INQUIRY AFTER MODERNISM

INQUIRY AFTER **MODERNISM**

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Anthropology of the Contemporary Research Collaboratory

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

REMEDIATE & REOCCUPY!

This book takes off from the claim that the stasis of inquiry today that we observe is characterized by inadequate forms for interconnections between and among truth and subjectivity.

The works that we have published over the last five years (2012–2017) have each, in different ways, been steps in a larger endeavor to forge an account of how inquiry, taken in John Dewey's sense as the vocation of thought, could be equipped to exit such stasis.

Our response in these works has been to center primarily on an anthropology of "ethos" as both object and objective of inquiry—hence, our stated aim, over at least a decade, to narrate the task of forging an ethos for inquiry today, in the wake of scientific and artistic modernity. Prior books have included two books based on participant-observation with bioscientists; a genealogical reader recasting the topics and concepts for anthropological inquiry into science, reason, and modernity; as well as two books that were based on observation and reflection on the arts.[1] Each posed the challenge of how that which was observed, the character of the lives observed, the production of the domains of veridiction, as well as the narrative experimentation, could be grasped and given significance for writer and reader in terms of their own ethos. This work was both an effort to exit from a situation of stasis and *stultitia* (troubled irresolution) and to search for, or perhaps invent, a path toward an entry into a different topological space of inquiry with a different mood and form: ultimately with a distinctive ethos.[2]

INQUIRY & ANTHROPOLOGY

What is the state of anthropology today? Minimally, the salience of two prior interconnected foundations of the discipline of anthropology's orientation and *raison d'être* during the twentieth century have withered, but not disappeared. These foundations are the salvaging, if only

discursively, of Others' forms of life through ethnographic description and the promised, but always deferred, *critical* re-examination of Self by way of knowledge of the Other.[3]

We hold that the power and pertinence of modernist forms of anthropological knowledge and critique arose under conditions of modernity (understood broadly). These conditions have changed, but the modernist forms of knowing and critique have not adequately developed concepts and forms to deal with these changes.[4] Let us not be misunderstood: saying that the salience of these foundations has weakened is not to say that anthropological knowledge in the dominant disciplinary forms as they developed throughout the twentieth century, in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States, is without interest; to the contrary, our aim in observing and diagnosing what we take to be the stasis of anthropology is to remediate and reoccupy a problem space of inquiry in which these traditions have waned.

We firmly believe such remediation is worth the effort. We use remediation as a technical term to diagnose or highlight a deficiency, either ethical or epistemological, as well as a call for a change of media. There should be and will be, we hope and trust, different remediations and reoccupations. The first step in our remediation and eventual reoccupation is to appreciate what has been accomplished previously, not to diminish it but to reflect on its prior determinations and taken-for-granted assumptions—veridictional, ethical, political, and narrative—as well as its unfulfilled promises and the reasons and conditions that left those promises unfulfilled.

MODERNITY & MODERNISM

We hold that the withering and stasis of the dominant modes of narration and presentation, and even premises, of the discipline of anthropology today lead to excesses and deficiencies that index a wider variety of existing vices and hoped-for virtues in the articulation of knowledge practices (and of the known) as well as the ethical practice of knowledge seeking (for the knowers).[5] We conclude that modernist anthropology has run its course and that a contemporary anthropology has yet to be invented, not simply justified in a defensive manner, but truly vindicated.[6]

Our diagnostic starting point is an attempt to render visible and enunciable what we take to be the current stasis arising from what we hold is an ongoing lack of salient reflection on, and experimentation with, the interconnections of form and veridiction after the last "experimental moment" of anthropology in the 1980s. That experimental moment had itself attempted to respond to, and to invent, multiple paths to explore that—it was hoped—might provide an exit out of what was perceived to be the then reigning stasis and *stultitia*, an affect felt by many but identified only by some in the discipline.

In the 1920s, the prospects for what had been a generalizing anthropology (philosophic anthropology, evolutionary anthropology, etc.) were troubled by emergent norms and forms of ethnography. One might be tempted to call this moment, in resonance with Marilyn Strathern, one of the concentration of the modernist anthropological endeavor in the figure of the ethnographer-as-hero (fieldworker, scholar, scientist, writer), who combats ethnocentric anthropological generalizations through attention to the singular.[7] The experiments with form, genre, and strategies of writing in the late 1970s and 1980s (Clifford, Crapanzano, J.P. Dumont, Favret-Saada, Rabinow, Tyler) ramified this modernism rather than radically undoing it, imposing a number of requirements for the continued possibility of anthropological inquiry.

The first requirement was the imperative to situate one's subject position in the production of knowledge (i.e., relative to those inquired into) and reciprocally to demonstrate a self-awareness of this positioning with the attendant consequences for the status of the knowledge that is produced and narrated for the intended reader or audience.

The second requirement was a consequence of the first: that anthropology become the object rather than uniquely the lever of what at that point in time was called critique. The illegitimacy or, minimally, the problematic endeavor of representing the Other transformed the promised return to "self" that had constituted the guiding orientation for anthropology within the dominant disciplinary contexts. If the self-evidence of claims about the Other were undermined, then such claims could hardly be used as a defining critical standpoint on the social-cultural "homeland," from where the anthropologist writes. As such, it is anthropology itself as an endeavor that became the object

of investigation and critique, which now required self-justification. We hold that while many such efforts at self-justification were made, and continue, a true vindication never took hold.

The following decades did not fulfill the promise of the invention and creation of new forms of writing and practice for which the enthusiasm of that moment had striven (1990–2015). We hold that a return to order, a re-inscription of realist or romanticist ethnography and what Gildas Salmon has nicely called "neo-classical" theory, is, at best, nostalgia.[8] We hold that the backgrounding of veridiction in the name of politics has not produced the promised political results while it has withered the courage of truth.[9]

In *Designs on the Contemporary*, we identified a remediation of these dual requirements in the present. Such work would require creating a series between: (1) the form given to inquiry, and thus the warranted assertibility, to use John Dewey's felicitous phrase, of the claims that can be drawn out of inquiry (after the crisis of representation—see below); (2) the relation of those claims to the manner of living (*bios*) of the inquirer; and (3) the mood and form through which the relation of the prior two elements might be successfully narrated.

As such, we have been looking for a way out, an exit, to use Kant's enlightenment imperative, for anthropology, after modernism. Such an exit requires acknowledging the dual problems of truth and subjectivity, while refusing the impossibility of truth claims (warranted assertibility), accepting the requirement of passing knowledge through a manner of living (*bios*), while qualifying and remediating the modernist haven of subjectivity. Affirmatively, we seek to move beyond the modernist sense of alienation from a historically grounded relation to the present, and beyond the ineffable "contingency" of the present, without falling back (as with ethnography) into realism or romanticism.[10] As we will explain, in our view, any vindicated anthropology after modernism would have to find a way of producing a ratio or relationship between the historical actuality inquired into, the life of the inquirer, and a narrative form in which a diagnosis of that actuality can be shared, between writers and readers, through the medium of an ethos.

CODA

INQUIRY IN DARK TIMES

Hannah Arendt, in the 1968 Preface to a collection of essays entitled *Men in Dark Times*, tells us that she takes the title from Bertolt Brecht's poem "To Posterity." The poem recounts "the disorder and the hunger, the massacres and the slaughterers, the outrage over injustice and the despair 'when there was only wrong and no outrage,' the legitimate hatred that makes you ugly nevertheless, the well-founded wrath that makes the voice grow hoarse." She comments that these brute realities, the place from which they were observed, and the form given to those observations ". . . was real enough as it took place in public; there was nothing secret or mysterious about it."[1] That fact does not mean that the politics of these observations and these forms were effective in righting the wrongs, remedying the injustices, or moderating the slaughters. Arendt's time, after all, was the first half of the twentieth century.

The problem, Arendt argued, was (is) that what remain(ed)s of what she understood, in her own idiosyncratic manner, to be the public sphere of political action was (is) covered over, or filled to overflowing, with "talk": talk that was self-evidently not achieving the goals it advocated. For Arendt, the reason for this proliferating, well-meaning vacuity is that the high-sounding talk originated in and remains within the condition she qualifies, using Jean-Paul Sartre's vocabulary, as "bad faith and *l'esprit de sérieux*."[2] Or, alternatively, she introduces Heidegger's term from *Being and Time*, "mere talk." The point is the same: discourse and political action are not the same thing. We should have learned this lesson by now.

In her essay *Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?* (first published in 1957), she argues that

> Philosophy may conceive of the earth as the homeland of mankind and of one unwritten law, eternal and valid for all. Politics deals with men, nationals of many countries and heir to many pasts; its laws are the positively established fences which hedge in, protect, and limit the space in which freedom is not a concept, but a living, political reality.[3]

This claim was not meant as an attack on philosophy per se, only on a certain tradition and practice that she considered to have worn itself out. More to her point, it was a diagnosis of what she considered to be an unearned and consequently misleading humanitarianism that, at least in some quarters, had come to replace thinking. Her diagnosis's actuality today is hard to contest.

If unearned humanitarianism was and is the problem, then what has been driving the deceptive mask of the seemingly self-evident modern understandings of the commonality of Mankind and its sufferings? Her answer, rather stunning given that she proposed it in 1957, was technology.

> Mankind owes its existence not to the dreams of the humanists nor to the reasoning of the philosophers and not even, at least not primarily, to political events, but almost exclusively to the technical developments of the Western world.[4]

Whatever one makes of Arendt's overarching use of the term "technology," in relation to an epochal diagnosis of modernity, perhaps drawn from Heidegger, we claim that there is a more precise and more pressing problem of how the human sciences have flailed, in relation to other sciences, given the moral shortcomings of the contemporary world.

We argue that, rather than find yet another way to critique or denounce the *technologies* of power that increasingly contribute to the darkness of the world, our aim, drawing on the conceptual terms of art historian Rosalind Krauss, should be to invent technological supports capable of giving better form to lives oriented to the medium of inquiry.[5] Consequently, if the *technical supports* of the taken-for-granted object of anthropology—whether Mankind, humanity, human nature,

anthrōpos—change, then it follows, in this mode of inquiry, that the *medium* in which it is best approached needs to be rethought and recast, i.e., remediated.

Lest there be the slightest doubt about how dark Arendt saw things to be, how little she was celebrating Europe or traditional philosophy or politics, such doubt is dispelled when she writes:

> When Europe in all earnestness began to prescribe its "laws" to all other continents, it so happened that she herself had already lost her belief in them. No less manifest than the fact of technology united the world is the other fact that Europe exported to the four corners of the earth its processes of disintegration . . .[6]

For her, however, this diagnosis is a hard-headed one; she has no ready-to-be-applied, one-moral-fits-all solution. She meant that times were dark.

> Our political concepts, according to which we have to assume responsibility for all public affairs within our reach regardless of personal "guilt," because we are held responsible as citizens for everything that our government does in the name of the country, may lead us into an *intolerable situation of global responsibility*.[7]

Her response to that darkness, to that temptation for high-sounding but unwarranted claims of universality, was to call for a renewal of light, however overshadowed, untimely, and unwelcome it might be today.

Today—our *dark times*—we have what is arguably the greatest ever quantity of words and images underscoring, analyzing, denouncing, and criticizing, in conceptual language as well as political-sounding discourse, the staggering, stunning state slaughter, unprecedented refugee flows, ever-widening distance between the privileged and a wide set of strata of gradated conditions of survival and sheer existence. This unending and truly extravagant representation of our *dark times* is connected, at least in part, to the unparalleled spread of technology.

A condition, it should be underlined, that Arendt diagnosed and warned against more than a lifetime ago:

> All of this is only another way of saying that the humanitarianism of brotherhood scarcely befits those who do not belong among the insulted and the injured and can share in it only their compassion. [. . .] But it is true that in "dark times" the warmth which is the pariah's substitute for light exerts a great fascination upon all those who are so ashamed of the world as it is that they would like to take refuge in invisibility.[8]

Arendt adds:

> This does not mean that it is insignificant, for it makes insult and injury endurable; but it does mean that in political terms it is absolutely irrelevant.[9]

Solace, not consolation.

Whatever is lacking today—and the list is very long and sobering—it is not attention to social suffering, violence, trauma, slaughter, dehumanization, poverty, degradation, ecological and climate entropy, and the like. We have been urged by a thoughtful and concerned reader of the manuscript to say so explicitly and to weave these topics and concerns into our narrative. We have been reluctant to do so mainly because we think that despite (or in part because of) the immense production of such topics and attention to them of varying craft and affective power, we see scant evidence that things are getting better. Perhaps they would be getting worse without this attention; regardless, one can be absolutely assured that these concerns, these representations, these *cris de cœurs*, are not going away.

We have been impatiently admonished for being Eurocentric by a reader: we have heard this before. This admonishment has often been intended as a chastisement and occasionally simply as a friendly alert. We accept it as an affirmation of the limits and humbleness of our undertaking. In self-justification, we argue that we have discussed at length with knowledgeable colleagues whether, in China or the Arabic-speaking world, to take two important examples, distinctive and

penetrating forms of inquiry are proliferating. When not greeted with perplexity as to what we were asking or nervousness as to our politically incorrect indelicacy, we have not been satisfied that our concern was being addressed. We know that vast areas of substantial importance are now being explored and reported upon: the fact that a keener attention to historical forms of oppression and exploitation is now *de rigueur* is unquestionable.

We tend to agree, however, with Max Weber, who, because he argued that historically a distinctive form of rationalized capitalism arose in Europe, was interpreted as arguing some superiority for the Europeans. Quite the contrary: Weber argued that the crushing burden of a methodical way of life lay especially heavily for a time in Europe. It was the strength of this form of capitalism that spread around the world; it was no longer linked to its origins, to those who had first lived with it, and the like.

What we do think, and again unexpectedly we converge with Arendt here, is that our times, our *dark times*, are not ones of conceptual and form-giving flourishing. Our modest wager here is that whatever we do in this book—an experiment in assembling a conceptual repertoire as well as an initial experiment in form-giving—the vast global production of reports, monographs, websites, technologies of communication of word and image, conferences, institutes, and the like will be little diminished or change direction.

Thus, our attempt is constructed broadly in the Weberian line. We concur with T.J. Clark's "farewell to modernism," even if we approach the subject matter from a different angle.[10] We were both trained in anthropology departments at different historical periods with the corresponding divergent emphases. The form of inquiry we are attempting to remediate was forged within those traditions, yet as the technological supports have changed, as the underlying principles of the disciplines have remained largely in place, we offer a modest, halting, experiment on one path forward in these dark times.

INQUIRY AFTER MODERNISM

INTRODUCTION

TOWARD A CRUCIBLE OF EXPERIENCE & EXPERIMENTATION

A key diagnostic question concerns the mood and ethos in which inquiry is narrated, as well as how it can and should be narrated in a contemporary manner. In our use, the term "ethos" is, to follow Kant's *Anthropology*, the fulcrum between the *characteristic* aspect of inquiry and its *didactic* purpose.[1] Ethos refers both to that which is characterized in inquiry, the object of inquiry, the lives and relations inquired into, and to the didactic purpose, the objective, of producing a relation between writer and audience, including the writer as possible recipient of what is to be understood, learned, or given form for living. As such, ethos, as ethical and rhetorical strategy, requires narration, and specifically requires a narrative mood.[2]

By drawing on the conceptual work of a prior generation of (modernist) literary critics, specifically Northrop Frye and Kenneth Burke, we can claim that anthropology, as with literature and history (as in the work of Hayden White), has used four generic modes of emplotment to characterize situations inquired into: romance, tragedy, satire, and comedy.[3] In our judgment, however, the narrative moods in which these emplotment strategies are viewed, that is to say, the relation between writer and imagined audience, are distinct from the genres of emplotment, and, in line with Frye's core argument, the "thematic mode" of the relation between writer and audience has become increasingly ironic in the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, and now, alas, into the twenty-first. Foucault names the modern ethos as one of "heroic irony."[4]

As indicated above, this question of mood is connected to, but distinct from, the genre of emplotment. In *Designs on the Contemporary* (2014), we identified four moods: comedy, tragedy, irony, and pathos. It is worth highlighting one key difference between the well-known genres of emplotment and our four narrative moods: while "romance" is still conceivable as a genre of emplotment today, "a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero's transcendence of the world of experience,"[5] a drama therefore of redemption, anthropology in and after modernism, of necessity, could not and cannot express itself in a normative romantic narrative mood. To put it otherwise, we hold that anthropological writers and readers cannot seriously identify with the objective of redemption through narrative.

Comedy and tragedy, however, are, as we have previously claimed, available narrative moods, as is perhaps the most frequently mobilized: irony. Irony as a mood produces a narrative distance between the work of ideas in the domain of experience and the capacity of those ideas to transform the experience of self-affectation (of the writer and reader). It is precisely this distance and weakness we identify in the supposed capacity for anthropology (and "ethnography") to produce a "Critique of the Self" that can be lived and integrated by reader and writer. It is this mood of irony that characterizes much of so-called ethnographic theory today. We have sought to contribute to reflection on and the making of a contrastive mood: one of pathos.

CONTEMPORARY DIAGNOSIS: THE ACTUAL (REALISM & CRITIQUE)

Prime among the claims of the prior turning point of modernist experimentation in anthropology (1977–1988) was the diagnosis that the central problem confronting the human sciences (including philosophy and the humanities) was a comprehensive "crisis of representation." Nevertheless, despite the proposed solutions—polyphonic evocation (Tyler) and dialogical ethnography (Clifford), to cite just two—experimental work with the core genre of ethnographic realism (Marcus) essentially retained the reified orientation and practice of the absolute primacy of ethnography: Knowledge of the Other as means of (eventually) Critiquing the Self; or, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.

We pick out two characteristics of what we see as the current stasis after the experimental moment of the 1980s: first, the lingering and unwarranted (because largely unexamined) claims to modes of (literary and philosophic) realism in ethnographic writing. It is plausible to read the return of unreflective and nonexperimental realist modes of writing in anthropology as a backlash to the critiques of representation (or their parodies) from *Writing Culture: On the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* forward. In our view, one of the primary drivers of this unwarranted advocacy of realist modes of anthropology in the present, and specifically the genre of so-called ethnography, was the priming of inflated political justifications for doing anthropological inquiry, which itself had been a driver of prior critiques of representation.

The epistemic worry over ethnographic authority, and consequent experiments with the form given to knowledge of realities, made explicit the problematic gap between (1) anthropological claims and descriptions, (2) the expectations (as well as concepts and categories) of a target audience, and (3) the self-understanding of those being inquired into. The realist mode of ethnography had presupposed an isomorphism of these three registers. The experiments of the 1980s, which acknowledged the troubled relations among and between these registers, should properly be characterized as experiments in (late) modernism, rather than, as has sometimes been the case, the "postmodern."

Or, as Jean-François Lyotard put it in 1984,

> the postmodern would be that which in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable.[6]

By contrast, we observe how, after the 1980s, at least for many, a solution in the form of a justification for the endeavor of anthropology as critique, in the name of supposedly "political" ends, was felt to have provided consolation. It was constituted, if unacknowledged and therefore not put to either a veridictional or ethical testing, through maintaining an uncomfortable stasis established between the three registers

of (truth) claims, (audience) expectations, and self-understandings (of those who write and those written about). A deceptive, and we argue unearned, consolatory form (actually a false reconciliation) regained dominance, establishing—as so often happens after moments of disruption and challenge—a return to order.

We hold that the second characteristic of the current stasis is a residue, or remainder, of the first: a self-consciousness of those producing such ethnographic realism, and such "critique," that it cannot be *vindicated*, which is to say, cannot be made to articulate with the life of the knower; hence the need for "perpetual critique" and its always deferred results (as Koselleck has pointed out was the case already relative to the eighteenth century).[7]

Today, we should, necessarily, after a century of experimentation in the arts and human sciences, no longer be able to claim (or feign) naïveté about the stakes and practice of representation and the "speaker's benefit" that are the linchpins that are held to enable critical position taking.[8] In terms of anthropological writing, such continued loyalty has not, however, ushered in a so-called postmodern anthropology, but rather has ramified and intensified often quite early modes of modernism. Such a mode brackets an attention to the manner in which forms of writing can produce an immanent consistency, whether theoretical (as in the renewed interest in structural anthropology) or political, that both demonstrates and responds to the hiatus between the form given to inquiry and the reality that is trying to be grasped.[9]

The consequence of this second characteristic is that anthropological inquiry, in the form of the ethnographic monograph or article, like the modernist novel, becomes a possible world realized among other possibilities of other possible worlds, and yet which seeks to make warranted and defensible claims: hence the problem of vindicating critique.[10] The problem then is the relation between the anthropologist, or anthropologists, the form given to their determinations of inquiry, both the veridictional configurations and the narrative moods in which they are written, and the ends to which the anthropologist moves in doing such inquiry and creating such forms.

TOWARD A CONTEMPORARY CRUCIBLE

We fully accept that we too as practitioners of the discipline have necessarily passed through a modernist moment in the history of veridiction as well as a modernist moment in giving form to thought, language, sound, images, experience, and imagination. That moment opened a field of experimentation for possible worlds. However, what has been missing has been invention of and reflection on forms for rearticulating, and vindicating, crucibles of experimentation and crucibles of experience (*foyer d'expérience*), for anthropology, and anthropologists, after modernism.[11]

Hence, in this book, *Inquiry after Modernism*, we are endeavoring to establish what we are calling, following Foucault, a *foyer d'expérience* that articulates practices of thinking (inquiry), judgment, and a mode of existence: such a foyer both refuses what we consider to be the false option of a supposed possible return to ethnographic realism and recognizes that modernist anthropology is at an impasse in terms of mood, form, and the ends it has sought. The key challenge of significance is that the foyer of anthropological practice is non-isomorphic with the actualities being inquired into: hence we do not attempt to get around modernism with a realist sleight of hand, as in the case of Actor-Network Theory, which arguably is, in fact, perhaps the ultimate high modernist form of theory. It does nevertheless have, at least, the advantage of recognizing the stasis of the supposedly critical project of the human sciences.[12]

Rather, by acknowledging the non-isomorphism between the crucible of inquiry and the configuration of objects to be grasped, both from within inquiry and after inquiry (a modal operation we have named previously as a working over of objects from the present to the actual), the crucible becomes the equipmental means of instantiating or inhabiting an *ethos* relative to the determinations of the actual. The ethos that equips the anthropologist to grasp the actual, we characterize as "contemporary." It is toward a practice that would facilitate the capacities and dispositions required to live within such an ethos that we are endeavoring to prepare a path.

Our desired exit from anthropology's relation to its past modernism

argues for the enduring salience of elements from that modernism, in particular the pertinence of *bios*, the manner of living of the anthropologist, as a test for the *technē*, the craft, of anthropology. Rather than suppose that we can adequately get at an account of modernity anthropologically, by way of a comparison that places the anthropologist in the position of conceptual pivot point, and thus a point through which the anthropological judgment to be made is a judgment of practical and conceptual difference, our aim is to forge, on the basis of inquiries into modernity, a judgment of the possible relationship that the anthropologist can have to the modernity grasped through inquiry.

Our proposed solution to exit the circle of modernism in anthropology is to explore the very modernism that anthropology, as a human science, mirrored, parodied, and even, in certain domains, such as the literary domain, helped produce.[13] The didactic aim is to ask what can or should be retained, and what jettisoned in equipping an anthropology, after modernism, to grasp and produce a moving relation (of knowledge and ethics) to modernity, which thus has to be understood as a historical and temporal relation.

Modernism therefore figures in two respects:

1. In Part One we take modernism in the arts as an object of inquiry, forging a work site for exploring the range of experimental responses to modernity as a space of (experiential) problems.

2. In Part Two we seek to discern a (variable) distance between (i) a modernist human science, including the ethos through which that science took up inquiry into problems of modernity, and (ii) a contemporary anthropological ethos for taking up (experimental responses to) problems of modernity.

Modernism in the arts becomes a topological work site for testing and equipping a contemporary anthropology relative to a modernist human science.

To this end, we have created a zone of inquiry in an adjacent domain to test the parameters of such a crucible; the arts during the

emergence (c. 1800–1820), high point (1920–1950), and limit point of modernism (c. 1960–1990), configured as a topological, and not historical, work zone in which to deduce warranted elements from a variety of modernist artistic practice to test our capacity to characterize a contemporary ethos.

We decided that, in order to adequately test our endeavor, to invent an as yet insufficiently explored response to the impasse of modernism in anthropology, it would be appropriate to bracket our inquiries in/into the present, such as Stavrianakis's field inquiry into assisted suicide in Switzerland, and Rabinow's inquiry into the art practice of contemporary painter Gerhard Richter.

We do so in order to emphasize two aspects:

1. The "equipmental" character of the undertaking, which is to say, and to reiterate, that the challenge of rendering a contemporary ethos for anthropological inquiry can be analytically separated from the particular actualities rendered visible through inquiry (whether fieldwork in the present, alternative forms of participant-observation, or historical inquiry into the past), so that it can be specifically worked on.

2. The challenge of a contemporary ethos for anthropology can be discerned by way of a difference from prior philosophic and human scientific responses to modernism, a difference rendered visible through our soundings in artistic modernism. As such, the relation of our foyer d'expérience to our work site of modernisms is not that of an attempt to describe a "social reality" but rather, by returning to modern philosophic/human scientific predecessors and the (modern) ethos of inquiry that they have made available—among others, Immanuel Kant, Max Weber, John Dewey, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault—our aim is to discern and interconnect a series of elements (problems, terms, practices) from our work site in the arts in order to warrant heuristic anthropological elements for a contemporary ethos.

MODERNISMS

The object domain of the human sciences for at least the last two hundred years can be called modernity. Modernism in the arts, and their diverse manners of taking up and giving form to the experiences and problems of modernity (broadly speaking, instrumental rationality, bureaucratization, increasing separation of truth claims and ethical forms, *bios* and *technē*), provide diverse points of view from which to observe excesses and deficiencies of modernist human sciences that have sought to take up interconnected problems of modernity. Juxtaposing modernist arts and modernist human sciences, relative to a problem space of modernity, enables one to establish—this is our wager—a position of adjacency from which a contemporary human science, an anthropology of the contemporary, might be able to experiment with ethos and mood.

One important reason to choose modernisms in the arts as the site for an adjacent heuristic from which one can draw and test concepts, parameters, and modes is that few would deny that there was ever such a thing as "modernism" in painting, music, and writing. Furthermore, one point upon which the contentious factions of critics all agree is that modernism in the arts had an origin point or period that is identifiable in principle, even if there is much discord and debate about what or when it emerged. Further, various modernist trajectories have been studied, discussed, and argued about for a long time. Finally, there is a broad consensus that modernism, however defined, however interpreted, eventually withered: equally there is a consensus that it has not really been replaced with anything of a comparable magnitude or significance. Multitudes of efforts have been, and still are, undertaken (both within the diverse arts and among and between critics) to remediate and reoccupy the topological problem space of modernisms, but none has apparently achieved anything like the status that the term modernism attained.

We are fully aware that every single one of the claims in the previous sentences is contestable and indeed has been—and is still being—contested. Strikingly, a distinctive form of criticism of the domains of modernisms is the production of contrasting topologies. All the more

reason, we argue, that a modernist problem domain and the movement spaces associated with it (or them) constitute auspicious territories from which to construct an adjacent heuristic. The key modifier is "adjacent" as this relieves us of one kind of evaluative task (who, what, when, where, and why). Rather, our challenge lies elsewhere; to be knowledgeable enough to trust our soundings as plausible in terms of what is known or can be seen or heard. Given that, we proceed then to knowingly leave those at work or war in their scholarly silos to themselves and to engage in our own construction and mappings. The impositions are our own.

By proceeding in this manner, we find ourselves in a somewhat awkward arrangement whereby we have chosen to abstract aspects of modernism in the arts rather than the human sciences even if, ultimately, it is the spaces of the human sciences we hope to remediate and reoccupy. We hold that, although high modernism—experimentation with form and materials as a means of displacing art as representation—has had a few moments of explorations in the human sciences (Michel Leiris, *Collège de sociologie*, Writing Culture, etc.), it never became mainstream or dominant.[14]

Why such sustained elaboration did not take place in the human sciences is a topic that deserves more explanation. The simple answer is the discipline's desire to be understood as scientific in the university world. The aforementioned momentary upsurges of attention to form and materials were periodically attacked, denigrated, and ultimately marginalized. In this instance, relations of power and research programs worked against experiments in form and mood. Consequently, in order to provide ourselves with a topological space of (at least one version of) modernism, we have decided to experiment by moving our soundings to a domain in which many more of the possibilities of modernism's attention to form and materials per se could be identified.

So, without knowing exactly why beforehand, we have made a secessionist move to an adjacent field of activity that is roughly contemporaneous in terms of historical temporality to the period of the human sciences that concerns us. These arts also provide a dynamic arc that seems to afford us an opportunity to identify and abstract pertinent

parameters and a pathway through these experiments in modernist art. Ultimately, the manner in which the pathway plays out in the history of the arts is not our ultimate concern. Our concern turns on deductions and series in the human sciences. Hence, we can self-consciously duck the legitimate demand to warrant our soundings to the experts in the histories of these art forms and practitioners; doing so would require a lifelong attempt to accommodate and adjudicate positions within the massive humanities scholarship. That work we respectfully leave to others.

Yet in a sense, precisely because painting and music and composition are public arts, they provide a certain accessibility, or at least exterior surfaces open to examination and reconstruction. We can thus observe these surfaces with our own optic so as to graph lines and dynamics contoured for the problems we are seeking to conceptualize and narrate. Given that there is no sustained consensus about the precise significance of any modernist art in the communities of experts, we acknowledge that we are leaving these communities to their professional excavations and deliberations. We hope to open a conceptual space and new standpoint that would encourage and enable others to set out to meet the demands of the day.

HEURISTICS: FROM ABSTRACTION TO DEDUCTION

For us: no farewells, no nostalgia, only a certain gratitude that all these modernist works (as well as a portion of the scholarly literature) have been created. Adjacency relieves us of the task of having to remediate or to reoccupy one domain only to oblige us to do so with another. Our challenge—and gamble—is to build a heuristic that would orient us.

Following the philosopher of science William Wimsatt, and the discussion of his work by anthropologist Matei Candea, heuristics are conceptual devices that have six characteristics:

1. Heuristics make no guarantees that they will produce a (correct or any) solution to a problem.
2. They are cost-effective insofar as they are tools for thinking (you wouldn't work over a "big data set" with a heuristic).

3. They are systematically biased insofar as they conceptualize certain kinds of problems but not others.
4. They transform a problem into a nonequivalent but intuitively related problem.
5. They are purpose-relative.
6. They are descended from other heuristics.[15]

Candea singles out a principal characteristic that he considers a hallmark of comparative heuristics, namely that

> heuristics are systematically biased. That is to say, they don't simply fail, they fail in regular and predictable ways. Wimsatt describes this distinctive pattern of error as the heuristic's "footprint." Having a consistent footprint is one of the main keys to the value of heuristics.[16]

We understand the traditional utility of this "footprint" characteristic, but hold that today it constitutes a major blockage point for contemporary inquiry. In standard comparison the purpose is (characteristic 5) to make the familiar strange—and this characterizes its taken-for-granted systematic bias (characteristics 1–3). Thus, the standard problem domain has been, and continues to be for many, that of "alterity" or the hiatus between the "categories" and "values" of the anthropologist, and the categories and values made available through a field experience and rendered into an anthropological object.

We contend that to operate heuristically today, one should give priority to characteristics 4 and 5, something which Candea is curiously silent about. We hold that a remediated heuristic should be able to produce nonequivalent but related problems within a purposeful inquiry; i.e., these characteristics are tools for inquiry to make available and hone problems that were previously not available or visible.

Following a maxim that has proved helpful in the past when blockages and stasis have set in, we can simply ask ourselves: "What did you do?" We note that this line of exploration and assemblage more or less got underway with Adorno's short piece on *late style*.[17] His remarks

(concerned primarily with Beethoven) abruptly rendered something visible and enunciable about Paul Klee, whose forced exile from the Nazis corresponded with, but was not the cause of, a change of style that could legitimately be called late style in Adorno's sense. The fit seemed immediately tight. This rendering opened up a series of questions and initial soundings among other artists whom we admired in one fashion or another, for one reason or another.

Does this secessionist and adjacent motion provide terms for a historical semantics—or even a philosophic semantics—that would help us to arrive at an anthropological one?[18] Can these moves enable us to establish a different relationship to a present and an actual that a straightforward observational approach could not attain?

A word then needs to be said about the specificity of the selected soundings configured in a zone of inquiry that we are attempting to forge, the topology that we hope will help us to deduce warranted elements so as to test our endeavor to forge an anthropological ethos and a mode of inquiry, after-modernism.

Let us say first that the initial forays into the arts that we will present—Francisco Goya, John Coltrane, Paul Klee, Pierre Boulez, David Foster Wallace—were guided by our curiosity and by our previous inquiries. We justify our amateur forays only by the capacity of the figures and elements to help us think about our anthropological endeavor: their practice, taken as soundings for our own.

As we will explain, initially, Rabinow's intuition was that after a monograph on the contemporary German artist Gerhard Richter, it could be generative to return to a figure about whom he has for decades been curious (and about whom he has previously written), and who can be observed in an adjacent position relative to the core practice and themes of artistic modernism: Paul Klee.[19]

Klee's practice, Rabinow initially wondered, might productively be taken up as "late style," not in an epochal sense (as reducible to the late modern) but as internal to the artist's formal inquiries. Moreover, especially given Adorno's well-known contempt for jazz, Rabinow wondered further whether John Coltrane's practice could also be grasped in such a way. But to what end? As we talked, we wondered whether and

how there is a late style in the human sciences, specifically in anthropology, after modernisms. As such, and in resonance with Rabinow, Stavrianakis drew out of his field inquiry into contemporary manners of assisted dying, an interest in Goya whose "late" works, specifically around compassion, lamentation, and the pathos of experience and imagination, certainly appeared to show a specifically "late" character, relative to which their own anthropological engagement could be gauged. To Klee, Goya, and Coltrane, we added Pierre Boulez and David Foster Wallace as possible exemplars of the pushing to the limits the formal possibilities of what can be referred to as high modernism and late modernism.

We decided that we could configure a topological movement space (*Bewegungsraum*—we take the term from Hans Blumenberg) of soundings of modernist practice through which to test our own anthropological concerns. We decided, while making our soundings, on two pairings to accompany Rabinow's reflections on Klee that would orient what could be discerned about modernisms: Goya and Coltrane as different manifestations of the pathos of finitude relative to the tests of the experience of existence and the test for imagination of virtual forms of subjectivity and the inhabiting of a different persona; Boulez and Wallace, by contrast, we pair as different manifestations of the test (*épreuve*) for a manner of living (*bios*) through modernist *technē*, in its infinite self-reference. These soundings open out for us onto the manner in which the human sciences and philosophy have responded, or failed to respond, to practices and configurations of modernism, in terms of the characterization of a modern ethos, leading us to the challenge of rendering a contemporary ethos for anthropological inquiry.

FROM A PROBLEM SPACE TO A CRUCIBLE OF EXPERIENCE & EXPERIMENTATION

Over the course of slightly more than a decade (2006–2017), we have been exploring a set of interconnected anthropological topoi: questions of inquiry, such as how to participate and observe in heterogeneous and changing domains of life and work; a focus on experimentation; as well as a curiosity about significant objects and objectives.

Inquiry after Modernism instantiates and clarifies the ongoing endeavor of an anthropology of the contemporary, which we have been pursuing. Such an anthropology seeks to conceptualize the parameters of anthropological inquiry into the "present" in terms of a movement-space, in which both the subject conducting inquiry and the objects and objectives of inquiry are in motion. What we have primed is the problem of adopting a posture and relation to a moving present, a present one endeavors both to be part of and to observe, and yet relative to which one is often slightly too early or too late, slightly too close or slightly too far.

In the collaborative participant-observation that we have designed and conducted, our anthropological experimentation was oriented to an ethical end, which we named from the start as "flourishing," a translation of the Greek term *eudaimonia*. Flourishing was a term we used to posit the telos for our mode of participant-observation. We used the term to ask how the ethical outsides of the instrumental rationality of the sciences could be reactivated and reconnected to new practices of scientific inquiry. This is not to say that flourishing per se is opposed to instrumental goals. Rather, we used the term to ask how modes of judgment distinct from those of instrumentality could be introduced into seemingly emergent spaces of work in the biosciences. Relative to our interconnected projects, flourishing was an end toward which we were trying to work, through the activity of anthropological and ethical inquiry, into the ramifications of bioscience and engineering.

Our initial conception of flourishing was stymied in our relations with several groups of bioscientists and other social scientists. This indifference led us to develop a conceptual repertoire of what we termed "minor vices," embedded in the micro-practices of knowledge production during the course of inquiry and research. Attention has been paid, of course, to the macro-scalar conditions of funding, institutional and bureaucratic inertia, the corporate shaping of agendas, as well as to our ever-increasing audit culture. How these macro-forces became anchored in practice, often tacitly, has been less explored.

These breakdowns and blockages reveal conceptual and ethical topoi that we are convinced demand more attention and a change in

practices. Our experiment left us convinced that flourishing is an essential metric of science as a vocation. In terms of our own collaboration as well as the conceptual and narrative work that nourished it, we remain convinced and indeed experienced among ourselves the joys and solace of a scientific practice guided by a metric of *eudaimonia*.

Given the paucity within anthropology and philosophy today of projects that resonate with this metric and this telos, we have asked ourselves how our endeavor might be conceived as a reoccupation of a prior problem space of knowledge and flourishing, a problem space whose past solutions can be made visible through historical semantics, and remediated through inquiry.

As part of such a semantics we can re-pose Kant's three auto-critical questions: What can I know? What should I do? What can I hope for? As we will develop in this book, the question of knowing cannot be sundered from the pragmatics of the crucible within which the endeavor to know takes place and the orientation and ends of knowing *with and from others*. Kant's practical question, What should I do?, for us thus becomes the pragmatic anthropological question of how to engage in a second-order form of collaborative inquiry that seeks to articulate the endeavor to know and the endeavor to flourish. The last question, which preceded Kant's englobing question *Was ist der Mensch?*, opens the terrain of mood, to which we add the question of a mood and ethos appropriate for attempting to reoccupy the space of flourishing and veridiction, after modernism's attempt to tarry with the discordant actuality of that historical problem space.

From the outset of this by now long-standing collaboration, we set ourselves the challenge of inventing an ethos that proceeds onward from a baseline of Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) sketch of "the modern ethos"; and Max Weber's (1864–1920) maxim on the logic of a new science formed via conceptual clarification of problems in modernity.[20] As Weber wrote,

> It is not the "factual" interconnection of "things," but rather the conceptual interconnection of problems, which forms the basis for zones of inquiry. A new "science" emerges where

> new problems are pursued by new methods and truths are thereby discerned which open up significant standpoints (our translation).[21]

Both Foucault and Weber envisioned the need for a new "standpoint" or mode of subjectivation as both means and goal to better understanding and more worthwhile forms of life for those whose calling was knowledge and understanding. The motivation to pursue this challenge arose and continues to remain compelling for us in that so much has changed in the world at large, but more specifically in the capacities of the human sciences to address those changes, to demand a remediation of the modern ethos.

A further, crucial point is that, following Weber's conception of the interconnection of problems that underlies the domain in which inquiry proceeds, such interconnection requires a point of view. Following John Dewey and the Dewey scholar Tom Burke, we will name this practice of self-consciously adopting a point of view as "operational perspectivity." Burke adopts the term to indicate how Dewey avoided the charge of subjectivism while simultaneously refusing the quest for decontextualized objectivism. Dewey's conception of the "situation" is such that both subject and object arise within a situation, not outside it. Hence, operational perspectivity is neither simple constructionism nor realism. Rather, it proceeded from the understanding that the knowing subject was always in a situation, and hence required that the inquirer self-reflectively inhabit a position and orientation that they could articulate and defend.[22] This second-order understanding, to use Niklas Luhmann's concept, was designed to enable the inquirer to discern the significance of the interconnection of problems on which inquiry is based; that is to say, to inhabit a position within such a zone.[23]

Although Dewey's term helps to counter the charge (or the misunderstanding) of subjectivism as a danger to serious inquiry, it must be modified so as not only to include the invention of a conceptual "point of view" but equally to include the crafted adopting of a stance, or *Haltung*, to use Bertolt Brecht's term, an attitude toward the practice of inquiry in a specific zone of problems.[24] Such a stance is embodied

and consequently is part of the structuring and motion of an affective field, and of the remediation of an ethos.[25] For quite some time now, we have named this possible alternative ethos as a *contemporary* one.

SOUNDINGS

Our exploration of a contemporary ethos for the task of enlightenment is situated relative to our prior explorations of modernity as a problem space, modernisms as (pragmatic) responses to those problems, and the (modern) ethos that characterized those responses.

Problems within this space have included: (1) the interplay of the history and legacy of colonialism, forms of anthropological writing, and the stakes of an "anthropology of modernity"; (2) the birth of "the social" in France and its colonies through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; (3) the emergence of biotechnology, as a terrain of sociality, of truth claims about human being and human diversity, and of industry; (4) collaboration in and between the sciences as an ethical demand and equipmental problem; and, (5) more recently, an interest in objects adjacent to the sciences, but which nevertheless prime a concern for *technē*, for the observation of judgment and the challenge of judgments from our observations.

One recent object of inquiry has been in the domain of art: the life and work of Gerhard Richter, the subject of a monograph by Rabinow.[26] Another object has been the art of medicine, the observation of its limits, and the multiple possible responses to its limits, when neither cure nor healing is possible. Specifically, this has taken the form of a field inquiry, by Stavrianakis, into assisted suicide in Switzerland. While of course there is no factual interconnection between an inquiry into the practice and ethos of Gerhard Richter and the practice and ethos of assisted suicide in Switzerland, nevertheless, both objects have seemed to prime a restive relation to the present and make visible breakdowns and remediations in modernity and "the modern" (in arts and *technē* broadly conceived), as well as the demand to give afterlives of modernism remediated form.

Assisted suicide can be conceived as a response to a modern ethos

that vacillates between the self-assurance of the will to cure and the tragedy felt when it fails, and the (sufficient) irony necessary to continue, to evoke comic narrative despite experience to the contrary. Such failing irony, tragedy, and comedy is perhaps a hallmark of medical modernity's pathos, and the endeavor to give it a new form, a remediated and ameliorated form, might be conceived as a form of medical modernism, understood as a reply to breakdowns in the modern ethos of medical modernity.

The analytic gambit for the observer is that such modernism transforms the available ethos for practice and observation, making visible an ethos we will qualify as contemporary, within a movement space of modernity. Such an orientation has already been tested and warranted by the inquiry into Richter's art practice: his practice is best understood as a response to the available modern ethos within artistic modernity, taking up modernist theory as a necessary afterlife, but not being limited by it, forging an ethos that Rabinow has characterized as contemporary and unconsoled.

In the work that follows, we take our leave of these case studies in order to explore a wider range of soundings in problem domains of modernity, chiefly in domains of artistic *technē*, and the forms of life and practice of artists. We assemble these soundings of modernisms and their afterlives and ask ourselves about the forms that might be given to them.

FORM & FOYER: AFTER THE ESSAY

Marielle Macé, in her incisive diagnostic book, *Le Temps de l'essai: Histoire d'un genre en France au XXe siècle*, traces the rise and gradual depletion of the pertinence of the essay as a distinctive genre in France.[27] Her 2006 book (essentially her doctoral thesis) closes with a diagnosis and a prognosis of how she sees the decline of the genre, as what it had been for many decades—a foyer of experience and experimentation. As she writes,

> At one point in its history, the essay was a focal point (*foyer*) around which the representation of literature, its modernity, and its powers, especially its competition with scholarly discourses, could gravitate.[28]

Further, she proposes some potentially heuristic elements and parameters of a possible future form and/or foyer that might be taking shape "after the essay." What if anything happens, she wonders, what follows once a form loses its power to invent and discover a significant range of topics and perspectives. She demonstrates aspects of the withering and gradual disaggregation of the essay-foyer as it became increasingly visible as an assemblage of heterogeneous elements rather than a crucible for creation.

Part of this disaggregation was the growing sense among sensitive authors that new forms needed to be invented. The first step was to identify constituent elements of the old one and to put them to the test. Thus, she writes:

> The authors of which I speak have mourned Theory, perhaps science, and no doubt said goodbye to criticism, but in no case to thought.[29]

This diagnosis (and its associated analytics) constitutes a challenge that we fully embrace: what, if anything, comes next—and not just in France?

Macé names a term—*la pensée*—as an anchor point for future labor and hope, both for a possible future genre as well as a marker of things to be conserved. In her account, thought is taken up as a generic term; we add that the term carries with it a tacit call for a relationality awaiting its couplings to come. Those aware of changing times and the withering of once potent forms should be understood in this case not uniquely as mourning the death of a modern form, but especially as conscious of the form passing into a state of historicity.

The parting and disjunction of the associated conceptual and narrative companions—theory, positivist science, forms of critique—of the modern essay-form can leave us equally with a sense of freedom rather than with a unique sadness or anomie. The unconditional affirmation of thinking, as an obligation and a task, is most welcome. The term "thinking" by itself does indicate broadly the desire to protect a prior problem space and a practice but does not by itself constitute—or identify—an actual problem-space of invention. In order to be put into motion, it needs to be relational.

GESTUS

Macé names one aspect that had functioned to consolidate the configuration within which the essay-form consolidated its foyer: "the rhetorical conditions of the intellectual." Through identifying how this particular element and relation shifted (without naming an efficient cause), she is gesturing toward a possible figure and/or configuration perhaps taking shape "after-modernism."

Since we don't know yet what (and if) such changes will catalyze into other foyers, it follows that the present task cannot be the same as that of the older arts of the rhetorician, those of communication and persuasion, nor those of the universal intellectual ready to speak on any and all topics with the assurance of theory and critique and the craft of public discourse. Rather, the contemporary rhetorician—to continue using the label until we coin a better one—is:

> the "*revenant*" of a desirable culture: to be inconstant, to be a traitor, overwhelmed with metaphors, endowed with a profound memory . . . the character gathers together, in a perfectly rhetorical contrast of essence, incompossibles—a writing that is both distant and close.[30]

In this mode, it is perfectly consistent to rely on Seneca as well as Marilyn Strathern, even if—we must admit with a mix of irritation and amusement—the mood baffles those mired in the actual configuration of things, frequently producing spleen and/or a subsequent mood of militant indifference.

But, of course, our challenge is not to convince these faithful. Said another way:

> The work to be done, Barthes explained in his last course, and talking for himself, should be "filial," which is to say, it should take up, maintain, and transform, a certain filiation.[31]

As Peter Sloterdijk observed, quoting the German poet Jean Paul (1783–1825), philosophy is the exchange of long letters between friends.[32] Many of these friends, it should go without saying, are long gone, and many others are not yet born.

Thus,

> The rhetorician is defined thus anachronistically, as with Barthes, by its treasure (a world of problems historically situated) and by its "taste for ideas (understood as material, one could say, fundamentally artificial objects, composed, calculable)"; . . . the rhetorician will be in a position to resist.[33]

For reasons we will explore at several junctures in this book, we prefer the term *counter-conduct* to *resistance*. Today, to resist is all too often to revert to the authority of theory, or occasionally the authority of science, or even ontology. Kant warned us—we friends of the Enlighteners—against that move two centuries ago. Counter-conduct offers no such consolation; only an experience of the need for something different and better, more conducive to flourishing. It eschews *ressentiment*.

Paul Ricoeur offered a diagnostic of the state that we are calling "after-modernism," a state that, Macé writes, is characterized by a decisive loss of the

> configuration of modern narrations, and the taking over by thoughtful prose of a whole dimension of existence and identity.[34]

Whether such thoughtful prose, or prose full of thinking, can be assembled relationally into a pathway for inquiry is our challenge and our task.

PART ONE

MODERNISMS' IMPASSES
ILLUMINATION & TERMINATION

CHAPTER ONE

FINITUDE'S MODERNITY | FRANCISCO GOYA

In what does Goya's "modernity" consist? In what way was his manner of observing forms and his ethos of observation a response to the task of enlightenment, within configurations of modernity? In what way could his artistic practice be considered "modern," which is to say, taken up as an ethos for testing of concepts in experience, and of experience through conceptual reflection?

Moreover, the contemporary question is: what might an anthropologist, in the present of the early twenty-first century, understand to be the significance of such an ethos and such a task? What is the significance of such an ethos, given the manner in which both the ethos and task have "become historical"? This latter qualifier must be further specified. Minimally, however, the "becoming historical" of modernity and an ethos of the modern pose the challenge, for us, of the difference that reflection on a sounding of a past rejoinder to modernity might make for us, in order to forge an ethos (a contemporary one) for grasping the actuality of our present.

Or to put it otherwise, we situate ourselves adjacent to the manner and historical distance through which Baudelaire and Didi-Huberman, among others (Foucault, Malraux), observed the significance of Goya's mode, mood, ethos, and his relation to modernity.

As Didi-Huberman has written,

> All of the great series etched by Goya could then be regarded as so many attempts at an anthropology from the point of view of the image, comparable to the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* . . . in which certain great conceptual constructions announced in the *Critique of Pure Reason* were literally

> tested, observed with the naked eye, sometimes felt, and, in any case, experienced in the body, in gestures, in images, of each and everyone.[1]

The changing and variable historical distances, through the nineteenth, twentieth, and now early twenty-first centuries, prime the question of what standpoint we in our present can invent for observing and grasping the significance of experiments and experience in modernity. And for our "contemporaries" in a standard sense (such as Didi-Huberman and others, including Y. Bonnefoy, T. Todorov, and J. Soubeyroux), who, like those who have come before us, see in Goya's work the test of modernity and enlightenment, we can pose the question of what distance and difference exists in the standpoints we seek to inhabit and the significance we seek to draw out, in and for our present?[2]

Goya's artistic techniques and the forms of his artistic expression are tied to a core anthropological problem: how thought and practice are tested in a foyer of experience. This problem can be said to exist, on the one hand, within the crucible of Goya's own time and practice, in Goya's testing of his ethos, his *bios*, his *technē*, within his work. On the other hand, and more importantly for us, Goya's tests themselves, and those who have observed them, become a sounding for our anthropological endeavor to characterize a relation and ratio of the present to the modernity and enlightenment that Goya instantiated and tested. Our observation of his own time and others' observations of his practice become a site for the search for an ethos of and in the present, but not restricted to the present.

SOUNDING *L'HOMME*

Questions of the "first order," for Goya and the observers of Goya, are those such as: What form should be given to the experience of that which has been perceived? To what ends does an artist work and what mode and mood of experience is regained in such form-giving? What kind of putting to the test, experiential and conceptual, is made available in the trials of an anthropology realized through the making of images (as in the Didi-Huberman quotation above)?

We take up Goya's life and works, and these three questions, at this juncture, as a second-order sounding designed to test the pertinence of our contemporary heuristic. The purpose of testing the heuristic is to see whether we can clarify for ourselves further determinations about what a contemporary ethos may consist of. To do so, we take up the modern epistemological event of *l'homme*, while refusing the claim to modernity as a totalizing epochal historical striation and seeking to grasp changes in an ethos of the modern.

In what way does a second-order sounding of Goya constitute a test of the modern epistemological event of *l'homme*?

We index how his techniques and his manner of testing ideas in and from experience can be grasped as a response to a specifically modern anthropological problem of what Blumenberg has called "the legibility of the world"[3]: *l'homme* as reader and writer of narratives of a world and human experience in which he figures as a protagonist of the events and history described; a position and posture for *l'homme* that primes the indetermination and the irreducibility of any "logic of experience" (empirical synthesis, in Kant's vocabulary) to an "I" who thinks, who seeks to impose a sense and significance on experience.

The modern anthropological problem of the "legibility" of the world is then constituted by a relation between this narrated figure and an "I" who narrates, who asks what he, as a (third) person and figure, is supposed to be and to become. In our view, this modern anthropological problem (*l'homme* as the subject and object of knowledge) was one Goya was both keenly aware of and to which he gave a singular expression; the significance of the afterlife of this expression for an ethos of the contemporary is what we are trying to determine.

TO KNOW, TO IMAGINE

Coupled with the enlightenment maxim of "dare to know," or dare to observe, Goya thus instantiates, in his life and in his *oeuvre*, an accompanying maxim of modernity that ramifies the anthropological problem of the legibility of the world:

> the difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom.[4]

Such an interplay is given form, in part, through the active exercise of imagination, a "transversal form of knowledge" *(connaissance traversière)*, as Didi-Huberman notes.[5] Through such a form of knowledge, the inquirer or artist accepts the danger of going "beyond one's own reason" (*dépasser sa raison*) in order to remediate a form and foyer of experience.

The disquieting aspect of the daring venture was grasped in a stanza of *Les Phares*, in which Baudelaire observes,

> Goya, who in a nightmare-horde unfurls hags boiling foetuses in witches' milk, beldames before the glass and naked girls for demon-lovers tightening hose of silk.[6]

Or elsewhere, accompanying the grotesque and morbid nightmares that erupt from the sleep and dreams of reason, Baudelaire underscores Goya's significance as a specifically "comic" painter. His mood is comic for Baudelaire in the sense of being able to create a ratio of extremes, a temporary arrangement of and for paradox: Baudelaire discovers in Goya a relation between the piercing comic and the grotesque fantastic, a harmony of contradiction. His images animate viable monsters, or an "*absurde possible*."[7]

It would be a mistake, though, to restrict or reduce the significance of Goya's interplay of understanding and imagination uniquely to the theme of unreason, the theme of reason's dark materials and the interplay with light, as though a binary opposition, "reason/unreason," had an obvious significance: on the one hand, Goya has been observed as providing tragic, comic, and ironic moods for ethical and political criticism. On the other hand, he becomes for us a sounding to test, and thus find a point of view, a position and standpoint (*Standpunkt / Haltung*) toward the opposition of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment, modernity and counter-modernity, in the domain of experience. Such an opposition cannot be said to be strictly "dialectical," but rather, as with Foucault's claim about the role of *Geist* (spirit) relative to *Gemüt*

(disposition, self-affectation) in a pragmatic anthropology, we are looking for a principle of observation, a way of seizing a dedialecticized, nontranscendental dialectic in the domain of experience—a "vitalization" in which the work of ideas, of imagination, provides a freedom of vitality and virtuality within the constraints and conventions of a present, relative to a near future.

As *The Dictionary of Untranslatables* explains (and in line with our previous treatment of the term[8]), *Gemüt*, "one of the oldest philosophical terms in German language," refers to "an internal principle that animates the mind and its affections. Its purview is sometimes limited to the affective part when it is in competition with *Geist*, but not always —especially in its Kantian use."[9] Importantly, for Kant, *Gemüt* operates in relation to the understanding, which thus requires knowledge of diverse fields of experience in order for it to be put to a test. Or put the other way around, on the basis of objects of understanding, the challenge is to grasp, test, and form one's sensibility and the animating internal principle.

Goya's *oeuvre* certainly indexes the stakes of ethical, political, and affective breakdown. Moreover, as Baudelaire underscores, he often does so with an early modern comic and ironic edge. The contemporary problem for the anthropologist, then, is precisely one of composition, of using exemplars of modernity as soundings for seizing the variable distance and ratio of our present to a modernity whose early laughter and rosy blush has turned to a sigh, and yet which nevertheless still poses the problem and the task of enlightenment, *malgré tout*.

The bet, if it could be said in such a way, is that the tragedy, comedy, and irony of Goya's practice can themselves be grasped with a distinct mood and mode. The challenge is to find a manner of observation within a contemporary crucible, which is to say, a crucible in our present, which poses the question of our relation to breakdowns and transformations in modernity. Such a manner of (second-order) observation will bear on the specific forms of experience to which Goya devoted himself to observing: war, sickness, social mores, and destitution—in addition to his rightly famed portraits and religious paintings.

GOYA'S *GEMÜT* & *GEIST*

Daring to see, and therefore to know, was especially a problem and a task for Goya, since knowledge of the world (*Weltkenntnis*) primes a restive relation among the supposed assurances of reason to frame experience, the indeterminations and discordance of the world as experienced, and these indeterminations as presented and configured through imagination.

Goya's crucible evokes, in particular, a test of Kant's conception of experience; a test of

> the activity (of the power of imagination) through which appearances are brought under the concept of one object of experience.[10]

Three elements of Goya's practice can be named in order to grasp the kind of tests that take place in his interconnection of technique, imagination, and experience:

> **1. *Telos and Technē.*** In line with an older post-Renaissance transformation of norms around creativity and invention, Goya both accepted the "imitation of nature" as the telos of his practice and yet fundamentally challenged the manner in which *technē* could be mobilized with experience in order to shape such mimetic power. Indeed, the very meaning of "nature" as a pedagogic force and ethical end was undergoing transformation. The legibility of the world, of "nature," was nothing else than the capacity for the imagination to seize, and thus work through, what is observed.
>
> **2. *Weltkenntnis, Geist, and Gemüt.*** Goya thus considered painting to be a means of knowing the world. Painting, drawing, and etching did not aim at the production of beauty, presupposing a harmony of imagination and understanding. Rather, the aim was "sensible knowledge," posing, in Kantian terms, the question of the relation of *Weltkenntnis* to *Gemüt*—of both the open relations between imagination and understanding, vitalized by the work of thought (*Geist*), and the open relations

of experience and self-affectation. The distance between Goya and Kant is thus one of the breakdown and remediation of the legibility and "seizability" (*lēpsis*) of "the world."

3. ***Convention, Invention (Style).*** The third, striking characteristic of Goya's practice, fundamental for grasping not only his style but also the crucible in which he was operating, is his insistence on the specific freedom of imagination, the right and capacity to break rules of convention in artistic practice, while nevertheless forging a style and a practice that is anything but "avant-garde" (to use a prochronism).

The first two points combine to give an orientation to the stakes of "*technē*," of craft and technique, relative to "knowledge" and relative to the experience and use of (limited) freedom that was fundamental to both Goya's painting and his experience of the world: a rise to prominence in the court, a life-altering illness, a fall from grace, and a continued restive relation with the political "actuality" of his present. The second and third points combine to pose the question of the ratio of his "timeliness" with "untimeliness," his manner of living (*bios*), and the moods of the crucible in which he worked. Otherwise put, and put in terms of Foucault's reading of Kant's pragmatic anthropology, Goya provides multiple responses to the challenge of interconnecting and seizing *Geist* and *Gemüt*.

We will take up the interplay of *technē*, *bios*, self-affectation, and the work of ideas and imagination, in four moods that observers have grasped with respect to Goya's life and work: the comic, the tragic, the ironic, and the mood of pathos.

As we have claimed previously, the "tragic" mood holds that a fixed principle of *Geist* is so dominant that any claim that a remediated *Gemüt* could transform it only reinforces the strength of the *Geist*. The ironic mood indexes both the impotence of the voluntary work of ideas and the freedom of the work of ideas in the domain of experience to transform the experience of self-affectation. The comedic mood, by contrast, invokes a form of (dedialecticized nontranscendental) dialectic between *Geist* and *Gemüt*, which from another standpoint can be

observed as momentary. A fourth mood, which we have underscored, is salient for reading Goya and his contemporary significance, though its importance, we think, has been underplayed by his observers: the mood of pathos.

As we have written previously,

> The mood of pathos turns on breakdown and repair leading to more breakdown and repair. It certainly takes *Geist* into account as a dominant vector providing major determinations of situations and action. The mood of pathos, however, and this is what gives it its specificity, requires self-affectation, which is not delusional, in the comedic sense, but at least in its more accomplished forms recognizes both the necessity and finitude of taking up and testing whatever margins of freedom exist under particular conditions. This is not reconciliation, again in the comedic sense, but rather a mode of testing limits, resisting resignation, and seeking maturity. The mood of pathos, as with the comedic, seeks motion toward a near future. This orientation is unlike the mood of the tragic which seeks a far future and unlike the ironic whose future is always the same. The near future to which the mood of pathos looks requires a veridictional practice.[11]

Our challenge will be to test a mood of pathos for our reading of what can be drawn out from Goya's life and work relative to our search for a contemporary ethos. These moods and their interplay index ratios of the search for a form through which to know and show the world, *Weltkenntnis*, and the endeavor to constitute and instantiate (inhabit) a principle of self-affectation (*Gemüt*), to anticipate and neutralize *stultitia*, or the enervating flux and influx of representations. Between the horrors, vices, beauties, and virtues seen and shown, there is the didactic and characteristic anthropological challenge of the attitude to adopt.

Our contemporary challenge will then be what attitude we can adopt, given prior efforts to adopt an attitude toward contingencies and discordancies of the present. We will take up Goya's late works, plau-

sibly constituting a late style, in terms of an enigmatic and didactic pathos honed as a response to *stultitia*, a response to the demand to exit the afflictions of the present and their discordant configuration as actual. Goya's *technē* and *bios* will be observed as anticipating elements of modernisms, of *technē*, *Weltkenntnis*, and invention, and, simultaneously, we argue, he provides the means to observe the limits and breakdowns of configurations of *technē*, *Weltkenntnis*, and invention, the pathos of their failures.

KAIROS

In 1786 Goya was nominated as Painter to the King, after twelve years of working under the direction of court painters.

> I have established for myself an enviable way of life, if anyone wants anything from me they must come to me.[12]

He was forty. Three years later, after the death of Charles III in 1788 and the year of the Revolution in France, he was finally appointed Court Painter (*pintor de cámara*) himself. As Soubeyroux, scholar of eighteenth-century Spain, has noted, this achievement had a double significance:

> That is to say, at the moment when Goya thought he had reached the summit of a world that, initially, was totally foreign to him, this world was crumbling, carried away by the repercussions of the French Revolution.[13]

Biographical observers of Goya insist on the claim that this man from modest circumstances had a restive and ambivalent relation with the court on which he was for so long dependent; his powers of invention, imagination, and critical observation of the world around him would come to the fore in a diverse ensemble of forms and genres. But not straight away. Goya is perhaps well characterized by the critical task of "patient labor," a labor that is able to give form, as Foucault suggested, to the impatience for liberty.[14]

The transformation of the forms Goya gave to his impatience for freedom was not determined, however, by external political fac-

tors. Rather, the *kairos* in Goya's work came from a life event, his first major illness, which ruptured his relation with the world and opened the question of repairing his possible and virtual relation to the world around him. In November 1792, Goya was struck by an illness that would take him six months to recover from and would leave him deaf, communicating by hand gestures, writing, and painting:

> This illness, whatever its nature, provokes in him a major change. Deafness is for him a less dramatic infirmity than for his contemporary, Beethoven, with whom we like to compare him; and yet, the effect is just as decisive. The acoustic night into which he is plunged will push him to open his eyes even wider. His manner of painting, but also his manner of conducting himself (*de se conduire*) becomes different.[15]

Even for the amateur observer, it is clear that the period after the onset of the illness, from 1794, marks a turning point in the form, content, and modes of expression of his art: an entry into experimentation and an exploration of observation with respect to the artistic and social conventions of his time. Key among the new forms of expression was his first series of etchings, *Los Caprichos* (*The Caprices*), published in 1799.

From the point of view of technique, the series was original, making use of aquatint, which contributed to the simultaneous fine distinctions and nuances that grays, white, and black permit, while mobilizing their simultaneously abstruse and opaque qualities. Goya's use of gray and of a technique that was uncommon in Spain, as a means of producing depth, contrast, contours, and blur, can be observed from the point of view of the coming significance of gray for philosophy. Goya's contemporary, Georg Hegel, in his preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (1820), takes up the significance of gray:

> When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy.[16]

Hegel's orientation is pervaded by a somber seriousness, relying on the belief in the possibility of Absolute Knowledge (the Real is Ratio-

nal). By contrast, we have noted Baudelaire underscoring the "comic" horizon in Goya's etchings, which might be argued as technically a form of the ironic, in our sense:

> Goya's great merit consisted in creating realistic monsters. His monsters were born viable, harmonious. No one dared to go as far as him in the pursuit of possible absurdity. All of his contortions, those bestial faces, diabolical grimaces, are penetrated with humanity.[17]

Let's take as a point of reference the famous image from *The Caprices*, "The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters" (*El sueño de la razón produce monstruos)*. One of the preparatory drawings for the engraving, titled "Dream 1," shows an artist (Goya himself) asleep at his desk amid his tools, surrounded by imposing creatures, and is accompanied by a paratext:

> The artist dreaming. His only purpose is to banish harmful, vulgar beliefs and to perpetuate in this work of caprices, the solid testimony of truth.

The table on which he is leaning is inscribed with a text indicating the content of the first dream:

> Universal language.[18]

Rather than take up the panoply of possible interpretations, the objective here is to contrast tragic, comic, and ironic readings of Goya's ethos as a response to the task of enlightenment.

We begin with the title: the word "*sueño*" in Spanish has the double sense of both sleep and dream. Todorov argues convincingly that to translate *sueño* as "sleep" risks exteriorizing the monstrous from reason: Goya sleeps, his reason transforms into dreams, producing monsters, set within a series of caprices. The task of enlightenment is remediated to the degree that, rather than banish the monstrosity of superstition in the name of truth, the task of truth requires understanding the monsters produced by the dreams of reason. Todorov's reading is comedic and comic:

> The project is no longer to destroy superstitions and phantasms, but to understand them, and to tame them; when he succeeds, these visions, far from instilling fear, provoke laughter.[19]

Although we can agree with Todorov that it is precisely the combination and collaboration of reason and imagination that provides the specificity of artistic knowledge, the mood of the *Weltkenntnis* and the relation of *Gemüt* and *Geist* seem, in our judgment, to move more toward the ironic: we make this claim on the basis of the semantic range associated with the specific "monsters" depicted, principally owls and a lynx.

Even a cursory look at the semantic range at the end of the eighteenth century is sufficient to refuse an opposition between claiming that the figure of the owl stands for the continued possibility of wisdom within the dark realms of the imagination and understanding the owl as a popular figure of folly, sundering any relation with Minerva. Rather, we see, in the transition from the preliminary sketch of the dream of "universal language" to the final etching, reason's dreaming producing monsters, a proliferation of different kinds of owl, taking up various attitudes. The owls produce a polyphony, a cacophony of senses and meanings, of both wisdom and folly, observing the sleeping painter as he observes the figures of his own imagination.

Such proliferation precisely indexes Foucault's major thesis in *The Order of Things*. On the one hand, his thesis marks the beginning of the nineteenth century as the moment in which anthropology becomes possible. That is to say, anthropology taken as a proliferation of reasoned discourses (*logoi*) about *anthrōpos* irreducible to an "I" who thinks. On the other hand, this is also a moment in which "Man," as the object and subject of this knowledge, falls into a slumber under the comfortable blanket of transcendental categories. There is little reason to think that the relation observed by Goya is one of domestication or of taming such proliferation; rather, it is an observation of a problem, a problem named at the high point of modernism by Foucault as one of vindicating

> *l'homme* of nature, of exchange, of discourse, as the ground of his own finitude.[20]

GOYA'S FINITUDE, HIS PATHOS

Stavrianakis was familiar with, but not knowledgeable about, Goya when he opened the *London Review of Books* in late 2015, as he took the train from Sion to Lausanne, having spent two days with a man whose wife had ended her life by way of assisted suicide. He had been thinking about gestures in assisted dying, about what he had seen thus far and had been told about the repertoire of touch and forms of holding that it affords. Now a visual counterpoint presented itself in the pages of the periodical, in T. J. Clark's essay on the exhibition *Goya: The Portraits* at the National Gallery.[21]

Stavrianakis has gradually become convinced that one of the key elements of voluntary assisted dying is the configuration of holding that it makes available as the person dies, something that, while not impossible in the more common forms of dying in hospital, is nevertheless not specifically arranged. Assisted dying, it seems, draws on a repertoire of gestures marked and underscored in the many traditions and expressions of lamentation and compassion in iconography within European art: heads tilted toward each other, and the holding of feet and hands.

The early modern palimpsest is Goya's *Self-Portrait with Dr. Arrieta* (1820). The first key element is the date: 1820. The field of clinical medicine as an increasingly institutionalized practice had been developing in Europe for approximately two decades. In the case of Spain, an exemplary instance of the institutionalization of medicine was the reopening of El Hospital de la Concepción de Nuestra Señora in 1810 after a closure of almost a century.

While the date marked a key "external condition" of significance for the image—the rise of medical practice—the double portrait was also painted at the very moment Goya began what were to become known as his Black Paintings, frescos painted directly onto the walls of the country house that he had recently bought and moved into. The House of the Deaf Man, as it was known before he bought it, was situated in the outskirts of Madrid. There he suddenly fell ill again and would have died, if not for the compassion and care of Arrieta. Several things are significant:

1. Goya, when he gave a determinate visible form to the medical ethos of the early nineteenth century, grasped a moment that must be understood as key in the development and institutionalization of medicine as a practice.

2. What is then significant about this moment is how a relation between dying, care, and gesture is configured.

3. In this crucial moment, dying was not left uniquely to the church, and the question of *cura* became a this-worldly concern of the medical profession to summon the forces that can resist death.

But what is the composition and telos of such a this-worldly practice? The question is prompted by T. J. Clark's own reading of the painting.

> It is indicative, I think, that when Goya set himself the task of describing the boundary (or lack of one) between living and dying, as he did here, he seems automatically to have thought in terms not just of a double portrait—which would be extraordinary enough—but of a group portrait, or the parody of a group portrait, or a portrait of "life" (just) surrounded and haunted by entities from elsewhere. . . .[22]

Clark identified a salient element, namely, that in describing the threshold of living and dying Goya chose to paint a group portrait, a hallmark of scenes of lamentation. Yet the significance of the "afterlife" (gestural *Nachleben*) of such a configuration is missed, in our view, when Clark allows allegorical figures of death and life to overdetermine his interpretation. Clark observes "entities from elsewhere," background figures, haunting Arrieta and Goya. From another point of view, with a different observational stance and a different configuration of problems in mind, we see a priest looking on in amazement at the assuredness of the doctor, the strength and tenderness of the gesture, as the barely visible chalice in the priest's hand is almost forgotten, as the attendants close their eyes, out of fear, perhaps in prayer.

The positions and directions of their heads tell us that this is not

quite, or not directly, or not yet, a lamentation. There is care, certainly, but it can be grasped simply as Goya himself inscribes it:

> Goya, grateful to his friend Arrieta for his expert care, who saved his life during a painful and dangerous illness endured at the end of the year 1819 in the seventy-third year of his life, painted this in 1820.

As such, it is too one-sided to say with Clark that "maybe Arrieta in the picture stands for life and Goya for death." It seems more convincing to oppose rather than to synonymize, as Clark does, the "death wish" he sees in Goya and "the wish and need to escape from a 'reality' that is too often disorienting and cruel." A desire for escape, a line of flight, even toward ending life, is not isomorphic with the drive toward death, a drive whose significance comes from the traumatic repetitions it enacts, traumas that resist the power of analysis.

The three background figures, with eyes wide open, eyes shut, and downcast eyes, tarry behind the stocky, assured Arrieta and the feeble figure of a groaning Goya pulling gently on his bedsheet (a gesture long associated with imminent death) as supports for and attendants of the virtues that Arrieta is fulfilling: a firm and careful insistence on the capacities of medicine. The priest with eyes open, almost smiling, participates in the doctor's confidence in his powers to help his friend; it's a "comedy" painted with pathos; the resolution that Goya, like Arrieta, knows is only temporary. No delusions or illusions about that. And yet, he is still grateful for the skill (*technē*) and the care of his friend. The key pathos formula (*Pathosformel*, in Warburg's vocabulary) in the image is shown by the heads of the protagonists, expressive not of Goya's relation to death but of his grasping of the signification of medical care and skill relative to the available convention of showing, iconographically, composed elements of lamentation and care: a pietà on an immanent plane, gestures of lamentation at once signaled and warded off. The "modernity" of the Arrieta portrait lies in this form for pathos.

CHAPTER TWO

SOUNDING THE INFINITE | JOHN COLTRANE

We begin with the critics. There is no direct bond of critical discourse to music; given an often-inexpressible experience, as well as being obliged to operate within genre constraints, one remains bound by what those who have labored over understanding the medium and its traditions say as to the way understanding should look and sound. Writing about experience is, we should know by now, an interpretation of an interpretation; a second-order form if there ever was one.

Such semantic construction is both inevitable and always on the thin edge of betrayal of the object the critic may well admire. As Rainer Maria Rilke wrote:

> So much has been written (both well and poorly) about things that the things themselves no longer hold an opinion but appear only to mark the imaginary point of intersection for certain clever theories. Whoever wants to say anything about them speaks in reality only about the views of his predecessors and lapses into a semi-polemical spirit that stands in exact opposition to the naïve productive spirit with which each object wants to be grasped and understood.[1]

In this case, the productive spirit was anything but naïve. Once Coltrane's objects were performed, recorded, distributed, discussed, and debated, a critic must always appreciate and attempt to respect the illumination of his music. This guideline is especially hard to attain in this instance, perhaps is even the wrong standard, as our main object is

not actually the one immediately under scrutiny. Rather, this instance, or mini-case, is crafted to serve as a piece of a larger assemblage whose function is to further our efforts to prepare for a pragmatic anthropology with contemporary intent as well as to test its components and its bonds.

CRITICAL FRAMING

Here one must express appreciation for the guidance and judgment of a discerning jazz critic who provides an illuminated path for relating to the motion of John Coltrane's music and figure. The critic is Ben Ratliff, and his road map is laid out in his book *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound*.[2]

Two core claims structure Ratliff's narrative:

- "Coltrane made it seem as if jazz were evolving."[3]
- "With Coltrane, sound ruled over everything. It eventually superseded composition, . . . it superseded solos and structure."

The latter claim is particularly striking, as Coltrane was well known and respected by musicians and critics alike for his dedication to, even obsession with, understanding (and mastering) musical structure and composition. Increasingly over a short period of time (he died at age forty), Coltrane forged a reputation for his ever-expanding, deepening, and refined repertoire, his curiosity, and his technique (which included modern Western compositions as well as African and other musical traditions). Why this expansion should have led him to an identifiable range of sound—ultimately a kind of obstinate cacophony (by the reigning standards of the day and since)—remains a mark of his music and his figure in the history of jazz and beyond.

The prior claim is striking, for it is on this register that the category of *late style* can be tested. Such testing applies both to Coltrane's self-understanding of his music and its modes of performance as well as to the critical appreciation of his work both during his life and afterward.

For example, here are two observations:

> Coltrane, particularly from 1961 to 1964, sounds like the thing we know as modern jazz, just the way that Stravinsky sounds like the thing we know as modern classical music.[4]

> Suddenly, the life's work of John Coltrane, and his gradual trajectory toward non-swing, non-ballads, non-competitiveness, non-boundaried inclusion, could seem dangerous.[5]

In fact, Ratliff devotes half of his book to Coltrane's legacy, musically and critically, in the half century following his death. The subsequent dangers of repetition and genre closure are (and were) real enough, despite a plethora of immensely talented musicians and changes of venue (for example, from jazz clubs to prestigious concert halls, such as Lincoln Center).

More generally, the challenge of how to proceed from the conjunctures of classic modernism in the arts is a question we have previously explored.[6] Said another way, exploring the place of the *Nachleben* in multifarious developments in different arts as well as different genres of criticism may afford the creation of new paths to interpretation and judgment. In sum, in search of a contemporary ethos, we continue to inquire into these topics, objects, and problems.

A CONFIGURATION OF THE ACTUAL—BECOMING TIMELY (MODERN JAZZ)

The configuration of what has rather promiscuously been called "jazz" has historically undergone a series of transformations in the United States. The jazz that critics like Adorno infamously castigated was essentially big-band jazz, often set in dance halls. After World War II, the venue and the style of jazz underwent significant changes. To make a complicated and less neat story short: the rising *venue* for jazz was the club. For example, in the 1950s there was a proliferation of small clubs in Harlem. Attending was not expensive; the hours were late. Racial barriers were lowered, although musicians' unions and the police were

frequently restrictive and exclusionary, especially when black ("Negro" at that point in time) musicians performed outside of Harlem.

Jazz *styles* as well as the compositions of its practitioners became synchronous with this new ecology of scale, *economy* and audience. These club spaces of performance were smaller and more *intimate*—and less costly to maintain or to sustain. Smaller groups, often the quartet (at times with a few additional players), became the norm. Previously, the big bands had been known by their leader (Count Basie, Duke Ellington, etc.). Scoring for a big band and practicing for concerts or evening shows for dancing were essential elements of performance and reputation. Halls and hours were regular, when available.

Although there most certainly was a place within these famous bands for solo improvisation and demonstration of virtuoso technique, with the rise of this new configuration the soloist was often the person whose figure, style, and *technique* marked the brand and drew more or less loyal audiences. Such figures as well as such soloists drew other musicians to listen and learn in these numerous, more open, inexpensive clubs. One could drop in, perhaps after one's own gig, to listen and maybe to be invited to join in a late night/early morning "jam" session—or simply absorb what one had heard.

At least in retrospect (and definitely for the case at issue here), the preeminent modern style was "be-bop." Its most celebrated practitioner, although hardly the only hyper-talented musician involved in this genre invention, was Charlie "Bird" Parker (1920–1955).

The new style, and the assemblage of which it was a part, was heterogeneous. Its leading performers were forging a figure of the urban, bohemian, often drug- or alcohol-saturated (frequently addicted) type that constituted a definite break with the prudent elegance and eloquence of prior figures such as Ellington or Basie. It seems legitimate to call the new figure of the jazz musician, as well as the music itself, *modernist* for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that its iconic practitioners, like Charlie Parker, were curious and knowledgeable about changes in musical style and composition taking place more broadly. Thus:

> Be-bop, in the forties, was a new language of blues-based modernism. It came to be associated with fast tempos, asymmetrical melodic lines, and chord harmonies inspired by Stravinsky, Debussy, and Bartók.[7]

Jazz, largely urban and Northern based, was not—given who was playing it and their frequent Southern ancestry (Coltrane was born in North Carolina; Charlie Parker was born in Kansas City)—a direct or simple transposition of blues to urban clubs in the big cities of the North. The various, often regional, traditions of the blues or of Southern churches and gospel music were not forgotten; they endured as *Nachleben*.

So-called modern classical music can be understood less as an adjacent vale of *Nachleben*; rather, it functioned as a shadowy, often shared and discussed, offstage bandstand, a counter-vale or adjacent peak. Thus, it was not a surprise for a jazz critic to quote a prominent jazz musician (Percy Heath) about Charlie Parker, when he says:

> we knew that Bird carried around the *Firebird Suite* score.[8]

Bird and his peers did not perform the Stravinsky score per se. Rather, technical inventions, harmonic and other progressions and the like, were taken up as elements that could be used differently in this quite distinct modern jazz assemblage. Heath again:

> We were extracting the cadenzas and turning them around to fit our own groove.[9]

The claim here is not that the innovators of modern jazz were imitating modernist classical music (if that is a term)—although some, such as the Modern Jazz Quartet, were raising their symbolic capital and range of audiences by doing so—but that they were establishing a relation of adjacency to it, learning from it, pondering its technical and sonic innovations. These be-boppers were using its achievements in order to test aspects of their own music they had come upon by themselves from their own modernist experiments in composition, harmony, and the like.

The young John Coltrane (early to mid-twenties, during his formative period)

> frequently explained in later interviews that his interest in Debussy and Bartók, who also used these intervals, came *after* he and [Dizzy] Gillespie figured out their new language for themselves.[10]

A number of background claims are mixed into this completely plausible assertion. Coltrane was a disciplined and serious young man. He was known at the time and renowned later for the many hours and the relentless dedication with which he practiced. He constantly listened and sought to learn both from himself and from others. The lessons of this dignified perseverance attest to his wide-ranging curiosity and discipline. They do not attest to any need for legitimation from the so-called high-brow, bourgeois, and bohemian music and its audiences.

That being said, while Coltrane and his brethren were scouring that which was available to them as *technē* to integrate into their own experimental and experiential crucibles and *bios*, jazz critics were also expanding their repertoire of evaluation and understanding. Criticism was equally scavenging the tools for its own means of becoming part of the emerging assemblage.

In the vernacular of modern jazz, musicians were known for their style. Once a high level of technical mastery of their instrument(s) was achieved, and once the ability to play collaboratively in a small group was demonstrated and recognized, and once a certain hip urban lifestyle had been forged (and survived), the challenge that distinguished a highly competent, professional (studio) musician from a jazz figure was the achievement and recognition of a *style* as an integral element of a *bios*:

> By the time of the 1951 recordings, he [Coltrane] had developed his own style, if a barely coherent one—one that mixed exotic scale patterns and rhythm-and-blues rhetoric, stubborn long tones, and the beginnings of a serious interest in the low and high registers.[11]

This work on oneself, on one's technique, as well as one's figure and style (consciously as with Miles Davis or less so as with John Coltrane) posed challenges and dangers on multiple levels.

During this period from the early to the late 1950s and beyond—well into the following decade or two—one of the elements of the high profile (and less successful ones) was to live in, accommodate, and survive the urban milieu in which jazz musicians then had to operate. One of those dimensions was alcohol (an addiction Coltrane struggled to overcome for years) and, most notoriously and characteristically, heroin. By 1955 (the year Charlie Parker died), Coltrane was drinking heavily and using heroin. That year was a turning point in his career as well: Miles Davis (himself using heroin), after a certain hesitation, hired Coltrane in 1955.

FROM ONE MODERN CRUCIBLE TO ANOTHER: TIMELY APPRENTICESHIP WITH THE MASTERS OF MODERN STYLE

Intermittently, Coltrane achieved periods of professional stability in his life. From 1955 to 1957, as part of the well-known and prestigious Miles Davis Quintet, Coltrane was working regularly in clubs. He was earning a living and becoming known: Davis's inclusion was a mark of distinction. He settled down domestically as well, marrying Naima, a Muslim from North Carolina, for whom he composed several by now classic ballads.

For jazz critics and their faithful, Coltrane's main competitor at the time for up-and-coming saxophone star was Sonny Rollins (1930–). The critics placed them alongside each other, choosing one or the other in polls for *Downbeat* and other jazz-oriented magazines. Miles Davis hesitated as to whom he should give priority and for a while chose to employ them both. Ratliff contrasts their style:

> The Rollins performance is succinct, rhythmically tough, confident, pleasingly modern, coherent in its narrative. Coltrane's may suggest a broader vision of harmony, but it is shabbier in execution and seems, in a narrative sense, to stay in one place; the patterns are punched out without much grace.[12]

As always for him, Coltrane was restive: he changed his style frequently; one claim is that during this period it was every six months. Regardless, Coltrane was a quiet and reserved man in public, within himself. By himself, he was constantly in search of something better, for amelioration, at times even remediation. His relentless practicing was but one aspect of his incessant quest for things only he knew for sure he needed, even if he did not know what they were, or whether he could find a form and a technique to make them heard. Coltrane did register the praise and blame concerning his work coming from others, whether musicians or critics. He considered the ramifications of their evaluations in terms of risking losing or gaining paid work in clubs, recording contracts, and the essential overall recognition demanded in order to have access to these goods, but his *daemon* was internal.

Can one say that, if Paul Klee's challenge was "to render things visible," then John Coltrane's was "to make shaped sound"?

Ratliff recounts an anecdote of Coltrane sitting outside a club in Greenwich Village after his set, eating a piece of pie.[13] Another musician joined him outside and, after mutual greetings, Coltrane opened the conversation by asking the other musician what he thought of Einstein. Met with a puzzled look, Coltrane launched into a long reflection on Einstein's theory of relativity. As Ratliff observes,

> just as he was connecting phrases that seemed harmoniously distant, he was also making connections between bodies of knowledge that might seem unrelated.[14]

In sum, although it was impossible to be oblivious to the material and symbolic conditions of attaining and maintaining work and reputation, Coltrane was not, as opposed to Miles Davis, an overtly and calculatingly strategic player in the game. Coltrane was by necessity aware of the need to survive commercially, but he never allowed himself to succumb wholeheartedly to such demands.

As is well known, Davis changed his style and his "look" (his figure) a number of times, explicitly acknowledging his desire for both

artistic and financial success. But for Coltrane, it was the music in the deepest sense that obsessed him, driving his intense musical restiveness and eventually risking his hard-earned professional stability, even survival.

Coltrane's *bios* was neither heroic nor a flouting of conventions in the come-what-may tradition of the Cynics; it was resolutely restive and recalcitrant, dignified and persistent. During the moments when he found forms to suit that mode, one might well say, he achieved a fragile contemporary ethos that frequently left his historical contemporaries at a loss about what he was doing or why he was doing it.

In April 1957, Miles Davis fired Coltrane for generally unprofessional behavior—coming to gigs high, drinking in between sets, looking ragged, picking his nose on stage.[15] During the early summer of 1957, Coltrane was invited by Thelonious Monk to join his quartet.[16] This engagement was a period of intense learning both directly from performing with Monk and from his own reflections on how to make what he was learning his own. Monk was a very different personality from Davis. He engaged with Coltrane and answered his questions but also left him alone to find his own way.

1957
Coltrane with Thelonious Monk
"Epistrophy"

TOWARD THE UNTIMELY? BEYOND "LIGHT, HIP, SQUARE"

In 1958, at the end of Coltrane's gig with Monk, Miles Davis immediately rehired him. At this juncture, Davis's search for a new style and look proved beneficial for Coltrane. Davis was in the process of challenging standing forms even if, eventually, this variation only lasted a short period of time; shortly thereafter, Davis and Coltrane yet again took off in their own distinctive, different direction. The 1958 recording *Milestones* was seen as a radical break with be-bop. Miles Davis put it this way:

> I think a movement in jazz is beginning away from the conventional string of chords. There will be fewer chords but infinite

> possibilities as to what to do with them. Classical composers—some of them—have been writing this way for years, but jazz musicians seldom have.[17]

Davis explored many possible ways forward from this insight and challenge: some were rock-oriented, others drawn from imagistic imitations, however creative, of Spanish musical themes and the like.

1958
Coltrane on Miles Davis's *Milestones*
"Straight, No Chaser"

Coltrane now had his own group. Coltrane's direction during the late 1950s led him (presumably in conversation and discussion with others) to begin to study seriously: Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and *Dumbarton Oaks* concerto, Debussy's *La Mer*, and Paul Hindemith.[18] Coltrane was particularly taken with a book titled *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*. In the album *Giant Steps*, now with his own group, Coltrane began even more intense and original experimentation:

> Everything I did on that was harmonic exploration, harmonic sequences that I wasn't familiar with prior to that. I was working strictly from a chordal-sequential progression—in pattern and not melodically. It was easy to soon exhaust that harmonic thing. To write melodically is really the best way, because then you're not going by this set rule or that set rule; it takes everything. It's much more flexible and more far-reaching, for me, to write like that than to write from a harmonic basis. Now that I'm trying to write melody first, the melody will be that more important. Eventually I may derive some melodies which maybe have some quality, some lasting value of some sort.[19]

We note Coltrane's use of the phrase "lasting value of some sort." The challenge would be, first, of what sort? It seems fair to say the question of "lasting value" would remain both central and ultimately in abeyance.

The introduction of modal changes enabled a new shaping of sound. The jazz critic observes:

> This is the beginning of Coltrane's trance music, his practice of ignoring the limits of conventional harmony, and the beginning of what would turn so many listeners violently against him. . . . He had declared war on the common definition of coherence.[20]

The war metaphor is certainly overreaching and inappropriate to Coltrane's character. Coltrane was disquieted and discontented during these years, yet his public persona had none of the stylization of the rebel, even though what he was exploring soon came to be seen that way by others. And again:

> His position was not anti-social. There is no question that Coltrane's intent was generosity, and that he wasn't interested in art for its own sake. I have searched his written and spoken comments and unless I am mistaken, Coltrane never used the word "art" on the record.[21]

Coltrane did not stylize himself as an avant-garde artist.

> There is no evidence anywhere that Coltrane ever *tried* to be provocative. But the disposition he had grown into represented a subversion of artist-to-audience relations in jazz up to that point.[22]

More attuned to the mood and character of those involved is a report of a conversation with the saxophone player Wayne Shorter (1933–) and Coltrane.

> They talked about improvising and language, and how it might be ideal to start a sentence in the middle, then travel backward and forward, toward both the subject and the predicate, simultaneously.[23]

1960
Moving away from Davis:
Giant Steps
"Giant Steps"

1960
My Favorite Things
(released March 1961)
"My Favorite Things"

This passage is more a serious discussion of transforming the configuration of the then reigning actual than an avant-gardist attempt to simply shock or create something new for its own sake. Such an experiment required a remediated crucible.

UNTIMELY SPIRITUALITY—A CONTEMPORARY MODE OF VIRTUAL EXISTENCE FOR A POSSIBLE SUBJECT

Coltrane was intrigued and challenged by the argument of a book by Cyril Scott, *Music: Its Secret Influence Through the Ages* (1958). Scott believed that music was capable of bringing humans in touch with the angels or gods from previous ages.

At this point, Coltrane was beginning to head along a path toward what he (and critics) would name as "spirituality": finding and rendering an intrinsic positive force for good, for healing, in his work, something larger than music as it had been known, but nonetheless through the medium of sound. Following the conceptual tools that Foucault has provided for us, we can say that Coltrane was heading down the jagged path toward the invention of a mode of virtual existence of a possible subject. As we shall see, he names that subject in its virtuality.

Perhaps his intuition (whatever that means), or more likely his *daemon*, directed him to attempt to imagine or capture or glimpse a mode of virtual existence of a possible subjectivity; the challenge then consisted of experimenting with existing elements and their potentials to make it possible for such a subjectivity to eventually come into being. In order to do so, Coltrane was haltingly, but insistently, moving toward bringing into existence what he hoped would be a distinctive assemblage for music and musicians. From a second-order observation point of view, it is plausible to call this still-murky endeavor, albeit an unrelenting and largely tacit one, a search for a crucible of experience and experimentation.

It would take Coltrane several more years to arrive at a zone (he himself had created and inhabited) where he might be able to bring himself and his virtual project into the state of being. Coltrane was

pushing to the limits of jazz—in a way that nonetheless demonstrated a dignified persistence with what he had always been doing in diverse forms and modes—but not yet beyond. Self-aware as always, Coltrane observed:

> My real pianist, McCoy Tyner, keeps himself to the harmonies, which lets me forget them. It's he who gives me wings and lets me leave the earth from time to time.[24]

During the early 1960s, other jazzmen were performing in a new and distinctive style they called "free jazz." Coltrane was drawn to this music and to its performative dimensions; he paid careful attention to its most visible and talented trailblazers. He was moving to the edge not only of existing jazz forms but also, perhaps more distinctively, of avant-garde ones. At this multiply adjacent position he experienced moments of intensification when the virtual now and again began to seem possible.

In November 1961, Coltrane jammed with Ornette Coleman (1930–2015). In an interview, he wrote:

> We played two pieces—twelve minutes to be exact—but I know that was the most intense moment of my life.[25]

At least in the short run, experience, however intense, trumped experiment, although certainly not his restive, if unfulfilled, need to invent his own forms.

Strikingly, as Coltrane was approaching the limits of modernist jazz, it was at this time (late 1961) that he recorded *"Live" at the Village Vanguard*. His quartet was his most famous and productive one: Jimmy Garrison, McCoy Tyner, and Elvin Jones. They stayed together for six years. They rarely practiced, performing together only at clubs and recording sessions.

> The great statement of Coltrane on the Vanguard tapes of late 1961 was "Chasin' the Trane," a 12-bar blues improvisation in F that starts, as most Coltrane performances did, without anybody counting off one-two-three-four; it just vaults into being.[26]

Coltrane was still operating within the limits of the then-configuration of the actual in terms of venues and the composition of his group, and to a lesser or diminishing degree in his compositions and his figure. Perhaps one could say that free jazz beckoned but not precisely in the mode that Ornette Coleman and others were embodying it. Perhaps one could say that the challenge and the risk was how to achieve an untimely meditation, neither modernist traditional nor avant-garde.

Late 1961
Coltrane "Live" at the Village Vanguard
"Chasin' the Trane"

By late 1963, Coltrane did not want to keep playing the repertoire he and his group had honed to a certain fame and perfection. Recalcitrantly, Coltrane did not want to be controlled anymore by his own brilliant but familiar harmonic exercises. Perhaps, as Ratliff claims, Coltrane was moving "toward the sublime." Whatever the poet Robert Lowell meant by the phrase up in New England, Coltrane, it seems fair to claim, was assembling his own crucible of experience and experimentation. That crucible might well be called "spiritual," with all the complex connotations the term implies. As to what the meaning might be of "the sublime" or "the American sublime," we are not qualified to judge.

CRUCIBLE OF A CONTEMPORARY ETHOS: LATE STYLE

What is clear, however, is that John Coltrane was forging the elements of a new mode of shaping sound:

> The stronger the work is, the more it becomes a matter of sound rather than notes, the more unabashedly similar one piece is to the next.[27]

1964
A Love Supreme
"A Love Supreme"

To the question:

"What would you like to be in ten years?" Coltrane answered: "I would like to be a saint."[28]

Coltrane had at least and at last found words for naming a mode "of virtual existence for possible subjects."

Crescent, from April 1964, is on the verge of late-style Coltrane. The jazz critic once again:

> The year 1965 was a period of more concentrated excellence for Coltrane than has often been acknowledged. Its excellence is in its *turbulence, its volubility*. The great quartet was still intact but reaching the edge of the cliff.[29]

1965
Ascension
"Ascension II"

The "edge of the cliff" metaphor puts the emphasis on the claim of evolution in Coltrane's music and jazz more generally. If we see these changes instead as the spiritual turbulence of having to leave his magnificent quartet behind as he ventured toward a different crucible, then things look different. Ratliff's choice of the word "volubility" might be better served by substituting "garrulous" or "loquacious." Coltrane was entering into a period of excessive sound in part as a reaction to what he considered a deficit, in search of a mean—a fluency—he would apparently never find.

Coltrane married Alice McLeod (1937–2007) and moved from New York City to the relative isolation of suburban Dix Hills, Long Island, during the summer of 1964. He bought a Jaguar. He socialized minimally. His daily existence changed, as did his music.

> "Resolution" has been the last of Coltrane's great melodies. Beyond it, for the most part, lay something other than songs-for-the-sake-of-songs: melody lines were now a matter of intervals and cells. . . .
>
> "Suite" six months after the suite that really mattered, isn't nearly as distinctive. It marks the beginning of one interconnected song. It is music of meditation and chant, the sound of the interior cosmos.[30]

On another register, Coltrane's performances were becoming untimely in form, composition, and disregard for the existing audiences'

expectations. The link to the timely for his fans were the well-known members of his quartet as well as star performers who joined them from time to time.

Audiences' endurance and acceptance waned, however, as Coltrane began another dimension of his experiment in transforming the configuration of the actual, of assembling a new crucible. Coltrane began to invite and include often younger musicians, not well known or established, to join in his ever more "free" and "spiritual" performances. By traditional standards, some lacked the talent to contribute musically to Coltrane's sound. This imbalance did not bother Coltrane, quite the opposite, as he was moving beyond such judgments. Critics have called this inclusionary move "democratic," but we do not think the term makes any sense in this instance:

> The one-foot-in, one-foot-out phase was characteristic of Coltrane, who resisted making qualitative decisions about his music. Essentially, he wanted it all: he wanted to mash the old players and the new players together, without losing anyone.[31]

Ascension, recorded in late June 1965, is named by Ratliff as "an experiment in a democratic ideal." The term seems wrong; perhaps experimenting with equality as a means of invention, while clumsy, is more accurate. Coltrane's was a critical move against the constraints of venue, composition, evaluation of talent, and hierarchy. It was a self-conscious step into chance and uncertainty.

Such experimentation had its dangers, even though neither Coltrane nor anyone else knew what its limits were:

> His performance at Soldier Field in Chicago . . . on August 15, 1965, as the headlining act of the Down Beat Jazz Festival, has been understood as a famous breaking point—a Dylan-at-Newport, or a *Rite of Spring*.[32]

The obvious limit to this analogy, however, is that, while Dylan and Stravinsky went on to decades of further experimentation and consolidation, each establishing in his own right a distinctive dimension of modernist tradition, the same cannot be said of Coltrane.

McCoy Tyner had been the first to leave the band, at the end of 1965. Then Jones left at the end of January 1966. They both gave the same reason, more or less. "He added another drummer," Jones told Whitney Balliett,

> and I couldn't hear what I was doing any longer. There was too much going on, and it was ridiculous as far as I was concerned. I was getting into a whole area of frustration, and what I had to offer I felt I just couldn't contribute. I think Coltrane was upset, and I know in those last weeks I had a constant migraine headache.[33]

No doubt with a touch of remorse, Coltrane was driven to push his experiment to the very limits of sound.

The entry for "ridiculous" in Wikipedia is helpful:

> The ridiculous is that which is highly incongruous or inferior, sometimes deliberately so to make people laugh or get their attention, and sometimes unintended so as to be considered laughable and earn or provoke ridicule and derision.[34]

Coltrane's experiments were certainly highly incongruous, in a sense deliberately so, except Coltrane was not undertaking his quest for rhetorical reasons. His sound certainly got people's attention; much of the reaction from audiences and other performers alike was often confused, irritated, and negative. There was no momentary comedic resolution for them, although there must have been some for Coltrane, at least in the sense of his learning.

There was always a process with Coltrane, something thought through. Rashied Ali (1933–2009) described it best as a kind of premature epilogue, the consequence of having played everything there was to play:

> "I'd say, 'Trane man, why are you doing that beating on your chest and howling in the microphone?'" Ali remembered in an interview. "He'd say, 'Man I can't find nothing else to play on the horn.' He exhausted the saxophone. He couldn't find nothing else to play, he ran out of horn."

If we accept the description of the process of "thought through," then Coltrane's experiments should count as spiritual in Foucault's sense of the term:

> If we define spirituality as being the form of practices which postulate that such as he is, the subject is not capable of the truth, but that, such as it is, the truth can transfigure and save the subject, then we can say that the modern age of the relations between the subject and truth began when it is postulated that, such as he is, the subject is capable of the truth, but that, such as it is, the truth cannot save the subject.[35]

An example of late Coltrane, in a late style, is found in the session of February 15, 1967, released as *Stellar Regions*. As Adorno writes,

> The maturity of the late works of significant artists does not resemble the kind one finds in fruit. They are, for the most part, not round, but furrowed, even ravaged. Devoid of sweetness, bitter and spiny, they do not surrender themselves to mere delectation. They lack all the harmony that the classicist aesthetic is in the habit of demanding from works of art, and they show more traces of history than of growth.[36]

There is certainly no mature ripeness here. There is, however, a product that could only have found the form it did after a decade of mastery of tradition-based invention. Whether or not it qualifies as "furrowed" is hard to say. That being said, it is hard not to see traces of both history and growth.

1967
Interstellar Space
"Mars"

On July 17, 1967, at the age of forty, John Coltrane died of liver cancer.

CODA

MODERNIST LATE STYLE AS MEDITATION

Theodor Adorno's musical criticism is notoriously rich and opaque. Its meaning and significance pose some perplexity even for his most devoted and knowledgeable commentators.[1] Further, Adorno's scattered reflections on "jazz" are notoriously dated and controversial for their contempt and lack of appreciation of the music, its performers, and its audiences. That being said, one must remember that his essays mainly concerned dance groups in Germany during the 1930s or were used as examples of his theory of the culture industry.

Juxtaposing Adorno's essays with the writings of recent American jazz critics such as Ratliff is like comparing the proverbial apples and oranges; as an exercise in and of itself, there would be no point in doing so except to engage in futile polemic. Placing them as categories adjacent to the work of John Coltrane, however, can be useful as a distinct form of putting to the test—as a way to open additional "operational perspectivity" (to use Dewey scholar Tom Burke's term) on Coltrane's other interpreters as well as on Coltrane's own sense of his work and life. Finally, such extraction from Adorno's theoretical apparatus, while obviously not loyal to the original function for which his critiques were fashioned, can contribute to our equipmental tool kit. Poaching can render available and, at times, even afford the assemblage of new configurations.

DIAGNOSIS: EXTRACTION

One of the leading interpreters of Adorno's musical theory, Rose Rosengard Subotnik, in her *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*, proposes a comprehensive interpretation of Adorno's

negative dialectics of modernity as applied to classical music. She cites Adorno's obsvervation,

> Beethoven's late works mark the revolt of one of the most powerful classicistic artists against the deception implicit in the principle of his own work.[2]

This claim is dialectical in that it is not dismissive of Beethoven; to the contrary, it is dialectical because it attempts to clarify a fundamental contradiction in what Adorno considers to be the great artistic achievements of modernity and modernism (both terms taken most broadly). Further on, she writes,

> Implicit in Beethoven's late style, as Adorno analyzes it, is the eventual dissolution of all the values that made bourgeois humanism the hope of a human civilization.[3]

For Adorno, the threshold of modernity and of modernism was crossed when great artists recognized (tacitly or otherwise) that reconciliation with society (whatever Adorno means by the term "society") was no longer possible.[4] Whether this claim simply implies a nostalgia on Adorno's part, that it was once possible to achieve such reconciliation (e.g., "middle Beethoven"), or whether this claim is a form of imminent critique (as he clearly contends) remains debatable.

MEDITATION

For Adorno, "modernity," like "society," is cast as an actor capable of truth and/or deception.

As we have seen, Coltrane never used the term "art." It follows that using other related terms, such as "to aestheticize," would have been equally foreign to him. We can easily imagine that claims like Adorno's, that music was perpetuating "modernity's lie," would have occasioned a puzzled look from Coltrane. That being said, Adorno's claim can be challenging for our purposes:

> But estrangement created aporia: the more autonomous the art, the greater its remove from people, themselves increasingly conditioned to receive aestheticized representations of

> market will. If autonomous art turned away in order to reference something better, it risked losing touch with the human subjects on whose behalf it acted.[5]

While Adorno is essentially (although not uniquely) writing about commodified art for the masses (created by the increasingly ubiquitous culture industry), and as usual raising his claims to the realm of the general (social), a form of the dynamic he is diagnosing, at least in one respect, does apply to Coltrane's ceaseless explorations. As we saw, in Coltrane's late style of the last two years of his life, audiences who had respected and supported (including economically) Coltrane and his famous quartet were initially perplexed by, then irritated and eventually impatient with his later performances, especially the live ones.

Coltrane was perpetually in search of "something better." Coltrane was honest and sincere in asserting that he did not know what "something better" would sound like. For him, the creative process was risky, as it entailed both curiosity as well as uncertainty. Coltrane's intermittent states of satisfaction with his music were consistently soon accompanied by moods of dissatisfaction or at least restiveness. In his own words, responding to an interviewer:

> There is never any end. . . . There are always new sounds to imagine, new feelings to get at. And always, there is the need to keep purifying these feelings and these sounds so that we can really see what we've discovered in its pure state. So that we can see more and more clearly what we are. In that way, we can give to those who listen the essence, the best of what we are. But to do that at each stage, we have to keep on cleaning the mirror.
>
> And that is what *Meditations* is about—cleaning the mirror into the self, going as far through the looking glass as possible each time. Making music as naked as the self can be brought to be.[6]

At this point in his life, the self in question was becoming more a cosmic one than an individual one.

MELETĒ

Coltrane was not talking about introspection per se. Rather, once again turning to extraction, it is conceptually fitting to take up a classical term that Michel Foucault deployed in his 1981–1982 course at the Collège de France on "The Hermeneutics of the Subject." Foucault introduced a technical term from the manuals of classical rhetoric: *meletē*. He writes:

> In rhetoric, *meletē* is the internal preparation—preparation of thought on thought, of thought by thought—which prepares the individual to speak in public, to improvise.[7]

Meditation for Coltrane required constant practicing, constant performing in a group, but also constant reflection about what was being created as time unfolded. The reflection took the form of a kind of *askēsis*:

> when there is something you don't understand; you have to go humbly to it. You know, you don't go to school, sit down, and say, "I know what you are getting ready to teach me," you know, you sit there and you learn. You open your mind. You absorb. But you got to be quiet, to have to be still to do that.[8]

Listening and reflection, given a form as meditation, can lead to invention, not planning. It seems appropriate to call Coltrane's ethos of "something better"—*meletē*.

In this light, in 1965 Coltrane gave a compelling answer to an interviewer probing him on his work method:

> Question: Can I ask you what you're planning for the future?
>
> Coltrane: I don't know yet. I'm looking for new ground to explore. Physically, I can't go beyond what I'm doing right now in the form I am practicing. It always scares me a little to think that I'm going to have to change again. Very often, when I'm at a turning point, I put off the decision so that everyone might understand me before I've already changed.[9]

In addition to a form of *askēsis* must be added another essential com-

ponent of Coltrane's practice: an art of the government of the self and others.

Such a practice was not avant-gardist; it was solidly—oh, so solidly and reflectively—drawn from and dependent on musical traditions as the indispensable basis of invention. The shock of the new was never Coltrane's goal:

> I wouldn't want to give up the use of chords, if what I want to do can be accomplished by using those devices. I'm not sure whether the chord system will survive, but I do know it will be used very differently. I don't want to take anything away from music; I want to add to it. I prefer not to answer the controversy about "anti-jazz." If someone wants to call it that, let him: I'll continue to search to look for truth in music as I see it, and I'll draw on all the sources I can, all the areas of music, all the things there are in the world around us to inspire me. It takes many people to effect a complete change in any system.[10]

As usual, Coltrane listened attentively but with a certain distance to queries from jazz critics; he was always generous with his time in responding for interview requests. His responses appear to be sincere but never quite provided the exquisite quote the critic seemed to be in search of, as the critic's genre constraints demanded.

RELIEF: UNCONSOLED

Adorno, once again, emphatic and totalizing, and employing a form of commanding irony in the spirit of Thomas Mann, with whom Adorno had worked so assiduously on the musical analysis (especially of Beethoven and Schoenberg) in Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, writes:

> Modern music sees absolute oblivion as its goal. It is the surviving message of despair from the ship-wrecked.[11]

or:

> the inhumanity of art must triumph over the inhumanity of the world for the sake of the humane. . . . All of its beauty is in denying itself the illusion of beauty.[12]

Albeit with a certain queasiness, let us grant Adorno the term "inhumanity," as well as "humane." Coltrane's spirituality did not turn on shaping sound to produce "beauty"; rather, he hoped and worked so hard to shape sound that would bring some "good" into existence.

Adorno's use of consolation in its negative dialectic form remains clear in his discursive intentions but far less so when one searches for instantiations:

> This music denies the very thing we have been accustomed . . . to expect from music as the magical art: consolation. What it offers instead, simply, is truth—without the crutches of the familiar, but also without the deception of praise and false positivity. But herein lies an alternative and non-passive form of consolation: the strength to do this, not illusion, is what is consoling about it.[13]

His criticism of the search for consolation amounts to naming a passive state. Naming the active state "truth" (seemingly referring to ideology critique) veers off in a direction that may well apply to some modernist works but certainly not all. And, we are assuming, it does not mark a contemporary ethos.

COLLABORATION & CARE

On one topic at least, Adorno is affirmative without being nostalgic. He found in the form and practice of classical chamber music a paradigmatic practice of human solidarity and flourishing:

> What Adorno valorizes in [chamber music] is not privilege but a sociability and inter-subjectivity constructed through musical performance: art as a source not for reconciliation but for reconciliation's promise, and at the same time the solicitation of the young into that realm of hope realized through what Adorno took to be art's truth content. What he imagines is the boy's [Adrian Leverkühn from Mann's *Doctor Faustus*] recognition of a *promesse de Bonheur*, by means of the highest form of musical experience: its realization in performance.[14]

Not without a certain irony, it is in chamber music that the ultimate bourgeois European virtues are given form:

> The first step in playing chamber music well is to learn not to thrust oneself forward but to step back. What makes a whole is not boastful self-assertion on the several parts—that would produce a barbarian chaos—but self-limiting reflection. Chamber music in essence "practices courtesy."[15]

The commanding virtue is courtesy, intended as a gloss for a self-limiting reflection that functioned to facilitate solidarity and instantiate the truth of the humane.

Not surprisingly, these are not the virtues Coltrane sought to embody, to bring into existence, so as to invent a different form of flourishing. In 1965, Coltrane responded to a critic's query:

> Question: What criteria did you use to choose your musicians?
>
> Coltrane: I never had to tell them anything. They always know what they're supposed to do and are constantly inspired. I know that I can always count on them, and that gives me confidence. Even in the case of *Love Supreme*, without discussion, I don't go any further than to set the layout of the work. It's just twelve measures, developed, which has, for the framework of the last part, a minor blues. The first part doesn't contain a set number of measures, and the central part is composed of three groups of eight measures. For me, when I go from a calm moment to extreme tension, it's only the emotional factors that drive me, to the exclusion of all musical considerations. For Elvin [Jones, his drummer], I think that the musical considerations are the most important.[16]

For Coltrane, it was not bourgeois courtesy that was primed. Rather, it was an untimely, affective space of a practice of shaping sound—*A Love Supreme*.

CHAPTER THREE

MODERN PATHOS AT WORK | PAUL KLEE

On occasion, Paul Klee (1879–1940) offered maxim-like observations on art and modernity:

> The more horrible this world (as today, for instance), the more abstract our art (1915).[1]

He also spoke of his stance on artistic practice:

> Ingres is said to have created an artistic order out of rest; I should like to create an order from feeling and, going still further, from motion (1914).[2]

Although he was not a philosopher, Klee kept a diary for many years and produced aesthetic manuals, as well as writing invited lectures from time to time. Thus he did identify the topics of the relation of creation and historical situations, as well as how to introduce order and feeling in dark times. Yet Klee will be chiefly remembered not for his occasional writings but rather for his vastly prolific and heterogeneous production of paintings. Scholars, and we are thankful for them here, in their dedicated attempts to make sense of Klee's style, have opened the way to see how some of these topics of modernism and modernity played out in his distinctive work.

SONORITIES

In 1925, Klee produced a complex, layered, oil painting in the form of an imperfect grid, to which he gave the name *Alter Klang*. The title has been translated into English in a number of ways: "Antique Sound" and "Old Harmonies." For a number of reasons that will be made explicit shortly, the title "Old Sonorities" or, better, "Prior Sonorities," is preferable.

The highly informed scholarly literature with which we are familiar and which, as amateurs and interlopers to that discipline, we admire (especially Annie Bourneuf's magnificent *Paul Klee: The Visible and the Legible*) provides a range of sophisticated interpretations of the painting that turn primarily on other registers than that of the semantics of *Klang*.[3] Despite her erudition and keen attention to the painting itself, Bourneuf accepts the standard and grammatically acceptable translation "Antique Sound." Using the painting as the subject of the epilogue of her book, Bourneuf interprets it as paradigmatic of Klee's work (at least during this period and with at least this one style), that is, as a condensation of both Klee's art and of the reigning attempts to interpret his work over the last seventy-five years.

Pierre Boulez praised Klee's compositional sophistication, a technical virtuosity that Boulez credited with aiding him in clarifying his own practice of musical composition. Boulez focused on the formal parallels and differences between how Klee's compositional lessons applied, in his view, to painting and to music.[4] In that light, Boulez's translation of *Klang* as *sonorité* draws attention to shaped sound as the medium of composition, directly for Boulez and perhaps for Klee.

Klee, after all, was raised in a family of musicians and played the violin in chamber music ensembles his whole life. It is therefore not surprising that the historical semantics of *Klang* turn out to be potentially interesting and relevant not just as a general gesture to music but as a technical term with wider resonance. In fact, Klee's title does indeed indicate a register of technical significance that aids in interpreting his painting *Alter Klang*. The title refers to and takes up in a distinctive way the centuries-old reflections on and theorization about *Klang* in Western compositional history. Our interest is in how Klee took up the problem of how shaped sonority could be given a historicity and rendered visible.[5]

CONCEPTUAL INTERCONNECTIONS OF PROBLEMS

Since we are concerned with the conceptual interconnection of problems, it is appropriate—and hopefully heuristic—to wonder what, for Boulez (as a highly self-conscious, reflective, compositionally

concerned modernist), was the interconnection of problems that his controlled and reiterative reflections on Klee, over the course of many years, helped him to clarify?

Subsequently, by using Boulez's formulation as a heuristic, we can speculate on how dimensions of this problem zone had been taken up by Klee. Perhaps these reflections will help us to clarify how we understand and approach the contemporary interconnection of problems.

Boulez was captivated by what he understood to be the compositional strategy undergirded by Klee's technological principles. Boulez's interest was not simply musing but rather was a matter of seeking aid and clarification about the challenge of how he might relate Klee's problems and solutions to his own compositional challenges.

Boulez constantly sought to articulate the analytic coherence that he felt underlay his compositional practice. As he argued eloquently and at length in many publications, he framed his understanding of musical composition and performance through what we take to be a metaphorics of succession and analogy. To use an example he returned to a number of times: in order to understand the music of Webern, one needed to revisit the music of Wagner as well as that of Debussy.

Boulez argued that the problem was best approached by first identifying and analyzing core principles. For that reason, Boulez was convinced that Klee—as demonstrated by his Bauhaus pedagogy—was a master to be learned from, not only analytically, in the manner in which he approached problems, but equally in his prodigiously proliferative artistic production. For Boulez, the two dimensions were bound together:

> What is so important, whatever the complexity of a language, is to first understand the principle, to be able to reduce to extremely simple principles.[6]

The guiding technical principle that Boulez takes from Klee is that of "deduction." Boulez writes that Klee

> teaches us, at the same time, the power of deduction: to be able, from a single subject, to draw multiple consequences, which proliferate. To be satisfied with a single solution is

> quite insufficient, we must reach a cascade, a tree of consequences. And thereof, he knows how to give very convincing demonstrations.[7]

Through such coherence achieved or guided by his logical principles and procedures, Klee neither sought nor arrived at a single "best" solution. Quite the contrary: approaching and defining the parameters of a problem led directly for Klee (and Boulez) to the obligation to invent multiple solutions.

Klee did not reject the older technological supports of painting as a medium, such as perspective. Rather, he worked them over, or "developed" them in order to address a problem different from the ones they were invented to solve. One might say Klee sought to reoccupy a problem space (to use Hans Blumenberg's term) while recognizing that the historically modified space demanded different variables and parameters:

> Klee, who thinks that to make a drawing that is exact from the point of view of perspective, has no value in itself: everybody is capable of doing as much. He will develop the possibilities of this phenomenon, and to make of it a principle of construction.[8]

Klee was at work on a process of remediation.

MOTION

For Boulez, and of central importance here for us, is how Klee addressed the problem: How to render motion visible—through abstraction—in painting?

> To study the tensions that play between pairs of surfaces, to achieve a joint representation of space and of movement. The fundamental artistic task is to create movement by using the law, to use the law as a reference, and to deviate from it straightaway. At once. Traditional technique did not permit such a thing.[9]

For Klee, a fundamental task of the artist was to create movement: we have a first instance of Klee creating movement not in a direct

pictorial manner, following the compositional rules that he outlined so scrupulously in his Bauhaus courses (arrows and the like); but, rather, with the addition of his enigmatic title—*Alter Klang*—elusively and allusively hinting at a range of referents, historical or virtual.[10] By so doing, Klee was posing (for himself and for those who pay attention to such things) the problem of the motion of sonority under the sign of the modern.

Precisely because the painting itself is, by definition, silent, Klee's experiment enables us to get a better sense of the problem space. Klee renders one solution visible and enunciable by confronting the artistic challenges that the solution posed for modern painting at that historical conjuncture.[11]

Among the means of achieving this goal was a painter's gesture, a manner of using a brushstroke or other device, such that these technologically mediated interventions yielded a sense of *intensity* of motion (speed, or perhaps slowness, etc.):

> One can also consider the time involved in the painter's manner of working. If one perceives a gesture (*un geste*), like the gesture of Picasso, one grasps retrospectively the speed of this gesture. . . . the gesture itself communicates a very real sense of speed.[12]

In Klee's case, however, in certain paintings it was not a single gesture or sign that sparked a sense of motion but rather something else, a different type of technological elaboration:

> In some of Klee's paintings, the backgrounds so worked-over and rich in texture and material make it possible to perceive with acuity the slow process that produced this result. It is easy to understand that time played an important part in the conceptual elaboration, but also in the practical aspects of the work, if only in the necessity to wait a few days for a layer to dry, in order to develop another.[13]

As we shall see shortly with another series of Klee's paintings, a similar problem is confronted when the topic is the historicity not of sonority but rather of chronicity.

Consequently, a challenge for us is to clarify how these analogic and technological transfers of domains might be used as equipment for crafting a contemporary anthropology. We are challenged by Clement Greenberg's diagnostic insight about Klee's style:

> Adjectives do not fit the case as well as verbs. Klee's line indicates, directs, relates, connects. Unity is realized by relations and harmonies that play across neutral areas whose presence is more like an assumption than a fact.[14]

Given these exercises, is there a way to better identify how the prior interconnections of problems in one domain might help us to clarify rather different ones we are attempting to confront and render contemporary?

PARODIC DOUBLE-CODING

At first, it seemed to us that, for Klee, the term *Klang* functioned as a *Nachleben*, thereby providing an interpretive frame for composing the work in a mode of *Pathosformel*. Thus, by coupling Aby Warburg's terms (*Nachleben* + *Pathosformel*), the painting would be referring to something no longer directly available as a current part of the artistic stylistic repertoire per se but something not entirely obliterated from memory of the genre or from the tradition of composition. In that framing, such an element could be seen as having migrated from the tradition—a modernist term, after all—to a codified past perfect explicitly available pedagogically but cast as historical, in what we have been naming as a kind of haunting of the configuration of the actual.

The Warburgian couple would function as something that was potentially known to a concerned and knowledgeable artist but not as an authorized part of the reigning modern repertoire. Such a spectral status, depending on how it was taken up (affectively and compositionally) by the artist, might well verge on the nostalgic: as a recuperation of something that had been of value, then had been lost or at least backgrounded or depreciated as an element of an outmoded style. Such a move was indeed practiced in the arts and was given the name "kitsch."

Klee's paintings were often referred to as "child-like," among other

epithets, but were never comfortably classifiable. Hence, Klee managed to avoid kitsch, certainly in his own work and even for those critics who sought to diminish his style. In that framing, perhaps Klee could be legitimately called Romantic. After all, Klee did in fact refer to himself as a "cool Romantic." The "cool" gives one pause, however, as Romantics are usually understood to be "hot," or at least "warm."

IRONY AT PLAY

The catalogue of the major 2016 exhibit of Klee's work at the Centre Pompidou in Paris is titled *Paul Klee: Irony at Work*. The continuing insistence on the characterization of Paul Klee's work as "ironic" is curious, bewildering, and misleading for an English-speaking audience today.

The catalogue contains sporadic references to Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and "German Romanticism." This pointing is frequently vague and little more than scholarly decoration: no serious conceptual, semantic, or even genealogical development is undertaken.[15] The function of the label is apparently more to close a discussion than to open one.

Wondering why this is the case, we have looked a bit more closely at some of the articles in which the term is deployed. Invariably, in the actual discussion there is hardly any gloss on the term at all; in fact, it is often replaced by such terms as "satire," "parody," "caricature," etc.

The exception that supports the rule is found in the introductory article to the catalogue. Angela Lampe, the catalogue's editor, presents a justification for the centrality and significance of "irony" for understanding Klee's work. She places two epigrams at the head of her essay that opens the catalogue. The first is by Friedrich Schlegel—the *ursource* for the term in the German Romantic tradition:

> There are ancient and modern poems that were pervaded by the divine breath of irony throughout and informed by a truly transcendental buffoonery. Internally: the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue or genius; externally, in its execution: the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian *buffo*.[16]

The quote inclines toward a mode of infinite jest rather than any resentment, arrogance, or distancing that the term carries in its current English usage.

The other epigram is from a 1906 diary entry of Klee himself:

> No one has to get ironical about me, I see to that myself.[17]

While this quip qualifies as ironic in its reversal (but also its demurral), how it relates to his painting, early, middle, and late, remains to be established.

Lampe then quotes from the third edition of an overview work of cultural history by a certain Carl Einstein. He was perhaps the first to apply the label "ironic" to Klee:

> His art shows the extent to which he regarded all monumental or stylistic effects as suspicious. Irony—it is romantic irony that has found its pictorial fulfilment in his work—the pleasure of language, of the mind, of laughter were an integral part of Klee and his home.[18]

Let us agree that if Klee had been living in the first half of the nineteenth century there would probably be little reason to contest or hesitate over the label "irony" in the Romantic (capital R) sense of the term. The identification of a tone of allergy to self-seriousness and monumentality, not infrequent in some modernist artists, as well as the pleasure of creating work and living life seem apposite. Why they need the label ironic is not evident.

By the beginning of the twentieth century in the art world—and in fact quite a bit earlier in philosophy and literature—any settled sense the term may have once had during its moment of efflorescence had been troubled by philosophers and critics alike.

For example, one of the classic books in the scholarship on German literature is Erich Heller's *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German*. Despite the title, tropes of parody and related terms are frequent.[19] By the end of the book, Heller metaphorically throws up his hands:

> Irony—the reader will no doubt have noticed that the word has had to cover, in the course of this discussion of Thomas

> Mann's works, a multitude of moods. Deeply discouraged by even the very best writers on the subject (with Hegel and Kierkegaard among them) as well as by Thomas Mann's extremely resourceful employment of the term, I have attempted neither a definition of it nor a catalogue of its varieties (which are such that it is impossible to grasp hold of the thing they vary). For like "romantic," with which ever since Friedrich Schlegel "irony" has enjoyed a firm and intriguing alliance, . . . it has maliciously provoked and invariably defeated hosts of definitions; and an earnest discussion of irony is likely to prove as incongruous and as tiresome as a dispassionate debate on love or a prosaic dissertation about poetry. Every attempt to define irony unambiguously is in itself ironical.[20]

This half-grudging admission comes, after all, from a scholar whose very book title deployed the term. Granted, by page 235 of the book where this quote is taken from, Heller had gone to great pains to demonstrate convincingly that the creative artistry and masterful craft of Mann far outran any simple label.

Wayne Booth, in his by now standard *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974), arrives at almost exactly the same conclusions:

> There is no agreement among critics about what irony is, and many would hold to the romantic claim [. . .] that its very spirit and value are violated by the effort to be clear about it.[21]

Booth then goes on to show that, rather than seeking a stable definition of the term, it was more interesting to explore the different ways that the trope has been put to use rhetorically in literature.

Finally, in a book titled *Irony*, in the series *The New Critical Idiom* (seemingly aimed at the market of graduate students and advanced undergraduates), the author Claire Colebrook presents several pages of summary of her positioning of an American philosopher: "Richard Rorty: Irony and Pragmatism." She writes,

> Richard Rorty argues that irony is the only possible ethic of modern liberalism.[22]

Rorty's argument runs along the then familiar lines that we are the "effects" of the discourse we are enmeshed in, a discourse that has no outside referent to which one might appeal.

COMEDIC & PARODIC: NOT IRONIC

Thus, it is better not to approach these stylistic *unheimlich* hauntings as irony, at work or at rest. Instead, we propose to explore the pertinence of the term "parodic" and its companion—"comedic."

The literary critic Margaret Rose provides a deep historical sense to the term "parody," one that complicates the current English language sense of the term. The Greek genre of parody was crafted to provide a specific form of imitation. The *parados* is the name given to a singer who imitated another; a *parode* was a song sung in imitation of another song.[23] Parody was not marked by a spirit of mockery; rather it was deployed as a comedic supplement. Naturally, there are many types of humor (some, it is true, deploying mockery).[24]

Parody was a form characterized by an

> element of metafiction or "double-coding," namely the imitation of codes and conventions of another work of art.[25]

Such "double-coding" might be depreciatory but might also entail sympathy or admiration for another work.

This semantic enrichment proves to be illuminating for approaching Klee's "aged, worn" style. Klee's style (his use of a particular *technē*) fits—up to a point—this dimension of the parodic. What is often referred to as "playful" covers over the fact that Klee is rarely if ever denunciatory and never bitter in tone. Klee is never "ironic" in the by now common meaning of the word.

The art historian Charles Haxthausen writes of this genre of Klee's work (and perhaps more comprehensively of his entire production) that

> Far from being a protest against the world as it is, his art is an attempt to make himself more comfortable in it; first he rejects it, then, when it has been rendered harmless by negation, he takes it fondly back.[26]

We name this mode a comedic one in the sense of temporary resolution, preceded and followed by breakdowns. The comedic/pathos hybrid both springs from and produces a state of *Gemüt* that is characteristic of much of Klee's work—for which and to which we are grateful.

FUTURE PERFECT: ABSTRACT WITH (FICTIONAL) MEMORIES

Charles Haxthausen, in the incisive essay "'Abstract with Memories': Klee's 'Auratic' Paintings," opens a fertile heuristic pathway by conceptually clarifying certain stylistic dimensions of Paul Klee's paintings (especially but not uniquely during the 1920s). Haxthausen's analyses are trenchant, especially because these were (in part) the years that Klee was teaching at the Bauhaus—his famous courses on color, composition, and the like.

Our attention had been previously drawn to what is appropriately referred to as Klee's *late style*, once he was forced to leave Germany and move to exile and unexpected physical decline in Switzerland. It now seems equally pertinent that Klee was experimenting with an alternative style during his Bauhaus years (and slightly before). In this contrasting body of work, Klee's emphasis and mastery of the *technē* of painting and artistic composition is orderly and methodical. Klee's mastery in making a specific tradition of painting technique his own is a documented fact, even if little commented on per se in the critical literature. Haxthausen observes,

> Much has been written on the technical innovations of early twentieth century art—collage, photomontage, assemblage, frottage—but little has been said about Klee's technical practice within this larger context. Yet no artist of his generation experimented so widely with pictorial techniques as he did. Certain cubists, Dadaists, and constructivists may have been more radical in the range of novel materials they introduced into the work of art, but Klee was more resourceful in exploring original effects with traditional artists' materials such as oil, gesso, watercolor, chalk, and fabric support. His originality lay less in his choice of materials than in his manner of working

> with them, a manner in which the hand of the artist is not always readily apparent, in which the most salient surface effects sometimes seem to be the product of time rather than craft.[27]

These effects are, recent scholars have definitely shown, the product of self-conscious craft.

Klee developed a *technē* and produced a definite *Gemüt*. The latter might well be taken to be a kind of *Nachleben* à la Warburg, as it seemed to draw on past styles and to evoke such references. Such an exercise might well be consistent with an expansion of Walter Benjamin's much celebrated and commented on term of "aura." Haxthausen, however, goes to great length to convincingly argue that Benjamin never settled on a fixed meaning of the term and that, in any case, neither the term nor its various concepts apply with any clarity to what Paul Klee was attempting to achieve.

Klee was not imitating any prior style but only privileging a theme and narrowing the contours of a problem; he was at work at remediating the tradition as well as quietly engaged in counter-conduct to the reigning variants in the world and market of modern art at the time. Given the manner of his invention of a self-conscious *technē* for producing a sense of aging, Klee's style was, to that degree, resolutely new, modern. It was, however, a markedly discreet and muted modernism:

> Klee achieved these effects of deterioration *deliberately*. . . . He created a work that dramatized its own lack of "durability and permanency," and it did so from the moment it left his easel.[28]

If the effect was a kind of lingering *Nachleben*, it was a fictional or second-order one. Klee was experimenting with how to produce, to return to Warburg's term one last time, what one might refer to as an imaginary *Nachleben* for the near future.

Haxthausen observes:

> Klee's simulation of the traces of age in modernist works that are playfully offered as relics of some distant era marks an original intervention in a centuries-old discourse on the aesthetics of age. . . . His art abounds in fictive artifacts—works that allude to visual traditions of many eras and cultures.[29]

The qualifier "playfully" is frequently applied to Klee's work in its many phases and styles. It usually is a placeholder rather than a term with any conceptual precision. A better qualifier is "pathos," but not, of course, "pathetic": or comedic—each of Klee's paintings, after all, was a resolution to a broader challenge.

Several scholars have given interpretations of the painting titled *Carpet of Memory*, originally painted in 1914. Thus, Jürgen Glaesemer, the art critic and elected first conservator of the Paul-Klee-Stiftung, noted Klee's

> great care in achieving the impression of a strongly worn material by artificial soiling of the surface, through deliberately frayed edges . . . as well as by means of seemingly artless application of paint. The idea of a long and cherished object suggested a "carpet to which memories cling."[30]

Naturally, what we have is a painting, not a carpet with a long history of use. Rather, it might be seen as

> a sample, an *exemplification*—or, rather, a pseudo-exemplification—of a type of artifact.[31]

There is certainly a double-coding at work. There is also a horizon of counter-conduct—how not to be governed by the then current conventions of painting—easily overlooked by critics comfortable with the dismissive label of "playfulness" applied to Klee.

OBJECT & OBJECTIVE: TEMPORALITY, CHRONICITY, INSCRIPTION

Klee's 1926 *Inscription (Inschrift)* can be seen as a parody (double-coding) of an ancient, indecipherable textual fragment. Klee simulates the effects of aged paper that has survived the ravages of time. Of course, all is effect, and effect is a fiction, a made object.

Still we can wonder, what is the state of such objects? One answer is as follows:

> Like in a museum, these works have an afterlife as an aesthetic object.[32]

Actually, it was precisely not like a museum, where works were chronologically arranged and by definition historicized. Rather, Klee's paintings are artfully crafted so as to be seen to be existing in a historical zone of a future perfect tense—the painting will have had an afterlife as an aesthetic object.

Let us return to the reflections of Pierre Boulez on what he learned compositionally from Paul Klee:

> All Klee's genius is there: starting from a very simple problematic and reaching a poetics of remarkable force, in which the problematic is totally absorbed. In other words, its basic principle is primordial, but poetic imagination, far from being impoverished by reflection on a technical problem, does not cease instead to enrich itself.[33]

Noting and concurring with Boulez's diagnostic of Klee's "problematic" and "remarkable poetic force," we accept the challenge of what, if any, part of a modernist ethos, affecting both observing and what is observed, might, with appropriate remediations, be transferred.

CHAPTER FOUR

TECHNĒ OF THE INFINITE | PIERRE BOULEZ

Pierre Boulez (1925–2016) can be seen as embodying, practicing, and reflecting upon what Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) has named and advocated as "a pedagogy of the concept."[1] In his book with his friend Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze distinguished three moments (or types) of approaches to concepts in philosophy—encyclopedic, pedagogic, and communicative:

> The post-Kantians concentrated on a universal *encyclopedia* of the concept that attributed concept creation to a pure subjectivity rather than taking on the more modest task of a *pedagogy* of the concept, which would have to analyze the conditions of creation as factors of always singular moments.[2]

Actually, as we will see, Boulez embraced and encompassed both the encyclopedic and the pedagogic. His vast erudition covering the history of music as well as his mastery of the classical repertoire through his conducting of the world's premier orchestras would qualify as encyclopedic, except that Boulez's usages were never simply the product of "pure subjectivity." His practice was always a great deal more historically and collaboratively situated. Encyclopedic knowledge of concepts and turning them into instruments for the creation of "always singular moments" are hardly the same thing.

Pierre Boulez, like Gerhard Richter, was an artist of artificiality and enlightenment. Both are artists of incessant variations. Neither is avant-gardist or neoclassical, although Richter has been accused of sentimentality over his insistence on the inherent worth of artistic creation per se. No one has ever accused Boulez of being sentimental.

Nonetheless, while he was arguably the most recognized composer of the second half of the twentieth century, he devoted a substantial amount of his time and career to conducting the classical repertoire as musical director of several of the world's most renowned orchestras.

Both, it seems just to say, can be characterized as embodying and inventing a moving ratio in which the modern and modernism were treated as living history to be learned from, mastered to the degree that was possible—and remediated. For both, such work was (and is) intimately tied to ongoing invention and remediation. Such practice sought (and often succeeded) to establish a (nonlinear) movement space (to reintroduce Hans Blumenberg's concept) for creation. For both artists, that space and that movement simultaneously but differentially constitute the site of testing both their art and themselves.

As Boulez's conducting career gained increasing centrality in his life and work, he also developed an enlarged understanding of form: one that included contributing to shaping audience appreciation of the moving relations of the canon of classical music to an aging modernist canon as well as others that emerged in their wake. Such sensibility to seeing relations not as blocked oppositions but as open to dynamic reinterpretation became a central practice of Boulez's *métier*.

Previously, we have explored instances of *late style* for conceptual soundings: here we address a different topological terrain and the conceptual motion it affords. There is no doubt that Pierre Boulez changed his style a number of times; the manner in which he proceeded, however, is best described as a series of *recursive experimentations*. Boulez was a scrupulously analytic composer and thinker. Although his primary medium was music, throughout his life he wrote, lectured, produced videos, and made himself available for often extended interviews. He used those venues to clarify, explain, and demonstrate his recursive experimentation with concepts, elements, and, ultimately, composition. This restive, reflective, and recursive work flow was mediated and constantly observed as it unfolded by the composer himself. This simultaneous usage of composition and second-order self-observation constituted a defining marker of his self-stylization.[3] If Niklas Luhmann's famous injunction to "observe observers observing" sounds

slightly humorous, then if the subject doing these three actions was the same, the injunction is even more comedic—a series of moments of temporary resolution—distinctly pertinent to Pierre Boulez's style of work and the connection to his manner of living: his *technē tou biou*.

Boulez's mode of meticulous recursivity can be contrasted to Paul Klee's relative discursive silence as his style coagulated into a *late style*; to Goya's perennial, increasingly isolated, search to both give form to the fantastic and heal the pathos of the fantasmatic; to John Coltrane's minimal post hoc explanations to interviewers as he moved through his own musical and performative changes via a tireless putting into practice; to Gerhard Richter's insistence on incessant variation and broad thematic consistency while using interviews to establish space adjacent to the theoretical and, at times, analytic discourse of the critics and curators; or to Michel Foucault's practice of retrospectively providing all-too-coherent explanations of his past work that clearly were not direct correspondences to what he had done but rather analytic rectifications that served to help him clarify the problems he was currently struggling with as well as to indicate the kind of materials that finding past solutions to problems of the same sort required.

In broad strokes, all of these creators could be said to be carrying on a kind of inquiry, albeit not one whose discourse or telos was explicitly veridictional. In equally broad strokes, all of these creators could be said to acknowledge the weight of the existing determinations of the configurations of the actual in which they found themselves entangled. Pierre Boulez, however, took up the task of inquiring into the configurations of the actual as an analytically self-aware means of moving beyond them through analytic and artistic deduction. Concepts, one might say, are tools for understanding and a means of invention.

His practice consisted in a self-stylization via his ongoing compositional and performative experimentation. Such experimentation provided him with a mode of *vindication*. This stylization, this philosophic drive, albeit partly in artistic form and partly in theoretical or conceptual writings, is netted by Deleuze and Guattari when they declaim,

> Nietzsche laid down the task of philosophy when he wrote, "[Philosophers] must no longer accept concepts as a gift, not

> merely purify and polish them, but first *make and create* them, present them and make them convincing. Hitherto one has generally trusted one's concepts as if they were a wonderful dowry from some sort of wonderland." But trust must be replaced by distrust, and philosophers must distrust most those concepts they did not create themselves.[4]

Boulez certainly made and created concepts and gave them a syntax. To what degree his creations provided *consolation* remains to be thought about. That being said, there is no evidence that Boulez suffered from his situation; late modernism for Boulez did not seem to require consolation—the infinite restive and recursive experimentation and production provided its own, if ever unfinished, gratification.

BIOS

Pierre Boulez notoriously staged himself in his early years in the mold of a Parisian *enfant terrible*: from the start of his career he made it clear that he considered himself to be extraordinarily intelligent, ferociously competitive, and knowingly, supremely gifted: in a word, arrogant. Few disagreed with these claims, although not everyone appreciated the manner in which Boulez stylized them—no doubt to his delight.[5] The young Boulez was, as the saying goes, nothing if not "cocksure."

Boulez wanted his *technē* and his all-encompassing métier to be known and recognized. His style was agonism pushed to the limits, often, perhaps all too often, becoming antagonism if no worthy opponent could be found:

> It is as if Boulez were asserting his power over the mainstream concert-going public in the 1950s through an impressive (aggressive?) display of technical prowess, and conversely, dominating the technically proficient audience at Darmstadt in the 1960s through appeals to philosophical notions of musical aesthetics and (French) literary flourishes. In his writings, he adopts a strategy of what could be called "rhetorical displacement": the ever-combative Boulez is scientistic in literary society, and poetic among the technocrats, both strategies that aim at dominating discursive space.[6]

Pierre Boulez put himself to the test whenever possible. His *bios* turned on the triumph of his *technē* in whatever contest came before him, alone or in public.

Boulez's personal life is notoriously underreported and under-documented in the numerous works that have been written about him. Apparently, this absence is no accident, as Boulez—as opposed to Foucault or Roland Barthes—never discussed the topics that he considered personal, such as sexuality, tastes, leisure, and the rest. Granted, Foucault and Barthes did not indulge in any form of standard autobiographical or confessional mode. Both, however, certainly made a range of such topics available for form-giving, conceptualization, genealogical work, and the like. Perhaps we can simply claim that the *bios* for Boulez was embodied in his *technē*—especially his mode of incessantly testing himself through his compositions and conducting.

CRITICAL FRAMING: ANALYTICS & DEDUCTIONS

Boulez's early compositions have been characterized as "violently modern." Nevertheless, Jonathan Goldman, an authorized analyst (he has contributed a biographical preface in the edition of Boulez's lectures at the Collège de France), notes that from early on in Boulez's compositional career,

> classical form never fully evacuated: the model of the Beethovenian Sonata is ever present, complete with conventional scherzo movement with trio.[7]

Boulez, and this was part of the distinctive stylization, was never one to pretend to simply ignore or to attempt to put the past in a black box.

Early on, he proclaimed his allegiance to the compositions of prior modernists such as Anton Webern. For Boulez, Webern, Schoenberg, and others were not just inventors of pathbreaking modernist form but were also deeply familiar with (and appreciative of) the history of composition and performance. The so-called Second Vienna School (Schoenberg, Webern, Berg) of high modernism, although frequently taken up by critics and other composers as avant-gardism per se, was, as Boulez demonstrated, attempting a thoroughgoing revolt against

tradition not so much for its own sake but rather as a vanguard movement seeking to overcome and reanimate what these artists considered to be often admirable but increasingly withered achievements.

Boulez took up, with recalcitrant vigor, this ethos of detailed attention to the recent past, thereby refusing to eradicate or to simply oppose past form. Rather, he used his study and mastery of the recent past to provide a baseline of innovation. Boulez was not a mechanical system builder nor did he settle into uncritically following a preestablished doctrine, even those he had contributed to creating, both in the strict musical sense per se as well as in the sense of crucibles of experimentation and experience for others. Rather,

> Boulez shapes music through the creation of oppositions: he defines concepts by opposing one type of material against another, and thereafter having them interact with each other.[8]

That interaction constituted a pivot point of innovation rather than a mechanical structuralist device imposed on material.

Roland Barthes reflects on a similar point,

> Most of the time, unfortunately, people think they're under an obligation to engage in *general conversation*. How many times have I been irritated and frustrated by a conversation—that others make "general"—because a specialist whom I'd dearly love to hear discuss his specialism starts making banal cultural or philosophical remarks when he could be telling me about his craft!—Intellectuals in particular never discuss their craft, as if they didn't have one: they have "ideas," positions but no craft![9]

In a late interview, Boulez remarked in a similar vein,

> The concepts of structuralism did not help me. Structuralism interested me, and I am connected with it, because I wrote a work called *Structures*. However, I did not see clearly the adaptation I could make and I wanted to finish with this type of obsession. On the other hand, I am very attached to techni-

> cal work proper, because it pushes me to find solutions that I would not have thought of.[10]

Boulez captured this interplay of ideas and craft, confirming his agreement with Barthes of the primacy of craft, while not eschewing larger intellectual currents and vocabularies any more than Barthes did.

Boulez had been moving aggressively and successfully out of the avant-garde circles of Paris and the "serialist" music world for a number of years. In 1971, he was appointed principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony. In 1975, he initiated the Domaine Musical, IRCAM, Cité de la musique, and his appointment to the ultra-prestigious Collège de France.

Among other ramifications of these positions and the manner in which Boulez took them up was the fact that he became adept at not only conducting but also analyzing works of great length (compared to various modernist compositions) though limited in time by previous conventions as well as concert hall protocols:

> Thus the nostalgia for large-scale form is not only a reaction against brevity, but derives from the necessary temptation to re-conquer deduction, to give it its true dimension—which is, necessarily, that of extension in time.[11]

His many concert performances over the years as a conductor by necessity entailed a technical and interpretive familiarity tending toward mastery of the tradition of Western music.

Boulez habitually coined terms with a specific attention to the concepts interior to them both as a means to guide his composition and to provide a conceptual language—*écriture*—to describe it. Thus, for example, he used the term "sound bloc" ("*bloc sonore*") to replace the traditional concept of chord. In the work that proved to be the reputational breakthrough for Boulez, *Le Marteau sans maître* (1952–1955), he anchored it in a poem of the same name by the poet René Char (1907–1988), contributing an added dimension to the achievement of a highly technical virtuoso composition.

Among other qualities, as Goldman underscores, *Le Marteau sans maître*

> makes use of original methods of vocal declamation including *Sprechstimme* and humming.[12]

Sound per se, however, was not an end in itself but rather an element (*bloc sonore*) in composition.

That sound would be central to a musician's work is not surprising, but how and what musicians make of it as a category in composition or beyond it—as we saw with Coltrane—is telling. Coltrane strove in the last years of his life to give an ever more prominent place to sound per se at the expense of composition. This quest led him to undertake many experiments, some more successful or rewarding than others, but led Coltrane ultimately to the end of the musical and sonorous road.

CONCEPTS: ELEMENTS OF BOULEZ'S REPERTOIRE

Pierre Boulez was a prolific composer and an energetic conductor; throughout his long life he was equally a vigorous writer and theoretician. His writings concerned not only his own compositions but also his views on many other composers, musicians, and artists; they also included a ceaseless effort to conceptualize and to theorize creativity. The term "creativity" is appropriate, since for obvious reasons the bulk of Boulez's writing and interviews (a genre he engaged in and entertained throughout his career) concerned music. Boulez drew on other art forms, from poetry to painting, as well. He used these other art forms as sources of reflection and conceptual development and also as testing grounds for his conceptual repertoire.

Distinctively central to Boulez's conceptual repertoire was a term that crossed several boundaries, from the bodily to the theoretical: "gesture" (*le geste*):

> It is at once the physical gesture of the instrumentalist on his instrument and the gesture of the composer "drawing" a musical idea onto paper. His conception could almost be captured in a single sentence: "The *gesture* penetrates every *moment* of the composition, from the initial *idea*—which is subjected

> to *writing* or *écriture*—and which forms the basis of the *work*, elaborated through a series of *deductions*, and regulated by a *system*.[13]

In this one quote we find a series of concepts: idea, *écriture*, work, deductions, and system. These concepts are interrelated and implicate each other in the manner that Boulez deploys them.

Écriture is a heavily laden term in French, roughly translated as "writing," but the English term does not capture its range. Theorists such as Roland Barthes and others explored the semantic terrain of *écriture*, textuality, and related terms for several decades. Goldman uses the term "musical discourse," and although "discourse" is itself a polyvalent and contested term in French theory, it serves the basic purpose here of conveying an idea of medium:

> There is no gesture for Boulez without *écriture*, which is the medium of musical discourse and the mediation between the idea and realized sound. Without *écriture*, there is no access to the musical as such, but only to the sonorous. This explains Boulez's repeated criticism of *musique concrète* and its electroacoustic derivatives: the error of the electroacousticians, according to this reasoning, was to believe that they could produce music by working directly on sound, whereas sound in itself does not admit of hierarchies, or any kind of coherent form whatsoever unless it has passed through *écriture*. *Écriture* is the source of musical ideas or gestures; ideas and gestures are also the result of assimilation, an integration of models, of the key watershed works of the past. *Écriture* is the manipulation of graphic symbols: in a word, notation.[14]

Yet again, a seemingly simply term, "notation," is at one level simply the written or printed score of a composition. That being said, it conveys Boulez's elaborations of traditional notation, especially in his elaboration of gesture for performers and students alike. The goal of composing is thus to construct musical meaning, which is defined as internal consistency, an abundance of deductions, and an economy of means.

Within the medium of *écriture*, and the practice of considered and orchestrated gesture, the logical operation—perhaps the key mediating term in creativity—that Boulez has pondered, revisited, and invested with the greatest significance is *deduction*:

> According to Boulez, an abundance of deductions from the initial idea are the trademark of the unified musical work. Deduction plays the role of mediator between the idea and the work in *Leçons de musique*. This notion does not, however, denote a simple mechanical proliferation of the initial material of the work: deduction includes the elaboration of consequences, both logical as well as unconscious, of the material as a function of itself. It requires *métier*, another concept that Boulez rehabilitates in the *Leçons*.[15]

Although it is legitimate to qualify the term as logical, if by that one means something close to John Dewey's use of the term, one must insist that this is not a purely mental or logical term in the broader sense of only internally consistent or formalistic, although such considerations may well play a role in the act of creation, in its performance as well as its conception.

As mentioned above, craft grows over a long-term usage of experimentation and testing of creative possibilities, especially the actual practice of composition, as well as performance and—later in Boulez's career and thought—reception as an active element in form-giving. Hence, the place of the term—*métier*. For Boulez, creative work and inspiration may draw on many sources—inevitably tradition of the art form—but it is always one type or another of mediation and remediation.

FORM & PÉRIFORME

Boulez was passionately curious about, perplexed over, and a restive explorer of the term "form," a term over which he experimented incessantly. The challenge was how to conceptualize it and how to produce a referent for it. In his search for concepts to enable his own composi-

tion and performance, Boulez refused the more standard definitions of form. For Boulez,

> Sonata, rondo, fugue are not musical forms, but rather different types of modes of action of unity upon multiplicity.[16]

Types rather than forms: in that sense Boulez's challenge was a double one. He knew the history of Western musical types extremely well and his extensive conducting experience provided him with venues to perform them.

The perplexity turns on how to approach form after the height of twentieth-century modernism in music. Boulez even wrote a poor poem to capture his perplexity. It was included in a book of essays and reflections entitled *Périforme* (1966).

> Form:
> Is it a gesture, an accident? A series of gestures,
> a series of accidents?
> Is it a chance encounter?
> Is it a discipline?
> Is it a truth to be discovered or reinvented?
> Is it a pattern in the maze, inherited from one
> generation to the next?
> Is it an organized maze?
> Is it a revelation?
> An illumination?
> A shock?
> Is it a doubt?[17]

THE PREFIX "peri" has the standard meaning in both English and French of "about, around." However, and Boulez certainly knew this, the prefix was also a noun.

> *Peri:* In Persian mythology and Armenian mythology, the Peri (Persian: پری pari) are exquisite, winged fairy-like spirits ranking between angels and evil spirits.[18]

Was Boulez referring to himself as creator or messenger of these beings? Or was the work itself infused with such beings? Even for someone such as Boulez, with the reputation of being hyper-rationalist, such a perplexity on his part signals one limit, among others, where he not only allows but also invites and welcomes that which is beyond rational powers to enter into his practice, at least of writing.

As Boulez wrote in an early essay, "Necessity of an Aesthetic Orientation,"

> Each work must absolutely and necessarily create its form out of the virtual possibilities of its morphology, in order for there to be unity at every level of language.[19]

Or: the generative approach concentrates on the individual work. It

> considers how each individual work grows from within and how the various elements of a work coordinate to make a coherent whole. In its most extreme manifestations, the generative idea of form makes no essential distinction between the form and content of a given work.[20]

Thus, it is seamless but not organic.

RECURSIVE EXPERIMENTATION, OR *L'INACHEVÉ* & *LE FINI*

From his very first compositions, Pierre Boulez sought to break new musical ground as well as to reflect on and to put into discourse what he was doing, or at least what he was striving to be doing. This stance [*Haltung*] was unrelentingly consistent, a task and an obligation he imposed on himself as a constituent testing of his work and himself, over the course of his long and distinguished career. Boulez, however, was never a breaker of idols per se, quite the contrary, but rather what we prefer to call "a restive and recursive experimenter." Perhaps one could say that Boulez always kept the virtual in view while systematically working out the possible.

Early on in his compositional career, Boulez moved through works and reflections on the last stages of twelve-tone serial composition, ultimately rejecting it for its seemingly inevitable academicism while remaining loyal to Webern. At the same time, Boulez consistently ex-

pressed his gratitude to Debussy for the lessons in composition he had provided at an especially significant *kairos* in the emergence of musical modernism. These lessons, of course, were quite different from those of the so-called Second Vienna School (Schoenberg, Webern, Berg). Debussy provided a counterweight to the subsequent avant-gardist modernist canon; there were multiple solutions to a general problem.

Boulez persevered in carrying out a series of concerted experiments (and orderly reflections on them), composing so-called open works or, as he preferred to call it, "directed uncertainty." In this instance as well, in part through dialogues with John Cage and Umberto Eco, in part through his own compositional experiments, Boulez worked methodically until he had convinced himself to his own satisfaction that he had understood the limits of these imperatives, these forms.

Once he sensed that the formerly experimental form was becoming an academic method, his recalcitrance flared. In sum, Boulez's drive to include at all times a critique of form provided him with an unremitting, if sensitively variable, virtual touchstone of evaluation. Goldman observes,

> All ready-made technical solutions are banished in what could only lead to the "sterile plagiarism of one procedure on another." . . . Boulez distances himself by the middle 1960s from the adherents of the open work in the face of what he must have felt to be an excessive abdication of the responsibility for decision-making on the part of composers . . . under the influence of John Cage. Without rejecting either series or open works outright, Boulez relegates them to lower levels of musical form. In later writings, he seems to retain the series as a useful model inasmuch as it aids in deductions necessary for the variation of musical ideas, without entrusting the responsibility of assuring the coherence of a musical form to it.[21]

We see here a restive moving through the recent past to the near future through an ethos of invention and bricolage. We also see Boulez's self-testing of his will and his *technē*. He did not pause until he had reached, at least for the time being, the *singular moment*, to

use Deleuze and Guattari's phrase, that his concepts ultimately made available if not inevitable. Boulez, like Gerhard Richter, would be unremittingly tempted to revisit and recast works that seemed done at one time but not, upon revisiting, at another.

In addition to the flexibility and uncertainty provided by his combination of open-ended compositions and their initial formally thought-out structure, Boulez's compositions are notoriously challenging to perform. Added to that quality is the fact that, once again, in addition to their sophistication and technical complexity, they have a

> resolutely unfinished character, giving them the status of works-in-progress.[22]

Over time, Boulez revisited many of his works, recasting their instrumentation as well as their structure and, if one permits the expression, their ethos.

MATURITY, NOT LATE STYLE

In 2002 (at age seventy-six), in an introductory essay for an exposition he had been invited to curate at the Louvre, Boulez wrote in his circumambulatory style concerning his lifelong quest to compose a work of which he could in some sense say it was completed: is it this or that or perhaps something else? In any case, he writes,

> Is it a certain form of modernity, or only of actuality, that can be found elsewhere, in other forms of expression? Is it a will to leave good luck to chance, or rather to the unexpected with respect to which every stop appears only as a trick?. . . In the end, is it rather the desire to affirm that the real *œuvre*, defined by spatial and temporal limits, could be, in a certain way, only the more or less voluntary fragment of a great imaginary, virtual work (*grand œuvre imaginaire*), whose origin and end we do not wish to know?[23]

For us, the distinction Boulez draws between modernity and actuality is elusive: can actuality in 2002 not be of a piece with a tradition of

modernity? In any case, he conveys a certain ambiguity that perhaps the quest for form does not ultimately lie in individual works but rather in a "grand imaginary oeuvre, that is virtual and consequentially not bounded by a beginning or an end."

Boulez observes that historically there has been first a tacit and then an explicit practice of multiplication of stages or drafts of a work as a part of the composer's (or writer's or painter's or philosopher's) habitus:

> One remains aware that the preparation of a work involves a phase of trials (*une phase d'essai*), more or less exhaustive, more or less finished, destined to be solidified in a form, a definitive continuity. These tests have long been considered as preliminaries destined for the scrap heap, the *œuvre* annihilating them, so to speak.[24]

He draws the conclusion that what Roland Barthes has called "the preparation" (of the novel, artwork, self-stylization, treatise, etc.) is itself sui generis and of great interest.

Boulez observes his own emerging consciousness of the fact that his own early attempts, his *essais*, were held to be (for himself) only preliminary moments of crafting toward the completion of a definitive work to come. He deduces that these linked assumptions—drafts, sketches, versions, work—could be, and probably should be, decoupled. Further, such an uncoupling provided a freeing, an understanding of a *bios* as a life-long *épreuve*.

Upon reflection, for the composer at least, it is revealing to look more closely at these early, previously discarded attempts. Perhaps in examining them (one's own or those of another), one might decide that the choices made by the composer, or writer, or artist, were not necessarily the best ones and certainly not the only worthwhile ones. Others might well have been chosen: paths were not foreordained, only imposed.

Here doubts arise, Boulez observes retrospectively, and then as a matter of daily practice, about prior tacit or mandated distinctions as to what is finished, achieved, and what is not.

He came to appreciate that such prior essays might well be instructive in dissolving certainties, in remembering the temptations sparked by these chunks before they were included finally in a work. He advocates attention to taking them up as if they were independent of a narrative or a type.

For example, Boulez points to an older concept, "motif," and uses it to demonstrate, in a self-reflective fashion, a continuing concern of the artist with how he or she works, beyond the production or completion of any single specific work. This attentiveness is another aspect of the not finished, unachieved.

Boulez insists on a pertinent and unsurpassable criterion: one must be as reflectively and logically rigorous as possible given the problem, the situation, and the available conceptual repertoire (*le geste unique*). Those demands for rigor, however, must be conscious at all times, equally aware of the excess of rigor, which turns into method (or planning), as well as its deficiency, which turns into free play or expressionism:

> But the play between the completion of the unique gesture and the unfinished of the informal, random, multiple structure, remains essential. Confrontation, ambiguity of relations, independence or subjugation, whatever may be the relation between the formal and the informal, a kind of relativity has been introduced into the work which rejects the exclusive constraint of the finite.[25]

The capacity to judge these proportions is a function of *métier*.

We have encountered situations multiple times where one has to decide what objects to concentrate on and how to modulate them. As Boulez adds, there is certainly an ambiguity in such cases that arises from the impossibility of a method or a theory that would determine in advance what the status of such objects should be:

> A form of greater dimension can juxtapose finite fragments, grouping them by affinity [or] by contrast, in order to make a conjunct or disjunct trajectory [*parcours*]. The formal trajectory consists of the irregular or regular alternation of finite fragments which can belong to fragments which are strongly

> characterized by their immediately recognizable external marks . . . compartmentalized [*cloisonné*], mosaic forms can result from this way of positioning the fragments according to their own natures.[26]

The form arrived at ultimately depends on the material one is working on.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTENSIFYING DEGREE ZERO
DAVID FOSTER WALLACE, TARRYING WITH MODERNIST FORM

A distinctive trait of the work of American writer David Foster Wallace (1962–2008) is his singular manner of tarrying with the elements of *form*.

> Tarry (v.), Old English *tergan*, *tirgan* "to vex, irritate, exasperate, provoke."[1]

Form here refers to the specific sense Roland Barthes gives to this keyword, a configuration of a language + a style + a mode of writing.[2]

The language Wallace was immersed in, his medium, through which he sought to remediate, to remedy, even to redeem, postwar American image-media culture (literature, television, music), was a language that he considered to be saturated in irony and cynicism. Already in 1993 Wallace considered rap music to have become an exemplification of a grim outlook on American cultural life, the enervating principle and form of parody, irony, and cynicism:

> To me rap's the ultimate distillate of the U.S. eighties, but if you really step back and think not just about rap's politics but about white enthusiasm for it, things get grim. Rap's conscious response to the poverty and oppression of U.S. blacks is like some hideous parody of sixties black pride. We seem to be in an era when oppression and exploitation no longer bring a people together and solidify loyalties and help everyone rise above his individual concerns. Now the rap response is more like "You've always exploited us to get rich, so now goddamn it

> we're going to exploit ourselves and get rich." The irony, self-pity, self-hatred are now conscious, celebrated.[3]

For Wallace, these terms index aspects of the cultural situation (not only in respect to rap music) in which he lived and worked, and a quality of the double bind against which he had to contend: principally the contention that nihilism is a counter to, and defense against, sentimentality, artlessness, and naïveté: second-degree reflexivity about language (frequently humor) as counterpoint to first-degree earnestness.

The bind is constituted by the seeming impossibility of mobilizing first against second degree, given the pervasiveness of the latter. His mode of writing in this language was, moreover, given form relative to what Barthes calls "style": the biographical aspect of the desire to write, characterized in Wallace's case by, on the one hand, an affect of sadness, loneliness, and lostness, and, on the other hand, the desire for pleasure and humor, a desire bathed in the mediated gratification that he recognizes as part of the bind.

Wallace's mode of writing, configured with this language (postwar media discourse) and style (sadness + jokes), is a late modernist search for a form, one that anticipates its own disruption, deferral, and ultimate failure.[4] We think this mode can be characterized as an unending, exasperated search for a "zero degree" of writing, one that seeks a mood capable of capturing both first and second degrees, without synthesis or recomposition, his own desire for remedy and redemption notwithstanding.

Wallace's bind, to both seize an actual form of mediation and transform the medium in which that actuality can be grasped, is one we think he shares with Barthes's diagnosis of the zero degree, which can be qualified as modernist to the extent that

> Modernism begins with the search for a Literature which is no longer possible.[5]

We are aware, of course, of the danger of remobilizing a concept honed for a specific time and place: French literature in the 1950s. The zero degree of writing was a conceptual intervention to grasp a sequence of transformations that took place in writing (*écriture*) once Literature

(i.e., French Literature) became an object of conscious reflection (Barthes sets the threshold between the end of the eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth, the dates of Balzac's birth and death: 1799–1850). Prior to Literature itself becoming an object of conscious reflection, literary art

> was transparent, it flowed and left no deposit, it brought ideally together a universal Spirit and a decorative sign without substance or responsibility . . . towards the end of the eighteenth century this transparency becomes clouded; literary form develops a second-order power independent of its economy and euphemistic charm; it fascinates the reader, it strikes him as exotic, it enthralls him, it acquires a weight. Literature is no longer felt as a socially privileged mode of transaction, but as a language having body and hidden depths, existing both as dream and menace.[6]

Subsequently, writers had to tarry with form, with its second-order powers. Form becomes a problem.

Multiple solutions resulted from the recognition of form as the result of *technē* (craftsmanship). All solutions had to deal with the fact that:

1. Form could no longer *not* be recognized as the result of *technē*
2. The multiplicity of *technē* required a commitment to a mode of writing, relative to the style and language for which the writer takes responsibility
3. These forms are historical, thus posing the question and the challenge of the relation of the writer's forms to prior forms

What Barthes calls the zero degree is a particular response to an ongoing problematic "becoming historical" of form:

> in those neutral modes of writing, called here "the zero degree of writing," we can easily discern a negative momentum, and an inability to maintain it within time's flow, as if Literature,

> having tended for a hundred years now to transmute its surface into a form with no antecedents, could no longer find purity anywhere but in the absence of all signs, finally proposing the realization of this Orphean dream: a writer without Literature.[7]

The zero degree is, for Barthes, an ethic of form for Literature. Arguably it is the modernist ethic par excellence; remembering and forgetting the history of the form and contingency, as well as constraints of the freedom to take up a mode of writing.

Does it apply to Wallace? And if it can (or cannot), might the observation and grasping of Wallace's mode of writing help us to characterize the challenge of observing experiments with form in anthropology after modernism?

INTENSIFYING THE DIREMPTION OF *GEMÜT* & *GEIST*

The zero degree of writing seems appropriate to the extent that Wallace developed a mode of writing that could:

1. Introduce a difference with respect to the "tradition" of postmodernism in American Literature (1960–1980)
2. Do so without naively thinking a writer could return to a prior mode of writing that would obviate what had become the excesses and deficiencies of language and style
3. Yet also try to avoid the risk of an avant-garde technical gesture conducted for its own sake

The first step in Wallace's search for such a mode was to recognize the problem of finding a manner in which to approach, observe, and write the "present." Following Foucault and Baudelaire's observation of Constantin Guys as the painter of modern life, one may have no right to despise the present, but that present will have many aspects that are despicable. Wallace certainly was rigorous and an earnest enough observer to take both points seriously. Yet what became the more pressing challenge was what to do with the present that one has no right to despise.

What does it look like to work over the present?

In Foucault's terms, writing of Guys, the endeavor was to transfigure the present through

> the difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom.[8]

We have seen how imagination and *Gemüt* could be mobilized by Goya in just such a "difficult interplay," at modernity and modernisms' dawn. The core problem has not gone away; we will claim, however, that the excesses and deficiencies of the capacity for imagination and *technē* to give form to such a transfiguration have *intensified*.

In an interview from 1993, Wallace described the mimetic and didactic anthropological problem, a problem, in our terms, of how to render the present actual, as follows:

> If what's always distinguished bad writing—flat characters, a narrative world that's clichéd and not recognizably human, etc.—is also a description of today's world, then bad writing becomes an ingenious mimesis of a bad world. If readers simply believe the world is stupid and shallow and mean, then [Bret Easton] Ellis can write a mean shallow stupid novel [*American Psycho*, about a murderous investment banker in 1980s New York City] that becomes a mordant deadpan commentary on the badness of everything. Look man, we'd probably most of us agree that these are dark times, and stupid ones, but do we need fiction that does nothing but dramatize how dark and stupid everything is? In dark times, the definition of good art would seem to be art that locates and applies CPR to those elements of what's human and magical that still live and glow despite the times' darkness. Really good fiction could have as dark a worldview as it wished, but it'd find a way *both to depict this world and to illuminate the possibilities for being alive and human in it*.[9]

In our terms, we name Wallace's problem as one of the interconnection of *Gemüt* and *Geist*.

But how? Through what *technē*, and connected to what *technē tou*

biou, that is to say, what manner of living, and connected to what telos, could he "illuminate the possibilities for being alive and human" in "today's world"?

Boulez, given the forms and the traditions of music he was working with, could simultaneously mobilize and masterfully configure high modernisms' gestures with other elements, both conventional and invented elements. The transformation happened in music both pedagogically and in terms of performances and interpretations. For Wallace, in terms of the medium of writing, the gesture of transforming the form was challenging both in relation to the reworking of prior repertoires and in relation to the specificity of the medium of writing: that it has, at least for Wallace, a necessary connection to the experience of life in his present.

Minimally, the search for form meant taking stock of lessons learned from predecessors while wanting somehow to move beyond them. The predecessors of import for Wallace were the generation of American "postmodernists," born in the 1930s, among whom he frequently named John Barth and Robert Coover, who,

> even though their self-consciousness and irony and anarchism served valuable purposes, were indispensable for their times, their aesthetic's absorption by the U.S. commercial culture has had appalling consequences for writers and everyone else.[10]

The second step was thus to find a mode in which to achieve this conceptual animation: here we wager that an observer of Wallace must configure the moral search for redemption that he claims for his endeavor with the actual techniques and form of the practice that he instantiated in his writing, realized as specific ethic and ethos in his mode of writing.

We think focusing on the relation of *technē* and *technē tou biou* captures and characterizes this ethics and this form, which for us functions as the terminal point of late modernism as well as our equipmental soundings. The telos that Wallace names for himself can, in our terms, be characterized as the redemptive endeavor to interconnect *Geist* and *Gemüt*: to mobilize the animating principle of self-affectation to work on and work over the affect of his present:

> if you're going to try not just to depict the way a culture's bound and defined by mediated gratification and image, but somehow to redeem it, or at least fight a rearguard against it, then what you're going to be doing is paradoxical. . . . The paradox can't be resolved, but it can somehow be mediated—"re-mediated" . . . by the fact that language and linguistic intercourse is, in and of itself, redeeming, remedy-ing.[11]

In an interview with Laura Miller conducted in March 1996, Wallace described his just-published novel *Infinite Jest* in terms of "wanting to do something sad":

> Wallace: I'd done some funny stuff and some heavy, intellectual stuff, but I'd never done anything sad. And I wanted it not to have a single main character. The other banality would be: I wanted to do something real American, about what it's like to live in America around the millennium.
>
> Laura Miller: And what is that like?
>
> Wallace: There's something particularly sad about it, something that doesn't have very much to do with physical circumstances, or the economy, or any of the stuff that gets talked about in the news. It's more like a stomach-level sadness. I see it in myself and my friends in different ways. It manifests itself as a kind of lostness. Whether it's unique to our generation I really don't know.[12]

Wallace sought to capture, to diagnose, a mood, an affect, and to propose a possible pathway to a remedy that, he knew, remained forever elusive. The novel configures four lines of narrative: the lives of student-athletes in a suburban Boston elite tennis academy, the family that runs the academy, the lives of the residents of a nearby drug and alcohol recovery clinic, and the activities of a Quebecois separatist movement, set against a historico-political backdrop in which the United States, Canada, and Mexico have merged, Northern New England has become a vast toxic waste dump, and years are no longer numerical but rather designated by corporate sponsorship (what he calls "Subsidized Time").

What is significant for us about the interview with Miller is that, rather than focus on the complexity of the narrative structure, or the intellectual gestures that he performs in the novel, Miller asks Wallace to try to grasp the relation between the inquiry he conducted, principally at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and the mood he sought to capture. Although not mentioned in the interview, D.T. Max's biography documents Wallace's own period spent in a recovery house in Brighton, Massachusetts, in 1989.[13]

Their exchange on this topic aids us in observing the configuration of *technē*, *technē tou biou*, and telos that Wallace instantiates as part of our soundings of modernism. His *technē* from *Infinite Jest* forward is constituted, at least in part, through participant-observation, both first- and second-order. His habitual manner of writing has produced a pervasive lassitude. That manner of writing had, to a large degree, integrated and been animated by the black humor and complex, second-order gestures of postmodern American literature; it was spurred by his desire to capture a mood, to show what it is like to live in America at the end of the second millennium. His work became increasingly "ethnographic."

He put the problem in the following terms:

> Brains and wit and technical tightrope-calisthenics are powerful tools in fiction, but I believe that when they're used primarily to keep the reader at arm's length they're being abused —they are functioning as defense mechanisms. . . . I do not wish to be a hidden person, or a hidden writer: it is lonely.[14]

As he put it in a letter to critic Larry McCaffrey, "The magic of fiction"

> is that it addresses and antagonizes the loneliness that dominates people.

McCaffrey cites this sentence back to Wallace during their 1993 interview, to which he replies,

> "Aggravate" might be better than "antagonize," in the sense of aggravation as intensification.[15]

We think Wallace here is much more precise and perceptive about the affect and function of his writing. While his hoped-for telos was the interconnection of *Geist* and *Gemüt*, his resolutely modernist seriousness was, in actuality, *an intensification of their diremption*: intensification is the correct term here, insofar as it is not an extension of the separation between, on the one hand, a principle of animation of affect and thought in the human being, and, on the other hand, the historical determination and manifestation of thought and affect in the world. Rather, Wallace intensifies the experience of the tension between the desire to grasp the present and the desire to work over a relationship to the present.

If our own search during the last decade has been to forge and to prepare the way for an ethos of the contemporary, a way of grasping the actuality of the determinations of inquiry, then we observe Wallace as a salient, albeit tragic, affective and ethical response to the challenge of the ethos through which to grasp a restive relation to the present.

Wallace yearned for authentic sentiment and redemption, a key orienting affect and ethical orientation of Romanticism, and he was honest and aware enough to know that Romanticism's redemption lives only in modernism's search for an exit within a situation conceived as exitless; the exitlessness of the language that the writer seeks to both grasp and work over.

Wallace's ethic of modernism fits squarely within what Hayden White elegantly characterizes as the "archetypal theme of Satire," which is the opposite of the Romantic drama of redemption:

> it is in fact a drama of diremption, a drama dominated by the apprehension that man is ultimately a captive of the world rather than its master, and by the recognition that, in the final analysis, human consciousness and will are always inadequate to the task of overcoming definitively the dark force of death.[16]

His ethic points to the intensification of diremption and not remediation or redemption. Intensification thus also seems to be the limit point of this modernist ethic.

CONTROLLED EXPERIMENTS IN DEGREE ZERO

Wallace's intensification of the *Gemüt-Geist* relation in his fiction primes an interconnected problem in his nonfiction writing: the problem of the integration of truth and conduct. What is common, underpinning both genres of writing, is their mode and medium, which we will grasp through the motion they instantiate.

Shortly after *Infinite Jest*, Wallace published a collection of nonfiction essays, several of which were reportage pieces based on experiences at (among other places) the Illinois State Fair, the production set of David Lynch's film *Lost Highway*, and a week on a luxury Caribbean cruise.

Each sentence in the first six paragraphs of his report of a week spent on a luxury cruise, originally published in *Harper's* under the title "Shipping Out: On the Nearly Lethal Comforts of a Luxury Cruise," begins with a variant of:

> I (have) (now) seen / heard / felt / know.

He learned, among other things,

- "that there are intensities of blue beyond very bright blue"
- "the difference between straight bingo and Prize-O"

He heard, among other things,

- "upscale adult U.S. citizens ask the ship's Guest Relations Desk whether snorkeling necessitates getting wet"
- as well as "whether the crew sleeps on board"[17]

The point of the detailed observation is not estrangement per se, nor a tactic of anthropological defamiliarization. It is a challenge of simultaneously paying acute attention to a particular social form, "the luxury cruise," while writing about it in such a way that the description does not only mimic that reality. He offers a diagnosis:

> it may seem weird that the ultimate American fantasy vacation involves being plunked down in an enormous primordial stew of death and decay. But on a 7NC Luxury Cruise, we are

> skillfully enabled in the construction of various fantasies of triumph over just this death and decay. One way to "triumph" is via the rigors of self-improvement (diet, exercise, cosmetic surgery, Franklin Quest time-management seminars), to which the crew's amphetaminic upkeep of the Nadir is an unsubtle analogue. But there's another way out too: not titivation but titillation; not hard work but hard play. See in this regard the Nadir's constant activities. . . . It makes your existence seem non-contingent. The hard-play option promises not a transcendence of death-dread so much as drowning it out.[18]

With respect to the effort to drown out contingency, Wallace observes in one of his characteristically detailed footnotes that he suspects that the hundreds of "YOU ARE HERE" signs next to red dots on maps, which appear on each deck of the ship, are for reassurance rather than orientation.

The compositional or remediatory question of the cruise story, republished as "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again," was how to integrate what he would come to know with the overriding affect of despair that he observed. Wallace uses the term "despair" with caution: "The word despair is overused and banalized now, but it's a serious word and I'm using it seriously." Wallace felt despair, a despair he connects to the story of a sixteen-year-old boy who jumped off the upper deck of a Megaship a week before Wallace's cruise. The "news version" of the suicide was an "unhappy adolescent love thing," but Wallace wondered if part of the death was something no news story could find a narrative form and mood for: the unbearable sadness that is left once managed fun comes to an end.[19]

The limit point for us will be that finding a form for intensification does not in itself prepare the knower or writer for a transformation in ethos. Intensification of observation, in this instance, led to a movement of distanciation. A case in point: the essay ends with an account of the Celebrity Showtime Entertainment Headline Act, a hypnotist, functioning for Wallace as a microcosm of the week's whole experience:

> the hypnotist's boredom and hostility are not only undisguised but incorporated kind of ingeniously into the entertainment itself.[20]

Wallace does not allow himself to mirror or participate in the hypnotist's disdain, but neither does he take up a position as an object of disdain, safely channeling the affect into an observation in the third person (although inviting the reader, "you," to imagine being that object of disdain):

> being entertained by someone who clearly dislikes you, and feeling that you deserve that dislike at the same time you resent it.[21]

Participant-observers have been known to find themselves in analogous positions. Wallace's recourse is then to a movement also familiar to participant-observers: a "dissociative trance," in which Wallace imagines observing the scene from a dinghy in the sea, a projected observation post, where he spent the subsequent twenty-four hours before disembarking.

Key to observing Wallace's late modernism are his controlled experiments in the intensification of experience. Unlike Boulez's attempt to be the figure of a masterful modernism, a domination of both *technē* and *technē tou biou*, Wallace's technical capacity indexes countervailing movements of centripetal and centrifugal motion, an intensifying combination that does not cancel the forces' motion, but in its own way neutralizes the force of both.

In order to give a better sense of a mode of writing that manifests a movement of neutralization with respect to both first-order and second-order powers of observation—a mode of writing we think qualifies as "zero degree"—we will take an instance from Wallace's last collection published during his lifetime, *Oblivion*. An instance from this collection has three advantages: it does not necessitate the kind of contextualization that would be required were we to focus on an instance from *Infinite Jest*; as the last literary work he published in his lifetime—before his suicide in 2008—it gives us at least one form of the kind of technical and more mature aspects of his writing; and it shows

the manner in which he was moving toward images and experiences of the ordinary, the theme that would reach its terminal point in his unfinished novel, *The Pale King*, which, in part, took up the experience of boredom and loneliness of a group of characters working for the Internal Revenue Service.

An example from the highly demanding story "Mr. Squishy," the first story in the volume, gives us a grasp of both the technical side of Wallace's mode of writing and the kind of affect that he was able to express in and through his writing. No narrative context is needed for the instance. At stake in the instance is the mood mobilized through his technical capacity and the awareness of this capacity to capture a mood. The instance is of a 567-word sentence in free indirect style, through which reader, narrator, and narrated are merged, but in such a way that, because it is so ostentatious and grueling, the very obviousness of technique ensures sufficient distance for the reader to observe the writer's observation of that which he is narrating—that is, the reader's and writer's awareness of the disavowal of the narrator's oblivion through claims to (self-)awareness:

> Schmidt had had several years of psychotherapy and was not without some perspective on himself, and he knew that a certain percentage of his reaction to the way these older men coolly inspected their cuticles or pinched at the crease in the trouser of the topmost leg as they sat back on their coccyx joggling the foot of their crossed leg was just his own insecurity, that he felt somewhat sullied and implicated by the whole enterprise of contemporary marketing and that this sometimes manifested via projection as the feeling that people he was just trying to talk as candidly as possible to always believed he was making a sales pitch or trying to manipulate them in some way, as if merely being employed, however ephemerally, in the great grinding US marketing machine had somehow colored his whole being and that something essentially shifty or pleading in his expression now always seemed inherently false or manipulative and turned people off, and not just in his

career—which was not his whole existence, unlike so many at Team Δy, or even all that terribly important to him; he had a vivid and complex inner life, and introspected a great deal—but in his personal affairs as well, and that somewhere along the line his professional marketing skills had metastasized throughout his whole character so that he was now the sort of man who, if he were to screw up his courage and ask a female colleague out for drinks and over drinks open his heart up to her and reveal that he respected her enormously, that his feelings for her involved elements of both professional and highly personal regard, and that he spent a great deal more time thinking about her than she probably had any idea he did, and that if there were anything at all he could ever do to make her life happier or easier or more satisfying or fulfilling he hoped she'd just say the word, for that is all she would have to do, say the word or snap her thick fingers or even just look at him in a meaningful way, and he'd be there, instantly and with no reservations at all, he would nevertheless in all probability be viewed as probably just wanting to sleep with her or fondle or harass her, or as having some creepy obsession with her, or as maybe even having a small creepy secretive shrine to her in one corner of the unused second bedroom of his condominium, consisting of personal items fished out of her cubicle's wastebasket or the occasional dry witty little notes she passed him during especially deadly or absurd Team Δy staff meetings, or that his home Apple PowerBook's screensaver was an Adobe-brand 1440-dpi blowup of a digital snapshot of the two of them with his arm over her shoulder and just part of the arm and shoulder of another Team Δy Field-worker with his arm over her shoulder from the other side at a Fourth of July picnic that A.C. Romney-Jaswat & Assoc. had thrown for its research subcontractors at Navy Pier two years past, Darlene holding her cup and smiling in such a way as to show almost as much upper gum as teeth, the ale's cup's red digitally enhanced to

> match her lipstick and the small scarlet hairbow she often wore just right of center as a sort of personal signature or statement.[22]

Affect degree zero.

The ethic is resolutely modernist in its absolute commitment to the medium of writing: exitlessness, and its infinite and limitless demands, but minimally with the hope that this exitlessness could be shared, thus rendering it less lonely.

Solace, not consolation.

CODA

MEDIUM, *TECHNĒ*, AND MODERNISM

It is our contention, on the basis of what we have discerned in our soundings of aesthetic and artistic modernism, that a possible future anthropology after modernism, one that learns from that modernist past, which does not reject it, but which also refuses to be contained by such a past, requires reflection on the *medium* of its realization.

Why medium, and what does the word refer to?

In *Under Blue Cup*, art historian Rosalind Krauss makes a startling and bold archaeological claim: that medium is the "historical a priori" of modernism, fixed around the trope of synecdoche.[1] The claim is designed to do battle on two art-historical fronts: one is a battle in relation to prior understandings of modernism in the history of art, specifically that of Clement Greenberg (1909–1994), and the other is a defense of modernism against developments in art practice and "theory" of the last fifty years, specifically in the guise of installation and conceptual art. Greenberg, she points out, was perhaps "the first to stabilize medium as the locus of discursive unity" in which it was matter that, recursively, provided the "analogical thread" between painting and "the physicality" of painting.

While Krauss concurs with Greenberg in his understanding of modernism as being primarily concerned with "medium specificity," it is not, in her judgment, a concern specifically or uniquely with "matter." The "vehicle" of medium specificity, she forcefully argues, is the creation of *convention* on the basis of "technical supports," supports that can have variable degrees of materiality.

Two examples of technical supports are "the car" in Ed Ruscha's (b. 1937) work and "investigative journalism" in the work of Sophie

Calle (b. 1953). What is most clarified by taking Calle's work as an exemplar, in contrast to Ruscha, is that the technical support in her artistic medium, investigative journalism, is not the materiality of the photograph, or the camera, or the note-taking per se, but rather the observational arrangement, a series of positions of observation in motion that produce a *situation* that can be objectified through participation, drawing the participants and observers "in" while simultaneously showing their blind spots, showing the dependence of what is made visible on the arrangement that makes such observation possible.

Calle's assemblage exemplifies a feature of modernism in that its recursivity is "open." The positions, functions, and objects, in principle, can be brought into assemblage, making manifest who one is at a given moment in time and in a given moment within the medium.

Krauss puts it this way: technical supports, as conventions with scope for freedom, index "who one is" within the forms that arise in the medium of the overall practice. For Krauss, medium, understood specifically through the technical supports that enable each medium, is a "logic" rather than a form of matter.

In Deweyian terms, we could say that logic here means conventions for submitting practice to ongoing developing standards and forms of that practice. The medium and technical supports that Krauss is most interested in are those that prime ratios of memory and forgetting:

> Each of these supports allows the artist to discover its rules which will in turn become the basis for that recursive self-evidence of a medium's specificity.[2]

That self-evidence is then put to the test of "who one is" relative to that medium's specificity. Each of her exemplary artists primes such testing: William Kentridge, James Coleman, Sophie Calle, Ed Ruscha:

> If such artists are "inventing" their medium, they are resisting contemporary art's forgetting of how the medium undergirds the very possibilities of art.[3]

The problem of the post-medium, for Krauss—broadly speaking, modernism after conceptual and installation art—is the emergence of art practice that revels in its "recursive structure" but that also

1. Does not work to specify itself
2. Hence, does not seek to index who one is, in that specificity (Krauss directs a distinct attack against a certain pastiche of Derrida)

Thus positively, her exemplars develop a recursive form that has to be able to specify itself and has to index who one is within that specificity. That recursivity then makes visible semantic and pragmatic conventions that enable one to make judgments of practice.

As Krauss put it in the lecture she delivered and published in 1999, before suffering a brain aneurysm (after her recovery, she wrote and published *Under Blue Cup*):

> the expressive freedom that improvisation always contained, as the relation between the technical ground of a genre and its given conventions, opened up a space for release, the way the fugue makes it possible, for example, to improvise complex marriages between its voices. *The conventions in question need not be as strict as those of a fugue or a sonnet*; they might be exceedingly loose or schematic. *But without them there would be no possibility of judging the success or failure of such improvisation*. Expressiveness would have no goal, so to speak.[4]

For example, in addition to the technical grounds of the genres that Coltrane worked with, there was equally the technical support of collaboration, which became increasingly significant for him as he moved away from music toward the exploration of sounds. His medium was not autonomous, as in the high musical modernism of Boulez, and instead of the latter's immanent plane of *écriture*, it was clear that Coltrane was aiming for transcendence. Perhaps it is correct to say that Coltrane's medium was not autonomous precisely to the degree that it endeavored to transcend music, to use sound for a spiritual purpose, which he succeeded in doing. Goya, situated historically prior to the

rise of the autonomy of medium with modernism, was in a position of discomfort, between a move toward a tacit desired autonomy of the medium and the pathos of the finitude that the medium indexed, as in his portrait with Arrieta. With Wallace, we have an endgame of the search for differential specificity within a literary medium after the rise of the absolutely autonomous and recursive medium. Wallace's search was precisely to ask who one is within such a medium, given a simultaneous impossibility of, as well as desire for, sincerity, of a relation between *Geist* and *Gemüt* that is not ironic. The infinity of the search, of its recursivity, indexes the exitlessness in form that he was wrestling with in terms of experience.

As with the arts, we think there is a challenge of the medium for an anthropology after modernism.

PREPARATION OF A MEDIUM

An exemplar of a high modern version of that recursive attention to medium specificity is Roland Barthes. Significantly, Krauss not only draws on Barthes's work but also, with Denis Hollier, has translated Barthes's lecture course, *The Neutral*.

In his lectures as in his other texts, Barthes uses a technique for avoiding the repression of subjectivity under the banner of a falsely objective discourse for analyzing the work of writing, or, more generally, the work of creating: fantasy, or what he elsewhere calls "the imaginary."

The technique is a means to refuse the avoidance of "the subject that I am" when seeking to grasp the work of writing. The imaginary of the desire to write becomes a means of taking up the relations of the *technē* of writing to the *bios* of the writer. Moreover, Barthes, in his lectures at the Collège de France of 1978–1979 and 1979–1980, given under the heading *The Preparation of the Novel*, is specifically interested in the *technē* and the imaginary of a specific form that is desired, relative to a life and a desire to write: the novel.[5] Thus, rather than take up "the novel" as an object of sociological determination (Lukács, Goldmann), the task is to grasp the imaginary of the form, grasped in its pragmatic and ethical force.

He begins the course with an element that connects the *technē* of writing with the *bios* of the writer: the Vita Nova, or else, in line with the reference to Dante, the statement "here begins the new life." A life that takes on a new form at a distinct moment, a *kairos*, that is designated with reference to *The Inferno* as the "*milieu du chemin de notre vie*"—"the middle of the journey of our life." The milieu is not the chronological middle but rather is marked by the moment, the event, that separates life into a before and an after.

For our purposes, Barthes's discussion discerns how the *kairos* of the *milieu du chemin de la vie* forces the subject to confront the manner in which that subject uses time before death. The *kairos*, he thus suggests, has three parameters:

1. Although Barthes does not call it so, we could say the first is a parameter of finitude. He re-mobilizes Proust's use of the biblical citation "yet a little while is the light with you" to index the awareness that "days are numbered" and that a decision must be taken about how to use time, given the available light, its quality, range, intensity, and duration.

2. The second is the awareness of repetition: on this point, in contrast to Camus's claim that "one must imagine that Sisyphus was happy" because his fatality is his own, he makes the interpretation that Sisyphus was not happy, not because his task was in vain, but because it was always the same. We could then say, in contrast to Camus, that Sisyphus's fatality could not be his own insofar as there was no room for *technē*, for invention, relative to the constraints by which he was forced to live.

3. The third parameter of the *kairos* of the *milieu du chemin de la vie* is what Barthes calls "*l'actif de la douleur*," the active aspect of distress; this seems to be, properly speaking, the event that induces pathos.

Finitude, repetition, pathos, therefore, are configured as the parameters of a life so as to force the subject to make a judgment of practice within the limits of the margins of freedom.

For our purposes, what is telling is that these parameters are exemplified for Barthes in Proust's *Search*, in which the *kairos* of Proust's mother's death, which provided the active distress necessary, in Barthes's view, for the form given to the desire to write that became his *Search*. Given the actual manner in which Proust lived and died, writing, confined to his room, Barthes makes a claim that seems warranted: that as fantasized form, writing the novel, in the form of the oeuvre, for Proust,

> also means that death serves some purpose. For Proust: writing serves as a salvation, as a means to vanquish death.[6]

We can qualify this solace as high modern, that the medium can save the subject and redeem the significance of death. To put it otherwise, in its high modern form, finitude, repetition, and the pathos of the active character of suffering can be configured in a medium, the novel, so as to redeem a relation between *bios* and *technē*. Medium, in its mean form, articulates *bios—technē*.

PART TWO

ANTHROPOLOGY AFTER MODERNISM
INVOLUTION & DEVOLUTION

CHAPTER SIX

ANTHROPOLOGY'S LATE MODERNISM #1
MEDIUM & SUBJECTIVITY

It is our contention that anthropology can be seen to be situated within the same blockage that Krauss identifies in art practice: that recursivity and reflexivity as modernist tools became ends in themselves, detached from both subjectivity and medium. The flourishing of "expressive freedom," as Krauss puts it with respect to art practice, in anthropology has likewise meant that there are now few agreed-upon standards and forms for making judgments of practice: what is a warranted ethnographic or anthropological account? What are the genre conventions of such accounts?

Following Krauss's lead, in our judgment there are excess and deficient forms of anthropological medium, in the invention and use of such conventions, judged relative to a high modernist ratio of medium-recursivity-subjectivity.

A useful orientation for thinking about medium, recursivity, and subjectivity in the articulation of anthropological inquiry and writing appears in Clifford Geertz's (1926–2006) short book *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (1988). It is particularly pertinent on two fronts: first, relative to Geertz's own early work, especially his outlining of his methodological orientation to "culture" in the 1950s and 1960s, and, second, relative to developments in anthropology over the course of the twentieth century, read in relation to our concern for the ratio of medium, recursivity, and subjectivity in the giving of form to inquiry.

In terms of the relation between Geertz's later attention to the medium of anthropology and his early methodological and analytic orientation to inquiry, a comparison of *Works and Lives* with his essay

"Ethos, World-View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols" (1957) makes the following point clear: on the one hand, Geertz never quite gave up on the orientation that presupposed that the reality ("worldview") and experience ("ethos") of a given group could be grasped and described in terms of, and through, core symbols, as argued for in "Ethos"; but, on the other hand, the author-text-reader relation does not follow from the capacity to solve or "manage," as he puts it, the relation between observer and observed, as argued for in *Works and Lives*. Or, to put it otherwise, the problem of discursive form is not reducible to a problem of the mechanics of inquiry.[1] "Being there" is crucial to any anthropological writing, to convince the reader that the author has grasped something about a "form of life"; but the point of Geertz's reading is to show how variable the form given to that grasping can be, the mode of presence of the author, the authorial devices mobilized, and the degree of recursivity engaged in.

In addressing the rhetorical and discursive strategies of four major anthropologists—Ruth Benedict, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Bronisław Malinowski, and Claude Lévi-Strauss—Geertz singles out "authors" in Barthes's sense of "founders of discursivity," those who invent a discursive style that convinces in some way regardless of the open degree of, and relation to, empiricism. As he puts it rather sardonically, why is it that Edmund Leach's "data-poor" *Political Systems of Highland Burma* was a hit, while the "fact-crammed" atonement that followed, *Pul Eliya, a Village in Ceylon*, was roundly ignored?

We wish to focus briefly on one of Geertz's exemplars to show the various possible ways to respond to the modernist ratio of subjectivity, medium, and recursivity: Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009). One reason for selecting Lévi-Strauss and Geertz's reading of *Tristes Tropiques* is that Geertz takes up the author, the text, and the *oeuvre* as writing, thus situating the structural anthropological project in relation to what we would name as modernist anthropology. With such an orientation, Geertz justifies focusing on *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) as a lens for grasping the whole of the project, rather than looking at a sequence of Lévi-Strauss's works, on two grounds: the book is difficult to assimilate either into a Whiggish narrative of scientific progress or into a view

of structuralism as a stable and obvious method applied to a series of different phenomena. *Tristes Tropiques*, in our terms, allows Geertz to link structuralism to the problem of modernism in anthropology, both to account for the specificity of the project and to make a judgment about the mode of anthropological writing.

To make the point succinctly, Geertz's reading helps us to make a judgment of *Tristes Tropiques* as exemplary of an approach to anthropological form-giving that is high in medium and its technical supports, high in recursivity, and momentarily central in terms of subjectivity, before leaving this behind:

> In the whole of anthropology there are no works more self-referential—works that point as often to themselves as artifacts, and deliberately, as they do to what they are ostensibly about—than *Tristes Tropiques*. It is a classic example of the book whose subject is in great part itself, whose purpose is to display what, were it a novel, we would call its fictionality; a painting, its planarity; a dance, its comportment: its existence as a made thing.[2]

The technical supports are both foregrounded and, Geertz argues, recursively interwoven. The medium of *Tristes Tropiques* is composed of five genres, each with its own supports: travel literature, with an ironic detachment; ethnography with a scientific aim; a defense of a Rousseauist philosophical argument about the natural foundations of human society; connected to the latter genre, what Geertz calls a "reformist" tract, but which we would qualify as Lévi-Strauss's "counter-modern" orientation in the guise of "aesthetic repugnance" to modernity; and, most significantly, a symbolist literary text, in which experiences are mere contingent epiphenomena of deeper truths:

> To reach reality we must first repudiate experience, even though we may later reintegrate it into an objective synthesis in which sentimentality [i.e., *sentimentalité*—"consciousness," "sensibility," "subjectivity," "feeling"] plays no part . . . [Our] mission . . . is to understand Being in relation to itself, and not in relation to oneself.[3]

For Geertz, *Tristes Tropiques* is

> part of the symbolist effort to orchestrate immediate images into absolute signs.[4]

Moreover, the relation of those signs, the recursivity of inquiry, and the structure of signs, relative to the practices observed, is closed. As Lévi-Strauss writes of the ethnographic element of his composite form,

> The ensemble of a people's customs has always its particular style; they form into systems. I am convinced that the number of these systems is not unlimited and that human beings (at play, in their dreams, or in moments of delusion) never create absolutely; all they can do is to choose certain combinations from a repertory of ideas which it should be possible to reconstitute.[5]

We can thus compare Lévi-Strauss's grasping of the relation of images, signs, and the mood of his writing with our exemplar, Barthes: if Lévi-Strauss's images are immediate, his signs absolute, and his mood, well, *triste*, vacillating between the irony of his "travel book" and the tragic contempt of his counter-modern attitude, Barthes indicates for us, by way of his insistence on the importance of *kairos* as the linking device, the technical support for articulating experience in inquiry and form given to discourse; that, in his own ratio, images are stylized (not immediate, allowing room for freedom in relation to *technē* and conventions), signs are finite and this-worldly, rather than absolute, and the mood is one of pathos.

The problem of medium in *Tristes Tropiques*—the question "who I am," which medium indexes—ends, as Geertz rightly points out, in a "formalist metaphysics of being."

MEDIUM IN ANTHROPOLOGY: WITH SUBJECTIVITY

A second exemplar of author-ity in anthropology whom Geertz takes up, and who provides a second mode of configuring medium, recursivity, and subjectivity, is Bronisław Malinowksi (1884–1942). Instead of

focusing on Geertz's reading of Malinowski's *Diary* in relation to his ethnographic texts, we will focus on what he diagnoses as the legacy and the problem of the I-witness approach to anthropology:

> The problem, to rephrase it in as prosaic terms as I can manage, is to represent the research process in the research product; to write ethnography in such a way as to bring one's interpretations of some society, culture, way of life, or whatever and one's encounters with some of its members, carriers, representatives, or whomever into an intelligible relationship. Or, quickly to refigure it again, before psychologism can set in, it is how to get an I-witnessing author into a they-picturing story. To commit oneself to an essentially biographical conception of Being There, rather than a reflective, an adventural, or an observational one, is to commit oneself to a confessional approach to text-building.[6]

The confessional approach, is, thankfully, only one modality. Nevertheless, the reference to a "biographical" conception of participant-observation is in continuity with our concern for the medium and the *kairos* (turning point) of life, the *kairos* in which *bios* searches for *technē*, or technical support, to form a medium. Geertz takes up a trio of examples: Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami* (1980), and Kevin Dwyer's *Moroccan Dialogues* (1982). The trio pertained to three then "recent examples" of a "mood—an enormous tangle of epistemological, moral, ideological, vocational, and personal doubts, each feeding upon the others, and mounting at times to something very near Pyrrhonism."[7]

MODERNIST LATE STYLE

In Geertz's judgment, the response to the problem of the authorial or writerly inventions of "I" in the texts corresponds in turn to the text-form employed. Geertz underscores "invention" in the "sense of construction, not imposture," while then rendering these fictive Selves as analogous to Barthes's "ham actors" and seducing selves. The point here is that "the I" is a literary device, one whose instability and limits

were already more than clear in 1977. Hence we can follow Geertz's citing of Barthes when he writes that

> By choosing the most "direct," the most "spontaneous" form of writing, I find myself to be the clumsiest of ham actors. (And why not? Are there not historic moments when one must be a ham actor? By practicing an antiquated form of literature to the bitter end, am I not saying that I love literature, that I love it in a harrowing fashion, at the very moment when it's dying?)[8]

Hence our contention that what Geertz has in fact helped us diagnose is that by 1977 a form of late style ("harrowing") had emerged in which the ratio of medium, subjectivity, and recursivity was precisely foregrounded as a device. The consequential problem then is that, as Geertz puts it,

> the sincerity crux awaits all who pass this way.[9]

As with Wallace, a question emerges as to how it might be possible to exit the sincerity crux through an invention of recursivity, medium, and subject in a way that interconnects the writer's self and those others he writes of, and the *bios* that is writing, in some way surpassing high modernisms' terminal points.

An exemplar of how to work within the bind of late modernist anthropology, a bind constituted by the temptation to escape the problem of medium and subjectivity through the "formal metaphysics of being," as well as the need to account for the problem of medium and subjectivity, is the work of Marilyn Strathern.

STRATHERN'S HEROIC MODERNISM

Any future possible, or virtual, anthropology after modernism, one that learns from and is not determined by reflections on the actuality of modernism in anthropology, must take account of the work of Marilyn Strathern. Her *oeuvre* produces iterative and partial connections between the divergent modernisms, and responses to modernisms, present in the legacies of British, French, and American anthropology, with the effect, we shall argue, of inventing a "late style" of modernist (British social) anthropology.

In what follows, we first take up her reflections on the "postmodern" moment in anthropology, circa 1986. Subsequently we narrate her diagnosis of the "post-plural" condition of anthropology and its objects in the 1990s, a diagnosis that must be observed in relation to her understanding of the waning of modernist style, and the limits of postmodernist style, in anthropology. Finally, we look at what arguably is her late style of British social anthropology, in the wake of her tarrying with modernism and post-plurality, specifically in relation to what became her central preoccupation: relations as objects and epistemic conditions of knowledge practices.

MODERNISM & POSTMODERNISM: OUT OF CONTEXT, 1986

Rereading the works of James Frazer (1854–1941) in preparation for her 1986 Frazer Lecture, later published in *Current Anthropology* under the title "Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology" (1987), Strathern writes that she realized how simultaneously "old-fashioned" and "modern" Frazer's ideas were:

> Ideas seem to have the capacity to appear at all sorts of times and places, to such a degree that we can consider them as being before their time or out of date.[10]

Such a capacity to appear simultaneously of the moment and out of touch was narrated as disconcerting for an anthropologist brought up, like others of her generation, to regard Frazer as "unreadable," and unreadable precisely because of a shift that she narrated as having had occurred in the period from 1916 to 1926 within the discipline of anthropology.

Strathern, in the space of one brief paragraph, created a complex temporal configuration and a problem space for her questioning. From the narrative instance of the 1986 Sir James George Frazer Memorial Lecture, given at the University of Liverpool, she produced a sequence of interconnected temporal moments:

> 1986: The then-present concerns with the crisis of representation and ethnographic authority

1890–1918: The period between the publication of Frazer's key works *The Golden Bough* and *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*

1916–1926: The period of the birth of (so-called) modern (fieldwork-based) anthropology

1960–1970: The moment when Strathern's generation of anthropologists conducted their first fieldwork

Within this frame, she specifies a key concern for the lecture:

> This is the confession of someone brought up to view Sir James Frazer in a particular way who has discovered that the context for that view has shifted.[11]

The moment inquired into, then, is arguably what happened in the twenty years leading up to 1986, such that this context shifted, a shift that alters the ratio and relationship between the (seemingly) old-fashioned and the (seemingly and so-called) modern.

The modern, as an anthropological ethos, we would say, was being narrated as having become historical, and historical in a particular sense: not a simple past of "having been," but a becoming historical that produces backward and forward motion through the problem space of the temporal configuration that Strathern sketched. In such a narrative, ideas are not considered as a reflection of a specific time, as though the movement of time isomorphically moves and changes the ideas: time and ideas are narrated in moving ratios.

Strathern builds a pathway to explore what should properly be called the medium of anthropology by way of conventions produced in inquiry and through writing, including the technical support of expectations and conventions between (the anthropologist as) writer and reader relative to objects of inquiry.

Taking "ideas about ethnocentrism" as her example, she creates a five-node pathway:

1. The 1805 English edition of Abbé Fleury's 1681 *The Manners of the Israelites*, produced by the Manchester cleric Adam Clarke
2. Sir John Lubbock's 1874 lecture on modern savages

3. Frazer's 1918 publication of *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*
4. Bronisław Malinowski's 1922 *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*
5. Clifford Geertz's 1984 essay "Anti Anti-Relativism"

The Fleury/Clarke node indexes a "cyclical view of the world" and points to the idea that one must distinguish between judgments made on account of different "premises and values" and judgments made on the basis of the position in the cycle of moral generation and degeneration that the observer finds himself in.

Lubbock's conception of ethnocentrism, by contrast, was outright evolutionist: savages conceived as a stage in progress. Lubbock's ideas could serve as the context for understanding Fleury and Clarke's, and thus demonstrate a difference, just as Frazer's evolutionist ideas could then provide the context in which Malinowski's ideas about ethnocentrism could be received. As Strathern puts it,

> the same aim, to understand other people's values, is differently conceived; for Malinowski the goal is to "grasp the native's point of view."[12]

The last node is Geertz; on the one hand, there is continuity with the Malinowskian aim—grasping the native's point of view is part of the endeavor—but:

> when he adds that "we see the lives of others through lenses of our own grinding and . . . they look back on ours through ones of their own (1984, 275)" this version of a two-way regard in turn makes his meanings a significant departure from Malinowski's.[13]

That anthropology and its premises have an epistemic history is clear; so what's the problem?

> The problem is simply that I know that these sets of ideas are different, that the gulf separating Geertz and Malinowski, say, is as wide as the gulf separating Malinowski from Frazer or Frazer and Lubbock from Clarke and Fleury. But how am I to

> *persuade* myself that I know? If the sequence of ideas is always so ambiguous, from where does our dramatic sense of shifts and gulfs come? It must come from the place those ideas have in our practices.[14]

For Strathern, what is crucial is not whether or not a writer could conceive of a culture, a society, a practice in this or that way, but rather "the manner in which an idea was implemented," that is, the manner in which the idea was given rhetorical form, the conventions, and hence, in Krauss's technical term, the technical supports that sustain the medium of anthropology in writing, and thus rhetorically the manner in which a form does or does not persuade. Seen from her present, the technical support of modern and modernist anthropology relied on a specific set of conventions to "persuade ourselves that there has been a history" to anthropological thinking.

At stake for us is her claim that specifically "modern" anthropology no longer seemed to persuade in 1986 in quite the same way as it had in the 1960s, and thus the exclusion of Frazer's anthropology from modern anthropology, which had been necessary to the emergence of modern British social anthropology, could be recalibrated.

Her present, the narrative instance of the lecture, is characterized as a moment in which "from all sides" is named as a "postmodern age." What is of interest to Strathern, and what distinguishes her, is how claims of having entered a so-called postmodern age in the 1980s could themselves be read as symptomatic of changes in the social and cultural forms of human relations in the countries in which those speech acts were being made. The way she puts it in the lecture is specific to Frazer, but the point stands more broadly:

> this latter-day representation allows a contemporary place for Frazer that was barely conceivable twenty years ago. This most recent shift suggests that anthropologists might after all find parts of Frazer more readable than they thought.[15]

As she will go on to pursue in her works in the 1990s, in particular in *Partial Connections* (1991) and *After Nature* (1992), the medium of anthropology shifted when the core conventions, conventions she calls "mod-

ern" and "pluralist," broke down, producing post-pluralist conventions, with which she herself, in her comparativist project, sought to engage.

With a change of medium and a change of technical support will come, we argue, a change in style. Nevertheless, it will be a style that draws on and ruffles the conventions of British social anthropology, and yet can still be read within that tradition: it is a form of nostalgia that is, strangely, both forward and backward looking. It shares readily in Jameson's "nostalgia for the present," in which markers of the contemporaneity of the present are obscured in the service of reliving or reconstituting a past present in the actual present: a relation to the present that can be narrated and taken up as a historical perspective, demanding historical judgments of participants and observers.[16] What distinguishes the modality of Strathern's nostalgia, in our judgment, is its pathos, a pathos that is projective rather than introjective, a pathos that knows that the past present cannot survive without being de- and re-formed. The challenge for Strathern is to find a mood and voice through which to narrate this backward and forward motion.

OUT OF STYLE, 1922

It is crucial that Strathern names precisely Frazer's style as what made him unreadable for anthropologists between, roughly, 1920 and 1970; thus, if he became readable in 1986, then perhaps that indexes a change in anthropological style.

So, what was his style? His style turned on a conception of practices as historical survivals (what Aby Warburg would call, after Edward Tylor, *Nachleben*) that constituted the fascination with Frazer's writing and in turn led to his exclusion. Strathern's diagnosis of Frazer's style was how it was parameterized by the overall writing strategy to show, in his late-nineteenth-century orientation, the survivals of savagery into civilization. Malinowski, in opposition, in terms of his own style, showed the civilization inherent in those practices that observers think are savage; diachronic, historical, civilizational narrative style was thus excluded in favor of a style of the ethnographic present.

Frazer becomes readable again, and thus helps an observer to discern the character of the present (in 1986), once the reader becomes conscious and reflective of the fact that the ideas through which others'

practices as observed are themselves survivals relative to which and through which the writer tries to persuade a reader by constituting a triangular relation between writer, subject matter, and reader: that "the modern" style of anthropology became historical allowed for a change in the distance between reader and writer.

As Strathern cogently argues, anthropology as a specifically modernist phenomenon resulted from the movement by which a particular type of change in distance was created between writer and reader relative to the object of study: a culture that is conceived a priori as Other. Fieldwork was supposed to narrow the distance, and reading ethnography was supposed to enlarge the reader's experience, with the attendant concern that an unconvincing account, or an ungenerous reading, would "narrow perspective."

A clear consequence of this conceptualization of the object of inquiry (the field site as an entry point into an Other's Culture and/or Social Structure, depending on whether one is American or British) is

> the possibility of exploiting the dualism of the relation between observer and observed, using one's own language in reversing or turning upside down one's own categories. . . . Because the other was framed off, it became possible to use terms within the frame for meanings different from those they held outside it (kinship to them is not what we mean by the term).[17]

The audience, Strathern reminds us, is obliged to tacitly concur

> in its distance from the anthropologist's subject-matter.[18]

It is thus a complicity with respect to a specific kind of narrative mood and voice, in Gérard Genette's generative distinction.

MODERNIST MOOD AND VOICE, AND AFTER

As Genette indicates, any narrative, including scientific, historical, and anthropological ones, would seem to be "indicative." And yet, things can be affirmed more or less, and "these differences are ordinarily

expressed by modal variation." Genette therefore argues for thinking about narrative mood, modeled on grammatical mood:

> [the] name given to different forms of the verb that are used to affirm more or less the thing in question, and to express . . . the different points of view from which the life or the action is looked at.[19]

Narrative mood captures, for Genette, this capacity to tell more or less, or in terms that Strathern uses, to be more or less "explicit," or "literal," according to a (or multiple) point(s) of view. Distance and perspective, for Genette, are the two chief modalities of the "regulation of narrative information that is mood.[20]

If "mood" captures modalities (forms and degrees) of narrative mobilized to affirm, question, and express different points of view from which the life or the action is looked at, then "voice" takes up the way "the narrating itself," conditioned by the "narrative instance," is "implicated in the narrative itself" and the relation between narrator and audience, whether real or implied.

In modernist anthropology, mood is stabilized through voice, by the kind of complicity that Strathern indicates:

> The audience had to accept the naturalness of Trobriand ideas in their context—once that context had been created in the separation of the culture of those to whom he [Malinowski] was speaking from the culture of those about whom he was speaking. . . . His proximity to the culture he was studying became his distance from the one he was addressing, and vice versa. This, *tout court*, is how the modern(ist) fieldworker has imagined him- or herself ever since.[21]

Already in 1986, Strathern argues that it is precisely the instability of context as a grounding device for ethnographic writing that renders Frazer readable again. Hers is an early diagnosis of a condition that today (2019) has arguably become increasingly acute in anthropological writing. For the modernists, Strathern quotes Godfrey Lienhardt to the

effect that Frazer was unreadable because he took things "out of context": rather than using the device of a (wholly) alien context as a means (1) of establishing authority and (2) of establishing distance, Frazer

> establishes his authority . . . with reference to an extraneous frame, the sense of history which he shares with his readers.[22]

Frazer's "voice" was one in which he sought to show the interconnection of reader and writer relative to both "the ordinary" ideas, customs, expectations, and norms they shared, and the extraordinary, which the reader was unaware that they shared.

Frazer showed traces of survivals rather than outlining a cultural logic. As Strathern points out, a disjuncture he uses is one between familiar stories from the Hebrew Bible and the unfamiliar cognates, with the disjuncture taking the further form of

> customs the reader takes for granted in his or her own culture and the origins of these same customs under very different, savage, regimes.[23]

Frazer is thus read, from Strathern's 1986 narrative instance, as mobilizing what would later come to be seen as a reverse anthropological gesture: rather than making the unfamiliar logical, he is making the familiar strange. The obvious caveat must be that Frazer did see the estrangement in evolutionary terms: the palimpsest had an origin. Strathern explicitly names the fact that she is "not suggesting that Frazer is a postmodern." His mood "takes its creativity from modernism" on the one hand; on the other, we can suggest, in line with Strathern and against commentators such as James Boon, his mood is non-ironic, which for Strathern was a hallmark mood of postmodernism, or, put otherwise, a hallmark of a form of reflexivity about modernism in anthropology at a specific moment in its history, circa 1980–1986.

Strathern gives numerous examples of the discovery of irony by recent commentators in the work of past anthropologists: Frazer is ironic according to James Boon, in contrast to Malinowski's non-ironic modernism; George Stocking, by contrast, writes of Malinowski's "gentle irony"; and James Clifford, she suggests, generalizes the ironic stance to all participant-observation:

> the ethnographer both shares their vision and knows things about them that they do not.[24]

Her point is not that anthropologists should no longer do fieldwork, but rather that "problems surround the kind of narratives" anthropologists produce. Strathern underscores what could be called, following Genette, a narrative strategy that uses "variable internal focalization": seeing a situation from the internal point of view of a variety of characters and the positions and practices they occupy, but in such a way that it leads to a narrative strategy in which the narrator "knows more" than the individual characters.

Writing of her own fieldwork in the New Guinea Highlands, Strathern explains:

> Integration also appears possible because in making everything come together, as in a monologue, I imagine myself as a singular person.[25]

In modernist forms, such a mood rests on the *pluralist* juxtaposition of context, of the multiplication of points of view. Strathern identifies "pluralism" as a manner of approaching objects of inquiry in such a way that "by changing the scale of observation" the diversity and complexity of those objects can be grasped. She clarifies what a change of scale of observation means:

> switching from one perspective on a phenomenon to another, as anthropologists routinely do in the organization of their materials.[26]

Shifting perspective can involve degrees of "magnification"—singular or multiple practices of singular or multiple persons—as well as the capacity to take up different "positions" on these practices, and thus to qualify their significance in a certain way; for example, to treat a practice (or multiplicity of practices) as "political," "religious," "economic," or "ethical." A pluralist orientation has as its core that the multiplicity of practices, persons, relationships, and classes that are the object of inquiry are

> only ever partially described by analytic schema.[27]

The problem of pluralism, in Strathern's diagnosis, is that anthropology, in its pluralist guise, seems caught in the insufficiency of either the local case or the broad generalization for understanding human practice.[28]

POST-PLURAL

For Strathern, anthropology became "post-plural"—and it is very much a historical and epistemological diagnosis—once there was a recognition, included within forms of anthropological writing, of such insufficiency. Anthropological inquiry and writing after the 1980s "ceases to be perspectival."[29]

Scales, in a post-plural mode, can no longer be mobilized as a way of managing complexity or, more importantly in our view, as the means of assuring significance, assuming that from a moment in the narrative present there was once a moment in the (recent) past when such assurance was possible.

In Strathern's judgment, this left certain anthropologists, under conditions of post-plurality, with a nostalgia for the lost assurances of some versions of "holistic" modernism—James Clifford is her object lesson in the piercing essay "Parts and Wholes: Refiguring Relationships in a Post-Plural World."[30] Her basic contention is that the affirmation of fragmentation and polyvocality characteristic of Clifford's work presupposes a prior holism that has come undone.[31]

Her own version of working under conditions of post-plurality is thus precisely an endeavor to do anthropology and to write, recognizing the partiality of connections, in such a way as to sidestep, to take an adjacent position to, the presuppositions of holism and of modernism, while taking seriously the fact that talk about wholes and parts has been a key orientation of much of anthropology in its heterogeneous histories. The breakdown of this modernism was qualified by some as "postmodern," leading to nostalgia and/or pastiche.

Strathern has been vigilantly conscious of pastiche and nostalgia as effects of attempting to do anthropology after modernism, and her vigilance, it seems to us, obliges her to focus on the invention of operations and conceptual tools that can multiply and interconnect scales in which significance is generated for observers and those observed.

There is a clear-sighted recognition of the limits of both holism and individualism that we fully share. Our own mood is not haunted by nostalgia or pastiche, as we are not trying to save the tradition that she is committed to remediating. We understand Strathern's post-plural mode of comparison as a methodological intervention that refuses the binary holism-individualism as the means through which significance can be judged. It is precisely this shared mode of post-plurality that could properly be called "topological":

> the conception that discrete and detached entities may remain nonetheless continuous and entangled, a geometry where shapes and forms maintain their essential properties and substance even if stretched and contorted.[32]

Comparison is a means, then, not of finding an external point of view from which to compare properties under more "general categories," but rather of grasping "essential properties" of sociocultural forms precisely in their contortions. It must be recognized, nevertheless, that the contortion of forms that she finds herself obliged to invent is an artifact of the specific mode of abstraction pursued through comparison. We do not share this mode of what amounts to comparative metaphysics in the twenty-first century.

RELATION REANIMATED

The cornerstone of this metaphysics is no longer that of nature-culture or society, pluralist terms as they are, but rather, relations. These relations, and this is why it is metaphysics, are taken to be existent in the world. They provide for Strathern both access to the world and a path to the problem of narrative, however labyrinthine.

Thus, the fundamental problem of "relations" for Strathern can be characterized by the question, how are forms of relation either bound to, or abstracted from, substantive connections? Or, to put it otherwise, how are interconnections of things—ultimately of substance—rendered into relations, which is to say, connections that can be conceptualized as relations? Or is the fundamental unit the relation itself as substance?

In her opening lecture as William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge (1994), given under the title "The Relation: Issues in Complexity and Scale," Strathern begins with an exemplar of an issue in relationality that had then recently confronted the Supreme Court of California: a couple had contracted with a woman to carry their embryo. "Relations deteriorated" (in a colloquial English sense, civil interactions) to the point that the couple sought a legal declaration as to their status as parents, and the woman responded in kind, seeking the same. The court ruled in favor of the couple, and, as Strathern points out, whether consciously or not, the presiding judge used the trope of the pun in order to underscore that it was the couple who had "conceived of" the child, and that this mental concept of the child was a "controlling factor of its creation."[33]

What seems of crucial importance in the story for Strathern, a *leitmotif* of her recursive return to the "The Relation," is how an "idea" can be primed as the form that a relation (in this case, between parent and child) can take, trumping, in this particular case, the substantive connection between the child and the woman carrying it. Or rather, the idea, and the relation expressed by it, was the condition and "controlling factor" for the substantialization of relatedness, as the condition or quality of being in a relation.

As a social fact, both the capacity for relations to refer to interconnections of ideas, concepts, persons, and substances and, significantly, the fact that relation came to mean, in English, connections via kinship indicate, for Strathern, that there is an unexpected resonance and interconnection between the emergence of the "new sciences" in the seventeenth century—relations being the prime objective of knowledge making—and "the way people represent their relations" (in the sense of kin). Indeed, the thing that puzzles Strathern is how, at this given moment in the late 1600s, the term "relation" could be both a category of knowledge and a predicate, which is to say, a secondary substance. As Strathern would later write, "[R]elations are invariably people related *through some other criterion*. To hear an English speaker call someone a 'relation' tells you there is some other reason for the connection than simply acknowledging it."[34] The term comes to stand

in simultaneously for the abstract construct and the concrete person. Moreover, for Strathern, it is precisely this "creative appropriation of The Relation" as a term simultaneously capable of referring to its conceptuality and its referentiality (such as "abstract construct" and "concrete person") that was crucial to the development of modern anthropology (1920–1970).

Strathern consistently returns in her thinking about relations to the emergence of the New Sciences, and to the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704). She takes up his argument about how one can logically make or discern "a relation" even if the precise nature of the things being connected is in doubt. Locke's example in chapter XXV of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is the cassowary—a bird from New Guinea. The point of the strange example is how one can make a logical connection between parent and child, between the dam and chick, even if one doesn't have a clear knowledge of what the bird actually is.

A point of divergence is then the following, and arguably marks off the tradition of British social anthropology from the traditions of anthropology and philosophy that we are connected to, and particularly to that of the pragmatism of John Dewey. "Routing relations through persons," Strathern advises, "became the substance of anthropological empiricism":[35] in its modernist guise, social order became both the substantive form of interactions in a society and the rules of cohesion. W. H. R. Rivers and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown set the agenda for a specific anthropological project:

> how to understand the totality of social life in terms of its own internal ordering, namely as social ordering.[36]

To conceive of the person as the substance of relations is to indicate that, like relations, persons can operate at multiple scales. For example, as Strathern points out,

> Dobuans are not confused about the difference between yams and humans; the point is that lineage persons can take the body of either kind of being.[37]

In her judgment, "something not dissimilar is there in English ideas about knowledge." Like Dobu persons, "the relation" crosses scales thanks to its properties as abstract concept and concrete kinsperson.

The relation, in such an account, is synecdochic: "every part containing information about the whole and information about the whole being enfolded in each part."[38] Moreover, the modernist relation is also "holographic." Strathern qualifies what she means:

> It is a holographic effect to imagine one can make connections anywhere. For the relation models phenomena in such a way as to produce instances of itself. We would call it a self-similar construct, a figure whose organizing power is not affected by scale. At whatever level or order, the demonstration of a relation, whether through resemblance, cause and effect, or contiguity, reinforces the fact that through relational practices—classification, analysis, comparison—relations can be demonstrated. It works above all as a model for the kind of secular knowledge ushered in with the seventeenth or eighteenth century conviction that the world (nature) is open to scrutiny. For relations are produced through the very activity of understanding when that understanding has to be produced from within, that is, when things in the world can only be compared with other things on the same earthly plane.[39]

Such relations are therefore also demonstrative of "complexity": elements or things can preexist the relation, or the relation brings the elements into existence. The relation becomes a self-organizing device. In itself, however, such an argument does not necessitate having a substantive or ontological view of the kind of problems that relations give access to.

AGAINST ONTOLOGY

John Dewey published a paper in 1926 on "Substance, Power and Quality in Locke."[40] He provides a clarifying account of Locke's orientation to substance and quality, in particular his way of thinking about the difference between "relations" and "connexions" (*sic*). Dewey, like

Strathern, insists on underscoring the originality of Locke in arguing "that knowledge consists in the perception of a relation."[41] Locke, according to Dewey, departs from Scholastic philosophy "in holding that knowledge is not the apprehension of form or idea as such, but is the apprehension of a relation between forms or ideas."[42] Please note, knowledge, not reality.

Furthermore, Dewey underscores how commentators often misread Locke in thinking that secondary qualities "reside in the mind," whereas in fact Locke argues that secondary qualities are ways in which "certain properties of substance" produce certain effects "in us." Secondary qualities depend on relations. Dewey then explains Locke's position:

> Relations are thus opposed by Locke to the intrinsic constitution of a thing and also to the properties which directly depend upon this essence. And what is more important for our present purposes it is also marked off from what he terms connexion, both "necessary connexion" and "real coexistence" or as he frequently terms it "going together."[43]

Pragmatically, however, a relational understanding of knowledge does not necessitate having to accept the metaphysical baggage of "necessary connections."

> Eliminate this assumption of necessary connexion as equivalent to or derived from essence in substances themselves, and his [Locke's] argument takes on quite a different temper and import.[44]

The stakes of Dewey's interpretation of Locke are significant. It is in relation to Strathern's take-home from Locke versus Dewey's take-home that we can affirm our position on inquiry after modernism. We follow Max Weber in exploring what difference it makes to conceive of our anthropological endeavor as conceptualizing interconnections of problems rather than taking substantialized relations as facts.

Strathern's heroic commitment is to remediating the tradition of social anthropology, to salvaging what can be saved from it, given her

diagnosis of the withering of its late modern ontological foundations. Hence her return to an early modern source. We agree with Dewey that this does not actually solve the problem, or, at the very least, that this ontology of relations as substance is neither inevitable nor necessary to the forging of a new or a renovated traditional anthropological mode of inquiry. To the degree that Strathern's focus remains on the level of the factual connection of things, no matter how adroitly conceptualized, no "new" science has emerged. Instead, we hold once again that attempting a conceptual interconnection of problems is the path at the very least to new zones of inquiry, and perhaps even to a new science and significant standpoints.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANTHROPOLOGY'S LATE MODERNISM #2
CRITIQUE & KITSCH

In our judgment, mainstream anthropology in its return to order, avoiding the problem of anthropology after modernism, justified its form and aim through what became the topic of "critique." As we will indicate, the turn to critique, perhaps paradoxically, can be understood as a parallel and reinforcing development of a turn to the mood of irony.

Janet Roitman, in her sterling book *Anti-Crisis*, shows how the concept of "crisis" has shaped and blocked the discourse of wide swaths of modernity over the last two centuries or so and, more particularly, demonstrates the misleading manner in which recent fiscal developments have been cast through this insufficiently examined metaphorics. She shows how a different understanding of these recent events is not only possible but promises to be illuminating.[1]

Here, in a more modest manner, we seek only to indicate that parallel work could—and should—be done on the concept of *critique*. Some such work does exist, but, at least for our purposes, the manner in which it is being carried out only continues the actual blockages and deficiencies that concern us.[2] Although the concept of irony has a long history in the Western tradition of rhetoric, it has gained a centrality verging on dominance—the master trope—in modern times.[3] Here, we wonder and propose that we need alternatives not only to *critique* but also to *irony* if we are to proceed *after modernism* in a worthwhile manner. We take as our testing ground and exemplar the recent work of Luc Boltanski, a sociologist whose work we respect and admire, specifically his book *On Critique*, which we can use to gauge the character

of an endeavor to move beyond the limits of modernism, relative to the topic of critique.[4]

Boltanski begins his discussion of critique, specifically the relation between sociology and critique, with reference to the term "social domination." He proceeds by juxtaposing two definitions of the term in order to clarify what is distinctive about sociologies that can be characterized as "critical":

1. The first conceptualization of "social domination," as a term that is used by sociologies that *do not* have a critical aim, refers to the identification of different ways of placing power in the service of politics.

2. The second conceptualization of "social domination," as a term that is used by sociologies that *do* have a critical aim, refers to the identification and condemnation of power deemed excessive.

The second conceptualization, he tells us, not only is a value judgment added to the first descriptive definition, but also actually involves the constitution of a distinct kind of object, connected to the conceptualization of, and the multiple possible referents of, the term.

In the first mode of grasping "social domination," he tells us that power relations are empirically describable insofar as they are rationalized (a point more or less in line with Weber), meaning both that these relations are submitted to a distinct economy and that they require justification. Let us recall that, in this manner of approaching social relations, criticism is "technical criticism" according to Weber. Although this claim is highly selective, insofar as it fits with the model of work he has pursued for forty years, Boltanski goes on to suggest that

> to challenge a power relation is to challenge its legitimacy, compelling those who challenge it to rise in generality.[5]

Although empirically contestable (there are modes of challenging a power relation that turn on specification and conduct, rather than generalization and discourse), his view is helpful insofar as it treats "critique" as a chiefly semantic and logical operation, a point that will

become important in our discussion of alternatives to "critique" as a telos for human sciences.

By contrast, in terms of the object constituted and grasped by the second mode of taking up "social domination," to identify (scientifically) social domination, which can then be denounced, requires a synthetic reconstruction of an object of inquiry, from a point of view beyond that of the empirical observer: the point of view of "the Totality." For Boltanski, the "critical attitude" toward the "social order" is dependent on achieving this point of view.

Boltanksi's book argues that, while the pragmatic sociology of critical capacities that he helped to create has been understood in opposition to Pierre Bourdieu's critical sociology of domination, and thus has been understood as kindred with the first kind of descriptive empirical sociology, refusing the totalizing vision of a sociology such as Bourdieu's or indeed that of the Frankfurt School, *in fact*, he will argue, the pragmatic sociology of critical capacities was an endeavor to push forward and to push further the second kind of critique of social domination. The core problem has been, all along, how a sociology of domination, as a mode of critical human science, could grasp the discontents of "actors," explicitly consider them in the very work of sociological writing, in such a way as to

> alter their relationship to social reality, and thereby that reality itself, in the direction of emancipation.[6]

Translated into our own vocabulary, there are four steps that Boltanksi is proposing that any critical sociology, including a pragmatic one, must pass through, in order to count as critical:

1. Grasp the discontents of actors through inquiry into situations of discordance and indetermination (our terms)
2. Produce a configuration of the discordancies of the actual out of those discontents
3. Remediate (or even reconstruct) the actual
4. So as to contribute to emancipation

As we have previously pointed out, steps 1 and 2 are more or less steps we think are equally pertinent for an anthropology of the contemporary that we are seeking to inhabit. It is rather steps 3 and 4 that mark the distance between our projects.

TERMINAL IRONY

Two constraints on critical theories are needed, Boltanski suggests, in order to link steps 1–4 and make them cohere:

1. The first constraint is to identify normative supports—justice, dignity, etc.—independent of particular moral ideas that are connected to "local" forms of critique. The reason for the requirement of such independent supports is to allow the critical theorist to obviate the accusation that he is speaking, in fact, on behalf of—and from the viewpoint of—"particular interests."

2. Second, a critical theory must also "meet" these "particular moral corpuses formed from already identified religious or political approaches," "as if they derived from them" (independent normative supports), which is to say, as if the independent normative supports derived from the local moral forms and ideas. Boltanski's claim, a very strong claim, is that to achieve such a successful encounter one must induce "actors" to think it possible to exit from their inhabited reality, and to create a meaningful and possible distance from that reality so as to conceive of changing it.

Here is now the crucial point for us: when the second constraint is not fulfilled, critical theories can be rejected as Utopian or metaphysical.

Strangely, or not so strangely, Boltanski buries his response to this key problem of linking the two constraints in a footnote (chapter one, footnote twelve): he argues that to link the two constraints, i.e., to move from step 3 to step 4, does not require naming a positive telos:

> The "goods in themselves" on which the critical enterprise is based do not need to be very clearly identified.[7]

Of course, one can then ask the question of what the minimal threshold of "clarity" would look like. He continues,

> It is even less necessary to offer a precise outline of what the contours of society would be if these goods were satisfied.

Again, one wonders, does a hazy outline satisfy the critical theorist? In a wonderful inversion, we then have the ultimate self-protective device:

> This is what distinguishes critical theories from utopias. The latter, based exclusively on moral exigencies, can free themselves from the reality principle.[8]

That is, by naming positive ends, not based in a scientific account of the actual, which they then don't live up to, Utopias are unrealistic. By not naming positive ends that they don't (yet) "realize," critical theories are based on a scientific account of the actual, which scientifically and ethically can be judged as

> not providing sufficient purchase to sketch with precision what society would be once released from the alienations that hamper it, or even to identify clearly the goods that underlie the critique. In this sense, they can in part extricate themselves from justification, at least in its ethical forms.[9]

Although he does not say as much, and indeed, there may be good reasons not to say so explicitly, given that *On Critique* began as the series of Adorno Lectures at the Frankfurt School for Social Research, Boltanski seems to be arguing for a form of negative critique, or even a negative dialectic. The negative critical relation, we would argue, is between the orienting concept of emancipation as the ethical end of critique and the object of social order as an object of scientific inquiry.

Following Gillian Rose (1947–1995) in her work *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*, the relation is one of non-identity thinking (no necessary relation between concept and referent) in Adorno's sense, as opposed to either identity thinking (pragmatic relation between a concept and the referents it

stands for), or rational identity thinking (in which a particular object is claimed to have the properties of an ideal state, i.e., Utopian thinking).[10]

Non-identity thinking, it seems to us, is the ultimate form taken in the social sciences of modernist irony, the refusal of *parastēma*, discursive maxims underscoring the inevitable relations of claims to truth and ethical conduct. Our position and stance are buttressed by Rose's discussion of the importance of irony to Adorno's negative critical apparatus.[11] Boltanski's specific way of formulating an ironic posture is to say that the position of critique for critical theories is in fact "meta-critical."[12] The meta-critical posture, position, and attitude provide what he calls a "complex exteriority" to reality, opening up a field of the "possible." Just as Strathern felt the need for an internal substantive relationship, Boltanski's internal demand for an external positionality sunders the imbrication in inquiry of the quest for veridiction and ethical conduct. This sundering leaves them only, it seems, with a recourse to a heroic stance and kindred modes of inquiry that cannot escape modernist forms of irony.

PARODY & KITSCH

What attitude might an anthropologist adopt, what affects might he mobilize, what intellectual project might he seek to fulfill, what logic of inquiry might he pursue, what forms of expression might he invent (and to what purpose?), when faced with a present in which emergent forms of life in modernity, and their ontic afterlives, are characterized by brutality, violence, and domination?

Many works in anthropology today focus on experiences of suffering, domination, exploitation, and asymmetric power relations that parameterize modes of subjectivation. The core medium for such work, and more generally for inquiry in anthropology, is still participant-observation. With respect to the medium of participant-observation and the experience of domination rendered visible through it, a core technical support has been that of "critical analysis" (writing), which, in line with Foucault, we can identify as a particular form that counter-conduct has taken in modernity, as a means of tarrying with and identifying power relations that the observer deems should be challenged.

Critique is one way through which an observer might name the excessive exercise of power in which a dominant set of forms for living (formats of "reality," to use Boltanski's language) excludes, exploits, and destroys dominated forms for living. We have previously named one challenge for the anthropologist who aims to fulfill a critical project: the risk of ultimately inhabiting an ironic position, a "complex exteriority" to the situation in question (speaker's benefit), even if that positionality has been achieved through and expressed in the medium of participant-observation. We have characterized this "complex exteriority" as a negative critical relationality (rather than simple positive denunciation: this is bad, this is good).

The negative critical relation, in broad strokes, is constituted between two poles: the social order, or collective form of life, at stake in the inquiry and an ethical telos necessary to a "critical" point of view on, and expression of, that form of life. Whether explicit or not, these days critique in anthropology is rarely a positive ideology critique. Rather, critique today frequently takes a negative form: a refusal to state explicitly the ethical telos of inquiry, or what it would actually look like if the critical project were realized (and hence would be dismissed as Utopian, as in the case of Boltanski and "emancipation"). Thus the aim is frequently to maintain, in written prose, a privileged space for thought through which existing modes and practices of power and force can be observed and, through the creation of that space, also create a position from which the observer does not have to be included in the relations of power under observation, thus protecting the benefit of being able to speak for another.

Such a critical project is one manner of grasping—and of not forgetting—the ontic survivals of prior loss, violence, and trauma, supposedly without reifying the ontology of what has previously been lost and the fragments that live on—thus somehow holding out hope for what might be constructed in the future.

Lucas Bessire's book *Behold the Black Caiman* (2014) is exemplary of such an endeavor.[13] The book is a serious and rigorous account of the recent experience of several groups of Ayoreo Indians, who live on the Bolivia-Paraguay border in the Gran Chaco province. Bessire spent

three and a half years over a period of twelve years (2001–2013) tracking how different groups of Ayoreo lives were emerging in relation to different moments, and to different extents, of "contact" with outsiders, under conditions of deforestation, cattle farming, Christian missionary engagement, sale of their land, and a desire from anthropologists to appropriate primitive culture.

Bessire's account is noteworthy for a number of reasons, one of which is that he tries to account for the transformation of the inquiry through its unfolding: for example, he tells us that the focus of the project

> has sharply changed since I began traveling to the Chaco as a twenty-one-year-old. From the outset, I was an active participant in representing Ayoreo humanity to fellow outsiders, most notably in two documentary films [produced/published in 2004 and 2006]. Yet I soon came to feel that there was something profane about anthropology as commonly practiced in the Chaco. And Ayoreo-speaking people wouldn't let me forget it. Unsettled by the process of making my second video during the aftermath of a 2004 "contact," I resolved that a collaborative project was the only option for the immersive research that I began in 2006 among Totobiegosode–Ayoreo in northern Paraguay.[14]

He does not specify what he means by a "collaborative" project: working together in order to shape the problem at stake in the book? This seems unlikely, given that one version of "the problem" at stake for Bessire in the book is the negative immanence that conditions the foreclosure of becoming. Clearly this is Bessire's expression of the discordance of the situation he experienced. Nevertheless he must confront the "elementary recognition" of the problematic character of his initial orientation: that given a century of reflection and critique of anthropological representation, on political and epistemological grounds, anthropological inquiry cannot legitimately endeavor to authoritatively represent the humanity, tradition, or culture of a people. Furthermore, what kind of inquiry is possible, today, sixty years after *Tristes Tropiques*? Bessire

implies this problem, without being explicit, in his opening quotation from Lévi-Strauss, which ends with the question:

> Is mine the only voice to bear witness to the impossibility of escapism?[15]

Bessire will add his voice to such witnessing. Yet the responses to such impossibility are markedly different: Lévi-Strauss repudiates experience to understand Being in relation to itself; by contrast, the impossible experience of primitive culture for ex-primitives under contemporary political and economic conditions in Paraguay leads Bessire to track the space of the "becoming" of the Ayoreo under such conditions.

In contrast to the complex modernist configuration of five genres (travelogue, scientific report, philosophical treatise, counter-modern aesthetic tract, symbolist literary text) identified by Geertz at work in *Tristes Tropiques*, in *Behold the Black Caiman* we have "the delirium of ethnographic experience" as the "central interpretive guide."[16] So if not a structural semiotic search for Being, what is the logic of Bessire's inquiry? He explicitly narrates the telos and mode of inquiry at a number of points through the writings of Theodor Adorno, and through the trope of negative dialectic, which is recurrent throughout.

He quotes Adorno's well-known sentence from *Minima Moralia*, without, however, explicating his understanding of the connection or significance of the sentence for his project:

> The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption.[17]

The sentence continues, however, and is worth quoting at length because it will help us clarify a distinction between ethical grammars of anthropological writing and positionality:

> Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as

> *it will appear one day in the messianic light*. . . . The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world. *Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible*. But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters. (Emphasis added.)[18]

Let us note several points: our italic emphasis indexes the standpoint of redemption as indicating a future tense that must comprehend its own impossibility, and the condition of impossibility from the present. Such a simple future, we claim, is in marked contrast with the future perfect we have identified as key to *Gemüt* (disposition, self-affectation) as a support for anthropological inquiry in the medium of participant-observation. As Adorno rightly points out, from the point of view of the simple (far) future, the reality or unreality of redemption hardly matters, since its realization is impossible, but the conditions of that impossibility in the present are what keeps the "light of redemption" shining. The present and the future are linked in the optative mood: *if only*.

Bessire's project is fully in line with such a negative dialectic and "impossible" or "optative" ethico-political project. He characterizes his endeavor as intended as a

> lament, protest, doomed expiation, and critical analysis of the preemptive foreclosure of human becoming.[19]

It thus takes on a distinct modality of what Foucault has called the "speaker's benefit," the claim that one is outside of power relations and speaking in the name of a truth to be realized.

We take his aim seriously and consider that the medium and technical support he mobilizes, exemplary of current ethnography, indicate precisely some of the problems with how medium and critique are combined at present, especially in light of the history of modernist anthropology. As such, we think that the book, precisely in its strength of expression and seriousness of the fieldwork, demonstrates one possible, ultimately deficient, combination of medium, positionality, and ethical aim, relative to which we are seeking alternatives.

BESSIRE'S MEDIUM

The medium and critical aim of Bessire's project are expressed in several ways, the first of which is this:

> Asserting the *moral value of rupture* and transformation was one of the few ways to account for the *nonsensical intersections* of ecological devastation, soul-collecting missionaries, tradition-fetishizing ethnographers, unscrupulous humanitarian NGOs, and neoliberal economic policies. (Emphasis added.)[20]

He continues, off-handedly, after such a thunderous list,

> Ayoreo ways of being were locked in a life or death struggle with modern categories *that they also at times embraced or simply ignored*. (Emphasis added.)[21]

With respect to the multiplicity of ways in which the Ayoreo are subjected to "modern categories," embrace them, and also ignore them, it becomes clear how important the mood and genre of the ethnographic report is. How to narrate the variable values given to rupture under these conditions? Rather than look systematically at the repertoire of ways in which Ayoreo live within and through this rupture, the core device that Bessire mobilizes is his focus on the rupture as the condition through which all experience is anchored. No doubt the experience of Ayoreo on coming out of the forest marks a rupture. Nevertheless, Bessire writes of it almost uniquely in terms of a double negation: the moral becoming of the Ayoreo is not not-modern. The past-oriented form of this is a refusal to reify Ayoreo ontology, and on this point he is particularly sharp in his criticism of culturalist takes on primitive ontology.[22] The future-oriented form of this double negation is of a hoped-for redemption of the fragments from damaged life. Negative dialectic is thus a way of refusing "the tired binaries of cultural continuity versus culture death." As such, he states:

> This book critically examines the conditions under which the emergence of actually existing Ayoreo alterity became possible. . . . *If there is any opening to altermodernity to be located among those ex-primitives* struggling to survive on the margins

> of lowland South America, *it may well lie in the various ways that Indigenous senses of being in the world always already exceed the terms of the radical imaginaries that many outsiders claim they sustain*. The challenge we face, then, is not how to more finely parse these sensibilities as redemptive or spurious. Rather, as Michael M. J. Fischer points out, it is how to evoke and consolidate "a new humanistic politics." (Emphasis added.)[23]

Bessire, as with the majority of critical projects that wish to refuse to be dismissed as Utopian, requires the unmarked standpoint of futurity, specifically, in his terms, the standpoint of redemption. The empty telos operates as a means of juxtaposing, without resolving tensions between, a series of "mediums" for the realization of post-contact Ayoreo moral personhood.

In our judgment, Bessire's book documents his search for a *technical support* through which to grasp the contradictions of post-contact Ayoreo existence in the medium of participant-observation. He makes visible three Ayoreo mediums that he is (perhaps appropriately) unable to reconcile in a single anthropological medium and technical support (thus having recourse to the support of negative dialectic).

This point is brought out in an important story about war and peace among the Ayoreo. Bessire narrates the fact that every available account of the Ayoreo mentions the importance of a special site called *Echoi* (Salt), which is an area of saline lakes, traditionally functioning as a key setting in Ayoreo historical narratives:

> For most scholars, however, Echoi figures only as a site of resource exploitation by mutually hostile Ayoreo bands or as the scene of several brutal massacres by enemy Ayoreo as well as *Cojñone* [non-Ayoreos, especially whites].[24]

Bessire had the intuition that the narrative of war and hostility mediated by peace in the name of resource extraction was itself a product of violent colonial history. He was looking for a counter-history, a historical resource for counter-conduct of the Ayoreo relative to the ready-made formats of outsider narratives. He gained fragments that confirmed his desire, as well as blockage points, refusals to go further

into narratives about the past. He was once again left with the only tool available to him to "understand" how Ayoreo were giving form to what they had become:

> The negativity of Echoi as a space exceeded each of the contradictory limits set around viable Native life.[25]

It was a landscape of loss for those outsiders who wanted to keep present-day Ayoreo in continuity with their culture and tradition; it was a landscape of both fantasy and immorality for post-contact Ayoreo, an immorality to be overcome and a fantasy, one might say, to be kept at bay. *Echoi* was the negative anchor for the space of modernity that demands transformation of old humans into new. *Echoi* is precisely a modernist *topos*:

> Echoi was a constellation of binaries that refused coherence. It ultimately defied all of my attempts to give it a stable, singular form. As soon as it was evoked in one register, it slipped into its opposite. This was the source of its power, its ghostly presence, and even, perhaps, its real political potential. It was uncanny because it mirrored precisely the fragmentation of a meaningful Ayoreo past and turned contradictory desires to find a redemptive history against one another.[26]

Bessire does not want to accept the space of modernity and the contradictions of Ayoreo life under its conditions as the necessary limit of their "becoming"; thus the anthropologist's redemptive fantasy is necessarily included among the contradictory desires.

RADIO & APOCALYPSE

How is Ayoreo life worked over in the name of becoming new forms of human being? Through what mediums does this happen? Bessire describes three mediums in which the "ethical substance," in this case, "soul matter" of the Ayoreo, is given form. The three mediums and the way in which he grasps them demonstrate precisely the tensions at the heart of Ayoreo becoming and of the difficult position Bessire found himself in in documenting that becoming: the first is the medium of

the radio; the second is the medium of apocalyptic futurism; and the third is the medium of shame. Each medium demands a distinct kind of operation and practice from the Ayoreo and from Bessire in attending to it.

People talked on the radio, *a lot*, but *only* about two things: God and illness. Bessire doesn't understand why they talk so much. Jochade, a key informant, tells him,

> You have to listen to what they say. It is not about their words. It is never about their word, Lucas. It is about their *ayipie*. They are giving their *ayipie* to each other.[27]

Ayipie was

> one of the three kinds of soul matter believed to animate human life. The other two . . . were previously associated with different dimensions of immortal and shamanic power and were no longer discussed except in reference to the Holy Spirit. Not so with *ayipie*. It was associated with the corporeal seat of memory . . . , emotion, rationality, and willpower. . . . That is, it encompassed precisely all those elements believed to constitute the moral human. Moreover, I learned that it was this kind of soul matter that Ayoreo believers imagined to have been transformed by conversion to Christianity.[28]

He quotes "a former slave boy" who after contact had been a guide to missionaries in the 1950s:

> Our *ayipie* were very bad when we lived in the forest before. That is why we had to know Jesus. And now we know Him. Before, we didn't know who God was. God knows how to change our *ayipiedie*.[29]

Work on soul matter through radio (long, long exchanges about how great God is, Jesus as the Savior, and lots of concern about how the health of each person is) was thus not a site of resistance or counterconduct but, on the contrary, was a mode of subjectivation to norms of post-contact life.

Bessire does not take seriously the moral project of Christianized soul matter being given to one another through radio, in the manner, for example, that Charles Hirschkind has done with cassette sermons for certain Egyptian Muslims. Rather, the medium of radio for Bessire was the means of Ayoreo objectification and domestication of rupture, a medium through which self-transformation consequent to rupture could be evoked: hence the moral *topos* is the rupture and not the content of ethical substance and its expression. Bessire's medium and capacity for the objectification of the Ayoreo capacity to objectify the terms of their self-transformation through the medium of radio remains focused on the negative dialectic of rupture: a double negation of their becoming modern:

> Like radio sound itself, the new moral self was fractured and ambiguous. As quick as it could be conjured, it dissipated back into the ether, just out of reach of us all.[30]

Radio as a technology and medium can be seen as a form in which apocalyptic experience can be narrated. In contrast to the other technologies, which were primarily technologies of terror during life in the forest (principally bulldozers), radio was a medium in which the ending of the world and the beginning of a world, which has emerged within the end of the world, could be partially contained.

Bessire makes sense of the apocalyptic sensibility that he observed as a way of giving expression to rupture as a divide between two mutually exclusive forms of life that needed somehow to be brought together, no matter how contingently:

> Apocalypticism was a form of moral reasoning that mediated this divide and transformed the fundamental contradictions of the colonial situation into the principles by which moral life may be inhabited and reproduced. . . . Through these apocalyptic inversions of the colonial labor of the negative, Ayoreo-speaking people recast such negation of their past humanity as the space of modern life.[31]

SHAME

Bessire showed us two mediums in which Ayoreo gave form to the content and expression of becoming new: radio and apocalypse. The third medium, an affective medium, is distinct from the first two, or at least more complex and hence arguably more significant for the inquiry, because, as he himself points out, he cannot insulate his own medium of participant-observation from this particular Ayoreo medium of becoming: shame.

Indeed, we might well go further than Bessire and point out that in terms of inquiry the very capacity of describing shame as a medium of Ayoreo becoming depends on the sensibility mobilized in the medium of participant-observation. Such dependence is intimated by Bessire in the quotation from Primo Levi that opens the sixth chapter, "Shame and the Limits of the Subject":

> It was that shame . . . that the just man experiences at another man's crime.[32]

The figure of "man" involved is constituted through complex pairings:

- Bessire's and the reader's sense of shame relative to the crimes of other *Cojñone* (widely practiced rape and murder of Ayoreo women and children)
- The Ayoreo's shame as possible new just (Christian) men who are supposed to be ashamed of their past non-Christian life
- The shame that Bessire feels relative to his sense of the injustice of the Ayoreo becoming shamed as just men relative to their past lives
- Even a shade of shame for Bessire about the experience of this shame, that is to say, the feeling of shame about the Aroyeo's shame of becoming new men is itself shameful to the degree that it instantiates precisely the escapist fantasy of native purity

- The shame of *Cojñone* missionaries when confronted with the common Ayoreo practice of burying unwanted children alive
- The reader's shame burning from identification with the experience of these injustices

Bessire's narrative, however, begins much more simply, with the description of Siquei, an Ayoreo who emerged from the forest in the July 2004 contact as a proud and glorious man,

> barrel-chested and supremely self-confident . . . in his late thirties who had killed several enemies.[33]

He tells us he met Siquei in July as he began immersive fieldwork. In September, Siquei and the group who had just emerged decided to settle in Chaidi with a group who had been living there for much longer. Bessire had tried to stop them from moving, but they didn't listen to him. It is clear he did not and still does not understand why they moved in with the other group. Moving in with them meant being belittled, having customs overturned, and being exploited by those who had been there longer:

> When I returned a year later, Siquei was thin and sick and had developed a severe stutter. He was among the most marginal people in Chaidi.[34]

As an adolescent in the forest, Siquei had been a rival of a person who had left the forest earlier and became the leader in Chaidi. Bessire writes,

> I could not understand why he did not simply leave. When I tried to ask him one afternoon, alone at his house, he just laughed nervously and looked away. The others said something was wrong with him, that he was ashamed. "Ashamed of what?" I asked. No one answered.[35]

At other times, shame was more forthcoming as an answer to a series of specific questions Bessire poses: Why sell wild honey to buy white

sugar? Why prefer makeshift firearms to bows and spears? Why do you now ignore the delicate and detailed *puyaque* taboo restrictions?

The answer, albeit straightforward, clearly left Bessire in a state of bewilderment:

> what did it mean if a group of "ex-primitives" felt ashamed but in ways that were almost precisely the opposite of how we think they should feel?[36]

What kind of life inhabits this medium of shame? The Ayoreo word for shame was *ajengome*:

> *Ajengome* was most often described as a function of failing to act, speak up, or assert one's will, but it could also arise from acquiescing to the negative judgments of others.[37]

The opposite of shame, for the Ayoreo, is "righteous anger," "the appropriate way to refuse the attribution of *ajengome*." Of course, nervous laughter and silence might be another way of endeavoring to refuse or ignore a shaming speech act (why don't you do what I think is right for you to do?).

Bessire thus shows us the intimate relation between what he can understand as the semantics and experience of shame and his own presence as part and parcel of the dynamics of shame: as the elders of the group narrated, it was desirable, on the one hand, to become a person without shame, to impose will and to dominate, and, on the other hand, to subordinate "individual will to group norms and an ecology of metaphysical forces that imposes limits on human behavior."[38] The world of the Ayoreo was thus

> composed of two countervailing forces that were inseparable but often pitted against one another: the moral limits imposed by an ecology of metaphysical forces, and the individual human drive to status, dominance, and strength. It was, of course, nearly certain that this theory of immanence arose as a direct response to colonial violence in the last century or so.[39]

What Bessire seems to be characterizing are two distinct senses of shame: the one pertains to the upkeep of appropriate standards of con-

duct and the experience of oneself (through the qualification of another) as breaking a norm of conduct; the other pertains to disgrace and the anger that accompanies the perceived injustice of having one's conduct qualified as improper.

The process of leaving the forest transformed the "moral ecology" in which dynamics of shame and anger operated:

> In the past . . . shame was attributed by an audience comprised of those who witnessed the transgressive event. . . . During my fieldwork, Ayoreo people commonly discussed *ajengome* in relation to *Cojñone* witnesses who were not physically present. I was told that young people didn't learn how to hunt, sing, or play the old games because they were ashamed of acting like an Indian in front of *Cojñone*, even in a remote village where no *Cojñone* could see. . . . "The young people today do not *ajengome* God, and they do not *ajengome* the old things from before. . . . But now they *ajengome* the *Cojñone*. They want the life of the *Cojñone*, that's why."[40]

Bessire rightly points out that these dynamics of shame operate through a sensibility of "becoming insufficient." As he then puts it,

> In the classical style of negative dialectics, this oppositional framework created a new kind of disordered subjectivity. It was this tension between subjective immanence and the impossibility of subjectivity that shame articulated.[41]

As such, Bessire's own negative dialectical support is precisely the medium for the expression and reproduction of that shame. The only figure he can describe as refusing that medium is Iodé, a shameless fifteen-year-old Ayoreo prostitute.

In a beautiful sequence that precisely exceeds Bessire's negative frame, perhaps even his own understanding of the event, after having described both the horrors of her everyday life and the carefree and self-assured manner in which she gives form to that life, he describes an encounter with her while he was in the principal city of the area, Filadelfia (Paraguay), where she often works. She was

carrying groceries, bought with the night's earnings. Bessire describes the scene:

> She offered me a little plastic box of yogurt. I thanked her and refused. She was upset. "Why are you ashamed of being my friend?" she asked. "Eat this. It is not bad. I want to adopt you in the old way; you will be my older brother. I will be your sister, your little-bird-mother. Your whore-mother." She handed me the yogurt again, and stretched out on the ground. My face burning, I opened the carton and began to eat.[42]

Iodé, it seems, refused the negative space of the impossibility of recognition. Her simple gesture, unlike the thwarted speech of Siquei, demanded recognition of who she actually is.

TOO KITSCH: LATE MODERNIST ANTHROPOLOGY

One risk for modernist anthropology, which as far as we know has gone unremarked, is that, as with modernism in the arts, any return to—or effort to include—sensibility, experience, realism, and figurative representation, after the effort to work in and on the medium of observation and participation, is that it can be read as kitsch. As Clement Greenberg put it,

> Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times.[43]

Although the term "kitsch" was developed to apply to mass culture in the self-styled high arts of modernism, its application as qualifier or epithet spread to a whole range of domains, from consumer goods to design and the like.[44] To our knowledge, however, the term has not been put to the test in the human sciences. In order to do so, two steps are required: (1) identify a range of referents; (2) specify the concept as it applies to knowledge domains in the twenty-first century. Doing so, we argue, has become a salient demand of the day, especially as current forms of discourse have lost their pertinence, particularly in works that self-proclaim to be critical.

Kitsch is very much a danger, we would argue, for those who accept the demand for discursive or conceptual abstraction as necessary for anthropological knowledge and who simultaneously wish to root or orient such knowledge in a moral-political end, one ethnographically authorized through objectifications of the suffering and the conditions of suffering of a particular people, person, or persons.

Those who refuse abstraction find themselves with a number of different genre possibilities, running from "expert NGO report" through to the exemplary and beautiful films of Frederick Wiseman. Those who consider the objectification of experience to be unproblematic risk the trap of logical academic puzzles with no relation to configurations of the actual.

It is important to observe that one wave of what we will refer to as kitsch in the human sciences was initially covered by the epithet "postmodern" (used by critics as well as adopted by some who practiced this mode). Initially, its critics and polemicists were situated mainly in the residual positivist camps as well as among defenders of the so-called canon. As Perry Anderson has documented, however, the term "postmodern" has a longer and more precise lineage that has largely been ignored.[45] Where the term does apply with some specificity, especially in architecture, its practitioners also embraced, at least in some cases, the label "kitsch."[46] As the epithet postmodern has waned, it has not been replaced in the qualitative (or what is left of the avant-garde) human sciences.

As has been pointed out in discussions of kitsch and abstraction,

> Arguments over the relative values of kitsch and avant-garde art are linked to the ideals of high modernism and concurrent political struggles.[47]

Our goal, of course, is not to invent an epithet, as either derogatory trope or more neutral adjective, but to specify a term that we hold illuminates both a currently important style of thought and narration and a problem that those of us who wish to work through the challenge of modernist anthropology must face.

MODERNIST KITSCH

In what follows we present a series of (edited) quotations from the entry for "kitsch" in *The University of Chicago: Theories of Media: Keywords Glossary*.[48] We will see immediately that some of the original claims of scale, as well as direct connections to political economy writ large, will need to be tempered and adjusted when it comes to the human sciences today. That being said, within their own restricted domain, today's most prominent practitioners of the human sciences have become mandatory points of reference for large swaths of their relevant fields and their publics. It follows that their work deserves close conceptual scrutiny.

Before the glossary entries and the promised conceptual deductions, we underscore that a growing scholarly literature explores and demonstrates the ways in which the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century university (above all in the United States and the United Kingdom) became more and more "corporate"; however one evaluates that broad claim, there is no doubt that the academic publishing industry and audit tools, an indisputable passage point, have moved (or are moving) from their craft status, attuned to catering to small specialist elites, into a much more digitalized register, making them obliged to play by the latter's recently invented standards as well as the standards of social media stakeholders, patent- and trademark-protected inventors—in sum, their technical and commercial masters. At least some exemplars of the human sciences have chosen to veer to a style closer to social media than to critical theory—a style we call kitsch.

TERMS TO RETAIN: CANDIDATE PARAMETERS

Here is a series of glosses on "kitsch" from the aforementioned *Keywords Glossary*. We provide these (edited) quotations as a semantic baseline for the eventual development of concepts and parameters. We will then perform a kind of analytic deduction to facilitate the identification of candidate parameters for an analysis of kitsch as a form and mood in twenty-first-century human sciences. Our goal in this concept work is to enable us—through this deduction—to identify and thus to avoid what we see as the style's deficiencies and excesses.

Etymology. "Though its etymology is ambiguous, scholars generally agree that the word 'kitsch' entered the German language in the mid-nineteenth century. Often synonymous with 'trash' as a descriptive term, kitsch may derive from the German word *kitschen*, meaning *den Strassenschlamm zusammenscharen* (to collect rubbish from the street). The German verb *verkitschen* (to make cheap), is another likely source. Similarly, the Oxford English Dictionary defines kitsch in the verb form as 'to render worthless,' classifying kitsch objects as 'characterized by worthless pretentiousness.' Other potential sources also include a mispronunciation of the English word *sketch*, an inversion of the French word *chic*, or a derivation of the Russian *keetcheetsya* (to be haughty and puffed up)."[49]

Terms to retain: *render worthless, to make cheap, chic, pretentious*

Historical domain. "Whatever its linguistic origin, 'kitsch' first gained common usage in the jargon of Munich art dealers to designate 'cheap artistic stuff' in the 1860s and 70s. By the first decades of the twentieth century, the term had caught on internationally. Kitsch gained theoretical momentum in the early to mid-twentieth century, when utilized to describe both objects and a way of life brought on by the urbanization and mass-production of the industrial revolution. Thus, kitsch possessed aesthetic as well as political implications, informing debates about mass culture and the growing commercialization of society."[50]

Terms to retain: *aesthetic implications, political implications, mass culture*

Culture industry. " 'If works of art were judged democratically —that is, according to how many people like them—kitsch would easily defeat all its competitors,' observed Thomas Kulka. Yet, despite its status as a source of pleasure for a mass audience, kitsch is typically considered a negative product and used as a pejorative statement. It is seen as a type of creation

that reaffirms rather than challenges the collective norm, a source of sheer entertainment in opposition to the elevated perception generated by high art."[51]

Terms to retain: *reaffirmation rather than challenging, accessibility*

Deficiency: Sentimentality. "Kitsch tends to mimic the effects produced by real sensory experiences, presenting highly charged imagery, language, or music that triggers an automatic, and therefore unreflective, emotional reaction. Pictures of couples silhouetted against sunsets or songs with lavish, repeated crescendos elicit a conditioned response from a broad audience. Milan Kundera calls this key quality of kitsch the 'second tear': 'Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see the children running in the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running in the grass! It is the second tear which makes kitsch kitsch.' The appeal of kitsch resides in its formula, its familiarity, and its validation of shared sensibilities."[52]

Terms to retain: *mimicry of sensory experience, highly charged language, triggers unreflective responses, "second tear," false universalization*

Complacent subject position. "The self-congratulatory spirit of kitsch can also be seen as a deception. Kitsch holds up a 'highly considerate mirror,' according to Hermann Broch, that allows contemporary man to 'recognize himself in the counterfeit image it throws back at him and to confess his own lies (with a delight which is to a certain extent sincere).' By providing comfort, kitsch performs a denial. It glosses over harsh truths and anesthetizes genuine pain. As Harold Rosenberg perceived: 'There is no counter-concept to kitsch. Its antagonist is not an idea but reality.'"[53]

Terms to retain: *self-congratulatory, comfort, half-truths, sentimentalize pain, lacks a counter-concept*

Deficiency: Enemy within. "Kitsch's ubiquity as 'the faked article that surrounds and presses in' obscures—some would claim consumes—the reality that it imitates. Broch regarded the parasitic feature of kitsch as its fundamental iniquity, calling kitsch 'the enemy within.' He compared the difference between art and kitsch to the absolute schism between good and evil: 'The Anti-Christ looks like Christ, acts and speaks like Christ, but is all the same Lucifer.'"[54]

Terms to retain: *parasitic, the enemy within*

Trend: Readymade, repackaging. "Clement Greenberg emphasized that the 'pre-condition for kitsch, a condition without which kitsch would be impossible, is the availability close at hand of a fully formed cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions and perfected self-consciousness kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends.' Kitsch does not analyze culture but repackages and stylizes it. Kitsch reinforces established conventions, appealing to mass tastes and gratifying communal experiences. 'Kitsch comes to support our basic sentiments and beliefs, not to disturb or question them,' according to Kulka. As a result, kitsch is easy to market and effortless to consume. . . . Class implications are not hard to recognize in analyses of kitsch. After the industrial revolution, urban working and middle classes became materially and spiritually linked to mechanized means of production, counteracting their lack of autonomy with an increased emphasis on personal leisure. The expanding distance between high art and daily life, reflected in the growing elitism of abstraction, consigned art to the province of a privileged few who, with time to cultivate their perceptual abilities, could approach avant-garde works with a trained eye or ear. For Greenberg, Adorno, and others, the growing popularity of kitsch was seen as a threat to the last vestiges of high culture in modern society."[55]

Terms to retain: *readymade, repackaging*

Situation. "Whether loved or reviled, indulged or condemned, kitsch indexes mass-cultural values in a given era while simultaneously exposing the relationship between the masses and the forces controlling production."[56]

Terms to retain: *mass-cultural values in a given era (render worthless, to make cheap, chic, aesthetic implications, political implications, mass culture)*

PARODY OF MODERNISM: DOUBLE-CODING KITSCH & ABSTRACTION

In Clement Greenberg's judgment, in 1939, in the domain of the arts, after figurative painting, tonal music, and the sentimentalism of romantic arts, art practice had two options: kitsch and abstraction. The cornerstone of late modern(ist) kitsch in the human sciences is its parasitic state. Its legitimated practitioners depend on a tradition of scholarly work with (once) warranted veridictional claims. These are assumed (if not always earned). This dependence is both assumed and undermined through the claim that predecessors and contemporaries have not been sufficiently critical in the sense of denunciatory of social injustices. The parasitic state relies on skilled deployment of known topics and forms with the correct citational architecture that reproduces and extends those topics.

For those who are aware of the danger of kitsch, there is recourse to complex modes of critique and forms of abstraction and citation that try to demonstrate the obviation of "simple" denunciation or repackaging of readymade political and aesthetic positions: an effort to negate an easily consumable, self-congratulatory criticism that mobilizes sentiment and/or affect in an unreflective manner, packaged in a form that is, nevertheless, consumable, congratulatory, and sufficiently unreflective (sufficiently unreflective in order to be plausibly deniable).

We reintroduce the trope of parody in the more specific sense of a double-coding of sensory experience, of lived conflict, of warranted assertability: in sum, the double-coding of possible grounds of earned judgment. Thus anthropologists writing broadly in the tradition of

late anthropological modernism are today aware of the dangers of representing both others and themselves within a scholarly tradition in which the critical points of attack have all already been outlined.

In Bessire's excellent monograph, the parodic double-coding of voices and moods and lives is present throughout his text. That is the strength of his book. Maintaining the tension of this double-coding, however, is unbearable for him. He seeks to escape the tension by (to his credit) uncomfortably vacillating between Adorno's abstractions and what we qualify as kitsch, such as the claims for a new humanism. Refusing, or bearing the unresolved tension that the parodic form offers, we hold, is the mean after modernism.

We offer two instances of this uncomfortable vacillation.

1. Double-Coding of Culture

Kitsch: "He knows," as well as we do, that he can't seriously represent Ayoreo culture (from Boas to Geertz).

Abstraction: He refuses the binary of cultural continuity or culture death by a "negative" analytic tactic, linking the use of the trope of the cultural to the denunciation of the form of life available for "ex-primitives" under current political conditions:

> It was hard to imagine more thoroughly animalized beings, inserted as they were into contradictory moral, political, and economic orders through an unstable personhood of death. . . . Through their bouts of madness and their public death, profound contradictions between the "negative citizenship" of deculturated life, the resurgent moral economies of primitivism, and the figure of a savagery that must be sacrificed were uneasily reconciled.[57]

What is thus surprising is that the "negative" analytic used to grasp this experience is of a figure of lived reality to which these "animalized beings" are ultimately "reconciled," no matter how "uneasily." The surprise stems from the open question, left unmarked and unaddressed, of Bessire's own reconciliation, or not, with the "moral economy" of the figure of the primitive and the argument of deculturated life.

2. Double-Coding of Ethics

Kitsch: "He knows" as well as we do that the actual lives of the Ayoreo are intertwined with moral terms that come from heterogeneous discourses—missionaries, NGOs, the state—that are part of the actuality of their ethical life. Taking Ayoreo "beliefs" in "God" or in (liberal) "rights" at face value, however, would risk an aesthetic of kitsch in the presentation of that ethical life, in the sense that this ethical terrain is part of his own moral imaginary of good and bad, which to a degree implicitly and to a degree explicitly indexes that ethical life to mass cultural values produced through external forces.

Abstraction: Given his need to double-code "culture," he cannot simply denounce the external force that produces such ethical language—whether it is, for example, a language of spiritual salvation in the name of the God of the Mennonites, or, for example, a language of rights to land through which the Ayoreo might preserve autonomy, as in that of many NGOs that aim to restore land-claims—since such a denunciation would return him to precisely the reification of culture that he refuses. Both isolation and contact are presented as losing hands: contact produced the negative citizenship of deculturated life, and isolation the (false) "biolegitimacy" that relies on primitivist fantasy, which "we know" is impossible. In such a context, Bessire tries (and in his own words fails) to understand why, for example, recently captured Ayoreo would want to participate in the capture of relatives who remained in the forest:

> Were they lying to appease missionaries? Was life in the forest actually so hard? Was this ethnocide speaking? None of these explanations seemed entirely plausible. Yet I could not come up with anything better.[58]

LATE MODERNIST anthropology, for which Bessire provides an exemplar, has now acquired a perfected self-consciousness, which includes awareness of kitsch and abstraction as part of the available tradition: a self-conscious cultural tradition of the impossibility of figuratively rep-

resenting forms of life; a complex acceptance of the necessity of the anthropologist's sentiment as part of the object of knowledge—sentiment that, however, cannot be avowed or analyzed in itself because of the risk of affirming the quality of kitsch; a simultaneous packaging and disavowal of "realist experience," and denunciations of injustice, for cultural consumption—perhaps like the two films Bessire made, which he barely describes (surprisingly), and which he quickly qualifies as being part of the problematic tradition of cultural consumption of alterity that he is trying to move beyond.

The narrative and ethical seesaw of abstraction and kitsch result from the discipline's reigning incapacity to endure the parodic actuality of particular situations. Bessire refuses to give us abstract modernism in the form of charts about Being (ontology), and he has the integrity to avoid the temptation to come across simply as a humanitarian. Thus, he "likes to think of himself" as a friend of certain Ayoreo but is aware enough to leave such a claim suspended in the medium of indetermination, where all claims can be both affirmed and disavowed.

When the tension can no longer be borne, despite himself he seems resigned to take up currently acceptable disciplinary moves: conjuring a political goal, a future with less brutal suffering for these people, with its willing partner of, ultimately sentimental, tropes of both hope and futility. His text demonstrates the inadequacy of these exits.

CODA

LATE MODERNIST ANTHROPOLOGISTS' *GESTUS*

Marilyn Strathern's anthropological medium is loyal to a tradition of British anthropology whose research program turned for close to a century on models of social structure and the logic of social relations. She has singularly committed to the safeguarding of that tradition by an exceptional remediation and reinvention of that medium, principally through her manner of conducting comparative analysis of the substance of relations and of the "contextualization" of that endeavor. She is calling for a re-naissance within that tradition.

We consider Strathern's anthropological approach as exemplary of the late modern, and as an end point of it, but not its end. Diagnostically, we consider that, in terms of *þarastēma*, maxims for bringing together truth and conduct, her approach is best qualified as an unshakeable heroism, eschewing, as we have seen, the reigning temptation to irony (both Geertz and Bessire), and insisting on the veridictional and ethical stakes of the demand to historical contextualization as the route to a deepening significance of knowledge about the substance of human relations. We identify this distinctive *Haltung* (stance) as one reason we situate her work as late modernism, partially acknowledging biography and then resolutely avoiding routing comparison through the accidents of personality.

In terms of judgments of practice, we consider Strathern an exemplar of skill in skirting both *ressentiment* and self-justification: her practice is resolutely active (thus avoiding nihilism), and her care for the medium of anthropology, her interlocutors, and thinking is a veritable demonstration of how to avoid self-justification. As such, she exemplifies the search for vindication as a core part of the calling of anthropology.

Our project of an anthropology in a contemporary mode first parts way with Strathern's late modernism (which we have explained in the prior chapter) with concerns about the medium through which the search for vindication takes place. Second, it diverges with concerns about the technical support through which it could be vindicated.

In keeping with her diagnosis of the movement from a plural to a post-plural condition for anthropological knowledge, Strathern's search for vindication encounters discordances and indeterminations. Despite these, Strathern's *Gemüt* remains oriented by a grounding sensibility toward nature–culture. This sensibility remains intact even as its conceptual status is analytically demonstrated by Strathern herself to be discordant and indeterminate. The back-and-forth motion between her sensibility and the analytic breakdowns she diagnoses produces the recursive and incessant inquiry—labyrinthine heroism—that leads her to a fundamental thematization of *anthrōpos after nature*.

Given the heroic stance Strathern's diagnosis demands, we qualify the *technē tou biou* (craft of a form of life) as producing solace, neither melancholy nor reconciliation. To the degree that writer and reader share in this solace and in this figure of truth and ethics is the degree to which this late modern configuration is consistent and coheres.

The affect field within which these more explicit considerations are anchored is not something that these anthropologists have thematized per se. We think that this affect field is essential for understanding the ethos and conduct of modern and late modernist anthropology. We take up the affect field of the conduct of this practice of knowledge in terms inspired by Roland Barthes's seemingly oblique *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse*—oblique because, within the discipline, these considerations have remained at the level of tacit practice and not made into a conceptual interconnection of problems. Barthes, always conceptualizing problems at the level of affect and narrative, therefore provides a heuristic equipment with which to approach this pervasive component of anthropological practice, a component that is still more or less unrecognized and reduced to gossip.

In order to do this, we use the term *Gestus* as a means of distilling these otherwise diffuse aspects of anthropological conduct. This will enable us to clarify a form of conduct that is pastoral, under which we

no longer want to be governed. We feel this way precisely because it is this level of *Gestus* that in our view is essential to the current stasis of the field. Finally, our considered wager is that *Gestus*, and work on *Gestus*, holds the promise of an exit from this stasis.

We draw elements from the work of modern and late modernist anthropologists in order to construct a remediated form of ideal-types so as to abstract terms and parameters of gesture (*Gestus*), as a device to encompass *Gemüt*, and bearing (*Haltung*). Our equipment here is not the Weberian ideal-type but what we are calling, following Bertolt Brecht, *Gestus*, which is to say an accentuated distillation of discourse, attitude, bearing, and sensibility. We aspire to deploy these elements heuristically as parameters in order to specify (contrastive) alternative elements (forms and modes) that could be assembled and tested for their salience and pertinence for an anthropology *after modernism*: that is, an anthropology in a contemporary mode.

***Gestus*: A device of distance (voice) and pedagogy (mood)**

Gestus is an acting technique developed by the German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht. It carries the sense of a combination of physical gestures and "gist" or attitude. It is a means by which "an attitude or single aspect of an attitude" is revealed, insofar as it is "expressible in words or actions."[1]

FRAGMENTS OF ANTHROPOLOGISTS' DISCOURSE

Roland Barthes provides a scenography that introduces candidate elements of an operative positionality that might well help us assemble and stitch together a repertoire of terms and images that would, in the first place, render the contours of modern and late modernist anthropological ethos visible and enunciable.[2] We will subsequently turn to the challenge of a contemporary disposition and ethos for an anthropological *Gestus* and inquiry.

We are experimenting with (and are putting to a variety of tests): a manner of moving through (historical, philosophical, and anthropological) semantics; acquainting ourselves with the requirements and limits of modernist discourse; adjusting to the parameters of modes and moods of figuration; and, by so doing—logically—proceeding toward a pragmatic anthropology with contemporary intent. Were we to find a means and manner of doing so that is warrantable, we will have thriven—future perfectly.

We have selected a series of fragments from Barthes's book. We have chosen them for both their form and their content, which we transform in an attempt to remediate some of Barthes's *arguments* from his stylization of *a lover's discourse* by putting them forward as fragments of a potential anthropological scenography; or, alternatively, as candidate elements for inclusion in what Kenneth Burke referred to as a dramaturgy (rather than a *mise-en-scène*). The latter term was a keyword in modernist attempts in the arts to disrupt traditional modes of representation.

THE UNKNOWABLE: *INCONNAISSABLE*

Barthes's Argument

Efforts of the amorous subject to understand and define the loved being "in itself," by some standard of character type, psychological or neurotic personality, independent of the particular data of the amorous relation.

Reversal: "I can't get to know you" means "I shall never know what you think of me." I cannot decipher you because I do not know how you decipher me.

To expend oneself, to bestir oneself for an impenetrable object is pure religion. To make the other into an insoluble riddle on which my life depends is to consecrate the other as a god. . . . Then all that is left for me to do is to reverse my ignorance into truth. . . . I am then seized with that exaltation of loving *someone unknown*, someone who will remain so forever: a mystic impulse: I know what I do not know.

Or again, instead of trying to define the other . . . , I turn to myself: "What do I want, wanting to know you?" What would happen if I decided to define you as a force and not as a person? And if I were to situate myself as another force confronting yours? This would happen: my other would be defined solely by the suffering or pleasure he affords me.[3]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Anthropologist: The modernist, humanist anthropologist always knows the appropriate reflex when confronted with "enigmatic indifference": interpret, make sense. The natives are not waiting and don't care.

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Craft webs of significance discursively.

Bessire: Waiting for the dawn (daemons) at dusk (demons).

Strathern: Salvage the past perfect in the actual post-plural milieu.

▸ *CONDUITE*: WHAT IS TO BE DONE

Barthes's Argument

A deliberative figure: the amorous subject raises (generally) futile problems of behavior: faced with this or that alternative, what is to be done? How is he to act?[4]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Long suffering: How to be conducted like this and endure it?
How to conduct oneself (se conduire) *under these conditions?*

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Disciplined impatience gathering material for a figure of ethos.

Bessire: Willful subservience, ultimately justified in the name of a higher cause.

Strathern: Know and care for the self while erasing its foundations and existence.

▸ WAITING

Barthes's Argument

I am waiting for an arrival, a return, a promised sign. This can be futile, or immensely pathetic: in *Erwartung (Waiting)*, a woman waits for her lover, at night, in the forest; I am waiting for no more than a telephone call, but the anxiety is the same. Everything is solemn: I have no sense of *proportions*.

There is a scenography of waiting: I organize it, manipulate it, cut out a portion of time in which I shall mime the loss of the loved object and provoke all the effects of a minor mourning. This is then acted out as a play.

The other never waits.

In transference, one always waits—at the doctor's, the professor's, the analyst's. . . . *To make someone wait:* the constant prerogative of all power, "age-old pastime of humanity."[5]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Anthropologist: Boredom's bureaucrat. A scenography of the powerful being powerless. Restless. Busy work. Pacing. Attempting not to look at the timepiece. Masking annoyance.

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Accelerative abortive impatience.

Bessire: Remorseful penitence.

Strathern: Walking in the countryside: persistent and insistent grasping at form and formality.

▸ TO BE ASCETIC

Barthes's Argument

Whether he feels guilty with regard to the loved being, or whether he seeks to impress that being by representing his unhappiness, the amorous subject outlines an ascetic behavior of self-punishment.

I shall get up early and work while it is still dark outside. I shall be very patient, a little sad, in a word, *worthy*, as suits a man of resentment. . . . This will be a gentle retreat; just that slight degree of retreat necessary to the proper functioning of a discrete pathos.

Askesis . . . is addressed to the other: turn back, look at me, see what you have made of me. It is a blackmail: I raise before the other the figure of my own disappearance, as it will surely occur, if the other does not yield (to what?).[6]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Resigned, Dutifully methodical. Shoulders hunched. Forced smile. Resentment, blackmail, and the search for the right mode of askēsis.

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Respectful indifference. Notebook at the ready.

Bessire: Frustrated desire for recognition. Remorseful accounting.

Strathern: Impersonal and attentive engagement.
Form(al) grappling.

COMPASSION

Barthes's Argument

The subject experiences a sentiment of violent compassion with regard to the loved object each time he sees, feels, or knows the loved object is unhappy or in danger, for whatever reason external to the amorous relation itself.

My identification is imperfect. . . . For at the same time that I "sincerely" identify myself with the other's misery, what I read in this misery is that it occurs *without me*, and that by being miserable by himself, the other abandons me: if he suffers without my being the cause of his suffering, it is because I don't count for him: his suffering annuls me insofar as it constitutes him outside of myself.

So let us become a little detached, let us undertake the apprenticeship of a certain distance. Let the repressed word appear which rises to the lips of every subject, once he survives another's death: *Let us live!*[7]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Respectful decorum. Mimicry of bourgeois, or more commonly petit bourgeois, manners: Compassion as the proclaimed anchor-stone affect of humanist anthropology.

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Not a disturbance given its absence. The pleasure of work.

Bessire: Bedeviling attraction/repulsion.

Strathern: Urgently hidden under layers of apologia.

▸ **THE *LOQUELA***

Barthes's Argument

This word, borrowed from Ignatius of Loyola, designates the flux of language through which the subject tirelessly rehashes the effects of a wound or the consequences of an action.

Humboldt calls the sign's freedom volubility. I am (inwardly) voluble, because I cannot anchor my discourse: the signs turn "in free-wheeling."[8]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Keep writing. Keep denouncing remorsefully. Escape from the vortex. One might think that, having reached a veridictional, ethical, political, and form-giving impasse, the anthropologist would be silent.

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Web-spinning and then in search of a standpoint. Then stop.

Bessire: Rewards for rehashing but felt discontent put into words.

Strathern: Challenged to find a form for the inward volubility of a lost time.

▸ ***VOULOIR-SAISIR***

Barthes's Argument

Realizing that the difficulties of the amorous relationship originate in his ceaseless desire to appropriate the loved being in one way or another, the subject decides to abandon henceforth all "will-to-possess" in his regard.

The lover's constant thought: *the other owes me what I need*.

The *will-to-possess* must cease—but also the *non-will-to-possess* must not be seen: no oblation.

For the notion of N.W.P. to be able to break with the system of the Image-repertoire, I must manage (by the determination of what obscure exhaustion?) to let myself drop somewhere outside of language, into the inert, and in a sense, quite simply, *to sit down*.[9]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

"I am being silent: are you listening?" How to achieve a form for what has been grasped while still seeking the other's love and recognition?

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: I am not writing for you anyway.

Bessire: One day your ancestors will listen, if you won't. The book is my oblation to a blind and uncaring deity (black caiman).

Strathern: The anthropologist is seized by the present (ethnographic present + anthropological past + parameters of the actual).

▸ EXILE: EXILED FROM THE IMAGE-REPERTOIRE

Barthes's Argument

Deciding to give up the amorous condition, the subject discovers himself exiled from his Image-repertoire.

Then begins "a kind of long insomnia." That is the price to be paid: the death of the Image for my own life.

In amorous mourning, the object is neither dead nor remote. It is I who decide that its image must die (and I may go so far as to hide this death from it).

As long as this strange mourning lasts, I will therefore have to undergo two contrary miseries: to suffer from the fact that the other is present (continuing, in spite of himself, to wound me) and to suffer from the fact that the other is dead (dead at least as I loved him).

Isn't the most sensitive point of this mourning the fact that I must *lose a language*?

Mourning for the image, insofar as I fail to perform it, makes me anxious; but insofar as I succeed in performing it, makes me sad. This sadness is not a melancholy.[10]

• • •

Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Puffing and bluffing: Pouting. Modes of self-doubt verging on despair (self-loathing).

Anthropologist: What would the modernist, humanist anthropologist have if she gave up that image-repertoire?[11]

▸▸

Late Modern Anthropological *Gestus*

Geertz: Endeavoring to enrich the repertoire through craft: hope against hope. Save the medium.

Bessire: The impossible solace of an honest assembling of fragments. Working consciously against the odds of rescuing modernism's *Nachleben*: finding himself in the work of mourning instead.

Strathern: Refined discernment of the repertoire: attempting to twist forward from a past perfect toward a future whose tense does not exist.

CONCLUSION

CONTEMPORARY INQUIRY
MEDIUM & TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The assembling of this manuscript has been a prolonged process of "reiterated and controlled adjustments." By controlled, we do not mean that it was plotted out and regulated according to a method that would provide order and coherence. In fact, what might be meant by terms like "order" and "coherence" was a core aspect of the problem spaces, concepts, and practices we were seeking to determine. By reiterative, we mean that there was an incessant back and forth, a questioning of the course of the inquiry as well as what form to give it. We also mean that we became accustomed to multiple starts and stops: Genette's *frequency* was a constant companion.

We argue that a form of this process, which any author would be familiar with to a degree, was greatly facilitated, even if often in a stuttering fashion, by the collaborative manner in which we proceeded. Each of us had many of our suggestions evaluated initially, put to the test in some instances, reflected upon, and evaluated again; those that appeared to pass our tests were then tentatively assembled in what we hoped was a cumulative process.

One significant feature of this process that is worth underlining is that, while such exchange and blue-sky proposals are not foreign to certain kinds of workshops (interdisciplinary or otherwise), in the collaborative foyer (we aspired to be constructing while working in it), there were, as it were, even more controlled and reiterative adjustments than anticipated from experiences of a more standard give-and-take: such abundance, while at times confusing or disorienting, was ultimately what demonstrated to us that we were in fact involved in an

experiment that was itself a mobile experience of veridiction, ethical formation, and narrative construction as well as their interconnections and interferences.

The affect that structures productive work in such a venue turned on a disposition of vigilant, agonistic friendliness. This collaborative disposition was vigilant in that each step in the exercise of form-giving was subject to critical examination. It was agonistic (but depersonalized) in that the exchange of objections and affirmations was encouraged. Its metric was a mode of friendship: one in which a prior basis of familiarity and trust had been tested before and survived the ordeal.[1]

This collaborative disposition, when it works, produces the confidence that: (1) the exercise in form-giving is inherently worthwhile; (2) any result, positive or negative, is valuable in that, once tested, it serves to encourage motion toward a clarified form; (3) it yields motion toward a contemporary form of veridiction; and (4) it warrants the anticipatory pleasure of a form of life, one in which care of the self and others as well as pursuit of knowledge of the world are mutually enriched. Our venue provided material conditions (media) under which an initially unstructured series of attempts to visualize the general contours of the form we were attempting to delineate was facilitated.

PREPARATION FOR A MEDIUM FOR A CONTEMPORARY ETHOS

Using Krauss's paired terms of *technical support* and *medium*, we will now name the parameters of such form for the sake of the preparation of a contemporary ethos of inquiry. Our claim is that the medium we have forged is a medium of the conceptual interconnection of problems. The technical support through which such a medium is practiced is our *foyer d'expérience*.

As opposed to our prior two books, we worked from Berkeley and Paris, talking several times a week on the phone and meeting twice a year for a week. This practice emerged in an ad-hoc fashion, although it took place on the basis of more than a decade of work together. What is important to note here is that this decade of work was not only between Rabinow and Stavrianakis, but among and between Rabinow, Stavrianakis, and a number of students and former students at Berkeley.

For close to a decade, the milieu of a Collaboratory for Anthropological Research on the Contemporary (ARC) provided a venue, and we will claim required the construction / invention of a medium, to work on *ethos* as a shared object of inquiry. To one degree or another, those who have found ARC to provide an animating environment for work have done so in part because of the specificity of this object of attention.

We can distinguish this shared object from two others in the so-called social sciences: (1) forms of (moral) conduct (evaluation, mores) produced by (and producing) types of social formation (Durkheim); and (2) models of social action (Weber). We leave behind social typology as a nineteenth-century object in need of remediation for a twenty-first-century science, as well as leaving behind model theoretical accounts—such as the ontological turn—as the mode of grasping such an object. The pragmatic anthropology of ethos and veridiction that we are pursuing does not require foundational ontology of either the social or the cultural. In fact, we hold that such a foundational ontology constitutes an impediment to a contemporary pragmatic anthropology.

What do we mean by a pragmatic anthropology of ethos? A pragmatic anthropology takes up "ethics" to the degree that it seeks to grasp situations in which there is an indeterminate, plural, and discordant relation between what *anthrōpos* does (actual), can (possible), and might (virtual) make of itself. To the degree that it focuses on how subjects conduct themselves, the forms in-and-through which they conduct themselves, we specify that the goal of a pragmatic anthropology is to seize significance about *ethos* and manners of living (*bios*; *forms of life*; *pedagogy*).

Recalling the basic methodological insight of Max Weber's essay "'Objectivity' in Social Sciences and Social Policy," we underscore the fact that grasping the quality of a situation and of lives in those situations as "ethical" is not something that situations possess "objectively": such a characterization is rather conditioned by the orientation of our observation and the manner in which the significance of the observation is grasped, that is to say, as it arises from the specific significance that we attribute to the particular (ethical) episode, event, or turning point in a given situation.

To repeat and to paraphrase Weber: within the total range of ethico-pragmatic problems that we could investigate, we are now able to distinguish instances, episodes, and events, as well as constellations of norms, institutions, practices, and so on, the indeterminate ethical aspect of which constitutes their primary significance *for us*. The fact that the significance of ethico-pragmatic reasoning can be made visible and grasped by the inquirer operates wherever the question of form given to life (ethical orientation, *morphē*, expression, gesture, telos of *bios*) is bound up with the question of the manner of living (craft, practice, art, attitude, *Haltung*, *technē* of *bios*).

To the extent that our endeavor seeks to grasp configurations of forms given to life and manners of life, our objective is to grasp transformations in ethos and to grasp the anthropological significance of those changes. We agree with Weber's statement that

> The type of social science in which we are interested is an empirical science of concrete reality (*Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*). Our aim is the understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we *move*. We wish to understand on the one hand the relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations and on the other the causes of their being historically so and not otherwise.[2]

Clearly, we are not historical sociologists and as such we are more concerned with the "relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations" than with identifying historical causes of outcomes in a given present. Nevertheless, insofar as we are concerned with the ethical actuality of the "reality in which we move," we seek to understand *our movement* in this reality, which means not only to understand the "object" of reality from a point of view ("ethos today")—how, from this point of view, we understand something to have turned out "a certain way"—but also to understand the point of view *that we have taken* so as to understand this historical outcome: how it is that "ethos" has become a significant point of view for grasping something significant about both reality and our movement in it.

Weber writes that phenomena can be taken up by a science of culture

> only because and only insofar as their existence and the form which they historically assume touch directly or indirectly on *our cultural interests and arouse our striving for knowledge concerning problems brought into focus by the evaluative ideas* (Wertideen) *which give significance to the fragment of reality analyzed by those concepts*.[3]

As such, he insists, and we agree, that it is

> due to the evaluative ideas with which [the inquirer] unconsciously approaches his subject matter, that he has selected from an absolute infinity a tiny portion with the study of which he concerns himself.[4]

To repeat and synthesize: we are able to name problems and work on them with concepts such that we can produce knowledge of significance only insofar as these problems and concepts have been honed with respect to "ideas of worth" (*Wertideen*).

In our case, our objective is to render a contemporary ethos relative to our observations of the actuality of *ethoi*, and the determinations we can make from such observations, in modernisms and after. We approach this objective through a distinction between two conceptual constructs (*Gedankenbilden*), "modern ethos" and "contemporary ethos."

Our objective is oriented by our shared idea that ethos today is a problem-domain worth inquiring into because there are better and worse configurations of "manner of life" and "forms of life." To put it otherwise, our concern for "ethos" as an object of inquiry reflects our concern to invent a form of inquiry that can make "significant knowledge" about ethos as an object of inquiry.

How does one interconnect problems, concepts, and ideas of worth, on the basis of which one undertakes to investigate such problems with such concepts? Weber explains that the investigation of cultural problems that can produce knowledge that is significant for the inquirer requires conceptual constructs (*Gedankenbilden*) that are "neither historical reality nor even the 'true' reality."

Following Krauss, before pursuing such conceptual constructs within our medium, it is necessary to specify the support through which it is realized. By so doing we intend to affirm that forms of inquiry, in this instance anthropological, are both possible and worthwhile after modernism on condition that one clarifies its medium and shifts its formerly reigning—if unrecognized as such—technological support.

FOYER: A CONTEMPORARY TECHNICAL SUPPORT

We identify our technological support as a *foyer*. As already discussed, we take the term from Michel Foucault. Using the same term, however, we have modified its concept and its referent. The French term is *foyer d'expérience*, which we have translated previously as a "crucible of experience and experimentation." Foucault coined the term to capture the historical matrices in which "experiences" such as "madness," "sexuality," and the like were theorized and institutionalized. As the reader will have already understood, our overall approach differs in many ways from that of Foucault; let us just say that instead of a *History of the Present*, we are assembling an *anthropology of the present and actual in a contemporary mode*. The experience we are experimenting with and have been experiencing for some time now is *collaborative anthropological thinking*.

As we have seen, anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, Lucas Bessire, and Marilyn Strathern all experimented with and experienced in diverse manners variants of what can legitimately be named as "anthropological thought." We have characterized these diverse manners of proceeding as sharing, nonetheless, a modernist ethos and set of problems. They also share the heroic individualism of modernism. The individualism that they either enacted (Geertz) or diagnosed (Strathern) proved to be a stopping point for inquiry. Each of these latter individuals recognized, each in their own manner, the need to engage in an augmented manner of cooperation; Geertz talked of creating an archive of field notes of people doing fieldwork in Morocco but never did. When Pierre Bourdieu forcefully proposed a lab model for the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Geertz rejected the idea, saying, "I am not a cruise director."[5] Didier Fassin, as head of the social science division of the Institute, has adopted a form of the lab model

Bourdieu advocated. Fassin has emphasized the moral and political unity of his work rather than the scientific that Bourdieu insisted upon.

Strathern did engage in coordinated cooperative work in Cambridge but retained the individual authorship mode as well as the senior advisor mode for those working in her wake. Talal Asad (one of the two distinguished personages who contributed a laudatory blurb to Bessire's book) has adopted a cooperative model directing the work of younger scholars within a common problem space and common diagnostic of modernity.

Our challenge has been to forge a crucible for "after-modernism" in which a different form of experience was possible within an experimental space that we have been inhabiting for quite some time. It is time now to delineate some of the basic parameters of such a foyer.

The *technē* of anthropology, which is to say, the craft of pragmatic inquiry into *anthrōpos*, is supported by, given form, exercised, and, we claim, fundamentally mediated through the form of life (*bios*) of the one who engages in such inquiry. *Technē tou biou*, the craft of living, is both what one attends to anthropologically in the world, when conducting pragmatic anthropological inquiry, and what one must attend to in order to conduct anthropological work. The former concerns the *medium* for conducting pragmatic anthropological inquiry; the latter, the conduct of anthropological work. The object side and the subject side as well as their relations can be crafted in multiple different manners.

Here, we attend to naming the component elements of what we identify as the technical support appropriate to pragmatic anthropological inquiry. What we seek to demonstrate is how the conduct of anthropological inquiry, of a sensibility and awareness of objects of inquiry, requires attention to the awareness of the inquirer's own conduct, their own constitution, their own self-affectation.

We claim that such a sensibility seeks to move beyond the available technical support of modernist anthropology—of critical analysis, negative dialectics, merographic connections, and irony—while acknowledging the debt we owe to its achievements as well as attempting to be aware of the afterlife of the modernist insistence on the problem of significance of inquiry for a subject of knowledge.

CODA

PARAMETERS OF A CONTEMPORARY CRUCIBLE

On the basis of our soundings in modernism, and our return to the human sciences, we identify three terms, framed within ethical variables of excess and deficiency, for a contemporary foyer that correspond to veridictional, practical, and existential parameters:

1. For the veridictional element pertaining to knowledge and thinking, we mobilize the term ***parastēma*** (a maxim for articulating and inhabiting veridiction and conduct) and the figure of "the restive." The "restive" is a figure of impatience for giving form to a relation of veridiction and conduct, who, knowing well enough their frequent incompliance, must be obstinate in the search for a form to give the pairing.
2. For the element pertaining to judgments of practice, we mobilize the term ***vindication*** (grasping and giving form to one's judgments in time) and the figure of "the vindicated"; a figure of pragmatic judgment of the subject relative to its time.
3. For the element pertaining to mode of existence, we mobilize the term *Haltung* and the figure of "**the unconsoled**"; a figure of the recalcitrant pathos of hope.

PARAMETER FOR A CONTEMPORARY CRUCIBLE #1: *PARASTĒMA*

The term *parastēma*, in Marcus Aurelius's use, refers to reflective and reflexive aids or maxims that a subject may use to think about obligations that they have in the practice of the interconnection of veridiction and conduct.[1]

Ordinarily referring to the "stature" of a character, or else to the bearing of a subject, it is not simply a mark of civilized manners, which could be understood as behavior arbitrated by a rule. *Parastēmata* are what Foucault has called an ethical substance—that which must be the object of conscious consideration—the questions a person must keep in mind in order to do what they do truthfully. *Parastēmata* are thus principles or maxims (or "aids" or "standbys") for reflecting on becoming the subject of the truths a subject claims to know and seeks to live by.

Following Book 3 of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, the kind of *parastēmata* that interest us consist of those that help us to pose questions about the relation of truth and conduct: for example, what virtue(s) do I need with regard to the objects that affect me and that I affect? In this sense, questioning oneself through *parastēmata* is a means of cultivating or forming a disposition of mind, or what in Kant's vocabulary was termed *Gemüt*, or what in the ancient Greek repertoire was called *thumos*.[2]

Foucault gives three examples of *parastēmata* in Marcus Aurelius: the forging of an answer to the question, what is good for the subject? It is the freedom to form a judgment, and, as well, the determination of the single level of reality that matters for living, that is to say, the present moment itself.

In our use, the term *parastēma* indexes neither a principle nor a learned behavior. Rather, the term indexes a manner in which one can prepare oneself to make a judgment about the distance or proximity between claims to truth and the conduct of life. We will propose that in the ethical and aesthetic crucibles we seek to grasp in a contemporary and pragmatic mode, *parastēmata* are a key element in the test of experience for both second-order and first-order participants and observers.

A *parastēma* might more simply be taken up as a "motto" or heraldic device, on condition that it is taken up sufficiently seriously as making up an object of ethical reflection and constituting part of the ethical substance of the one who lives by it. Foucault had of course indicated his interest in such mottos and devices when he took up Kant's famous resourcing of Horace's expression: *aude sapere*. It is noteworthy

that, rather than use Kant's enlightenment motto as an example of a modern ethos, Foucault drew instead on a litotes, in the form of a precept, that better characterized modern ethos: Baudelaire's "you have no right to despise the present." This attitude of modernity, expressed in a precept, is, he says, an ironic heroizing of the relation to the present: simultaneously grasping and transfiguring the world. On the one hand, we have the enlightenment ethos of daring to know, and simultaneously, on the other hand, the modern injunction that accompanies the Faustian search for knowledge that, with our knowledge of reality, of the world, and of ourselves, we have no right to contemn:

> For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is.[3]

One may say to oneself that one has no right to despise the present, and, on the basis of such a maxim, one may engage in both close observation, daring to know, reality testing, and, simultaneously, a flight of imagination, in order to bear it. Such a device, however, produces both excess and deficiency when endeavoring to integrate a relation to one's conduct in the world, with a relation to one's free use of imagination.

Excess: Heroic *Parastēma* for Truth and Conduct

We instantiate the excessive pole of the figuration of a bearing for bringing together truth and conduct with the help of Max Weber's writings on science, ethics, and modernity. In his 1917 essay "Science as a Vocation," Weber cautioned his youthful audience to be wary of the widespread claims that modern science ensures and provides the highway toward progress in truth, prosperity, peace, and happiness. Weber rejected the claim that science opens all realms of human life (e.g., health, beauty, productivity, human relations) to perpetual improvement or deepening significance. Weber castigated this widespread faith as a Faustian lure. He admonished his audience of students and activists that the promise of perpetual progress through science was not

scientific. Thus, with Weber we can say that it is excessive to think, heroically, that with increasing truth comes increasing capacities for humans to conduct their lives ethically. And yet, simultaneously against Weber, we can question whether his own counter-heroic and ultimately tragic insistence on a modern ethos for science, his insistence on the truth conditions of modern science and its critical limitations for the rest of human existence, is not itself a variant form of the heroic.

Deficiency: Ironic Relation of Conduct and Truth

The deficient pole of the "parastematic" reflection on the configuration of truth and conduct is ironic: following Foucault's rendering of Baudelaire's modern ethos, the truth of the present, in its "depraved" reality, requires an imaginative transformative act in order to be rendered as an object of thought for a free subject. Such an ethos becomes deficient when a fixed, hence ironic, distance is maintained between the questions of how to live with others in a mode that can bring into configuration what one observes, the truth of what one thinks, and how one wishes to live. Irony is "parastematically" deficient to the degree that it proposes a solution for such a configuration that can be maintained as a fixed solution only to the degree that one ceases to be affected directly (of course, one can still profess to "care") by its breakdowns and limits, hence resulting in negligence, indifference, and bad faith.

Virtue: Restive

The virtue term is restive: The term "restive" entails a vigilant and deliberate motion (no fixed distance), calibrated to the actuality of indetermination and discordance in the relation of truth and conduct. By giving form to restless energy, the restive can evade the impulse to both heroism and irony. The restive figure indexes a practice of motion involving adjustment and recalibration of one's stances and modes, as well as a motion that refuses the demand that one remain in one's place.

PARAMETER FOR A CONTEMPORARY CRUCIBLE #2: VINDICATION

As previously discussed in *Designs on the Contemporary*, we have repeatedly found the questions from both Kant's and Foucault's responses to the question "What is Enlightenment?" to be central to our project. Although the precision with which we were able to pose these questions has altered and become more refined, the general orientation has been consistent for some time. One of the determinations that we have made and now, after three years of testing (2013–2016), consider warranted is that an important aspect of producing an object of knowledge out of participant-observational inquiry involved changing one's position and one's attitude toward that object. In *Designs*, we laid out a step in such transformation and movement that included not only attention to maxims for the articulation of truth and conduct but also

> work on the appropriate standards and forms for transforming the problem of *bios* from its location in configurations of the actual into a constituent object in the process of form-giving within an anthropology of the contemporary.[4]

We consider this to be a crucial step in the invention of an anthropology of the contemporary, a step that we are endeavoring to test through renewed collaboration. A key term that we picked out to name the subjectivational dimension of such testing, a term picked out by returning once again to Foucault's lecture course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, was the Latin and Roman Stoic term *vindicare*.

While working through Seneca's *Moral Letters* and his works in other genres, it appeared that the event of which Foucault spoke in his lecture was the manner in which Seneca had squarely faced the question of how a form of thinking and writing has temporal and ethical effects on judgments. We have previously underscored how Seneca transformed the technical juridical sense of *vindicare* into an ethical term performed by the subject on itself, and specifically on the subject's relation to his or her time. We wrote previously that Seneca primed a theme of

> the restive relation to the possession and detachment of experience for those seeking to know and care for themselves. . . .

> The work of the present, for Seneca . . . should be the work of appropriating and vindicating these objects of thought.[5]

As Seneca wrote in his first letter to his friend Lucilius,

> Do this, my Lucilius. Reclaim possession of yourself, for yourself, and whatever time was up till now taken away, was siphoned off, or fell away—gather it up and save it.[6]

As such, within our proposed elements of a contemporary crucible, it is a logical and experiential second element after *parastēma*. As with *parastēmata*, there are ethical poles of excess and deficiency.

Excess: Self-Justification

The excess of self-justification is the unwarranted judgment of a subject on its relation to itself and its time, frequently accompanied by, or manifested as, bad faith. It often takes the form of a sarcastic or ironic defense, often in an aggressive mode. Responses to criticism by academics often take this form; a variant is contempt for the interlocutor through further denigration of their character or by simple silence ("I can't be bothered with this person").

Deficiency: *Ressentiment*

There is a central and unsurpassable problem with taking Stoic philosophy as a resource for an anthropological form capable of making judgments (the attribution of a mode of being or action to a situation): that of the Stoic emphasis on *ataraxia*. *Ataraxia* is the absence of inner turmoil and the capacity of a subject to control their thoughts, actions, and passions, such that the subject is undisturbed by unexpected events, fortunate or unfortunate. This state is pursued by the radical affective separation of the time of the everyday and the time of moral edification. Since we are not Stoics and do not seek to separate these two times in our temporal configuration, where the time of action and the time of thought are mutually imbricated, the deficiency results in reactive forces prevailing over the active: as Deleuze the exegete underscores, "reaction ceases to be acted in order to become something felt," producing *ressentiment*.

Virtue: Vindication

Vindication is opposed to self-justification. As a mean, vindication indexes laying claim to an object of thought (object of experience) and a taking into protection, or a defense, of that object. It is the product of long work on the self and others as well as veridictional testing: it has to be warranted and tested with others. It must be inhabited and tested in conduct. Once, if ever, achieved, it contributes to an affect of care and well-being, even under conflictual circumstances, as well as a stance of assuredness in the claims arising from an inquiry.

PARAMETER FOR A CONTEMPORARY CRUCIBLE #3: *HALTUNG*

In Hans Blumenberg's modern philosophical anthropological assessment, consolation is a determining historical and anthropological *Haltung*. Demanded with respect to the intensifying contingency of life under conditions of modernity, it makes the contingency of human existence bearable. Consolation, like ancient *ataraxia*, is soothing in Blumenberg's assessment, and yet it constitutes an avoidance of thought for a clear-sighted thinker (with a modern ethos of self-affirmation) prepared to and capable of grasping and reflecting on historical and experiential loss and change.

Michaël Foessel's book *Le temps de la consolation* (2015) questions such a claim, asking precisely how loss, consolation, and thinking have been and could be reconfigured. With respect to our assemblage of formal elements for a contemporary foyer, we can ask, how do we grasp the limits of modern efforts to inhabit the relation of veridiction and subjectivity? Moreover, how to engage in the endeavor to vindicate one's time and thought with others, when such efforts seem to break down, leading to efforts at repair, which are far from certain, is the challenge of a contemporary *Haltung*.

Another way of posing the question is to ask, what mode of existence for the relation of science and ethics could be invented if neither tragic nor ironic modern variants seem adequate today?

Under conditions of modernity (or late modernity), Foessel explains, consolation becomes a critical tool once it is taken up as a de-

sire and not as a result. We think it is a prime element in ethical and aesthetic foyers that call for being grasped in a contemporary mode. The figure who embodies this ethos is "the unconsoled," whose sadness marks an ethical protest. Although Foessel does not use this language, it is useful to organize ethical claims in terms of excess, deficiency, and the middle term or virtue.

Excess: Reconciliation

The excess term for Foessel is "reconciliation." Although the term covers a wide range of instances, its claim is that sadness, melancholy, loss, and related states can be overcome, whether through therapy or conformity to norms of an untroubled life. The first step in the direction of excess is to posit a positive identification of what has been lost and to reject any acceptance of such states of finitude. For Foessel, the core response in modernity to such feelings of loss and hope for consolation is the narrative:

> Reconciliation abolishes suffering retrospectively: consolation replies to the suffering of suffering by giving it the means of narration.[7]

There is a price to be paid for constructing such narratives of reconciliation and making them believable, to others or to oneself. That price amounts to bad faith; the narrative as a therapeutic or theological or philosophical instrument for achieving relief of suffering and motion toward reconciliation works to the degree that the very instrument that promises relief or resolution must be forgotten as a fiction, an artifice.

Deficit: Melancholy

The deficit term is melancholy, or simply sadness. The subject tacitly accepts the state of lack of consolation for loss, whether personal or collective. Experience grows gray and static. We see this described both in modern narratives, such as Goethe's *Faust*, and in older ones. In the latter, presumably other actions were possible, while in the former, the path ahead led toward reconciliation, a state of unrequited hopes.

The correlative term is nostalgia. Adorno, in his *Minima Moralia*, observes that

> The idea according to which memories belong to us legitimately and accurately belongs to the arsenal of sentimental and impotent consolations.[8]

Recognizing this state of affairs—both the sheer factuality of human finitude and suffering and the impossibility of finding consolation through memory—requires a certain fortitude, a certain heroic culture, if one is to measure up to the ethos of the situation:

> The surest path toward desolation is the one that ignores the desolation which history has brought us.[9]

There is no exit except acceptance of this finitude and the sudden realization that a different ethos might be invented and practiced.

Virtue: Unconsoled

The virtue term is to be and to wish to be unconsoled. Striving for this state entails being neither passive nor regressive. Rather, it consists of imagining being consoled while remaining aware that whatever consolations are currently available will never be definitive, as there is no ultimate restoration of a prior state of presumed well-being or wholeness.

For Foessel, the figure of the unconsoled is that of modern man conscious of the unrepairable ruptures and breaks of existence but still caring to respond through the invention of new ways of being together. The recognition of this state of affairs, the irreconcilable, perhaps constitutes the only way of having a future. It calls for an ethos of recalcitrance to the demands to adapt to the supposed facts of human existence's finitude.

By facing the present and facing toward the near future, Foessel makes the striking diagnostic claim:

> Our consolations have gained the right to be inventive.[10]

He actually tells us little or nothing about the form such inventions might take—or have taken—and to that extent he remains a modern, albeit one who adopts an ethos of modern maturity.

Rather than either pointing to attempts to be inventive or proposing a form for such invention himself, Foessel concludes:

> Consolation for Moderns becomes hope.[11]

Of the traditional sites of consolation—nature, language, and community—he holds out the most hope for political change, for new forms of community, as well as a new language of politics, but offers neither cases nor narratives nor even sketches of what form such a coming together in a consolatory manner might take and how it might be discussed and narrated.

We have arrayed three parameters that we think can provide equipment for a more precise manner for the forging of a contemporary crucible of experience and experiment. These parameters, which are deductions of prior abstractions from inquiry, we think will constitute a space for collaborative reflection on *cases* of a contemporary anthropology with pragmatic intent. They are parameters to the degree that each one admits of excess and deficiency and they should be parameterized within a common space. The character of such parameterization, and thus the character of the cases that can be given a form within such a space, turns also and as much on the ethos of the inquirer as on ethos as an object of inquiry.

NOTES

PREFACE: REMEDIATE & REOCCUPY!

1 Paul Rabinow and Gaymon Bennett, *Designing Human Practices: An Experiment with Synthetic Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis, *Demands of the Day: On the Logic of Anthropological Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Anthony Stavrianakis, Gaymon Bennett, and Lyle Fearnley, *Science, Reason, Modernity: Readings for an Anthropology of the Contemporary* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis, *Designs on the Contemporary: Anthropological Tests* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); and Paul Rabinow, *Unconsolable Contemporary: Observing Gerhard Richter* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017).

2 On *stultitia*, see Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet, Cours au Collège de France, 1981–1982* (Paris: Seuil and Gallimard, 2001), 129.

3 Dell Hymes, "The Use of Anthropology: Critical, Political, Personal," in *Reinventing Anthropology*, edited by Dell Hymes, 3–79 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques cannibals* (Paris: PUF, 2009); and Pierre Charbonnier, Gildas Salmon, and Peter Skafish, *Comparative Metaphysics: Ontology after Anthropology* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

4 Collaboration (both between anthropologists and those inquired into, as well as between and among anthropologists) is frequently deficient (scientifically) and excessive (when justified uniquely on supposedly political or ethical grounds).

5 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983).

6 On "vindication" in anthropology, see Rabinow and Stavrianakis, *Designs*, 34.

7 Susan Sontag, "The Anthropologist as Hero," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961).

8 Gildas Salmon, "On Ontological Delegation: The Birth of Neoclassical Anthropology," in Charbonnier, Salmon, and Skafish, *Comparative Metaphysics*.

9 Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II; Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

10 Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, October Books, 2012); George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Romantic Motives: Essays on Anthropological Sensibility*, vol. 6 of *History of Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

CODA: INQUIRY IN DARK TIMES

1 Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), viii.
2 Ibid.
3 Arendt, "Jaspers," in *Men in Dark Times*, 81–82.
4 Ibid., 82.
5 Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Boston: MIT Press, 2011), 15.
6 Arendt, "Jaspers," in *Men in Dark Times*, 82.
7 Ibid., 83.
8 Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 16.
9 Ibid., 16–17.
10 T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).

INTRODUCTION. TOWARD A CRUCIBLE OF EXPERIENCE & EXPERIMENTATION

1 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
2 Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis, *Designs on the Contemporary: Anthropological Tests* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 66–70.
3 Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes toward History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984; originally published 1937). Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015; originally published 1957).
4 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 32–50 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 40.
5 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univesity Press, 1975), 8.
6 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 81.
7 Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).
8 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 6.
9 An example is David Graeber, who argues that "a realist ontology, combined with broad theoretical relativism, is a more compelling political position than the 'ontological anarchy' and theoretical intolerance of ontological turn exponents." David Graeber, "Radical Alterity Is Just Another Way of Saying 'Reality': A Reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (2): 1–41.

That is to say, in the wake of the so-called crisis of representations, Graeber makes a claim on political grounds for the adequacy of a realist ontology and yet, in line with the modernist anxiety over form and difference, is required to accept a "theoretical relativism" through which these real worlds are conceived and conveyed. As Graeber points out, at least his position isn't that of the ontological

turn, in which there is cynical isomorphism between the claim to realism and the univocity of the form given to inquiry. He is honestly modernist, while the ontologists are modernists of enlightened false consciousness.

10 Hans Blumenberg, "The Concept of Reality and the Possibility of the Novel," in *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Richard E. Amacher and Victor Lange (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979).

11 Michel Foucault, *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres, Cours au Collège de France, 1982–1983* (Paris: Gallimard et Seuil, 2008), 4–5.

12 Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 225–248.

13 Marc Manganaro, ed., *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014).

14 Michel Leiris, *L'Afrique fantôme: De Dakar à Djibouti (1931–1933)* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2014); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

15 William C. Wimsatt, *Re-Engineering Philosophy for Limited Beings: Piecewise Approximations to Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 345–346.

16 Matei Candea, "De deux modalités de comparaison en anthropologie sociale," *L'Homme* 218, no. 2 (2016): 183–218.

17 Theodor W. Adorno, "Late Style in Beethoven," in *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert, 564–568 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

18 Richard McKeon, "Discourse, Demonstration, Verification, and Justification," oral presentation and response (1968), 86, cited in Richard Buchanan, "Ecology of Culture: Pluralism and Circumstantial Metaphysics," in *Pluralism in Theory and Practice: Richard McKeon and American Philosophy*, edited by Eugene Garver and Richard Buchanan (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 150–151.

19 Paul Rabinow, *Unconsolable Contemporary: Observing Gerhard Richter* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017).

20 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 41.

21 Max Weber, "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 146–214 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1922), 166.

22 Tom Burke, *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 107.

23 Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), xxxiv; Paul Rabinow, *Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 64–65.

24 Fredric Jameson, *Brecht on Method* (New York: Verso, 1998), 21–36; Paul

Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis, *Demands of the Day: On the Logic of Anthropological Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 31–45.

25 On the field of affect and embodiment, see Fredric Jameson, *From the Ancients to the Postmoderns* (London: Verso Books, 2015).

26 Rabinow, *Unconsolable*.

27 Macé briefly indicates that the trajectory of the essay form was inflected differently elsewhere, especially in Germany.

28 "À un moment donné de son histoire, l'essai a constitué un foyer autour duquel a pu graviter la représentation de la littérature, de sa modernité, et de ses pouvoirs, en particulier de sa mise en concurrence avec les discours savants." Marielle Macé, *Le temps de l'essai: Histoire d'un genre en France au XXe siècle* (Paris: Belin, 2006), 321.

29 "Les auteurs dont je parle ont fait le deuil de la Théorie, peut-être de la science, et sans doute de la critique, mais en aucun cas de la pensée." Ibid., 265.

30 "le 'revenant' d'une culture désirable: être inconstant, traitre, surchargé de métaphores, doué déjà d'une profonde mémoire . . . le personnage rassemble, en un contraste d'essence parfaitement rhétorique des incompossibles—une écriture à la fois lointain et toute proche." Ibid., 298.

31 "L'œuvre à faire, expliquait Barthes dans son dernier cours, et pour son propre compte, devra être 'filiale,' c'est-à-dire qu'elle devra assumer, maintenir et transformer une certaine filiation." Ibid., 320.

32 Peter Sloterdijk, *Règles pour le parc humain* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2011), 9.

33 "Le rhétoricien se définit donc anachroniquement, comme chez Barthes, par son trésor (un monde de problèmes historiquement situés) et par son 'gout des idées (entendues comme matière, pourrait-on dire, objets foncièrement artificiels, composés, calculables)'; . . . le rhétoricien sera invariablement mis en position de résister." Macé, *Le temps de l'essai*, 299.

34 "configuration des narrations modernes, et la prise en charge par la prose pensante de toute une dimension existentielle et identitaire." Ibid., 318.

CHAPTER ONE. FINITUDE'S MODERNITY: FRANCISCO GOYA

1 "Toutes les grandes séries gravées par Goya pourraient alors être regardées comme autant d'essais pour une anthropologie du point de vue de l'image comparable à [l']*Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique* . . . dans lequel certaines grandes constructions conceptuelles énoncées dans la *Critique de la raison pure* se voyaient littéralement éprouvées, observées à l'œil nu, ressenties quelquefois et, de toutes façon expérimentées dans les corps, les gestes, les images de tout un chacun." Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet: L'œil de l'histoire, 3* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit), 126.

2 Yves Bonnefoy, *Goya, les peintures noires* (Bordeaux, France: William Blake and Co., 2006); Tzvetan *Todorov, Goya à l'ombre des Lumières* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011); Jacques Soubeyroux, *Goya politique* (Sulliver, 2011).

3 Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986).
4 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 32–50 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 41.
5 Didi-Huberman, *Atlas*, 14.
6 "Goya, cauchemar plein de choses inconnues, / De fœtus qu'on fait cuire au milieu des sabbats, / De vieilles au miroir et d'enfants toutes nues, / Pour tenter les démons ajustant bien leurs bas." Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1983), 195.
7 Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, 430.
8 Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis, *Designs on the Contemporary: Anthropological Tests* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 70–74.
9 S.v. "Gemüt," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, edited by Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), 373.
10 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31.
11 Rabinow and Stavrianakis, *Designs*, 71.
12 Francisco Goya to Martín Zapater, August 1, 1786, Pierpont Morgan Library, Department of Literary and Historical Manuscripts.
13 "C'est dire que quand Goya croyait avoir atteint les sommets d'un monde qui lui était totalement étranger à l'origine, ce monde s'écroulait, emporté par les répercussions de la Révolution française." Soubeyroux, *Goya politique*, 16.
14 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 41.
15 "Cette maladie, quelle qu'en ait été la nature, provoque en lui un changement majeur. La surdité est pour lui une infirmité moins dramatique que pour ce contemporain auquel on aime le comparer, Beethoven; pourtant l'effet est tout aussi décisif. La nuit auditive dans laquelle il est plongé le poussera à ouvrir plus grands les yeux. Sa manière de peindre mais aussi de se conduire devient autre." *Todorov, Goya à l'ombre des Lumières, 38.*
16 Georg W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, translated by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23.
17 "Le grand mérite de Goya consiste à créer le monstrueux vraisemblable. Ses monstres sont nés viables, harmoniques. Nul n'a osé plus que lui dans le sens de l'absurde possible. Toutes ses contorsions, ces faces bestiales, ces grimaces diaboliques sont pénétrées d'humanité." Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, 430.
18 See the image provided at Goya en el Prado, at https://www.goyaenelprado.es/obras/comparativa/goya/sueno-1-ydioma-universal-el-autor-sonando.
19 "Le projet n'est plus de détruire les superstitions et les fantasmes, mais de les comprendre et, partant, de les apprivoiser; quand il réussit, ces visions, loin de faire peur, font rire." *Todorov, Goya à l'ombre des Lumières.*
20 Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 352.

21 T. J. Clark, "It Stamps Its Pretty Feet, *Goya: The Portraits*," *London Review of Books* 37, no. 22 (2015): 11–12, https://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n22/tj-clark/it-stamps-its-pretty-feet.
22 Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO. SOUNDING THE INFINITE: JOHN COLTRANE

1 Quoted without reference in Ulrich Baer, *Rainer Maria Rilke: Letters on Life*, new translations, edited and with an introduction (New York: Modern Library, 2006), xxxiii.
2 Ben Ratliff, *Coltrane, The Story of a Sound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).
3 Ibid., x.
4 Ibid., xii.
5 Ibid., xv.
6 Paul Rabinow, *Unconsolable Contemporary: Observing Gerhard Richter* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017).
7 Ratliff, *Coltrane*, 9.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 13.
11 Ibid., 11.
12 Ibid., 23.
13 Ibid., 26.
14 Ibid., 25.
15 Ibid., 35.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 46.
18 Ibid., 48.
19 Ibid., 53.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 60.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 49.
24 Ibid., 66.
25 Ibid., 64.
26 Ibid., 72.
27 Ibid., 54.
28 Ibid., 109.
29 Ibid., 93.
30 Ibid., 92.
31 Ibid., 99.
32 Ibid., 96.

33 Ibid., 103.
34 Wikipedia, s.v. "Ridiculous."
35 Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19.
36 Theodor W. Adorno, "Late Style in Beethoven," in *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert, 564–568 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 564.

CODA: MODERNIST LATE STYLE AS MEDITATION

1 Among the very best, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
2 Theodor Adorno, "Paralipomena," in *Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 520.
3 Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 17.
4 On "society" as an all-encompassing term, see Hannah Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
5 Ibid., 514–515.
6 *Coltrane on Coltrane: The John Coltrane Interviews*, edited by Chris DeVito (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2010), 246.
7 Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 454. "Dans la rhétorique, la meletê c'est cette préparation intérieure—préparation de la pensée sur la pensée, de la pensée par la pensée, qui prépare l'individu à parler en public, à improviser." Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet, Cours au Collège de France, 1981–1982* (Paris: Seuil and Gallimard, 2001), 436.
8 *Coltrane on Coltrane*, 314.
9 *Coltrane on Coltrane*, 246.
10 *Coltrane on Coltrane*, 336. Originally quoted in *Esquire*, September 1965, 125.
11 Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (London: Continuum, 2004), 133.
12 Ibid., 552.
13 Theodor W. Adorno, "Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg," in *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 638.
14 Richard Leppert, "Commentary," in Theodor W. *Adorno, Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 328.
15 Cited in ibid., 523.
16 *Coltrane on Coltrane*, 246.

CHAPTER THREE. MODERN PATHOS AT WORK: PAUL KLEE

1 Paul Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee, 1898–1918*, edited by Felix Klee, translated by Pierre Schneider, R.Y. Zachary, and Max Knight (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 313.

2 Paul Klee, *Paul Klee Notebooks: Volume 1, The Thinking Eye* (London: Lund Humphries, 1961), 7.

3 Annie Bourneuf, *Paul Klee: The Visible and the Legible* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

4 Pierre Boulez, *Le pays fertile: Paul Klee* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2008).

5 S.v. "Klang (music)," Wikipedia:

> In music, *klang* is a term used in English to denote the "chord of nature," particularly in mistaken references to Riemannian and Schenkerian theories. In German, *Klang* means "sound," "tone," "note," or "timbre"; a chord of three notes is called a *Dreiklang*, etc. Both Hugo Riemann and Heinrich Schenker refer to the theory of the chord of nature (which they recognize as a triad, a *Dreiklang*), but both reject the theory as a foundation of music because it fails to explain the minor triad. The theory of the chord of nature goes back to the discovery and the description of the harmonic partials (harmonic overtones) in the 17th century. The word "*klang*" (or "clang") has often been used in English as a translation of the German *Klang* ("sound"), e.g., in the English translation of Riemann's *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre*. Among the few usages found in scholarly literature to denote the "chord of nature," one may quote Ruth Solie, who speaks of "the major triad or *Naturklang* as found in the overtone series," or Benjamin Ayotte, who refers to an article by Oswald Jonas in 1937 which apparently makes use of the term. The confusion by which the term has been used to denote a chord (instead of a complex sound) probably arises with Rameau's theory of *Résonance*. Rameau had misunderstood Joseph Sauveur's experiments, intended to demonstrate the existence of overtones, and believed that the harmonic partials arose from a resonance within the fundamental note, to which he gave the name *corps sonore*, often translated as *Klang* in German. As Henry Klumpenhouwer writes, "Almost all tonal theorists have proposed that triadic structure arises from a fundamental, conceptually anterior, constituent pitch—such as *radix*, *son fondamental*, *Grundton*, *Hauptton*—that exerts unity on the collection by means of an array of intervallic relationships sanctioned by Nature." *Klang*, he adds, is "technically the German word for 'resonance' or 'sound,' although in this context [of Hauptmann's *Harmonik und Metrik*] it refers specifically to the ontological entities of major and minor triads, whether generated acoustically or logically." Klang, therefore, should in most cases better be understood as "the fundamental sound," possibly "the sound of nature." Riemann defines the *Klang* as "a compound sound": "The ear comprehends a tone with its direct relatives (third and fifth or their octaves) [. . .] as forming one compound sound, which we will call a CLANG." He adds that "a clang may be either principal clang—in which case it is called TONIC—or derived clang [etc.]." And Schenker, although he recognizes that "the Klang as it exists in Nature is a triad," nevertheless stresses that "Nature's help to music consisted of nothing but a hint, a counsel forever mute, whose perception and interpretation

were fraught with the gravest difficulties. [. . .] This hint, then, was dropped by Nature in the form of the so-called overtone series. This much-discussed phenomenon, which constitutes Nature's only source for music to draw upon, is much more familiar to the instinct of the artist than to his consciousness. [. . .] I would recommend, however, that we conceive any so called 'major triad' much more significantly, as a conceptual abbreviation of Nature. [. . .] Any attempt to derive even as much as the first foundation of this [minor] system, i.e., the minor triad itself, from Nature, i.e., from the overtone series, would be more than futile." . . . The quotations above have shown the ambiguity of the word "klang," often taken to mean a "chord" but better understood as a complex or compound sound. The theory of the chord of nature does not resist examination because a chord by definition consists of several notes, each with its own overtone series. To view the overtones of a given fundamental note as a natural "model" to be imitated in art, as Schenker does, is not at all the same thing as viewing as model a chord built of several notes above the same root. The *Klang*, defined by Riemann as a compound sound (i.e., a note with its overtones), and the "chord of nature," defined by Schenker as a model needing "condensation" for the artistic usage[,] are but abstract concepts.

6 "Ce qui est si important, quelle que soit la complexité d'un langage, à en comprendre d'abord le principe, à être capable de le réduire à des principes extrêmement simples." Boulez, *Klee*, 11.

7 "[. . .] nous apprend, du même coup, la puissance de la déduction: pouvoir, à partir d'un unique sujet, tirer des conséquences multiples, qui prolifèrent. Se satisfaire d'une seule solution est tout à fait insuffisant, il faut parvenir à une cascade, a un arbre de conséquences. Et de cela, il sait donner des démonstrations tout à fait probantes." Ibid.

8 "Klee, qui pense qu'exécuter un dessin exact du point de vue de la perspective n'a pas de valeur en soi: tout le monde est capable d'en faire autant. Il va développer les possibilités de ce phénomène, en faire un principe de construction." Ibid.

9 "Étudier les tensions qui jouent entre couples de surfaces, parvenir à une représentation conjointe de l'espace et du mouvement—La tache artistique fondamentale consiste à créer le mouvement en se donnant sur la loi, à utiliser la loi comme référence et à s'en écarter aussitôt. La technique traditionnelle ne permettait rien de tel." Ibid., 64–65.

10 For example: Paul Klee, *Paul Klee: Cours du Bauhaus, Weimar 1921–1922, Contribution à la théorie de la forme picturale*, translated by Claude Riehl (Paris: Éditions Hazan, 2004).

11 Boulez, *Klee*, 87. Boulez observes that, while it was equally a problem for musical composition, solutions to it would only be developed later on—by the composer Pierre Boulez himself. "En musique, l'élément temps, le module de temps parle immédiatement aux sens, est perçu dans l'instant. La reconstitution de l'œuvre

dans sa globalité est une reconstitution imaginaire. On n'a jamais de vue réelle d'une œuvre musicale, dont la perception est toujours partielle. La synthèse ne peut se faire qu'après, virtuellement." And, "Face au tableau, on garde toujours l'initiative de vérifier assez vite les rapports aperçus ou soupçonnés."

12 "On peut aussi considérer le temps qui est impliqué par la façon de travailler du peintre. Si l'on perçoit un *geste*, comme tel geste de Picasso, l'on saisit rétrospectivement la vitesse de ce geste. [. . .] le geste lui-même communique un très réel sentiment de vitesse." Ibid., 104.

13 "Dans quelques tableaux de Klee, les arrière-plans si travaillés et riches de texture et de matériau mettent à même de percevoir avec acuité le lent processus qui a produit ce résultat. L'on comprend aussitôt que le temps a joué une part importante dans l'élaboration conceptuelle, mais aussi dans les aspects pratiques du travail, ne serait-ce que l'obligation d'attendre quelques jours le séchage d'une couche pour une élaborer une autre." Ibid., 107.

14 Clement Greenberg, "An Essay on Paul Klee" (1950), in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 3: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950–1956*, edited by John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7.

15 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire: Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemande* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).

16 Angela Lampe, ed., *Paul Klee: Irony at Work* (Prestel, 2016), 23; Friedrich Schlegel, "Fragments de l'*Athenaeum*," in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire*, 98–177; Schlegel, cited in Ernst Behler, *Irony and the Discourse of Modernity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 74.

17 Lampe, *Klee: Irony*, 23. Paul Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee, 1898–1918*, edited by Felix Klee, translated by Pierre Schneider, R.Y. Zachary, and Max Knight (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 194.

18 Lampe, *Klee: Irony*, 24.

19 Erich Heller, *The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958).

20 Ibid., 235.

21 Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), *ix*.

22 Claire Colebrook, *Irony, The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2004), 154.

23 Margaret Rose, quoted in Charles Haxthausen, "Abstract with Memories: Paul Klee's Auratic Paintings," in *Paul Klee: Philosophical Vision, from Nature to Art*, edited by John Sallis (McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2012), 85. And see Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); and Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2005).

24 On the history of the term and its many variants, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982).

25 Haxthausen, "Abstract with Memories," 75.

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 63.
30 Jürgen Glaesemer, *Paul Klee: Die farbigen Werke im Kunstmuseum Bern* (Bern: Kornfeld, 1976), 34, cited in Haxthausen, "Abstract with Memories," 63.
31 Haxthausen, "Abstract with Memories," 63.
32 Ibid., 65.
33 "Tout le génie de Klee est là: partir d'une problématique très simple et parvenir à une poétique d'une force remarquable ou la problématique est totalement absorbée. Autrement dit, son principe de base est primordial, mais son imagination poétique, loin d'être appauvrie par la réflexion sur un problème technique, ne cesse au contraire de s'enrichir." Boulez, *Klee*, 146.

CHAPTER FOUR. *TECHNĒ* OF THE INFINITE: PIERRE BOULEZ

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994; originally published 1991).
2 Ibid., 11.
3 Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), xxxiv.
4 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 5–6.
5 Wikipedia, s.v. "Pierre Boulez." As the Wikipedia entry for Pierre Boulez puts it:

> As a young man Boulez was an explosive, often confrontational figure. Jean-Louis Barrault, who knew him in his twenties, caught the contradictions in his personality: "his powerful aggressiveness was a sign of creative passion, a particular blend of intransigence and humour, the way his moods of affection and insolence succeeded one another, all these had drawn us near to him. Messiaen said later: "He was in revolt against everything." Indeed, at one point Boulez turned against Messiaen, describing his *Trois petites liturgies de la présence* divine as "brothel music" and saying that the *Turangalîla-symphonie* made him vomit. It was five years before relations were restored. . . . Alex Ross, in his book *The Rest Is Noise*, described him as a bully. Boulez did not disagree: "Certainly I was a bully. I'm not ashamed of it at all. The hostility of the establishment to what you were able to do in the Forties and Fifties was very strong. Sometimes you have to fight against your society." . . . Boulez's hostility was not only directed against the establishment. When, in 1951, Henri Dutilleux, who was only a few years older than Boulez, presented his *First Symphony*, Boulez greeted him by turning his back. As Dutilleux said many years later: "the problem was he had a lot more power than me. Indeed, he has often seemed to enjoy expressing his contempt for other musicians who do not share his musical views." The most notorious instance of this is Boulez's declaration in 1952 that "any musician who has not experienced—I do not say understood, but truly experienced—the necessity

of dodecaphonic music is USELESS. For his whole work is irrelevant to the needs of his epoch.

And see Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978; originally published 1977), 134–135.

6 Jonathan Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez: Writings and Compositions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35.

7 Ibid., 7.

8 Ibid., 4.

9 Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978–1979 and 1979–1980)*, translated by Kate Biggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 22–23.

10 "Les concepts du structuralisme ne m'ont pas aidé. Le structuralisme m'a intéressé, et on m'y rattache, parce que j'avais écrit une œuvre intitulé *Structures*. Cependant, je ne voyais pas clairement l'adaptation que je pouvais en faire et je voulais en finir avec ce type d'obsession. En revanche, je suis très attaché au travail technique proprement dit, parce qu'il m'incite à trouver des solutions auxquelles je n'aurais pas pensé." Boulez, 27.

11 Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez*, 77.

12 Ibid., 9.

13 Ibid., 57.

14 Ibid., 7.

15 Ibid., 59.

16 Ibid., 18.

17 Ibid., 29; *Périforme* (1966), 399–400.

18 Wikipedia, s.v. "Peri."

19 Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez*, 17.

20 Ibid., 17.

21 Ibid., 37.

22 Ibid., 10.

23 "Est-ce une certaine forme de modernité, ou seulement d'actualité qu'on peut trouver ailleurs, dans d'autres formes d'expression? Est-ce une volonté de laisser toute sa chance au hasard, ou plutôt à l'imprévu vis-à-vis de quoi tout arrêt n'apparait que comme un artifice? . . . En fin de compte, n'est-ce plutôt le désir d'affirmer que l'œuvre réelle, définit par des limites spatiales et temporelles, ne pouvait être, d'une certaine façon, que le fragment plus ou moins volontaire d'un grand œuvre imaginaire, virtuel, dont nous ne voudrions connaître ni l'origine ni la fin?" Pierre Boulez, Henri Loyrette, and Marcella Lista, *Pierre Boulez, Œuvre: Fragment* (Paris: Gallimard, Musée du Louvre Edition, 2008), 10.

24 "On reste conscient que la préparation d'une œuvre comporte une phase d'essais, plus ou moins poussés, plus ou moins aboutis, destines à être solidifiés dans une forme, une continuité définitive. Ces essais ont longtemps été considérés comme des préliminaires destinés au rebut, l'œuvre les annihilant, pour ainsi dire." Boulez, 10.

25 "Mais toujours reste essentiel le jeu entre l'achevé du geste unique et l'inachevé de la structure informelle, aléatoire, multiple. Confrontation, ambiguïté de la relations, indépendance ou assujettissement, quoi qu'il en soit de ce rapport entre le formel et l'informel, on a introduit dans l'œuvre une sorte de relativité qui refuse la contrainte exclusive du fini." Ibid., 12.
26 Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE. INTENSIFYING DEGREE ZERO: DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

1 S.v. "tarry," in Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language; Dealing with the Origin of Words and Their Sense Development Thus Illustrating the History of Civilization and Culture* (London: Elsevier 1966).
2 Roland Barthes, *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1953); Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967).
3 Larry McCaffrey, "An Interview with David Foster Wallace," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 146.
4 Clare Hayes-Brady, *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace: Language, Identity, and Resistance* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).
5 Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 38.
6 Ibid., 3.
7 Ibid., 5.
8 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 44.
9 McCaffrey, "An Interview with David Foster Wallace," 131.
10 Ibid., 146.
11 Ibid., 136–137.
12 Laura Miller, "David Foster Wallace," Salon, March 9, 1996, http://www.salon.com/1996/03/09/wallace_5/.
13 Daniel T. Max, *Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story: A Life of David Foster Wallace* (Penguin, 2013).
14 Ibid.
15 McCaffrey, "An Interview with David Foster Wallace," 136.
16 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 8.
17 David Foster Wallace, "Shipping Out," *Harper's Magazine* (January 1996): 33–56, 33–34.
18 Ibid., 36.
19 Ibid., 35.
20 Ibid., 56.
21 Ibid.
22 David Foster Wallace, "Mister Squishy," *Oblivion: Stories* (New York: Little Brown & Co., 2004), 25–26.

CODA: MEDIUM, *TECHNĒ*, AND MODERNISM

1 Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Boston: MIT Press, 2011), 15.
2 Ibid., 19.
3 Ibid.
4 Rosalind E. Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 6.
5 Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978–1979 and 1979–1980)*, translated by Kate Biggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
6 Roland Barthes, *La préparation du roman: Cours au Collège de France 1978–1979 et 1979–1980* (Paris: Seuil), 30.

CHAPTER SIX. ANTHROPOLOGY'S LATE MODERNISM #1: MEDIUM & SUBJECTIVITY

1 Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1988), 9.
2 Ibid., 28.
3 Ibid., 46; brackets in original.
4 Ibid., 44.
5 Cited in ibid., 37.
6 Ibid., 84.
7 Ibid., 90.
8 Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 371.
9 Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 99.
10 Marilyn Strathern, "Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (June 1987): 251–281, 251.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 252.
13 Ibid., 253.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 254.
16 Fredric Jameson, "Nostalgia for the Present," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (1989): 517–537.
17 Marilyn Strathern, "Out of Context," 260.
18 Ibid., 261.
19 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 161.
20 Ibid., 162.
21 Strathern, "Out of Context," 261.
22 Ibid., 262.
23 Ibid., 263.
24 Ibid.

25 Marilyn Strathern, *Partial Connections*, Updated edition (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004; originally published 1991), 9.
26 Ibid., xiv.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., xv.
29 Ibid., xvi.
30 Marilyn Strathern, "Parts and Wholes: Refiguring Relationships in a Post-Plural World," in *Conceptualizing Society*, edited by Adam Kuper (London: Routledge, 2002).
31 James Clifford, it should be recalled, was eminently aware of precisely the temporal and allegorizing tropes through which the relation between anthropologist and an other or others, is given form (e.g., *On Ethnographic Allegory*, 115). His concern was with the redistribution of authority, the capacity to determine and give form to the supposed meanings of other lives, through writing, by way of writing strategies.
32 Giovanni Da Col, "Strathern Bottle: On Topology, Ethnographic Theory, and the Method of Wonder," in Marilyn Strathern, *Learning to See in Melanesia* (HAU Books, 2013).
33 Marilyn Strathern, *The Relation: Issues in Complexity and Scale* (Cambridge: Prickly Pear Press, 1995), 7.
34 Ibid., 20.
35 Ibid., 12.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 17.
38 Ibid., 17–18.
39 Ibid., 18.
40 John Dewey, "Substance, Power and Quality in Locke," *The Philosophical Review* 35, no. 1 (January 1926): 22–38.
41 Ibid., 22.
42 Ibid., 23.
43 Ibid., 28.
44 Ibid., 31.

CHAPTER SEVEN. ANTHROPOLOGY'S LATE MODERNISM #2: CRITIQUE & KITSCH

1 Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013).
2 Didier Fassin, "The Endurance of Critique," *Anthropological Theory* 17, no. 1 (2017): 4–29.
3 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthes and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire: Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemande* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).
4 Luc Boltanski, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation* (London: Polity, 2011).
5 Ibid., 2.

6 Ibid., 5.
7 Ibid., 163.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Verso, 2014; originally published 1978), 56–58.
11 Ibid., 21–27.
12 Boltanski, *On Critique*, 6.
13 Lucas Bessire, *Behold the Black Caiman: A Chronicle of Ayoreo Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
14 Ibid., xii.
15 Cited in ibid., 1.
16 Ibid., xii.
17 Cited in ibid., 124.
18 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), 247.
19 Bessire, *Behold the Black Caiman*, xii.
20 Ibid., 17.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 19.
23 Ibid., 20.
24 Ibid., 50.
25 Ibid., 53.
26 Ibid., 81.
27 Ibid., 116.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 117.
30 Ibid., 123.
31 Ibid., 145.
32 Cited in ibid., 147.
33 Ibid., 147.
34 Ibid., 148.
35 Ibid., 148.
36 Ibid., 148.
37 Ibid., 149.
38 Ibid., 150.
39 Ibid., 151.
40 Ibid., 156.
41 Ibid., 157.
42 Ibid., 171.
43 Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939): 40.
44 An epithet (from Greek: ἐπίθετον epitheton, neuter of ἐπίθετος epithetos,

"attributed, added") is a byname or a descriptive term (word or phrase), accompanying or occurring in place of a name, which has entered common usage. It can be described as a glorified nickname. It has various shades of meaning when applied to seemingly real or fictitious people, divinities, objects, and binomial nomenclature.

45 Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso Books, 1998).

46 Heinrich Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988; originally published 1984).

47 Whitney Rugg, "Kitsch," *The University of Chicago: Theories of Media: Keywords Glossary* (2002), http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/kitsch.htm (accessed July 23, 2017).

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Bessire, *Behold the Black Caiman*, 185.

58 Ibid., 90.

CODA: LATE MODERNIST ANTHROPOLOGISTS' *GESTUS*

1 Wikipedia, s.v. "Gestus."

2 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978; originally published 1977).

3 Ibid., 134–135.

4 Ibid., 62.

5 Ibid., 37–40 passim.

6 Ibid., 33.

7 Ibid., 57–58. "For Spinoza or Nietzsche compassion was the pathway to perdition. Nietzsche: "Supposing that we experience the other as he experiences himself—which Schopenhauer calls compassion and which might more accurately be called a union within suffering, a unity of suffering—we should hate the other when he himself, like Pascal, finds himself hateful." *The Dawn*.

Spinoza: Commiseration is sorrow with the accompanying idea of evil which has happened to someone whom we imagine like ourselves. (*Ethics*, XVIII)

Contempt: is the imagination of an object which so little touches the mind that the mind is moved by the presence of the object to imagine those qualities which are not in it rather than those which are in it. (*Ethics*, V, 176)

8 Barthes, *Fragments*, 160, 161.

9 Ibid., 232–234 passim.
10 Ibid., 106–107.
11 This exile is the source of so much soul-searching among current anthropologists. They don't know what to say, so they stage a politics. Given the massive presence globally of NGOs and international institutions that exist in different ways, with different agendas, and with differing degrees of impact, what remains for the anthropologist to advocate? Scientific insight would be one thing. It is present, but somehow its producers seem to feel the need to justify it; knowledge is no longer self-vindicatory.

The world is hyper-saturated with media, especially images. What is left for the anthropologist that National Geographic, Disney, and science fiction films don't do more spectacularly, given their resources and clarity about their audiences? The answer is a high-serious tone and an avowedly unhappy conscious evocation of past modes of representation: parody, or better, a desperate self-parody of what the field once had to offer but which the world and current norms of the profession have rejected, or denigrated, often with good reason.

CONCLUSION. CONTEMPORARY INQUIRY: MEDIUM & TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1 Niklas Luhmann, "Familiarity, Confidence, Trust," in *Trust: Making and Breaking of Cooperative Relations*, edited by Diego Gambetta (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 94–107.
2 Max Weber, "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality' in Sociology and Economics," in Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, translated and edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, 1–49 (New York: The Free Press), 19.
3 Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 49–112, 81.
4 Ibid., 82.
5 Paul Rabinow, personal communication, Institute for Advanced Study, 1971.

CODA: PARAMETERS OF A CONTEMPORARY CRUCIBLE

1 "To the aids [*parastēmata*] which have been mentioned let this one still be added: Make for yourself a definition or description of the thing which is presented to you, so as to see what kind of a thing it is in its substance, in its nudity, in its complete entirety, and tell yourself its proper name, and the names of the things of which it has been compounded, and into which it will be resolved. For nothing is so productive of elevation of mind as to be able to examine methodically and truly every object which is presented to you in life . . . and what virtue I have need of with respect to it." Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 3.11.
2 S.v. "Gemüt," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, edited by Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), 373.

3 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 32–50 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 41.
4 Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis, *Designs on the Contemporary: Anthropological Tests* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 35.
5 Ibid., 36.
6 Translation by James Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 156.
7 Michaël Foessel, *Le temps de la consolation* (Paris: Seuil, 2015).
8 Adorno, quoted in Foessel, *Le temps de la consolation*, 161: "l'idée selon laquelle les souvenirs seraient notre bien propre appartient à l'arsenal des consolations sentimentales et impuissantes."
9 Ibid., 137: "Le plus sûr chemin vers la désolation est celui qui ignore la désolation dont nous sommes issus."
10 Ibid., 273.
11 Ibid., 193: "La consolation des Modernes devient espérance."