling.

It is also important to note that Eliot, at multiple times in the novel, expresses these concerns of register. After being thrown off his horse, Rex's father asks him if he is ready for the journey to Southampton. He replies in the negative, and is then described by Eliot has having “his heart metaphorically in his mouth” (78). No one would assume that Eliot meant Rex to have his heart literally in his mouth; that would be absurd. Pointing out this description as a metaphor is quite unnecessary. But with this move, Eliot is preparing her readers to question whether assumed metaphors are really what they seem. When the narrator describes Herr Klesmer at the archery tournament, he or she says that “it was literally a new light for them to see him in” (103). The narrator takes the rather clichéd metaphor of the new light and gives it literal significance. Where the previous absurd instance of metaphorical signification was a challenge in expectation, here one sees the narrator performing this shift of registers. While it may be too strong to say the

reader has been conditioned by Eliot, the reader has, at the very least, had his or her expectations of language subverted so that all it would take to spur this process of literalization would be to include a situation where metaphor causes an uncomfortable and somewhat insensible line of thought, such as the combination of Hugo's French saying and Daniel's reaction.

## VI. The Shifting Registers of Figurality Between Daniel Deronda and Mordecai

The term “microcosm” is perhaps the most appropriate word to describe how Mordecai conceives of himself as a prophet figure. He describes how his racial inheritance converges on him:

> You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages. The generations are crowding on my narrow life as a bridge: what has been and what is to be are meeting there; and the bridge is breaking. But I have found you...You will take the inheritance which the base son refuses because of the tombs which the plough and harrow may not pass over or the gold-seeker disturb: you will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew. (500)

One is immediately struck by Mordecai's mystical, poetic language. Taken figuratively, he is saying that he holds the wealth of his ancestors, that they all occupy him in some way, probably transferred by culture or something befittingly supernatural. The metaphor at the end of the passage seems to say that Mordecai, the “base son” refuses the inheritance because the tombs—which reside within Mordecai—are untouchable by both the farmer and the thief. Why this would be a basis for refusal is confusing—isn't the fact that the inheritance is untouchable a

positive benefit? Is it because this son is “base,” which is to say he is unworthy in some fashion?

Relying once again on the hypothesis of Pangenesis, Mordecai's words take on a literal significance and become more legible. The generations that preceded Mordecai would lay within him in either an active or dormant state in the form of gemmules. His inheritance is not one that is culturally or supernaturally given, but one of physical genetics. That he is a “base” son could also be literalized by becoming technical—he is the bottom of the descendant chain of ancestry, one that holds the untouchable components of his genetics, components which will be passed on in an active, living form as long as Mordecai reproduces. The gemmules are tombs of the ancestor that will never be dug out of the ground or had their valuables stolen. That he is a “bridge” must still be taken figuratively—though it should be noted that Mordecai and Deronda are standing on a literal bridge at the time of this conversation—as well as the rest of the quote about ploughs and gold-seekeers. But these rapid vacillations in register spin around themselves, acting with centrifugal force to mix the figurative with the literal.

Both mythology and science link the figurative with a preceding stage—the ancient past in Creuzer and the process of terminology and instinctual feeling in Darwin and Whewell—and the literal with the present and the future, the bridging of which is taken up by Mordecai. The narrator describes the passion that Mordecai pours into his verse: “he would...repeat a Hebrew poem of his own, into which years before he had poured his first youthful ardours for that conception of a blended past and future which was the mistress of his soul” (476). Mordecai, in suitable Creuzerian fashion, expresses “his feelings in speaking images,” or poetry, channeling the natural affective vitality of the ancients. But this project has the specific aim of not merely bringing the past into the future, as a relic preserved, but *blending* the two together. This

blending, which Mordecai takes on from a prophetic, mystical, symbolic approach, is cited as a maxim by Whewell. “In framing scientific terms,” he claims, “the appropriation of old words is preferable to the invention of new ones” (502). He justifies this by quoting the natural philosopher, Francis Bacon, who writes,

> ...I am studious to keep the ancient terms. For, hoping well to deliver myself from mistaking by the order and perspicuous expressing of that I do propound; I am otherwise zealous and affectionate to recede as little from antiquity, either in terms or opinions, as may stand with the truth, and the proficience of knowledge...To me, that do desire, as much as lieth in my pen, to ground a sociable intercourse between antiquity and proficience, it seemeth best to keep a way with antiquity *usque ad aras* [to the last degree]; and therefore to retain the ancient terms... (502)

This “sociable intercourse between antiquity and proficience,” is both a poetic objective as well as a scientific one. Both of these desire to blend the past into the proficient new, but it is only science that can do this successfully. This, among other reasons, is why the ancient Mordecai, ravaged by consumption, must pass his inheritance onto the cosmopolitan Deronda. And that this process of literalization occurs through the mechanism of inheritance, one of the most confounding factors of sympathy, brings these concerns to sympathetic extension.

## VII. Literalization, Sympathy, and Inheritance

The primary flaw with Deronda's sympathy is that it lacks any decisive power. He reflects upon his own sympathy before meeting Mordecai: “His early wakened-sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder and

persistent course of action." This diffusion of sympathy, which is ideally the moral telos, is paralyzed by a sympathy towards those that will inevitably be hurt by any action. Even a righteous indignance would lead "nothing to meet his spear but flesh of his flesh, and objects that he loved." It is also the very fact that he engages in this "reflective analysis" that his sympathy tends to be neutralized (364). In order to counteract this, Deronda yearns for "some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action" (365). A universal sympathy is the desired course for evolutionary development, but in the naturally enhanced form that appears in Deronda, it is paralyzed through reason and reflection. It has not yet been internalized and instinctualized.

The cause of this diffusion is imputed as his status as a wanderer within society. In order for a partiality to come, he needs to be "an organic part of social life." He is "stirred with a vague social passion, but without a fixed local habitation to render fellowship real." This was a fault in his birth and the way he had been brought up, which had laid no special demands on him and given him no "fixed relationship except one of a doubtful kind" (365). His doubtful filial relationship with Sir Hugo troubles the development of a solid basis for action. During his youth, the narrator describes the consequences of Deronda's familial speculations as giving his special sympathetic nature the tendency for "premature reflection on certain questions of life; it had given a bias to his conscience, a sympathy with certain ills, and a tension of resolve in certain directions..." (175). Deronda's "tension of resolve" comes precisely from the fact that he has no sure connection with an organic, familial center.

But this paralytic reflection is also the reason why Deronda's special sympathy is able to become so diffuse and universal, and it is why he is able to be subject to the transference of

Mordecai's grounding, organic center. Where most people would turn away from Mordecai's mystical injunctions, Deronda stays. It is the "exquisite quality of Deronda's nature—that keenly perceptive sympathetic emotiveness which ran along with his speculative tendency" that makes him receptive to Mordecai's visions. It was not the rational persuasiveness of Mordecai's claims, but rather Deronda's "profound sensibility to a cry form the depths of another soul" (496). Deronda gains his organic center—the external force that would allow him a partiality—from the "speculative quality," from the thing that prevented his partiality from arising internally. It is Deronda's initial disconnection with his inheritance that allows him to advance beyond the limits of primitive sympathy, and his reconnection with his inheritance that gives him the ability to act upon this advancement.

That "primitive sympathy" is inherently limited is perhaps unclear, but its truth is apprehended both by Creuzer and by Darwin. Creuzer saw the primitive vitality of man as one that will specify or materialize itself with a specific culture as well as fragment its unity with knowledge. There is no way to reverse this process of fragmentation short of a new experience of revelation—like that of Jesus Christ—but this will simply reset the process. For Darwin, extension of sympathy will always be bounded by natural selection. Morality is naturally characterized by antagonism, which is to say that what is morally right treatment of a community member is not necessarily the same as what is morally right treatment for a foreigner or an enemy. Self-sacrifice is also an individually detrimental trait, which is why it must work *outside* the realm of direct, genetic inheritance. It must be a culturally integrated value that becomes unified with the object that it affects, which is to say that it must become an instinct, a "sweet habit of the blood"—but it will still only affect the habits of a community. To put it simply,

Deronda's disconnection with his inheritance gives him a special speculative tendency to enhance his special sympathetic nature. This speculative tendency allows the expansion of his sympathy beyond the bounds of inheritance and antagonism. After Deronda reconnects with his inheritance, he is able to put the partiality of a community-sympathy onto his expanded sympathy.

The narrator uses Whewellian language when referring to this reconnection, tying it to the process of literalization. In a moment of sympathy and speculation, Deronda thinks it

> conceivable that as Mordecai needed and believed that he had found an active replenishment of himself, so Deronda might receive from Mordecai's mind the complete ideal shape of that personal duty and citizenship which lay in his own thought like sculptured fragments certifying some beauty yearned after but not traceable by divination. (512)

An “ideal shape” is precisely how Whewell describes the mental act of interpretation that unites sensory fragments. That “our sensations, from their first reception, have their Form not changed, but given by our Ideas” (36) allows one to think of Mordecai's influence in a literal sense. The “sculptured fragments” of Deronda's mind, lying about like unprocessed, uninterpreted raw data, is in a sense being acted upon by a foreign mind to unify them and give them form. From this and previous examples of literalization, the project of extending sympathy is intimately bound with a scientific, linquistic unity of past figurality and feeling with present and future literality. The blending of the past and future, in this sense, is required to meet the moral telos of universal sympathy:

> And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland

> where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be – the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material, as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies. (514)

The avatar of the figure and the ancient, natural state of mankind—the poet—must combine efforts with the scientist. They must unify in order to move humanity forward.

## VII. Concluding Remarks

Creuzer's history of mythology describes a past built on an ancient symbol. The old microcosm of man that contained the unified vitality of feeling worked with the same energy of the poets. The ancient world was one of fracturing—where humans were once unified with feeling and with revelation, they became fragmented, and the symbol was divided by cultures that materialized its message into specific stories. Science, as described by Whewell and Darwin, also sees this feeling as a beginning, but science, through literalizing language, has the ability to reunify the divided, fragmented figures and feelings of the ancients.

The moral telos of universal sympathy can only be accomplished by severing one from this fragmentary system, developing diffusive sympathies and extending it beyond the boundaries of community, and then reunifying with inheritance to allow it agency and the ability to propagate. Science provides this mechanism through words, the great connection with the past, and the only thing that can both express an emotion and refer to an objective reality. Through literalization, among other processes, the affective intensity of the past can be

recovered, modified, and redeployed to overcome its original boundaries and encompass all living organisms. It is a way of saving the past while pursuing a future that seems incompatible with it. This is what Daniel Deronda, the character and the novel, achieves.

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Erik Swan

Professor Lavery

English 165

Febrary 24, 2014

# Intersectional Ontology: the Metaphysics of Oscar Wilde's Epigrams

Oscar Wilde's epigrams are at once both amusing and frustrating. While they generally rest on some clever turn of phrase, an irony, or some sort of unexpected inversion, they shut down any interpretive penetration and seem far from any sort of utility. In his short work, “Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young,” Wilde gives a list of epigrams with this exact stated purpose, utility, for a vague group that consists of “the young.” Upon closer inspection, Wilde's wordplay in this piece does in fact give a point of entry, although a highly formal one involving grammar. It is in particular his use of the copula that gives the impression of Wilde as a serial reductionist, though other epigrams suggest that it is hardly this simple. From its function in a few relevant epigrams, the copula emerges as an immaterial singularity from which the physically reduced mind springs forth. It becomes the basis for an “intersectional” ontology rather than a physicalist one.

The strongest reduction lies in one particular epigram. He writes, “To be premature is to be perfect.” In a sentence with seven words, there are only two words that aren't forms of the verb “to be.” This epigram boils down the reduction to its most stringent, most straightforward form. The copula, however—the word “is”—is a point of special interest; it performs the central role in the reduction. But while the copula is present in all but six of the thirty-five total epigrams, it is unreasonable to assert that formulations like “Ambition is the last refuge of the

failure" are also using the copula to invoke the same reduction. Wilde is clearly not suggesting that the ontology of ambition is the nature of being a refuge—it is a description, a status. So it is not to say that the copula is always performing a reduction. But by prefacing a word with "to be," like in "to be premature," it indicates that he is speaking specifically of the ontology of the state of prematurity. Wilde is not invoking a description, like in the "ambition" epigram, he is invoking a state of being, not just of prematurity, but of perfection, by virtue of its parallel construction. Wilde therefore seems to make the claim that the state of prematurity is the same thing as the state of perfection—there is no difference, no distinction. The words on the page are misleading—they are synonyms.

This reduction, however, while grammatically forced, becomes problematic when dealing with words with intrinsic temporality. Prematurity indicates a temporality that's prior to a type of "ripeness," whereas perfection is the ideal possible occurrence of the ideal ripeness. In order to follow the reduction that this epigram seems to desire, one would have to dispose of particular moments, instead letting "states" extend indefinitely across time. And if time is subject to this bleeding together, then space is subject to it, as well. One requires time to travel through space; they are inextricably linked. And there is only one place where it seems philosophically feasible for this spatiotemporal mire of indistinctiveness to occur: that of the immaterial mind posited by Cartesian dualism. It seems, intuitively, that this interpretation is troublesome. It would imply that any sort of words dealing with temporality, when located within the immateriality of the mind, would just as adequately substitute the words used in this epigram. Thus, with the reductionist reading, the epigram renders itself both arbitrary and trivial. Any state of the mind is equal; and if there is no distinction, how can these states of mind have distinct effects?

Since reduction leads one into an interpretive dead-end, one is forced to reconsider this putative reduction as positioning the copula as the intersection of concepts. It is easiest to see this function of the copula in the epigram, “A really well-made buttonhole is the only link between Art and Nature.” One has the familiar “is,” but it is followed, crucially, by the word “link.” Grammatically, the copula is also known in this sentence as a linking verb. The epigram is thus creating a parallel between the form of the sentence with its content. A “really well-made buttonhole” is an unsuspecting link between two disparate and abstract concepts. If one imagines these concepts to extend themselves as a line does, then they would form themselves like a cross, with one point of intersection, while the rest exists independently. The copula performs this function in the same manner: it is the intersecting point of a cross with each line forming the subject and the predicate, respectively.

This interpretation of the copula as an intersection cleverly intercepts the implications of reducing immaterial states of mind. With the failure to eliminate the spatiotemporality of prematurity and perfection, Wilde backhandedly indicates the pairing problem. If one accepts that this epigram is indeed a failure in this way, one is thus locating the mind within space and time. In other words, one is thus conceiving the ontology of mental states as reduced to the physical. Through the proverbial martyring of the epigram, Wilde surreptitiously coerces one into conceiving a world where Cartesian dualism is false. But it is not as simple as a negation—the introduction of mental states as intersecting on the copula provides it with a unique property. The mind is physical, yes, but its interaction produces a property that nothing else has: it can force distinct physical states to converge in ways that would be impossible otherwise. Wilde is creating an incredibly nuanced mediation between ontological physicalism (also known as

materialism) and dualism.

It may be beneficial to put the case in other words. The crux of the problem is the idea that indistinct mental states can cause distinct effects. If thoughts are not located within space, then how is it that what person A thinks does not occur in person B's brain? How is there any differentiation? To put it in physical terms: suppose person A throws a ball at person B. Suppose as well that a third person, person C, throws a ball at a fourth, person D. How is it that B receives the ball thrown by A and D receives the ball thrown by C? The answer is deceptively obvious. It is their location in space that allows one to make this connection. The same is true with thoughts. If thoughts have no location, if they lie outside of material space, how is it that they occur in a single person's brain? How is it that brains are "paired" with bodies, just as the thrown balls are paired with individuals? This is known as the pairing problem, and it is troublesome because it doesn't seem to allow any room for either a soul or free will. The singularity of the copula satisfies this problem. One can have a physical mind that intersects on something that is not physical.

If it seems that these metaphysical concerns are too arcane, one needs only to look at an epigram where Wilde says this almost plainly. He writes, "Those who see any difference between soul and body have neither." The supposed paradox here comes from the implication that someone could both conceive of a soul and body while having neither. The more one thinks about it, the more troubling the epigram seems to become. If one follows it to the end, it seems to make more of a reduction than the one it explicitly states—that of the soul and the body—it seems to reduce the mind to a subject of its own perception. The existence of a soul and body depends upon a crucial third component that links them together. Without this, neither exist.

Likewise, the mind converges on the copula—which is itself a metaphor for a certain aspect of the mind. While it exists in the physical world, the mind creates an immaterial connection that enable the connected materials' existence.

But it is problematic to use the word intersection to indicate an immaterial occurrence, as the word intersection, and, indeed, the example of the cross that was previously given, is conceived entirely on a material, spatiotemporal level. The nature of the immateriality seems to be derived, then, from the ontology of the connected materials. It seems intuitive that physical objects exist intrinsically. A body exists independent of its surrounding conditions; whether it was on Earth or Mars, whether it is used to one purpose or another, it makes no difference. An objective rather than subjective existence is one of the very properties that seems to distinguish physical objects. The immaterial quality that is being supposed here, then, is that of a conditional ontology. The objective existence of the mind is tied to its subjective link. It is like a cone made out of linked chains, balancing on its point—except the point does not rest on some stable surface, but rather the metaphorical copula in the mind. Every mind would form its own cone, superposed upon on one another—but not necessarily connected—balancing on this same point. It is purpose of this metaphor that it is difficult to conceive of physically.

This theory of intersectional reduction derived from the role of the copula and the mind thus privileges this one form of language and perception. It is not necessarily the mind itself that allows for the existence of the soul and the body, though it is a precondition. It is the perception of these objects existing, as the epigram puts it, without difference; and this requires a medium. This medium, this link between phenomena, is what satisfies the conditional ontology and allows an objective existence of the mind and all its products. It is the singularity of linguistic

connection—it is the copula.

To put the steps of thought in concise terms: in the first epigram considered, the copula tricks the reader into conceiving a reduction of the mind and body by demonstrating the pairing problem. But just short of supporting a simple physicalist reduction of the mind, the second epigram suggests that the copula serves as an intersection, through the epigram's parallel in form and content. The third epigram allows one to understand this "intersection" as a transcendence of the physical by necessitating a conditional ontology on the objective existence of the mind. This takes the form of a privileged instantiation of language—the link, the copula. It is a singularity, and thus satisfies the pairing problem. It is the chain-link cones.

But the epigrams always seem to have the last word. They are supposed to be jokes. They are witticisms that rely on paradox and inversion to create their humor. Is it fair to seek such metaphysical interpretations in them? Or is it fair to use humor as a defense against these types of interpretations? It is likely that most people would answer the first question in the negative. But to forbid this sort of inquiry through the presumption of intention seems to be the worse option. It is a fine example of the intentional fallacy. It still seems, however, that the humor surrounding these epigrams looms around every corner, threatening some kind of inversion on anything one desires to say about them. But the intersectional ontology of the mind remains even under the pressure of this threatening presence.

Erik Swan

Jennifer Lum

Section 104

11/29/12

Judith Butler's Recovery of Psychoanalysis from the Technologies of Power as outlined by Michel Foucault

The exercise of power through controlled discursive shifts is the central method of subjectivation to Michel Foucault. In his *History of Sexuality,* he demonstrates the contrary repressive hypothesis as a superficial view of history—while explicit referrals to sexuality were proscribed and regulated, the overarching shift, multiplication, and dispersion of discourses was the true technology of power. In service of this claim, Foucault challenges the binarization of speech and silence, and reveals, in light of the consequential performative coextensivity of silence to speech, how the implicit considerations of power actually created polymorphous sexualities rather than repressing them. This multiplication of discourses implanted identities and typologized individuals in order to broaden power's influence and introduce venues for surveillance and discipline. These typologies were based on paradigms: the concept of deviance —which implies a naturalized "origin"—became central to the exercise of power in the subjectivation of people. With this danger of paradigmatic treatment of identities in mind, it is easy to see where the "interiorization" of psychoanalysis could be seen by Foucault to support the idea of conformity to the so-called "natural" paradigms. Judith Butler, however, makes use of psychoanalysis—particularly psychic mimesis—to disrupt the idea of primary self-hood. Our various incorporations of differentially gendered Others means that there is no naturalized, essential self that gender expresses—the relation is in fact inverted. The performativity of gender

imitations which have no origin actually produces the "essential identity" that it claims compels it to begin with. Through this, Butler demonstrates the inherent inevitably of failure of any attempt to prioritize the volitional subject and to typologize people with the categories that Foucault finds so critical to the technology of power.

From the onset, Foucault sets psychoanalysis as inimical to resisting the technology of power. Categorization of sexuality is what he hopes to combat—and with it certain ideas of the essential "self"—because it broadens the scope of power and turns them into docile bodies ready for discipline. He thus asserts that "one cannot hope to obtain the desired results simply from a medical practice, nor from a theoretical discourse, however rigorously pursued. Thus, one denounces Freud's conformism, the normalizing functions of psychoanalysis…" (5) and so on. By asserting the unconscious as a "subject," as an interior thing which exists and thus can be typologized, and by purporting to delve into the truest "desires" of a person, even at the dream level, psychoanalysis seems to be a useful tool for power. Power's discursive shift to sex, which purports "to reveal the truth about sex" (8), is served by this normalizing tool and affirmatio of self-hood. It is precisely this "will to knowledge" that drives the rigid sexual categorizations and regulations. One can almost taste the venom dripping from Foucault's words when he writes, "we shall leave it to psychoanalysts to speculate whether he [Don Juan] was homosexual, narcissistic, or impotent" (40). Psychoanalysts' will to knowledge seems to be the very tool that power would draw on to mark one's sexual identity. Unconscious, interior urges were where a psychoanalytic perspective might claim produced one's sexuality. This "interiorization" is one of the four operations of power. Homosexuality became "a personage, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology" (43). This sexuality was "at the root of all his

actions…it was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature…a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul" (43). The essence of power's exertion over sexuality seems to be from a psychoanalytic lens.

Butler, however, uses the incorporation of the Other of psychoanalysis to invert this idea of internalized self-hood and reject power's attempt to typologize sexuality. It is through Freud's theory of mimetic practice that Butler claims that "the psychic subject is nevertheless constituted internally by differentially gendered Others and is, therefore, never, as a gender, self-identical" (133). Gender and sexuality is far from the "singular nature" that power wants it to be—identity, from the beginning, is formed externally. These external and differentially gendered Others performatively create sexuality through repetition. Someone must repeat gender norms—which are arbitrary and out of one's control (an allusion to Saussure)—in order to create the illusion of gender. Power's suggestion of an essential, singular nature, however, might suggest that one would have the ability to pick which conventions to meet. Butler anticipates this when she writes, "there is no volitional subject behind the mime who decides, as it were, which gender it will be today. On the contrary, the very possibility of becoming a viable subject requires that a certain gender mime be already underway" (130). Interior, unconscious urges do not choose genders or sexuality; it is precisely the repetitive erotic or conventional acts that produce a subject. These repetitions "constitute as an effect the very subject it appears to express" (130), but because these repetitions are constantly necessary, "repetition never fully accomplishes identity. That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical" (131). Through the establishing of the primarily externalized, fractured identity, Butler manages to refute the idea that an inner nature is expressed through sexuality, and keep psychoanalysis from the hands of power.

Butler goes further, however, and problematizes the paradigmatic case of heterosexual, monogamous relationships that Foucault establishes is the "normal" sexuality that power seeks to impose. Rejecting, at least as a primary purpose, the idea that power encouraged the heterosexual, monogamous relationship for purely economic, capitalist reasons, Foucault points instead to the "network of pleasures and powers linked together at multiple points and according to transformable relationships" (45). Power needs to have a reason to give attention, to typology, to examine, and to keep under surveillance—power needs deviance. In this exercising of power over deviance, pleasure is achieved—but pleasure is also gotten by the one being subjectivated by power. In order to perpetuate and increase the exercising, then, power created polymorphous sexualities—it was a multiplying effect, rather than a reductive one. Foucault refutes the idea of power as a reductive mechanism: "to reduce them to the conjugal relationship, and then to project the latter, in the form of a forbidden desire, onto the children, cannot account for this apparatus which, in relation to these sexualities, was less a principle of inhibition than an inciting and multiplying mechanism" (46). According to Butler, however, this is essentially multiplying by zero—sexualities are all necessarily copies for which there is no original. Heterosexual relationships (with special regard to power's normalization of monogamy) presuppose homosexuality to claim itself as original. To have a deviant sexuality, you must first have a non-deviant one. And, Butler writes, "if the homosexual *as* copy *precedes* the heterosexual *as* origin, then it seems only fair to concede that the copy comes before the origin, and that homosexuality is thus the origin, and heterosexuality the copy" (128).

But it is still not that simple. All genders are made through imitations of conventionalized gender attributes. Imitation, or as Butler refers to it, drag, "is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e. an act of expropriation or appropriation that assumes

that gender is the rightful property of sex…where that notion of the "proper" operates, it is always and only *improperly* installed as the effect of a compulsory system" (127). One of the operations of power, then, is not only to typologize fictionalized identities and sexualities, but to make those that it affirms as "natural" as compulsory. But meeting this compulsory sexuality is impossible. As established earlier, the repetition of sexuality is never-ending and doomed from the start. Gender and erotic acts performatively create the subject, and there are intervals between each performative act—which means all sexualities, not just heterosexuality, are under the risk of being undone. Each interval, then, is a reminder that heterosexuality is not naturally primary, and presents itself as panicked and anxious, and "that it can never eradicate that risk attests to its profound dependency upon…homosexuality" (129). This extreme anxiety, then becomes the locus around which Foucault's description of the comprehensive machinations of the family revolves: "the separation of grown-ups and children…the relative segregation of boys and girls…the attention focused on infantile sexuality, the supposed dangers of masturbation…the methods of surveillance suggests to parents, the exhortations, secrets, and fears, the presence—both valued and feared—of servants: all this made the family…a complicated network, saturated with multiple, fragmentary, and mobile sexualities" (46). The impossibility of ever succeeding in the family's given task—naturalize what cannot be naturalized; inverse the causal relationship of gender performativity and subjectivity—drives the self-surveying, regulating, and disciplining citizen; drives the multiplication of sexual discourses; and, as a consequence of the former two, perpetuates the spirals of power and pleasure.

But, Foucault might say, does your provisional use of these categories for political purposes not promise "to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function" (8)? Foucault certainly has a problem with typologies, and as such might have a problem with

Butler's acknowledgment that "*politically,* we might argue, isn't it quite crucial to insist on lesbian and gay identities precisely because they are being threatened with erasure and obliteration from homophobic quarters" (125)? Even though Foucault establishes the hypocrisy of continuing the discourse that enables power with the pretense of rebellion against it, Butler still proposes a way in which discourse, combined with the necessary *exclusions* of any form of identity, may work to destabilize the identities. As Butler describes it, "if the I can so determine itself, then that which it excludes in order to make that determination remains constitutive of the determination itself" (122). The excess of what the an identity signifies necessarily includes the significations of what it is not. Power relies on static definitions—if an identity sign is used to express an inner, essential "truth" of the self, then that "truth" is not subject to change. But if one can include that which an identity sign signifies it is not, then perhaps, as Butler proposes, "part of what is necessarily excluded is *the future uses of the sign"* (126). As what is excluded from an identity will necessarily change as new signs enter into discourse, then it stands to reason that one can inject a necessary instability in the signs of the present. As Butler puts it, "in avowing the sign's strategic provisionality (rather than its strategic essentialism), that identity can become a site of contest and revision, indeed, take on a future set of significations that those of us who use it now may not be able to foresee" (126). By using the sign in this fashion, it is irrevocably problematized. By turning the sign outward, the notion that it expresses an interior, essential truth is obliterated—the sign now signifies the troubled lack of specificity, the necessary insufficiency of the sign. In this way, sexual discourse is undermined in a fundamental way through a strategic redefinition of the tenets the made it previously function.

Even though Foucault makes constant allusions to the danger of psychoanalysis because of its potential to establish the interiority that power requires in order to typologize and

subjectivate people, Butler uses psychoanalysis to destabilize and invert the concept of gender and identity. The incorporation of differentially gendered Others—whether that incorporation happens before or after Freud's notion of loss—permanently fractures the self. The psychic subject is never self identical. Thus heterosexuality, in its doomed pursuit to establish itself as the paradigmatic norm through never-ending repetitions, can neither eliminate the fallacious homosexual identity with which it presupposes, nor can it eliminate the anxiety that stands opposed to power's pervasive normalization. By strategically making use of this anxiety by acknowledging the exclusions and contradistinctive identities that are coextensive to any identity sign, then one can politically redefine the tenets power works by, destabilize its imposed identities, and replace the mechanism of subjectivating power altogether.