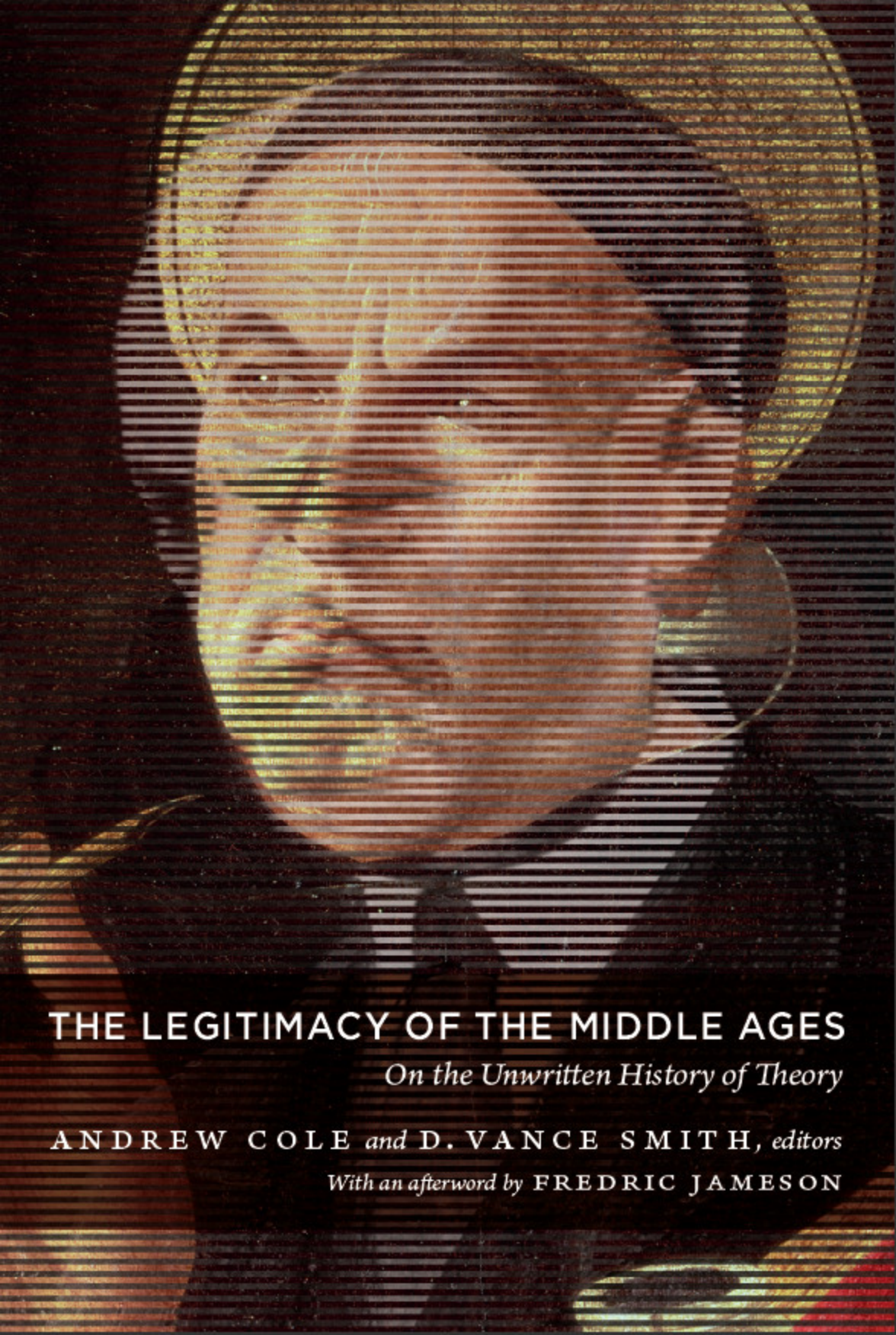

THE LEGITIMACY OF THE MIDDLE AGES

On the Unwritten History of Theory

ANDREW COLE *and* D. VANCE SMITH, *editors*

With an afterword by FREDRIC JAMESON

The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages

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Introduction

Outside Modernity

ANDREW COLE AND D. VANCE SMITH

I have always been in favour of a little theory; we must have Thought; else we shall be landed back in the dark ages.—Arthur Brooke of *Middlemarch*

To abandon the past to the night of facticity is a way of depopulating the world.—Simone de Beauvoir

From Roland Barthes's *punctum* to Pierre Bourdieu's use of the scholastic concept of habitus; from Martin Heidegger's early and continued fascination with *intentio* in the work of John Duns Scotus and Thomas of Erfurt to Fredric Jameson's engagement with the fourfold model of allegorical interpretation; from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *haecceitas* (after Scotus) to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's explorations of medieval communisms in thirteenth-century Italy, it is clear that many contemporary thinkers have turned to theoretical models developed in the Middle Ages in order to diagnose European and North American modernism and postmodernism. A more general engagement with the Middle Ages can be seen in the work of Julia Kristeva, Slavoj Žižek, and the late Jacques Derrida, all of whom find ancient and medieval theologies strikingly analogous to postmodern sensibilities. Examples of this sort of critical engagement are numerous. Because none of them are aleatory, we want to explore in this volume the place and function of the Middle Ages within critical theory.[1]

We view the medieval turn in critical theory as an essential component of theory's own history of self-making, a history that is itself bound up with the larger and well-known "project of modernity"—specifically, the secularization of medieval philosophical, religious, literary, and economic

modes.[2] We therefore gave this collection of essays a title that deliberately echoes and challenges Hans Blumenberg's important and enduring critique of the "secularization thesis," *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*.[3] In this work, which is astonishing in its breadth and learning, Blumenberg defends the "modern age" by arguing against both secularization, which is "nothing but a spiritual anathema upon what has transpired in history since the Middle Ages," and the very idea that modernity must legitimize itself in the terms set by that previous epoch.[4] Secularization, in Blumenberg's account, assumes that every level of modern political and social formation extends backward to the medieval sacralization of the world: the "modern work ethic is secularized monastic asceticism; The world revolution is secularized expectation of the end of the world; The president of the Federal Republic is a secularized monarch."[5] We'll say more about secularization and legitimation in the next section. Suffice it to say here that the title of this collection, *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages*, intends to compete with Blumenberg's similarly named study by asserting not only that these aforementioned medieval modes are sustained within modernity, but also that no theory of modernity can be complete or legitimate without a constant reckoning with "the medieval."[6] We reject, in other words, Blumenberg's premise about "illegitimacy": that "the medieval" undoes the cohesion of the modern.[7] On the contrary, as the essays here show, the intellectual and political history of the Middle Ages paradoxically gives coherence to various theories of the modern. We will extend this claim throughout this introduction to a variety of test cases: Blumenberg's meditations on the self-consistency of modernity; the problem of analogy in medieval and modern theory; the rich futural themes developed within French theoretical medievalism in the 1960s and 1970s alongside other avant-garde work; and the temporal structures of the "New Medievalism." In each case, we move closer and closer to the field of medieval studies before the essays that follow open up once again the investigation to broader theoretical questions.

SECULARIZATIONS

To describe Blumenberg's project, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, in brief is to say that he seeks to demonstrate that modernity came about neither as the inverted image of the Middle Ages nor as the illegitimate

heir of the medieval period.[8] Modernity, for him, does not bear the repressed content of medieval forms: the Middle Ages is not the disavowed truth of modernity, which is supposedly riven with medieval "pseudomorphs," the faint presences of the previous epoch.[9] In fact, for him, the secularization thesis is anything but secular, since it requires a version of unitary truth—that x explains y, that the medieval explains the modern, that "B is the secularized A"—that, like Christian medieval theology, purports to affirm analogies and correspondences not only between the earthly and the divine but also between dissimilar entities, histories, practices, and epochs.[10] Instead, for Blumenberg, a radical shift takes place between the Middle Ages, with its emphasis on sacred ontology and the divine presence infusing the intelligible world, and modernity, with its new modes of inquiry, self-reflection, and human agency via epistemology, hypothesis, new scientific cosmologies, and the processes of rationalization that render nature as inherently knowable in its laws. Indeed, this radical shift—which Blumenberg is clear to emphasize is not "a secularization ('becoming worldly') . . . but rather, as it were, the primary crystallization of a hitherto known reality"[11]—is most evident in the rise of the new person, the self-determined, free subject of modernity.[12]

Blumenberg offers, in our view, the most widely recognizable, and perhaps the most theoretically sophisticated, study of periodization that nonetheless rigorously sustains the great divide between the Middle Ages and modernity. His model of historical transformation is largely one of rupture and discontinuity between historical periods.[13] The great periodic split between the Middle Ages and modernity has been deftly addressed by scholars of the medieval period, especially on the vexed question of the "subject" or "self,"[14] but our specific interest here is in the implications of Blumenberg's work for the periodization of theory and philosophy, as well as the ways critical discourse *periodizes itself* as modern by citing, adopting, expanding, revising, and indeed even secularizing putatively medieval modes of inquiry. The urgency of our engagement with Blumenberg, then, can be stated succinctly: in seeking to explain away secularization, he does away with the Middle Ages. By extension, in failing to account for the persistence of the Middle Ages within critical philosophy after Kant, he also sustains a decidedly modern form of periodization that seeks to break from the medieval, as Kant famously did in critiquing "pure reason" and its extension in metaphysics as nothing other than a species of scholasticism

to be repudiated.[15] (The genius of Kant is that he medievalizes a founding figure of modernity—Descartes!)

Blumenberg's project, we suggest, lacks coherence as a theory of the modern precisely because of its premises about the secularization thesis and the Middle Ages. In other words, without secularization, and without the Middle Ages, Blumenberg lacks a language with which to describe the various modern hermeneutics of suspicion *as modern*—those methods of critical analysis that avowedly adopt, yet conscientiously critique, the pseudomorph, the mystifying appearance behind which one must see.[16] Marx's commodity and Lacan's symptom are the most recognizable examples of pseudomorphs in critical theory, though many more could be added, such as the ontically concealed obviousness of Heidegger's *dasein*, the "hidden meanings" of Gadamer's hermeneutics, the absent presences of so much poststructural writing, and so forth.[17] Indeed, without the Middle Ages, and absent a language with which to speak positively of critical models premised on the distinction between "essence" and "appearance," Blumenberg can characterize modern theory only as something of a failed Renaissance—an unsuccessful revival of classical forms of theoretical inquiry in the mold of Heraclitus, Parmenides, Socrates, and neo-Gnosticism.[18] Yet what remains to be explained is "the medieval" in theory. We would recognize that, in some measure, Blumenberg's study is an attempt at such an explanation, but his own project, like the very project of modernity itself, is decidedly unfinished and, in our view, raises more questions than it answers.

THE ANALOGY OF THE MEDIEVAL

We would go further to claim that it is precisely when Blumenberg tries to account for the appearance (in both senses of the word—phenomenological and originary) of such a critical hermeneutics that the *absence* of the Middle Ages becomes, paradoxically, its very ontological foundation. In discussing the end of scholasticism, Blumenberg traces both the end of the Middle Ages and the inauguration of a "pure" language of speculation, unmoored from its ontological foundations and no longer a discourse of finitude. "The end of the Middle Ages," he says, " . . . also means overcoming the naïve attitude to language that induces one to let an equivalent

reality be associated with every linguistic element and that sees in this association a closed circle of accomplishment."[19] To mark the end of the Middle Ages as the end of a certain language ultimately is to install an ontotheology at the heart of Blumenberg's historiography. Blumenberg's very disavowal of the secularization thesis makes this version of the history of linguistics, according to his analysis, historically implausible, revealing the deep contradiction in his identification of the Middle Ages by their ending—an ending that, he shows, is the ending of a discourse.

The examples of this termination of discourse are drawn from, of all things, the fate of Anselm's ontological argument. For Blumenberg, Nicholas of Cusa has finally severed the adequation of sign and thing that is assumed to be the presupposition of the argument, invalidating the "act of medieval humility" that requires the intellect to be sacrificed to faith. Yet the language of modernity is precisely a language of ineffability. In what Blumenberg calls its "continually renewed testing of the boundary of transcendence" postscholastic language is precisely the language of impossibility, constituted by its own contingency and arbitrariness, and also directed toward its horizon of intelligibility. It marks, in other words, both the transcendent and its nonarrival, as well as the very structure of futurity itself, the anticipated but as yet unknown category of the possible.

Yet Blumenberg's return to the question of transcendence, even if it is now defined as the possibility of impossibility in language, is also profoundly a return to the medieval. Indeed, almost all of what Blumenberg argues about the radical futurity in Nicholas of Cusa's work is already present a thousand years before him in Pseudo-Dionysius and even earlier writers. Cusa's unmooring of language from indication in his figure of God as a sphere whose circumference is nowhere and whose center is everywhere, according to Blumenberg, is a mathematical construction of an "exercise in transcendence" that allows one to experience transcendence as the very "limit of theoretical accomplishment."[20] But this figure is hardly mathematically "modern," esoteric, or avant-garde. It appears in works of conventional theology and accessible philosophy from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum*, where it anticipates—ontically, not historically—a language emptied of reference and designation. The crucial question that Blumenberg elides here is not what role the termination of scholasticism would play in ending the Mid-

dle Ages and in announcing a new philosophy of language, but the degree to which the discourse of the medieval is, and can only be, a discourse of the analogue.

It is at this point that we are reminded of Michel Foucault. The first chapter of his book *The Order of Things* closes with the assertion that with Velázquez representation is "freed finally from the relation that was impeding it" and now offers "itself as representation in its pure form."[21] What Foucault means by this relation that impedes representation is precisely the deep analogy that structures the language of the Middle Ages, the adequation of sign and thing that ontically guarantees the grammaticality of the world. Foucault's second chapter opens with the assertion that "up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture,"[22] a claim that comes to seem surprisingly modest in the light of the taxonomy of resemblances that follows. This taxonomy is divided into four classes of similitude: *convenientia*, *emulatio*, analogy, and sympathy. But the heterogeneity and distinction suggested by this very classification is, as Foucault suggests, merely heuristic, not least because the presence of analogy dissolves these very distinctions. Analogy has, he says, "a universal field of application" through which "all the figures of the universe can be drawn together."[23] If representation is at stake for the formulation of modernity, then its field of knowledge can be neither structured by nor founded on analogical repetitions of formal relations, *nor can it suffer the analogy of the medieval*. It is here that Blumenberg's argument against the secularization thesis converges with Foucault's notion of an austere and pure modern representationality. For Blumenberg, to preserve the vestige of medieval sacral relations would be not only to permit the horizon of modernity to be bounded by the medieval, marked as its logical consequence, but also to demand that it be structured by the historically and noumenologically inaccessible medieval experience of transcendence. Indeed, modernity's horizon of intelligibility would be the transcendent, at least to the degree that the traces of medieval power relations remain the inescapable analogue of the Middle Ages, a structuration that appeals to the persistent analogy between the human and the divine.

The question of analogy is deeply related to the question of transcendence, at least for the medieval philosophies of language that proved to be most influential in the installation of a philosophical modernity. Heideg-

ger, whose work itself could be said to mark the break between a medieval ontotheology and a critical modernist phenomenology, depends largely on modistic grammar (at least in his early work) for his version of medieval scholasticism, a crucial and, we will argue, *destructive* choice. For the philosophy of language that underpins modistic grammar insists not only upon the usefulness of analogy as a way to transcendence, but upon its reality. We understand how things are because of the deep analogical structure of being in the world: the modes of understanding, signifying, and being operate in concert because each is structurally analogous to the others. As Thomas of Erfurt, whose treatise on grammar is the subject of the second half of Heidegger's *Habilitationsschrift*, famously put it, "every mode of signifying radically originates from some property of the thing."[24] Likeness establishes the anterior *identity* of discourses, and any separation between them will only be heuristic, a way of organizing knowledge that in no way changes the apperception of reality. A certain philosophical realism underlies this theory of language. William Crathorn, in the generation after Ockham at Oxford, argued that the mind forms concepts by replicating or simulating the qualities of the external world—that is, by working on their *species*, their likenesses.[25] And Thomas of Erfurt himself shores up the analogy of understanding and world by arguing that the understanding must initially be passive, or there could be no analogy, no likening possible: it is the very potential of the mind to be determined by something outside it that allows analogies to be made.

In Heidegger's early work, his philosophy of language is arguably as deeply ontotheological as that of Thomas of Erfurt, and for the same reasons. The relation between the human and the divine (what Heidegger refers to as the transcendental) is, for Heidegger in his *Habilitationsschrift*, one of *communicabilitas*, that is, the possibility of an analogical structuring, even, and especially, when what we encounter is heterogeneity.[26] Our purpose here is to argue not that Heidegger has always been medieval, but that the pervasive recourse to the pre-ontic *legein* in his later work, masked as a primordial "gathering" that initiates the work of philosophy in world-historical terms, is both a repudiation of the role of the analogy in his version of medieval language philosophy and a continuing indebtedness to it.

Heidegger's rigorous and massive attempt to anchor the *legein* of thinking and of signifying in the mode of being itself was founded not just on the assumption that language is the way to transcendence, but also on the

implementation of a continuing work of analogization. Even when we are constrained to the *Existenzialien* that constitute our phenomenal world, we are bound to recognize them as relating to us precisely because of their *gleichursprünglichkeit*.[27] Because the mode of being conforms to rules that are like the rules of logic, both the understanding (*modus intelligendi*) and the act of saying something about something were considered to be like—to be equivalent to—being itself, yet not identical to it. In this sense transcendence and analogy are themselves equivalences, metaphysical and rhetorical conditions that give their fields of inquiry their warrant precisely by making them permeable, not only open to interrogation by other means but also articulable in other terms. Indeed, the possibility of articulation is not merely a supplement of what it means to designate analogy or transcendence, but their constitutive feature: to say precisely what they are not is to say what they are like and therefore fail to become. To designate something involves us in a play of loss and enjoyment: the recognition that designation itself is necessary because the object is absent and the expectation that designation will no longer be needed once we arrive in the presence of the object. Yet this loss and enjoyment is never the thing itself. If we were fully to experience either of these, both designation and object would disappear: loss tells us what we do not have—that is, what an object is—and enjoyment tells us we no longer know what it is—that is, how to say anything about it. But this play of play is merely a phenomenological way of stating how signs work, and we are usually conscious neither of the loss nor of the possession, nor are we aware of the impossible demand of being and having that designation makes.[28]

But both analogy and transcendence insist on the very impossibility of designation. Without the thinking of a *parousia*, a present and a presence in which all things are possible, likeness and supersession can be only figures of the impossibility of their own discursive boundaries. Unless it can be called into question, conceived as bounded, terminated, a discourse cannot have the *possibility* of the figures of analogy or transcendence. And it is this possibility, not its necessity, that allows the thinking, in turn, of analogy and transcendence. In one sense, they are founded on negations that precede the possibility of thinking them: unless a discourse can be conceived of as unlike any other, its putative likenesses will be subsumed into its attributes, into what defines it constitutively or essentially. Only what stands against it, what opposes it, what cannot be ren-

dered in its terms, can become its likeness.[29] Knowledge, as Pseudo-Dionysius says, comes only through the denial of all being; by this he means not merely the cancellation of positive terms of knowing, the Freudian disavowal that is also a determination of libidinal attachment, but something more like the Heideggerian clearing that allows gathering to happen, to appear.[30] A likeness first has to be impossible for it to become possible. The limits of analogy and transcendence are not their terminations, but rather the grounds of their possibility.

But is this critique of an analogical Middle Ages what Blumenberg means? What is most salutary about Blumenberg's critique of the secularization argument is not its installment of a periodization that itself remains prior to any hypothesis of periodization, for it remains deeply implicated in its own critique. Indeed, much of the usefulness of Blumenburg's work lies in its insistence on what Edmund Husserl would have called the transcendental reduction: not so much the removal of everything that encumbers the potentiality of the self, but the disclosure of what initiatives, within the horizon of its intention, remain possible for it. In discovering the medieval as the object of our contemplation, we discover that it exists in a world that does not fully contain us; yet it remains a world that presupposes our awareness of it. The moments that stand against us are the relics of our intentionality, of our own desire to discover how it is that we can organize a world that excludes us and by doing so define the boundaries by which we experience our world.

The difficulty of doing this—the impossibility of defining a world not our own precisely because in so doing we engage in the "worlding of world"—is the subject of Heidegger's late essay "The Age of the World Picture." By attempting to configure a "world view," a "world image," or a "world picture" of the Middle Ages, we necessarily define our own initiatives in terms of the very modes of figuration, of representation, that define and configure our own moment. Indeed, the drive to reduce the medieval to a representation in the first place is what separates us from the medieval and from ourselves by virtue of thematizing this or that mode of being: being-as-past, being-for-the past, being medieval, being modern, and so forth.[31] The "conquest of the world as picture," Heidegger argues, is the "fundamental event of the modern age," the *Neuzeit* whose legitimacy derives from the technics of representation.[32] Much of Heidegger's essay is, surprisingly, an argument for interdisciplinarity in the modern university.

The methodologies of representation have become the central question of knowledge formation in both the sciences and humanities because they are the subject of the "institutionalizations" that define areas of research and knowledge. The methodology of the "historical sciences," much like the methodology of the natural sciences, aims at "representing what is fixed and stable and at making history an object."[33] That Heidegger here means "object" in the phenomenological sense is clear in his equation throughout the essay of "representing" and "explaining," both of which depend upon a "reduction to the intelligible" and an objectification of the past as an "explicable and surveyable nexus of actions and consequences."[34] This phenomenological orientation to history is both a symptom and the cause of modernity. It demands that we free ourselves, in Heidegger's blunt phrase, "from the bonds of the Middle Ages" in order to free ourselves to ourselves—that is, in order to conceive of a "world picture."[35] The inability to form this *Weltbild* (which could also mean a conception of the condition of the world) is what Heidegger designates as the failure of the Middle Ages, which is a failure of representation precisely because of the primordial ordering of the medieval by correspondence and analogy. "The art work of the Middle Ages," Heidegger writes, "and the absence of a world picture in that age belong together."[36] The animating analogical quality of a medieval artwork, in other words, stands in for and disrupts the more comprehensive and copious view of the world as a system that is capable of analysis and that *must* be analyzed, researched, institutionalized, in order to be understood. In the Middle Ages, by contrast, everything stands in relation to a single cause: "to be in being means to belong within a specific rank of the order of what has been created—a rank appointed from the beginning—and as thus caused, to correspond to the cause of creation (*analogia entis*)."[37]

Prima facie, the insistence that the Middle Ages lacks a world picture is another way of saying that medieval theologians thematized both being and time—their past, their present, their future, their "being." In that light, Heidegger is not necessarily identifying a specifically medieval problem, because in his view philosophers from Thales to Kant and Hegel and beyond have offered thematic metaphysics of one kind or another—while all along persons in the fourteenth century, as in any other century, went about their business of comporting themselves within equipmental totalities without a thought about the essential "thisness" of, say, a rake (unless

of course the rake breaks).[38] Perhaps because Heidegger's project is split between the ontological and the pragmatic, Heidegger himself could not, like Blumenberg, periodize the Middle Ages in predictably "modern" ways (securing the exclusion of the medieval) only to turn around and conceive of secularization simply as "an attempt to answer a medieval question with the means available to a postmedieval age."[39] Yet when it comes to the repudiation of scholasticism, Heidegger and Blumenberg are of like minds. In fact, Heidegger's assertion that the Middle Ages lacks a world picture depends on his rejection of scholasticism *above all other ontotheologies*, and in particular the analogical ontology of modistic grammar and the Thomistic figure of the *analogia entis*. But he also repudiates the very way out of configuring being only as analogy that he had explored in the *Habilitationsschrift*. There he attempts to demonstrate that Thomas of Erfurt's *Modi Significandi* points toward a Husserlian symbolic, formal logic emptied of particularity and content—in other words, toward his later thinking of history as the reduction to the intelligible, calculable, and repeatable.[40] In some ways, it seems that the only distinction between the discarded analogies of the medieval and the institutional convergence of modern knowledges lies in the genealogy of their legitimacies. Emergent institutions themselves legitimate research in the *Neuzeit*, but in the age of scholastic language the *modi significandi*, which are "like the nerve of the complex of meaning," legitimate the correspondences of language and world; they "prescribe the structure and constitute a domain for its lawfulness."[41] We will put aside the question of what relation there is between the "nerve" that animates complexes of meaning and the nexus of institutions in the *Neuzeit* that determines the field of knowledge, although it seems to us that the relation between them is more than merely analogical. What we would like to do instead is to turn to an examination of this double work of analogy in a postmedieval historiography.

MAGICAL NARRATIVES

One of the most complex and productive articles written on the romance, at least from the perspective of a medievalist, is Fredric Jameson's "Magical Narratives: Romance as a Genre."[42] Apart from the philosophical richness of its approach to medieval forms and modes, a richness not cashed in by most work on medieval romance, it asks the slightly embarrassing ques-

tion of what to do with the forms of another age. Especially for Middle English studies, in which the vocabulary of literary form is strikingly impoverished, Jameson's account of romance as a pseudomorph is a compelling and, it seems to us, highly plausible thesis. Yet it raises the question of whether to think about the relation between periodization and formal change is to reinstall the very analogues at the heart of our inquiry that modernity tells us are no longer plausible ways of signifying the world to ourselves. Jameson is interested in, among other things, what remnants of the "worlding of the world" are still visible in the romance and its genealogy. In his account (which loosely follows Erich Auerbach's chapter in *Mimesis* on Chrétien de Troyes) the epic, which stages crucial moments of absolute moral determination—the choice, already made, of whether to oppose evil—gives way in a purely phenomenological reduction to the romance; that is, it no longer reflects the material conditions of its production as clearly as did the epic. The romance reflects the conditions of an ethics that no longer works directly on the world. It uses the form of narration—or chivalric value—to present to itself a consciousness that is unbound and unrestricted, although it remains free of the very sense of the utilities and determinations that make its world possible. What the romance does, Jameson argues, is perform a Husserlian reduction of history. He not only uses the epic and the romance as analogies for a politics of appearance and its unconscious; he also uses the very structure of analogy to do so, or rather the analogy of two structures of likeness. What we initially discover is the purposive form of each, the ethical ends that emerge within the horizon of their form, the conditions under which they present choice or withdraw it: what Jameson describes as the disclosure of the "worlding" of world. The conditions under which this happens—that is, the conditions under which, say, the romance is written—are themselves "historical in character," he argues. And they are historical in a specific instance, an instance that at first has the structure of analogy: "there must," he writes, "*as in medieval times*, be something like a nature left as a mysterious and alien border around the still precarious and minute human activities of the village and field."[43] The determination of the "preconditions" that make up a historical determination of worlding is structurally analogical: a temporality *as if* medieval, a state "like a nature." Jameson's point here is that we need to observe these conditions in order

to undo the mystifications that give us this illusion of an immanent and pressing nature outside of time that purportedly conditions our activities. The remnant of this work is what appears as nature, the "mysterious and alien border" around purposive, human activity—what is not assimilable as work.

But what does it mean to invoke the analogy of *medieval* labor, in its "still precarious and minute" state? The Whiggish, teleological assumption would be that medieval labor serves as an analogy for the preconditions of the historicizing (worlding) of world because it also serves as the precondition for a history of labor and for a conception of historicity as the conditioned forms that labor takes. This project is certainly valid and legitimate, but what legitimates it is the delegitimating figure of medieval labor as nascent, original, and primitive. That is, it is useful as analogy precisely because it fails, because that alien border is so proximate and demanding. That is also what work does, and to admit its failure is to admit also what we do not understand about its very purposiveness. But what if the work in hand takes on the very border that defines its historicity and artifactuality? Jameson's analogy here is more than the thorp or vill or unit of labor: it is the romance itself, for which an account of labor *serves as an analogy*. The work here is not the transformation of the earth's "original larder" (Marx) into the stuff that sustains the body, but the work of romance itself—and this work is precisely engaged with undoing the unassimilable alien border that marks off the world for us.

Romance gives us, if we read Auerbach's version as strictly as possible, the primal moment at which the preconditions of the world are set forth: the moment of choice, the abdication of freedom by the necessity to make determinations. It is precisely because the "feudal ethos" of romance "serves no political function" or "practical reality" that the moment of decision is, in Auerbach's term, "absolute."[44] Yet the ostensible argument of *both* Auerbach's chapter and Jameson's article is that romance ultimately stages the lack of a determination of choice: it obscures the binding of the subject by increasingly intolerable intrusions of massification, status anxiety, and the emergence of a global market. The purposive form of romance, then, becomes the surprise of its own survival, its emergence above life itself, in which its world remains determinative, a condition that allows thinking to persist. It is a world that, in its very persistence, its belated

nature, is made possible by a transcendental reduction, an organizing of and by the romance form of a subject that is under threat by the manifold but able to narrate its escape from determinations of all kinds.

The fact that Jameson frames the question in terms of genre is what allows the romance to survive its contingency, to remain determinative for the worlding of world. His dismissal of both Northrop Frye's and Vladimir Propp's alignment of the romance in terms of a hero or a central series of functions suggests, rightly, that the romance offers a contemplation of "states of being" rather than a record of acts and deeds.[45] But to frame the disappearance of the hero in romance as a crisis of, and in, generic limitation is to relegate the romance to the status of survival, to reinscribe the analogy as the genesis of medieval romance. The crucial question of romance is the conditions under which it survives, the question of how the belated historical conditions of the romance—the conditions that we *now* read into the romance, as its immediate audience—become an adequate substitute for the impossibly credulous conditions from which the romance emerges. Jameson calls these originary conditions "those older magical categories for which some adequate substitute must be invented."[46] But the substitute is there at the genesis of the formal problem of the romance, or those magical categories would be continuous with the categories that now determine the romance in the form that we recognize it. The formal problem, in other words, is that magic must be forgotten in order to make the romance a form determined by its originary repetition: the analogy for a condition that appears only in the obviated forms that adequation and analogy demand.

At a more general level, the mutual determination of romance and analogy is more than simply the result of framing history in generic terms, or of the assumption that the finitude of history is equivalent to the finitude of generic boundaries. It results from the demand for legitimacy, and, as we have argued, the correlative belief that the medieval simply cannot *remain* legitimate in the era of modernity. The crucial questions in Jameson's article are how to account for the trace of a world determined by magical relations, and how to identify the analogies that legitimate a form unmoored from its cause. Romance, in other words, is itself an analogy for the medieval, for the persistence of demands for forms of credulity and knowledge that we no longer believe to be absolutely legitimate.

For Jameson, romance is also an ever-persistent form that posits a unique temporal problem in its medieval and postmedieval deployments: "Romance . . . expresses a transitional moment, yet one of a very special type: its contemporaries must feel their society torn between past and future."[47] In medieval and modern societies alike, romance produces the past in a particular way—through nostalgia for traditional social arrangements, practices, and beliefs—but it also summons a future by dint of its "formal possibility," romance's own "process of secularization and renewal."[48] Clearly, Jameson's reflections on the persistence of romance, which trace the genre's eventual emptying out of medieval content in modernism only to be filled up again in postmodern fantasy fiction, mirror Blumenberg's attempt to perform a kind of phenomenological reduction on medieval historiography in order to strive toward a "pure" modernity freed of relations of mere analogy and medieval power relations.[49] But whereas Jameson (especially in his recent work) leaves us with the future of romance—a future of a medieval literary content and form—Blumenberg offers us a future that is far more predictive and pathologically modern. For him, the future is borne out in the "repeatable" and "imitable" paradigm of the modern, the tendency to "go beyond" established bounds and posit not only breaks from the past but also breaks from the present—"to anticipate what is possible for man, which is the future."[50] In this light, Blumenberg's *Legitimacy* can be seen as a history of postulated futures in modernity—the new domains in which human *curiositas* is extended, the manner in which classical and medieval *theoria* falls into modern *hypotheoria* in the quest for new possibles, new unknowns, new news.[51] It is the last problem—the future as it is conceived in the modern disciplines and especially "postmodern medievalism"—to which we must now turn, lest it seem that the persistence of romance succeeds as a screen for the persistence of "the medieval" and its future.

Futural thinking is historically determined, needless to say. Efforts to postulate a future for medieval studies, for instance, have been made for the past twenty-five years or so, from institutional reflections[52] to more theoretical ones.[53] This sort of disciplinary self-consciousness has also led to scholarly work on the medieval sense of the future.[54] Yet not all futural

projects within the field of medieval studies are relevant only to medievalists. In support of this claim, we turn to some of the earlier, formative enterprises in futural thinking, especially in French theory, where we find the work of the medievalist Paul Zumthor emerging alongside that of the more widely known expositors writing at the time. Our presentation of Zumthor is purposeful in that it helps us to discover the unique difference the medieval makes to futural projects.

Zumthor's *Essai de poétique médiévale* (1972; published in English as *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 1992) is the first book in medieval studies to deploy structuralism and poststructuralism at a transitional moment—the late 1960s and early 1970s. Peter Haidu once characterized Zumthor's *Essai* as "a structuralism on the verge of semiotics."[55] The same has been said of, say, Roland Barthes's master work of exegesis, *S/Z*, which is, as Jonathan Culler put it, "an extreme example of both structuralism and post-structuralism."[56] Zumthor, who wrote the book between 1969 and 1971, was very much in conversation with those in that French scene—Barthes, Michel de Certeau, Pierre Macherey, Foucault, Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous.[57] But in what ways? Zumthor's work stands out, among all these thinkers, on account of its temporal fascinations and, above all, its particular brand of futurism. For instance, Zumthor writes:

> The relationships set up within the text belong to a succession, but operate reversibly in time. A feature occurs at line ten that only then valorizes a posteriori an element found in line one or three. In this way a multiplicity of crosscurrents is created within the text's temporal dimension, as a result of which the present gives way equally to the past and the future. Textual time aspires to be pure form in which past, present, and future occur in patterns similar to the movements of stars, as an all-embracing present that simultaneously remembers, contemplates, and anticipates.[58]

Here there are some of the expected reflections on the relation between time and language, expectation and narrative, that are as old as Augustine and were, in Zumthor's time, developed in narrative analysis, such as Macherey's idea that the ideological work of the novel is disclosed, in the first instance, retrospectively.[59] Yet Zumthor references the linear, formalist, and chronological models of linguistic temporality in order to expand them and speak of the "multiplicity of crosscurrents," the multiple temporalities, within medieval texts.[60] It not just that Zumthor sees multiple

times within medieval texts, even before scholars in his own field, such as Jacques Le Goff, began to exposit on the topic of time in the Middle Ages and point out that various (and often conflicting) cultures of time comprise medieval experience.[61] Rather, Zumthor situates the temporality of texts within phenomenological time, within "an all-embracing present that simultaneously remembers, contemplates, and anticipates."[62] Mental states (remembering, contemplating, and anticipating) are temporal modes (past, present, future) within the present; therefore any reading of medieval texts (above all) is an experience of being in time: "The time in which the reception of the text takes place is an extension of a past in which all truth has its roots, yet it produces an accumulation of knowledge, generating science and a sense of right that belong as a whole to the future. At one and the same time the mind valorizes both memory and prediction, resulting in the collapse of the sense of time, the integration of the past into the present."[63]

In these reflections, Zumthor signals which contemporary temporal themes he wishes to engage, particularly those espoused by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Blanchot, and Emmanuel Levinas. When, for instance, Zumthor writes in his characteristically phenomenological manner that "medievalists are constantly brought face-to-face with a long past lying hidden behind the surviving texts,"[64] and when one remembers that the French scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s was rife with philosophical and phenomenological discussions about "face-to-face" encounters with Otherness and alterity,[65] it appears that he is in dialogue with, say, Levinas. In *Time and the Other*, for example, Levinas posits that futural thinking arises from a face-to-face encounter with the Other: "Relationship with the future, the presence of the future in the present, seems all the same accomplished in the face-to-face with the Other. The situation of the face-to-face would be the very accomplishment of time; the encroachment of the present on the future is not the feat of the subject alone, but the intersubjective relationship. The condition of time lies in the relationship between humans, or in history."[66] The "intersubjective relationship" of which Levinas speaks is staged in Zumthor, but with some variations on the themes of Otherness and futurity. Zumthor, for instance, would understand the "condition of time" to lie in something like the second of Levinas's suppositions—"in history," in a relationship between self and texts, or self and a postulated past (more on this below).

Zumthor writes: "What I needed was to be able to recognize myself in the Other—the texts—without making myself a mere learned catalog and without renouncing my taste for literature and my need to enjoy the text for its own sake; I needed to see my equal in the Other, to enter into dialogue with it, and, at moments of intense emotion, to experience the by no means innocent pleasure of a love capable of providing the motive for critical study."[67] This is a packed and personal passage by Zumthor, and explicating it would flatten it. Suffice it to say that the modes of self-recognition, desire, and Otherness exhibited here distinguish this passage as indelibly post-Hegelian and quintessentially intersubjective. It would be reductive, we believe, simply to relegate his reflections to a nonphenomenological form of Otherness of a piece with North American versions, in which the questions of "hard-edged alterity" instantly posit a distance between past and present in the effort to render the Middle Ages absolutely unique, an identity in its own difference.[68] To do so would be to confuse critical histories and evacuate desire from the scholarly enterprise and from the past.[69]

Yet to the extent that Zumthor proffers a phenomenology of medieval texts, he does so with some telling differences from contemporary models, and, we believe, with certain advantages. To begin with, his encounter with Otherness is a "relationship" with *the past*, and in this emphasis he differs from Levinas, among others, who speaks of the "exceptional place" that is the "relationship with alterity, with mystery—that is to say, with the future, with what . . . is never there, with what cannot be there."[70] Levinas takes up a model of futural thinking that is close to that of Sartre,[71] Beauvoir,[72] Louis Althusser,[73] Georges Bataille,[74] and Blanchot.[75] His is a "pure future," a "future purified of all content," and as such open to possibility.[76] Zumthor, however, finds a *place* for the future—"the texts," medieval texts—and grounds possibility itself in the Middle Ages:

> The twelfth century is akin to a turntable [*une plaque tournante*, a train hub]. It is both a point of departure and a goal, an exemplary sector, in which traits and tensions proper to medieval civilization take on the intensity of a revelation. . . . The fate and future of literature in French was largely settled in the twelfth century. I feel it is most helpful to consider what went before, as well as what came after, which already seems much closer to modern poetry, in the light of forms created in that century.[77]

The twelfth century, as a point of departure and return, transmits the future and brings it back again. It is no accident that Zumthor selects this circular, turning-and-returning image, for it resonates tellingly in the context of Blanchot's well-known adoption of the Nietzschean "eternal return,"[78] which for Blanchot can never fully be a "return" or closed circle, since the future always arrives in the present in dissymmetrical ways, bringing something back that is alien (and hence, purely futural and initially indifferent) to the present from which it departed.[79] In other words, Blanchot imputes alterity to the future, just like Levinas. (The prevailing image for the Blanchot would be a spiral or lopsided wheel moving across a terrain). Yet Zumthor has a different agenda for this theme of "returns" and its place in the past and present. He believes that a symmetrical return is possible—that a future can be generated from the past. On how this temporality works, on how a future is projected from the past, from medieval texts, Zumthor writes:

> The inventors of the first clocks in the second half of the fourteenth century were less concerned with counting the hours of the day than with reproducing the *eternal circular* motion of the stars [le mouvement éternal et circulaire des astres]. History was only a more profound form of memory that added substance to the present and projected it into the future as a more intense form of being [un accroissement d'être]. It was conceived both as the milieu in which the social group existed and as one of the ways in which *the group perceived and knew itself*. Although closed and finite, it was felt as progress toward a goal and *the hope of future perfection* [espoir d'une perfection].[80]

Self-recognition, then, transpires not only between the present and the past, between medievalist and medieval remainders, but also between the Middle Ages and the future that lies ahead of it. Being medieval, being in the *modus* now, adds historical substance—memory—to the present, a substance that is "projected . . . into the future." To be medieval is to posit a future in the very act of self-recognition, to offer a memory or memorial to a future that will be recognized at a time and place not yet known. In modern theoretical terms, to grasp this temporal project is not to modernize the Middle Ages or to thematize medieval being,[81] nor is it to project nostalgia onto the past. Rather, it is to assign the productive category of impossibility to medieval language itself and loosen the restrictive bonds that analogy places on language, being, and time that would discipline and

contain the Middle Ages both to its own time (or "age") and presumed mode of temporality. Medieval memory and modern recognition are, for Zumthor, consanguine temporal modes that defy the strictures and thematizations of their own epochs.

Yet Zumthor is equally concerned with recovering the philosophical category of *presence* and asserting the phenomenal significances of the medieval remainders that surround us, be they genres, manuscripts, or buildings. Indeed, for him, the future inheres strictly in the material presence of the past in our own time—manuscripts, ruins, languages, texts[82]—"works" whose own palpable "intensities" and "tensions" are met by our mutually "intense emotion, . . . the by no means innocent pleasure of a love capable of providing the motive for critical study." The theme may now seem familiar. For instance, Blanchot once wrote that "what was written in the past will be read in the future, without any relation of presence being able to establish itself *between* writing and reading."[83] Yet it seems clear that *presence*, for Zumthor, matters as a dialectical relation of desire, recognition, and memory, an intersubjective relation between past and present. Lest this idea again seem like mere romanticism beyond the ambit of "theory," we can bear in mind that this version of presence contains something of an ethical demand that itself was clarified by Beauvoir. In her *Ethics of Ambiguity*, she offers a formulation of futural thinking that seems coincident with Zumthor's effort to enter into intersubjective relationships with the past and is worth quoting in full, as the passage is itself beautiful and shows in notional form the difference even the slightest bit of medievalism makes in a quasi-existentialist, post-Hegelian scene:

> All that a stubborn optimism can claim is that the past does not concern us in this particular and fixed form and that we have sacrificed nothing in sacrificing it; thus, many revolutionaries consider it healthy to refuse any attachment to the past and to profess to scorn monuments and traditions. A left-wing journalist who was fuming impatiently in a street of Pompeii said, "What are we doing here? We're wasting our time." This attitude is self-confirming; let us turn away from the past, and there no longer remains any trace of it in the present, or for the future; the people of the Middle Ages had so well forgotten antiquity that there was no longer anyone who even had a desire to know something about it. One can live without Greek, without Latin, without cathedrals, and without history. Yes, but there are many other things that one can live without; the tendency of man is not

to reduce himself but to increase his power. To abandon the past to the night of facticity is a way of depopulating the world. I would distrust a humanism which was too indifferent to the efforts of the men of former times; *if the disclosure of being achieved by our ancestors does not at all move us, why be so interested in that which is taking place today; why wish so ardently for future realizations?* To assert the reign of the human is to acknowledge man in the past as well in the future.[84]

What Beauvoir says here, Zumthor says throughout his *Toward a Medieval Poetics*. For her part, Beauvoir is rejecting Futurism in its modernist, destructive and, by her time, tired rejection of the past. Could the past be done away with? Can one live "without cathedrals" and "without history"? These questions are related to humanism and also to phenomenology, and indeed to the intersection of both in the matter of ethics and the substance of memory. These are issues fundamental to the "disclosure of being achieved by our ancestors," which, if forgotten or misrecognized by us, becomes primarily a foreclosing of our own future. There can never be an "empty future" or self-forgetting, in other words, if the medieval is taken into account. The Middle Ages are or can be, in a very real way, the grounds of possibility and intelligibility for a human and humane future. To think otherwise would be, *pace* that journalist in Pompeii, a waste of time.

THE NEW FUTURISM

Zumthor did not downplay the theoretical innovation of his own work.[85] In fact, we believe that, in literary theoretical terms, Zumthor's *Toward a Medieval Poetics* stands alongside important titles such as Macherey's *Theory of Literary Production* (1966), Barthes's *S/Z* (1970), and Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974).[86] We do not want to overstate Zumthor's influence on Romance and English studies.[87] His immediate audience seemed to be in some ways thrilled, in other ways shocked, by this book, translating (often wrongly) its emphasis on futurity into a form of modernization.[88] While one may question whether Zumthor's ideas, as expounded in his theoretical section (part 1), were evenly deployed in his practical section (part 2), we submit that he offers one of the most historically grounded and generically rich futural projects among those *au courant* in the French theory of the 1960s and 1970s.

Our brief critical history may well offer points for discussion in an

already ongoing conversation about time and the future in the field of medieval studies.[89] Zumthor was among the first to posit a futural Middle Ages (or a futural past, in more general terms) in the context of temporal discussions ranging from Sartre to Blanchot and Levinas, all of whom worked within (and against) precedent temporal projects of Henri Bergson and Heidegger, among others.[90] We want this critical history to remain in sight for subsequent work in this area and discourage any tendency to elide these theoretical precedents, or worse, to suggest that thinking within multiple temporal frames is a particularly new project, or only a queer one.[91]

Much recent work in critical temporal studies has transpired in the wake of Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*—a book that declares its productively Heideggerean investments rather boldly and that draws from Heidegger's own refusal to "thematize" time or periodize the past (or for that matter, Being).[92] As Heidegger writes, "We must hold ourselves aloof from all those significations of 'future', 'past', and 'Present' which thrust themselves upon us from the ordinary conception of time."[93] Yet scholars in the field have yet to indicate whether a Heideggerean project conforms to more recent postmodern inquiry, or whether ideas within the Hegelian and Marxist traditions are really so simple in their temporal schemes (they are not and never were).[94] No critico-temporal project, nor any form of postmodern medievalism, would be worthwhile if it disavowed or occluded the texts and traditions that go into the making of modernity—or, for that matter, of modernism—in order to affirm the novelty of this or that new methodology. Indeed, the field of medieval studies has already witnessed several forms of futural medievalism that are problematic in this respect. The most prominent version is perhaps the "New Medievalism," which repeats the error of a Blumenbergian futurism that extols the very paradigm of the modern, the tendency to "go beyond" and posit breaks from the past and present.

The "New Medievalism," as delineated by Stephen G. Nichols, chiefly endeavors to undo "the putative modernity" of the Middle Ages by postulating a future for medieval studies.[95] Nichols writes that "modernism sought to make the Middle Ages in its own image, as recent studies have argued. New medievalism has on the whole tried to avoid reading the Middle Ages onto the modern world except as a gesture of postmodernist inquiry."[96] Nichols goes on to cite work by Umberto Eco, Lee Patterson,

Brian Stock, and Brigitte Cazelle as examples of "New Medievalism," which affirms "the desire to draw the line more sharply between Modernity and its successor," postmodernism. What follows is a statement full of implications for periodization: "In a real sense, Modernity has become the 'middle ages' of that successor program and we are free to pursue the historical identities of our own period, however we choose to identify the era from the fifth to the fifteenth century. We may, at last, leave the agenda of Modernity behind."[97] This program makes a great amount of sense in its refusal to reduplicate destructive nationalisms and colonial ambitions, but it in fact sustains the very modern temporal structures that have always, in the most superficial of terms, made modernity notorious in the tendencies toward rupture, and the aspirations for "the new"—that "desire to draw the line more sharply." What's odd is that "New Medievalism," in its emphasis on the *coupure épistémologique* of the "new," deems prior models to be "medieval." The "New Medievalism" is therefore an example of what Peter Osborne describes in *The Politics of Time*: "Once the 'modern' becomes 'tradition', the 'postmodern' can play the modern, and the temporal structure of the orthodox sociological concept of modernity can be redeployed across the new field."[98] Indeed, any "successor program" in medieval studies, or any other field, that seeks to look ahead and be free "to pursue the historical identities of our own period" will find this project difficult in temporal terms.

It seems paradoxical to declare that the Middle Ages will be periodized on their own terms (so to speak) but then turn around and accept the very periodizing terms of modernity that have troubled medievalists for so long, and that have put the field in its auto-legitimizing position in the first place. Arguably, however, the main difficulty in the "New Medievalism"—and the reason it must hastily designate a futural medievalism that will break with scholarly practices deemed to be "past"—lies (perhaps by now not surprisingly) in its seemingly wholesale acceptance of Blumenberg. Nichols writes:

> New medievalism tries to contextualize the concept of modernity as a process of cultural change, and thus to profit from the decline of modernism's hegemony both as the dominant period and the arbiter of methodological orthodoxy. In anxiously asserting its own legitimacy in its early phases, Modernity defined itself away from the Middle Ages. As Hans Blumenberg has argued, "[The Middle

Ages] were lowered to the rank of a provisional phase of human self-realization, one that was bound to be left behind, and were finally disqualified as a mere interruption between antiquity and modern times, as a 'dark age.'" Now at the other end of the process, Modernity has had to come to grips with its own historical identity. Its pastness is being surveyed, limits assigned.[99]

It's easy to accept that "Modernity defined itself away from the Middle Ages," but in settling on that idea, one risks following Blumenberg too far (as Nichols does) in rationalizing the legitimacy of modernity as an age in which the medieval is absolutely purged. As we suggested in the previous sections, that process of modern self-definition in relation to medieval modes has yet to be fully described, and Blumenberg himself endeavors to *explain away* (not explain) the inherence of "the medieval" within modernity. Our project is, in essence, to challenge Blumenberg's ideas and rewrite Nichols's formulation above as something like, "Modernity and postmodernity have defined themselves *toward* the Middle Ages and they will never let it go."

LEGITIMATIONS

If recent thinking about the so-called project of modernity can claim, as does the title of an important book by Bruno Latour, that "We Have Never Been Modern," the essays here collectively assert that "We Have Always Been Medieval."[100] We have collected a range of essays by scholars working in modernism or medieval studies, as well as those specializing in eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century comparative literatures. While, as we have already noted, there is work within the field of medieval studies that trenchantly challenges the suppositions of modernity and even modernism, we strive to reach an audience beyond the field of medieval studies—an audience that, regardless of its scholarly emphases, may easily recognize that the periodic distinctions between "the medieval" and "the modern" are far more interesting, generative, contested, and genuinely dialectical than those between periods where the lines are ubiquitously accepted as blurry (such as—to take an example from English literary studies—late Romantic and early Victorian). By exploring how "the medieval" and "the premodern" appear as necessary anachronisms in modernist and postmodern frameworks, the authors here seek to offer a new history of

critical theory and, in so doing, attempt to answer the following questions: What does it mean that the Middle Ages offer the conceptual equipment to analyze—or even produce—modernity? How, and why, are the temporalities of postmodern critical writing structured against medieval temporality? Why is the premodern deployed in the interests of globalization and capital? Why is it simultaneously used to demystify those very interests?

We have structured this collection to move from a survey of modern historiographical theory to the identification of a nominalist turn in historiography and aesthetics, whereby "the medieval" stands not only as the site of negation but also as the very figure for the negative in modernity. In between those essays are papers on Hegel, Marx, medieval and modern empire, and Heidegger's time and the tempus of medieval linguistic theory, and each of these falls within one of two thematic clusters, to which Michael Hardt and Jed Rasula respond.

The first cluster, "Theological Modernities," traces the determining presence of medieval, theological modes within the work of thinkers who define their own modernity as a historical present that has fully transitioned out of a previous phase, be it feudalism or imperialism. In the cluster's opening essay, Kathleen Davis examines periodization in the theory of sovereignty and "political theology" developed in the writings of Karl Löwith, Carl Schmitt, and Blumenberg, and its extension to a theory of history in the work of Reinhardt Koselleck. She demonstrates how the narrative of the transition from medieval to modern is made to absorb the slippage between law and religion and to legitimize a particular brand of "secular" politics. Focusing primarily on the "secularization thesis," Davis's essay delineates the structural and historical relation of periodization to the "sovereign exception," which makes but suspends law and thereby mimics the historiographic processes of periodization itself in the naming of a historical moment from the outside. The second essay in this cluster, by Andrew Cole, assesses Marx's own fascination with the transubstantiation of raw materials into commodities and shows that Marx draws from unappreciated Hegelian sources in formulating his theory of commodity fetishism. Hegel, both in his early theological writings and in his later lectures on the philosophy of history, posits fetishism as a cultural, religious, and institutional mandate to produce, praise, value, and consume that one Thing that obsesses medieval culture especially—the Eucharist. Cole argues that Marx translates this Hegelian Eucharist into the commodity

and makes possible his famous idea that "[the commodity-form] is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things." The third essay in "Theological Modernities" is by Bruce Holsinger, who examines the relationship between Hardt and Negri's *Empire* and the events of September 11, 2001. Holsinger suggests that while Hardt and Negri themselves sought to frame the book's project as a utopian revival of a premodern barbarism filtered through the lens of a utopian neo-Augustinianism, in the wake of the attacks of September 11, conservative critics perceived the book as a virtual script for al Qaeda. Holsinger considers *Empire* as a contemporary contribution to the genre of apocalypse and suggests that the book's apocalyptic medievalism resonates tellingly within the milieu of the "9/11 premodern"—especially the numerous medievalisms that served as a primary rhetorical weapon in the Bush administration's war on terror.

The second cluster, "Scholastic Modernities," pursues some of the afterlives of medieval philosophy within modern critical theory: psychoanalysis, Heidegger's engagement with Christian Aristotelianism, and Theodor Adorno's deployment of medieval nominalism, broadly construed as a theory of the particular. In the first essay of this cluster, Erin Labbie and Michael Uebel examine the psychohistory of modern and medieval paranoias by grounding them in an approach to the scholastic and aesthetic dimensions of Daniel Paul Schreber's famous autobiography, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1903). Schreber's paranoiac system, while reflecting the scientific methods that attempted to contain it, dramatizes the conflict and coexistence of the medieval and the modern. By contributing to broader discussions (such as those put forth by Latour, Louis Dupré, Alexandre Leupin, François Lyotard, and others) of the premodern, the modern, and the postmodern as epistemes that present the subject as a being in time, Labbie and Uebel open up a set of possibilities for paranoid subjectivity within both the modern science of psychoanalysis and everyday life. In the following essay, Ethan Knapp situates the development of Heidegger's early phenomenology within the context of early twentieth-century medieval studies. Heidegger's early study of Thomas of Erfurt, Knapp argues, demonstrates the extent to which this philosopher's first encounters with scholasticism were shaped by the specific Catholic antimodernism that grew in the wake of the *Pascendi* encyclical of 1907. Despite the irresolution of this early study, Heidegger here developed a crucial diagnosis of medieval scho-

lasticism as a philosophical moment too much in thrall to the object(s) of its analysis. In escape from the deadening overdetermination of the historical object within both medieval scholasticism and the historical methodologies that grew up around the study of specifically medieval materials, Heidegger developed a hermeneutics of facticity through a critical rereading of Augustine and Martin Luther. Knapp concludes by arguing for the relevance of Heidegger's solutions to the world of contemporary medieval studies. In the third essay of this cluster, C. D. Blanton tracks the history of one of the central historical and metaphysical concepts in Adorno's account of the modern work of art: nominalism. In Adorno's elliptical explanation, nominalism marks the ontological separation of the particular from the universal, a gap that inheres in the possibility of philosophy. But it also names a discrete episode in the history of thought, mapping the turn from a system of medieval correspondences to a modern structure of noncorrespondence. Accordingly, the problem of nominalism underlies and informs the entire history of development or transition, concretizing the constitutive incompletion of modernity in two crucial ways: first by formalizing the metaphysical failure of the universal or totality, but also by encrypting modernity itself as distinctly medieval. Drawing on accounts of both the historical transition into capital and the recurrence of nominalism as a philosophical problematic, Blanton suggests that Adorno ultimately locates the paradoxical metaphysical contour of modernism in this buried medieval identity, grounding his account of the modern work of art in the capacity of the aesthetic to incorporate a persistent state of historical unevenness as form.

The collection aptly concludes with an afterword by Fredric Jameson, who has engaged with the Middle Ages over the entirety of his career—from his book *The Political Unconscious*, in which he outlines a set of critical procedures that borrows from the medieval exegetical protocols discussed by Henri de Lubac in *Exégèse médiéval: Les quatres sens de l'ećriture*, to *Postmodernism*, which (following Adorno) names "nominalism" as the impulse to particularize and the concomitant refusal to conceptualize late capitalism as a social whole, a totality. Indeed, Jameson's engagement with "the medieval" appears in his more recent book, *Archaeologies of the Future*, in which he finds that the figural capacities of medieval theology are analogous to the very effort of utopian thinking from Thomas More to Ursula Le Guin. In this recent work, he writes:

Theology thus constitutes a repository of figuration and figural speculation whose dynamics were not recovered until modern times, with psychoanalysis and *Ideologiekritik*. But it is important not to confuse this remarkable language experiment with religion as such, and better to focus on its fundamental mechanisms, rather than on any alleged subjective content. Those mechanisms are summed up by the word *allegory*, which, as enigmatic as it may be, must always offer the central challenge of any attempt to go to the heart of the medieval.[101]

Jameson revisits precisely this issue in the afterword. Suffice it to say here, in closing, that we propose that allegory is not the *only* figure that poses the challenge of "the medieval" to contemporary critical practice. The essays in this book attempt to open a window onto how a range of thinkers have taken up this challenge. Indeed, as we hope to show, the very concept of "the medieval" offers to modern and postmodern philosophy and criticism the necessary antithetical term in the dialectic of modernity's own making. All that is designated by "the medieval" is never overcome and rarely superseded but rather continuously posited as that necessary anachronism that paradoxically generates "the modern" as we know it. To forget "the medieval" is to conjure a modernity that can never be known.

NOTES

1 Bruce Holsinger, a contributor to the present volume, has made an important beginning in this regard in his assessment of Bataille and his students in *Tel Quel*. See Holsinger, *Premodern Condition*, 97–113 (on Bourdieu) and 152–94 (on Barthes).

2 This is Jürgen Habermas's phrase; see "Modernity—An Incomplete Project."

3 Blumenberg is replying, in part, to Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History*.

4 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 5.

5 Ibid., 4.

6 A 1988 special issue of *Romanic Review*, edited by Stephen G. Nichols, bears a title identical to ours, "The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages," but is surprisingly not intended to echo Blumenberg's study. Nichols's introduction (1–3) never mentions Blumenberg's work, and only one essay (in the collection of thirteen papers) cites this thinker: Giuseppe Mazzotta's "Antiquity and the New Arts in Petrarch" (23). Our title signals both our interest in extending the work of Nichols (as indicated below in our discussion of "New Medievalism") and our sense that Blumenberg's work continues to be a deep provocation for medievalists, even if it is not widely read.

7 Joel Kovel's *History and Spirit* offers an interesting riposte to the secularization thesis by critiquing the "de-spiritualization" of the West. Among the spiritual figures Kovel discusses is Meister Eckhart, but he also notably includes non-Christian persons.

8 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 72.

9 Ibid., 18.

10 Ibid., 4; see 74. See also his claim that "secularization has been accepted as a category for the interpretation of historical circumstances and connections even by people who could not be prepared to conform to theological premises" (5); "The illegitimacy of the result of secularization resides in the fact that the result is not allowed to secularize the process itself from which it resulted" (18). See also 49–49, 74.

11 Ibid., 47; see also 48.

12 Ibid., 126, 137.

13 Ibid., 116.

14 See Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*; Aers, "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists."

15 See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 569, 117–19.

16 "Secularization," writes Blumenberg, "does not transform; it only conceals that which the world cannot tolerate and to be unable to tolerate which is its essential character" (*Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 40).

17 On the "pre-ontological," see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 12. On other pseudomorphs, see Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 4, 17, 19, 27.

18 On this problem of naming, see Brient, *Immanence of the Infinite*, 50–60. This excellent book, written by a medievalist, is one of the few on Blumenberg in English.

19 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 492. The hero of Blumenberg's account is Nicholas of Cusa, whose deployment of the linguistic skepticism of negative theology "makes logical antitheses into marks of world-bound language, which lead outward beyond world-boundness precisely by negating their perceptual contents. In this process, language [takes] itself as provisional and tending continually toward the point of its self-suspension" (490).

20 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 491.

21 Foucault, *Order of Things*, 18.

22 Ibid., 19.

23 Ibid., 24.

24 Bursill-Hall, *Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages*, 3.

25 "The word 'cognition' stands for the idea of the thing known, and that idea is the quality existing subjectively in the mind or in some part of the brain" (Crathorn, "On the Possibility of Infallible Knowledge," 261).

26 For more on this, see McGrath, *Early Heidegger*, 116–19.

27 This observation taken from ibid., 117.

28 On signs and "indicating," see Heidegger's discussion of the idea that "a sign is

not a Thing which stands in relation to another Thing in the relationship of indicating" (*Being and Time*, 110; see also 110–14).

29 Cf. Merleau-Ponty's statement about the transcendental reduction: "The positing of the object, therefore makes us go beyond the limits of our actual experience which is brought up against and halted by an alien being, with the result that finally experience believes that it extracts all its own teaching from the object. It is this ek-stase of experience which causes all perception to be perception of something" (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 70).

30 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 2.

31 See Heidegger's well-known critique of "ontological difference" in "The four theses about being and the basic problems of phenomenology," in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 15–19, as well as *Being and Time*, 414, on scientific thematization ("Thematizing objectifies"). On the history of being as metaphysics (and themes about being), see Heidegger's *End of Philosophy*.

32 Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 134.

33 Ibid., 123.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 143.

37 Ibid., 130.

38 See Heidegger, *End of Philosophy*, 89: "The completion of metaphysics begins with Hegel's metaphysics of absolute knowledge as the Spirit of will."

39 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 48–49.

40 See Kusch, *Language as Calculus vs. Language as Universal Medium*.

41 Heidegger, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, 269.

42 Jameson, "Magical Narratives"; expanded as the second chapter in *Political Unconscious*. We focus on the former version because it has a few more productively knotty provocations that are not so much smoothed out as moved aside in the book version.

43 Jameson, "Magical Narratives," 142 (emphasis added).

44 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 134.

45 Jameson, "Magical Narratives," 139.

46 Ibid., 143.

47 Ibid., 158.

48 Ibid., 142 and 143; see also 144–45. In other words, romance is, in medieval society, a medieval form, but in modern society it is a modern form in its redeployments in new fictions.

49 Jameson, "Magical Narratives," 145, and *Archaeologies of the Future*, 58–64.

50 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 440 and 442. We note here that for Hegel, the opposite is the case: in various works, he traces the ways in which humanity gathers in and humanizes the beyond, rendering it proximate, recognizable, and reasonable (or subjective).

51 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, especially part 3.

52 On the future of the discipline in view of a surge in new institutes in medieval studies, see Shook, "University Centers and Institutes of Medieval Studies," especially 486, and this striking (albeit lofty) conclusion: "The future of medieval studies lies in bringing what is valid and helpful in the scholarly tradition which I have dwelt upon in selected vignettes into the consciousness of man living out his accumulated experience in the eternal present" (492). See also Ladner, "The Future of Medieval Studies," for whom the future of the discipline is in prosopography, demography, and the history of mentalités. See also Gentry and Kleinhen, *Medieval Studies in North America*.

53 Indeed, medievalists are now used to articles, books, panel presentations at the Modern Language Association convention, and whole conferences with familiar themes about the future. See Bloch, "The Once and Future Middle Ages," and Paden, *The Future of the Middle Ages*. The latter draws from a colloquium, "The Future of the Middle Ages: Medieval French Literature in the 1990s," held March 9–10, 1990 at the Newberry Library. This volume is also in part a response to a special issue of *Speculum*, "The New Philology," edited by Stephen G. Nichols. There are also several relevant essays by Mark D. Jordan, E. Ann Matter, and Michael Camille in Van Engen, *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, which is the proceedings of a 1992 conference at Notre Dame. Van Engen's "Agenda Paper: The Future of Medieval Studies" (1–5; esp. 4–5) succinctly describes the topics for reflection about the discipline. There was also a panel, "A Future for Medieval Studies," at the Modern Language Association Convention in New Orleans in December 2001, on which many of the authors in this collection participated.

54 Conferences and colloquia on the medieval sense of the future have included the 1997 conference "Medieval Futures" at the University of Bristol, the 2003 conference "Perceptions of the Past / Visions of the Future" in Toronto, and the colloquia "Anglo-Saxon Futures" at King's College London, which took place in 2006 and 2008. Burrow and Wei, *Medieval Futures*, stems from the 1997 conference of the same name. See also Murphy, "The Discourse of the Future."

55 Haidu, "Making It (New) in the Middle Ages," 5; Haidu identifies Zumthor's chapter on romance as an example; see 9.

56 Culler, *Roland Barthes*, 88–90.

57 See "Author's Introduction to the Translation," in Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, xi. See also Vance, "The Modernity of the Middle Ages in the Future," 141–42; 143.

58 Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 11.

59 See Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 189–92. As Macherey indicates in an interview, the French title *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* should have been translated as *Towards A Theory of Literary Production*; see Kavanagh and Lewis, "Interview," 49.

60 On linguistic temporality, see Jakobson, *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*.

61 See Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age*.

62 See also Zumthor's notion of "periods," which are coeval, in *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 38.

63 Ibid., 63.

64 Ibid., 35.

65 We have in mind works from Sartre (*Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, 84–96; first published as *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* in 1939) to Deleuze and Guattari's "faciality" (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 167–91; on Chrétien de Troyes in this context, see 174, 184), but also the post-Sartrean work of Levinas, as discussed in the present essay and in Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (first published as *Totalité et infin: Essai sur l'extériorité* in 1961): "The way in which the other presents himself, *exceeding the idea of the other in me*, we here name face" (50; for a more general discussion, see 50–51). On the face-to-face encounter, Levinas writes: "Even when I shall have linked the Other to myself with the conjunction 'and' the Other continues to face me, to reveal himself in his face. Religion subtends this formal totality" (80–81). See also Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond* (first published as *Le pas au-delà* in 1973), 35.

66 Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 79.

67 Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, xii; see also 375.

68 Nichols, "The New Medievalism," 12. Of this form of alterity, Kathleen Biddick writes, "The repetitious invocation . . . of images of the 'hard-edged alterity' of the Middle Ages is suspect. These images mark a desire rigidly to separate past and present, history and theory, medieval studies and medievalism. They foreclose exploration of how critical theories might historicize medieval studies" (*Shock of Medievalism*, 4). One may find an earlier reflection on this issue in Gadamer's reflections on Hegel's dissolving of the "hard edge of positivity": "it is of central importance that the hermeneutical problem come to grips with Hegel. For Hegel's whole philosophy of mind claims to achieve the total fusion of history with the present. It is concerned not with a reflective formalism but with the same thing as we are. Hegel has thought through the historical dimension in which the problem of hermeneutics is rooted" (*Truth and Method*, 345–46).

69 In this vein, and epigraphically, L. O. Aranye Fradenburg writes: "Past times do not know themselves, or their pasts or their futures, in fullness, free of desire" (*Sacrifice Your Love*, 64).

70 Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 88.

71 By way of contrast, Sartre's historical sense is exhibited in his remark that the "past is not nothing; neither is it the present; but at its very source it is bound to a certain present and to a certain future, to both of which it belongs" (*Being and Nothingness*, 163). For Sartre, the present and the future are the fundamental dialectic of Being-for-itself. While one may fairly say that Sartre's notion of the past is an empty one (see ibid., 164), can the same be said of his idea of the future? According to Thomas Martin, Sartre's "futural dialectic," as we would call it, might not be empty after all but is bounded by identity and facticity—by, in

short, race, class, gender, and so forth; see Martin, *Oppression and the Human Condition*, 17–19. We would agree, citing Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*: "man is, before all else, something that projects itself into a future and is conscious of doing so. Man is indeed a project which has a subjective existence, rather unlike that of a patch of moss, or a fungus, or a cauliflower" (23). See also Simone de Beauvoir: "When I envisage my future, I consider that movement which, prolonging my existence of today, will fulfill my present projects and will surpass them toward new ends: the future is the definite direction of a particular transcendence and it is so closely bound up with the present that it composes with it a single temporal form; this is the future which Heidegger considered as a reality which is given at each moment" (*Ethics of Ambiguity*, 115–16). On the relation between the "practico-inert" in Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and the future, see Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, 196–97.

72 See Beauvoir on the "Future-Thing"; she argues that positing of a future is an act in the present (117). On Beauvoir, festivals, and the future in postwar France, see Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 25–27.

73 In speaking about Carlo Bertolazzi's *El Nost Milan*, Althusser writes of "empty time," a time that "tends towards silence and immobility," a "future that is hardly groped for" (*For Marx*, 135).

74 Bataille finds that "speculation on the future subordinates the present to the past. I relate my activity to the being to come, but the limit of this being is wholly determined in the past. The being I am talking about is closed off, intends to be unchangeable—its limits, its interests" (*On Nietzsche*, 144). Foucault, in "On Transgression," seeks to read a future out of Bataille; see *Language, Countermemory, Practice*, 33.

75 For Blanchot, there is not only an "empty future" but an "empty past"; see *Step Not Beyond*, 12–13, 15, 22, 29–30, 40, 42, 55–56, 90, 107, 110.

76 Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 89 and 90.

77 Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 39; *Essai*, 62–63.

78 For a succinct statement about various propositions on the "eternal return"—from Kant to Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Deleuze—see Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 57–84.

79 Blanchot, *Step Not Beyond*, 41–42, and similarly, 16; see also his discussion of writing as effacement, 50.

80 Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 16 (emphasis added); *Essai*, 35.

81 Granted, Zumthor's wilder, albeit intermittent claims—such as "medieval poetry is thus closer to the modern mass media" (*Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 19)—stand out among his more nuanced attempts to discuss the seeming "modernity" of medieval texts; see *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 28, 39, 43, 53–54, 71.

82 See especially Zumthor's reflections on the "empirical" levels of meaning from the "work's material (physical) aspect" to its "motifs and themes" (ibid., 111).

83 Blanchot, *Step Not Beyond*, 30. On Nietzsche, see also 22, whence this formulation comes.

84 Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 92 (emphasis added).

85 For an alternative view, see Holsinger, *Premodern Condition*, 16.

86 In *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, Zumthor exhibits a hybrid poststructuralism involving, in the first instance, symptomology—focusing on disrupted linguistic structures and modes of "interference" (8), "tension" (21), and "intensity" (4, 35, 39) in language that point to historico-textual conditions that are nowhere directly represented or "imaged" in any given work. He finds the same to be true of authorial identity, and in fact he proposes his own version of the "death of the author" (à la Barthes) and the "author function" (à la Foucault) in his pronouncements about "author functionaries": "The author has disappeared; what remains is the subject of the enunciation, a communicating psyche, integrated in the text and indissoluble from the way it functions: a talking id" (43, 44). Additionally, Zumthor takes up formalism in his use of preset terms to describe authorial, literary, and textual properties ("mouvance," 45–46; "work," 47–48)—all of which doubtless draws from his early adoption, as he puts it, of "the traditional English critical technique of close reading" (xi), which in turn informs symptomatic readings: "A certain type of critical formalism has to be opened up to the perception of history's silent presence" (4).

87 Vance, however, stated that with the publication of Zumthor's book in 1972, "a giant step has at least been taken" in the field, "a corner has been irreversibly turned" ("The Modernity of the Middle Ages in the Future," 145). Bloch and Nichols regard Zumthor's other work (particularly *Speaking of the Middle Ages*) as equally paradigm-shifting, "the first attempt, certainly in recent years, to propose the memoir as a legitimate exemplum within the domain of the 'objective' history of medieval studies" (introduction to Bloch and Nichols, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, 6); see also Bloch, "Once and Future Middle Ages," 71. For Zumthor's influence on "studies . . . of English medieval literature," see the translator's preface by Philip Bennett in Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, vii.

88 Zumthor's methods appeared to scholars as some strange new technology from the future to describe texts in their own futural terms. For example, Vance, in his review article entitled "The Modernity of the Middle Ages in the Future," suggests that Zumthor renders medieval texts as hypermodern, more modern than our own moment: "Zumthor, like his forbears in medieval studies, is portraying in the 'medieval' poet a modern in disguise. What is surprising is that the medieval poet turns out to be more modern than anyone writing nowadays at Editions du Seuil ever dreamed of being" ("Modernity of the Middle Ages," 146). Vance inteprets Zumthor's futural tendencies as straightforwardly *modernizing* ones and not (as they should be seen) as philosophical contributions about questions of futurity in the French scene. (Zumthor understands "modernization" to be, simply, "change" or the introduction of novelty to tradition; see *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 27 and 36.) In arguing against Zumthor's purported modernization of medieval literature, Vance drives a wedge between past and

present, a certain *hard-edged* (if you will) technological difference between medieval and modern forms of textual reproduction: modern culture has "the technological achievement that is Xerox" and thus satisfies the "compulsion to preserve as perfectly as possible the mark of the text as Original, to freeze it for futurity" ("Modernity of the Middle Ages," 147). As a result of this reception, Zumthor's own work appears out of time, such that any final judgement about its importance will have to wait for the future to which it speaks: "Zumthor's book does not demand, at present, to be judged, for it will assuredly stand or fall with the collective efforts of a whole generation" (Vance, "Modernity of the Middle Ages," 151). Haidu concludes similarly in saying that Zumthor's book "is guaranteed not to induce universal agreement—fortunately!—but it is likely to prove, especially for the coming generation, the most insightful and inciting voice speaking about that curious body of texts that is medieval literature" (Haidu, "Making It [New] in the Middle Ages," 11b).

89 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen supplies an overview of what he calls "critical temporal studies"; see the chapter "Time's Machines" in *Medieval Identity Machines* (1–34, especially 8). For other explorations of temporality in medieval studies or the "temporal folds" between medieval and modern, see Carolyn Dinshaw's contributions to the roundtable in Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities," 177–78, 185–86, 190; and the "Further Reading" at the end of Dinshaw, "Temporalities," 122–23.

90 For the critique of Bergsonian duration and an analysis of temporal interruption, see Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* (first published as *Dialectique de la durée* in 1950).

91 We agree with a point Annamarie Jagose made in the GLQ roundtable cited above: "Rather than invoke as our straight guy a version of time that is always linear, teleological, reproductive, future oriented, what difference might it make to acknowledge the intellectual traditions in which time has also been influentially thought and experienced as cyclical, interrupted, multilayered, reversible, stalled—and not always in contexts easily recuperated as queer?" (Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities," 186–87).

92 Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* has an avowed Heideggerian intention (18), with the "second part of the book . . . organized under the sign of Heidegger" (19; see also 21).

93 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 374 [326].

94 For instance, Dinshaw argues for affective identifications with the past that in turn produce an ever-expanding now. In light of the foregoing, this is not necessarily a new project. She contrasts, for instance, Foucault's "ontology of the present" with Jameson's imperative in *The Political Unconscious* to "always historicize!" (Dinshaw, "Temporalities," 111). In this respect, she follows Chakrabarty's critique of Jameson—particularly "the assumption of a continuous, homogenous, infinitely stretched out time" (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 111). However, Dinshaw simplifies Marxist theory after Chakrabarty as a body of

thought invested in singular temporalities, linear history, and progress. Any student of Marxism knows that the opposite has always been the case—from Marx's theorization of labor time and his observations about the anachronism of any given historical situation; from the Brechtian multiple, dramatic time (as fully realized by Althusser); to Lukács's prerevolutionary time; to Benjamin's retrospective "angel of history"; to modes of production as historical and temporal locators, often out of linear time; to the famous stalled history of the "dialectic at a standstill"; to Jameson's own *A Singular Modernity: Essays on the Ontology of the Present*, whose fitting subtitle matches Foucault's phrase and brings the questions of affect and temporality to historical reflection. One might well, then, regard Dinshaw's reflections on the ever-expanding now as an essential feature of modernity's own presentism, itself a marker of its own periodizing limits. For a statement that presentism is also periodization, see Kathleen Davis's opening paragraphs in this volume, 39–40. For a critique of presentism in medieval studies, as well as a grounded feminist polemic on historical method, see Bennett, *History Matters*. Last but not least, for some powerful essays that look at issues of temporality in various thinkers, see Nolan, "Making the Aesthetic Turn," and Uebel, "Opening Time."

95 See Nichols, "The New Medievalism," 8. On that entity related to "New Medievalism," the "new philology," see Kay, "Analytic Survey 3," and Warren, "Post-Philology," 24.

96 We are aware that one may now designate the former "new philology" in the German humanistic disciplines as an "old philology" centered around journals such as *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, *Neophilologus*, and *Studia Neophilologica*; on this point, see Warren, "Post-Philology," 23–24 and 40n22. But none of the program statements posit a new future for the discipline. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, however, does find analogues between the New Philologists and early twentieth-century Spanish philologists who sought to bring "the otherness of the tradition into contact with the culture of their own present and its future" ("A Philological Invention of Modernism," 42).

97 Nichols, "The New Medievalism," 9.

98 Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 3–4. Osborne suggests that "the failure to recognize the logic of these determinants underlies naive concepts of 'postmodernity' as a new historical epoch which succeeds modernity in historical time in the same way that modernity itself might be thought to have succeeded the 'Middle' Ages" (9). Not surprisingly, Zumthor himself affirms this idea in his review of this volume: "Attempts to revitalize the Middle Ages have been numerous in many countries in the last twenty years. At present the context of such attempts is the epistemological opposition between modernity and postmodernism" ("Review of *The New Medievalism*," 112).

99 Nichols, "The New Medievalism," 8.

100 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

101 Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 61.

THEOLOGICAL MODERNITIES

The Sense of an Epoch

Periodization, Sovereignty, and the Limits of Secularization

KATHLEEN DAVIS

This moment of suspense, this épokhè, this founding or revolutionary moment of law is, in law, an instance of non-law. But it is also the whole history of law.—Jacques Derrida

"Where is the now?" The challenge of this question lies less in its riddle than in its suggestion that we must not answer. Were we to supply a location for "the now," for a present already made strangely singular yet ubiquitous by the definite article, we would privilege a specific position—whether cultural, geographic, economic, political, or technological—as *the* perspective from which a "present" is made apprehensible. We would thus be proposing a particular content, and by extension a set of potential meanings, for the apparently global time of "the now." In short, we would periodize. Through its trick of catachresis, this question redirects us to the "where" of our own speaking position as the premise that makes it possible to say "now," and to the periodizing structure shared by this subject position and any conception of a global moment or politics. At its most extreme, this question references the global violence we witness today and reminds us that every faction engaged in this economic, religious, or ethnic strife must attach not only to a legitimating history but to a theory of history, not only to a particular claim upon "the now" but to a conception of how "the now" can be thought.

I take the question "Where is the now?" from Dipesh Chakrabarty, who raises it as a challenge to scholarship that presupposes a "certain figure of the now" in its approach to current political dilemmas, insisting that "how we periodize our present is connected to the question of how we imagine

the political," and that the insufficiently examined historicity of fundamental concepts—such as religion, secularism, democracy, and politics—renders the logic of many events across the world unrecognizable to dominant strains of critical theory.[1] The history of these fundamental concepts is also the history of medieval/modern periodization, consideration of which is essential to any rethinking of critical theory and its limits.

This essay focuses upon the problem of "secularization," which as a term suggests the transference or transformation of something from a "nonsecular" to a "secular" status, whether that something is a plot of land, a priest, a government, or an attitude. As an ecclesiastical term since early Christianity, it has referred to the movement from monastic life to that of secular clergy, and as a legal term in European history after the Reformation it refers to the expropriation of ecclesiastical rights and property. In a less concise and far more controversial sense, secularization has been understood as a periodizing term that attempts to narrate the modernization of Europe as it gradually overcame a hierarchized and metaphysically shackled past through a series of political struggles, religious wars, and philosophical upheavals. This is the familiar Enlightenment "triumphalist" narrative of secularization—for which the privatization of religion, along with the freeing of the European imagination from the stranglehold of Providence, came to mark the conditions of possibility of the emergence of the political qualities designated "modern," particularly the nation-state and its self-conscious citizen. The temporality of secularization in this sense is qualitative, and its underside is the history of colonialism, empire, and slavery. This triumphalist narrative is fast losing credibility as current controversies over secularization, coincident with the "resurgence of religion" in many parts of the world, including the United States, have exposed the historicity of its qualitative story.[2]

My interest here is in the role of medieval/modern periodization in the constitution of the fundamental categories in question, and how taking this periodization into account can make a difference in understanding the contours and implications of the debate.[3] The belief in a break between a medieval and a modern (or an early modern) period ever more intensively assumes world-historical implications for categories such as the sovereign state and secular politics—that is, categories with both ideological and territorial stakes. For exactly this reason, the "Middle Ages," like "modernity" before it, has been vaulted from a European category to a global

category of time.[4] This globalized Middle Ages operates in two conflicting ways. On the one hand, literary and political history—whether of Europe, Asia, India, or Africa—is increasingly organized along a conventional medieval/(early) modern divide. According to this scenario, the world moves in unison, in tempo with a once European story written at the height of, and in tandem with, colonialism, nationalism, imperialism, and Orientalism.[5] On the other hand, the "Middle Ages" is a mobile category, applicable at any time to any society that has not "yet" achieved modernity or, worse, has become retrograde. In this mode, it provides a template for what Johannes Fabian has aptly termed the "denial of coevalness."[6]

Our coming to terms with medieval/modern periodization, to put this more forcefully, is prerequisite to addressing the disavowal by "secular" politics of its founding paradox—a disavowal that, despite all good faith efforts (toward justice or freedom, for example) has enabled and continues to enable the sanctification of particular vested interests. The theory of history sustaining medieval/modern periodization, I suggest, bears a direct relation to this global violence, particularly with respect to the centrality of "religion" to "politics" in current bids for sovereignty. As a way of exploring within "secularization" the links between concepts of historical time and claims to sovereignty, I focus particularly on the relations between the thinking of Carl Schmitt on sovereignty and that of Reinhart Koselleck on historical time.[7] The obvious pertinence of Schmitt's theory of sovereignty to recent political events helps to explain why it has long resonated with political advocates on both the left and the right and continues, as Étienne Balibar notes, to "haunt the defenses as well as the critiques of national state sovereignty."[8] Koselleck's essays on the semantics of historical time in *Futures Past*, which center upon issues of secularization and have been crucial to arguments regarding the discrete identity of "modernity," do not overtly address problems of sovereignty. Yet as I show by considering their relation to arguments by Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Karl Löwith, and Hans Blumenberg, these essays take up central issues in discussions regarding sovereignty, periodization, and "world order." Indeed, Koselleck's project of identifying historical-political conceptions in the "given present" is at its core a question of "the now" as I address it above.

Periodization, above all, concerns the relation between the history of fundamental political concepts and its enabling theory, between a conception of "the now" and the conditions of its being thought. The word "periodicity," coined in the nineteenth century as a scientific term to describe recurring intervals (for instance, one might monitor or set periodicity in an experiment),[9] has moved into literary studies by analogy to "historicity," thus raising for "periods" and "periodization" the problematic issue of the *event*. An *event* occurs, unique and for the first time, yet it is recognizable and has meaning only within existing systems that anticipate it, predisposing or delimiting—although incapable of fully determining—the potential of its arrival. This paradox of the *event* describes the nature of the tie between periodization and periodicity, between the political history of "periods" such as medieval or modern and the potential of "the now," which this history anticipates and upon which it exercises a powerful tug. Periodization, even when it applies to a distant past, is always a critical intervention in "the now," always a bid to set conditions for the present experiment.[10] In an important sense, we cannot periodize the past, although interventions in "the now" always draw upon available schemes of intelligibility, including already consolidated "pasts" made accessible by the politics and historiography attending former periodizations.

The qualitative or overtly ideological narrative of Europe's secularization disavows the implication of the *épokhè* at the foundation of law. Operating in the void of the suspense of the law, the *constitution* of law, in the sense of a radical founding or revolutionary moment, has by definition no basis of justification in already constituted norms, resulting in a fundamental paradox that, as my epigraph from Derrida suggests, involves the sense of an epoch. This suspense of the law is akin to what Carl Schmitt has described as the "exception": a singular event that, like a miracle, entirely exceeds the existing order and thus suspends it. Sovereignty, the force that must "decide" upon the state of exception (*Ausnahmezustand*) and that is relevant only in relation to it, is analogous to the "divine" in the sense that its decision must come ex nihilo (although even for Schmitt the purity of this decision cannot be absolute).[11] The legal order of a state, Schmitt argues, can never be fully self-enclosed; there is always the possibility that a "state of exception" might exceed the expectations of all

juridical norms. The exception "can *at best* be characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state, or the like," but by definition it cannot actually be predefined or "made to conform to a preformed law."[12] Constitutional development tended toward honing legal order into a pure mechanistic system for which all circumstances are calculable, thus eliminating, in Schmitt's eyes, the state's capacity to confront that which is incalculable according to its laws.

In order to protect its autonomy, Schmitt argues, a state requires a sovereign, whose position it is to decide that an exception has occurred and to suspend the existing legal order for the preservation of the state. Schmitt makes it clear that he is dealing with a limit concept. Paradoxically, if a state is to be sovereign in the sense of being "autonomous" (*auto*, "self"; *nomos*, "law"), it must at its core be *antinomic*: it requires a sovereign who is both inside and outside the law, and whose decision, like creation ex nihilo, simultaneously defines and breaches the limit of that law. Rigorously true to the concept of sovereignty as underived power, the decision is "independent of argumentative substantiation. . . . Looked at normatively, the decision emanates from nothingness."[13] The foundation of this sovereignty, then, is not locatable. One goal of this essay is to show how medieval/modern periodization frequently serves as a substitute for this absent foundation of sovereignty and thereby installs certain ostensible characteristics of the "modern" in the place of the sovereign. In this sense, periodization functions as sovereign *decision*.

The term "secularization" as Schmitt uses it differs subtly but importantly from the qualitative narrative of secularization that I describe above. Indeed, he critiques such a narrative, and it is within the meaning of "secularization" that battles over sovereignty and periodization are fought. Rather than being a story of Europe's extrication from theological constraints and a consequent rise of modern political freedom and democracy, secularization for Schmitt, as well as for many of his contemporary theorists of sovereignty and history, means the transference of theological forms to the politics of an ostensibly "secular" state, in which "theology" thus becomes immanent. This change is generally understood to occur in the seventeenth century, or in the course of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but the "Middle Ages" invariably serves as the presecular exemplar for both the proponents and the detractors of this "secularization theory."

We find a sense of secularization with affinities to Schmitt's in the work of Walter Benjamin, who had also dealt with the "divine" suspension of all existing law in his "Critique of Violence," but who differently conceives the relation between sovereign decision and theological form.[14] Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, which acknowledges its heavy debt to Schmitt's *Political Theology*, also addresses the alignment of sovereignty and history with respect to epochality. The "true object" of the German *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin explains, is "historical life as represented by its epoch," and "the sovereign, the principal exponent of history, almost serves as its incarnation."[15] In this, Benjamin suggests, drama coincides with politics: "The Sovereign represents history. He holds the course of history in his hand like a scepter. This view is by no means peculiar to the dramatists. It is based on certain constitutional notions."[16]

Rather than validating this sovereign representation, however, Benjamin calls it into question by linking it to the problems of literary representation and interpretation, thereby intersecting several aspects of Schmitt's invocation of "drama" and political representation:

> Confronted with a literature which sought, in a sense, to reduce both its contemporaries and posterity to silence through the extravagance of its technique, the unfailing richness of its creations, and the vehemence of its claims to value, one should emphasize the necessity of that sovereign attitude which the representation of the idea of a form demands. Even then the danger of allowing oneself to plunge from the heights of knowledge into the profoundest depths of the baroque state of mind, is not a negligible one. That characteristic feeling of dizziness which is induced by the spectacle of the spiritual contradictions of this epoch is a recurrent feature in the improvised attempts to capture its meaning.[17]

By emphasizing the "*necessity* of that sovereign attitude which the representation of the idea of a form demands" (my emphasis), Benjamin returns us to the paradox of the sovereign decision, which must be made—and can only be made—in the face of its own undecidability: technically, representation is impossible. Whereas Schmitt negotiates this paradox by predisposing sovereign decision to the interests of the state, Benjamin, as Samuel Weber argues, concentrates on the disarticulation of sovereignty. On the one hand, Benjamin recognizes that the necessity of sovereign decision "demands completion of the image of the sovereign, as tyrant." On the other hand, the sovereign "who is responsible for making the

decision to proclaim the state of emergency reveals, at the first opportunity, that he is almost incapable of making a decision."[18] Rather than representing the solidity of an epoch, the sovereign instead represents its impossibility in the form of his own madness: "there is this one thing to be said in favour of the Caesar as he loses himself in the ecstasy of power: he falls victim to the disproportion between the unlimited hierarchical dignity, with which he is divinely invested and the humble estate of his humanity."[19] Benjamin's depiction of this mad Caesar perhaps gives reply to the image of a rational, secular modern state and the world order over which it would lay claim.

LÖWITH'S SECULARIZATION THESIS

Some of the postwar challenges to this logic of world order embraced and expanded the sense of "secularization" proffered by thinkers such as Schmitt and Benjamin. In so doing, they focused upon the relation between bids for political sovereignty and the periodization of history. Most influential was the "secularization theory" popularized by Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History*, which argued, far more generally than did Schmitt and with a critical sensibility toward his theory of sovereignty, that modern historical concepts such as progress are secularized versions of Christian ideas, particularly eschatology: for Auguste Comte and G. W. F. Hegel, history had its end at its beginning, and for Karl Marx the proletariat was a chosen people with a redemptive mission.[20] An expatriate German with Jewish lineage writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, Löwith admired the historians he studied—from Marx, Hegel, and Comte to Joachim of Fiore (1131–1202), Augustine, and Orosius—but he found their belief in a trajectory of fulfillment a critical failure: "The world is still as it was in the time of Alaric; only our means of oppression and destruction (as well as of reconstruction) are considerably improved."[21] For Löwith, there is nothing legitimate about historical "periods"; to the contrary, they are means of legitimizing political ends. Löwith's work is important for its insistence that conceptions of historical time must be understood as political strategy—and, in the case of periodized, progressive history, as a means of aggression.

With a keen sense of the political stakes of periodization, Löwith argues that peace requires a revised sense of periodicity, and his claims focus

upon the relation between political legitimacy and the quality of historical time. Periodization operates doubly in Löwith's argument. First, and crucially, he insists that the popularly accepted periodization of historical thought—that is, the dismissal of "prescientific" history as nonhistorical—is incorrect. He controverts, in other words, the standard conception of the philosophy of history as "modern." Löwith writes:

> Arguing that the philosophy of history from Augustine to Bossuet does not present a theory of "real" history in its finitude, wealth, and mobility but only a doctrine of history on the basis of revelation and faith, [modern philosophers] drew the conclusion that the theological interpretation of history—or fourteen hundred years of Western thought—is a negligible affair. Against this common opinion that proper historical thinking begins only in modern times, with the eighteenth century, the following outline aims to show that philosophy of history originates with the Hebrew and Christian faith in a fulfillment and that it ends with the secularization of its eschatological pattern.[22]

With this, Löwith undercuts the foundational claim of "modern" sovereignty by exposing its disavowal of the history upon which it constitutes itself. Having dismissed the validity of such a "modern" break in the conception of history, Löwith turns, secondly, to the destructive capacity of "secularized" eschatology, which he sees as having its theoretical basis in the Christian concept of a break with and the supersession of the old law, later materialized through political institutionalization. In this sense, the "secularization," as well as the periodization, of time and politics occurs first with Christianity's "incarnation" of spiritual principles and breaks from the classical pattern of recurrence (which, following Nietzsche, he favors). Löwith's sense of "secularization," then, like Schmitt's, is a story not of Europe's gradual extrication from religion, but rather of the sublimation of theology in the "world": *Heilgeschehen* merged with *Weltgeschichte*—a pattern that, unlike Schmitt, he found disastrous.[23]

Criticism of Löwith based upon whether or not his "secularization" theory is correct entirely misses his point that periodized, telic history is the conceptual basis and the legitimizing tool of world-scale aggression. It is for this reason that he regrets the New Testament teaching that Christ's birth "shattered once and for all the whole frame of history," a temporal break from which a secular and incarnate, rather than spiritual, world destiny was imagined with increasing intensity from the time of Augus-

tine.[24] In this respect, despite their differing philosophies, Löwith shares with Schmitt, as well as with their contemporary Erich Auerbach, a central concern with the political weight of the incarnation and its representative power in law and politics.[25] In his treatise *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* (1923), Schmitt finds in the Roman Catholic Church the authorizing logic of political representation: based upon the historical reality of the incarnation, "the Church is a concrete personal representation of a concrete personality," the model of a "juridical person" with the power to represent the *civitas humana*.[26] It is precisely the loss of such personal representation and its legitimating authority (with the dissolution of the monarchy in the nineteenth century) that for Schmitt inaugurates political crisis, and although Löwith wishes for a different outcome, he works from the same premise regarding the secular politics of the incarnation, which is precisely what sacred/secular periodization would both disavow and extend.

Löwith saw the eighteenth century's self-styled rejection of tradition as a second wave of secularization that redoubled the worldly imposition of the Christian paradigm: "The secular messianism of Western nations is in every case associated with the consciousness of a national, social, or racial vocation which has its roots in the religious belief of being called by God to a particular task of universal significance."[27] Whereas for Schmitt the (mainly Protestant) retreat to private religion amounted to "abandoning the world" to a crude materialism, for Löwith the "secularization," especially the politicization, of spiritual ideas makes nonsense of religion: "A Holy Roman Empire is a contradiction in terms."[28] Both, however, address the "theological" at the core of political legitimacy, Schmitt to urge the necessity of a sovereign who would cut across incalculability with a *decision* upon the exception, and Löwith (like Benjamin) to plead for sustaining the "incalculability" of history and politics.[29] Indeed, Löwith insists upon the very contingency and incalculability that Schmitt had theorized with the "exception," and argues against the preemption of incalculable "decision" by the interests of a state and a homogeneous "people," the identification of which Schmitt had aligned with the sovereign decision.[30] Recognizing that periodization operates both as a decision that constitutes a "people" and as the temporal platform for such precalculation, Löwith deliberately undermines "modern" claims about the meaning of history (secularization) and the concept of sovereignty resting on that meaning.

Response to this revised sense of "secularization" came in the form of Hans Blumenberg's strident *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966), which limns the stakes in its title.[31] Up to this point, the discussion of "secularization" had primarily focused upon political legitimacy and sovereignty. By recasting the issue as one of the "modern age" (*Neuzeit*), Blumenberg made explicit that this question of "legitimacy" turns upon historical time itself, and he determined to counter the threat to periodization. A refutation of "secularization theory" at large, Blumenberg's book specifically targeted Löwith and Schmitt but also criticized any related theories, such as Max Weber's on Puritanism and capitalism. Writing in the 1960s, Blumenberg is ready to offload what he sees as guilt-ridden concern for the politics of supersession and to reclaim possession of history in the name of a self-substantiating modernity. Keeping Schmitt's language of sovereignty but shifting the question of legitimacy to periodization, he likens "the secularization theorem" to a parting curse by theology as it declares the new, rightful heir its usurping bastard. The "secularization theorem," Blumenberg writes,

> is (in its position in history) something in the nature of a final *theologumenon* [theological dictum] intended to lay on the heirs of theology a guilty conscience about their entrance into the succession. . . . Not only does the secularization thesis explain the modern age; it explains it as the wrong turning for which the thesis itself is able to prescribe the corrective. It would be the exact reverse of the claim that the young Hegel had described as the task of the critique of religion in his time: "Despite earlier attempts, it has been reserved for our times especially to claim as man's property, at least in theory, the treasures that have been squandered on heaven; but what age will have the strength to insist on this right and to take actual possession?"[32]

The *right*, not the fact, of possession is the issue, and for Blumenberg its resolution utterly depends upon the legitimacy of periodization. In order to defend the status of this right as literally a matter of property (and, by extension, of propriety), he insists that the term "secularization" in the philosophy of history metaphorizes its juridical meaning as the illegitimate seizure of Church property, even though he grants that the philosophical history of the concept does not support this reading. By way of a

double negative and an appeal against rhetoric, he argues that this essentially improper, metaphorical "alienation of a historical substance from its origin" cancels out, or delegitimates, any illegitimacy thus attributed to the succession of the modern age.[33] Blumenberg's insistence upon the radical sense of "legitimacy" (from *lex/leges*, "law") in his title registers the stakes of periodization accurately enough, and the title of this volume, *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages*, responds in kind by exposing the machinations necessary to conjure the clean cut of a proper noun and literal propriety, and thus ironically overturns Blumenberg's property claim.

By way of a reply to Schmitt, Blumenberg negotiates the problem of a pure self-founding by describing *Neuzeit* as an "emergency self-consolidation"—an epochal "postmedieval self-assertion" in the face of necessity (such as the religious wars). This necessity, which, like Schmitt's *Ausnahmezustand* requires suspension of the norm, gives *Neuzeit* a historical grounding without historical continuity, thus granting it legitimate epochal status. In this way, Blumenberg explains modernity's self-assertion in terms of a sovereign *decision* analogous to Schmitt's definition of sovereignty ("Sovereign is he who decides on the exception"): "The concept of the legitimacy of the modern age is not derived from the accomplishments of reason but rather from the necessity of those accomplishments. Theological voluntarism and human rationalism are historical correlates; thus the legitimacy of the modern age is not shown as a result of its 'newness'—the claim to be a modern age does not as such justify it."[34] Justification comes instead from the historical necessity that calls it into being. Whereas for Schmitt it is the sovereign who decides upon the state of exception and thus suspends the law, Blumenberg collapses the sovereign and the exception, and consigns *decision* to history, which periodizes itself. And although it is understood by all parties that "world order" is the topic under discussion, the question "Whose history?" (a correlate, we could say, of "Who decides?") does not arise. In this way, the paradox of a self-constituting modernity is folded into the cut of periodization itself, and the "modern" can emerge as unproblematically sovereign.

For a more extensive example of this periodizing logic and its role in recent theories of time and modernity, I turn to a work that grapples—under the influence of Schmitt's *Political Theology* and in the context of this debate over periodization—with the issues of secularization, sovereignty, and temporality: that is, to Reinhart Koselleck's semantics of historical time.[35]

Koselleck's collected essays on historical semantics have (increasingly since the publication of their English translation as *Futures Past*) become a touchstone both for critics who are invested in theories of temporality and modernity and for those who want to lean on a respectable theory of periodization in order to skirt or to epitomize the Middle Ages (often the same people, of course). Koselleck's work is undoubtedly of profound methodological importance for studies in temporality, but this importance is all the more reason to consider his reliance upon periodization and the relationship of this reliance to controversies regarding the history and theory of sovereignty. Koselleck's analyses of European historiography distill decades of debate over secularization and periodization on both sides of the Atlantic, and in large measure they sanitize its politics. Directly and indirectly, his essays have made it easy for theorists to bypass the political intricacies of periodization and to support reductive versions of temporality that frequently undermine the very arguments being made. His *Futures Past* is thus both an example of and a factor in critical theory's difficulty with addressing, and sometimes even recognizing, events that defy preconceived concepts of religion, secularism, democracy, and politics.

For my purposes here, the germane issue is not empirical correctness or error, but the elision between a theory of history and the historical change it purports to examine. In Koselleck's case, I believe that—not least because of the critical matrix in which he worked—this slippage exposes the logic of medieval/modern periodization, its historical and conceptual relation to sovereignty, and its implications for the relation of religion and politics "now." Koselleck's characterization of medieval concepts of time is so reductive and misleading that to call it wrong seems inadequate; indeed, as I will show, it *is* inadequate, since these characterizations operate on the basis of such sweeping assumptions that they easily rationalize and absorb contradictory empirical evidence. In part, I argue here that by

shifting the target of critique from political legitimacy to conceptions of historical time, Koselleck—like many of his contemporaries—not only substitutes a medieval/modern break for the absent foundation of sovereignty, but also supplies this substitution with a narrative form.

Koselleck was deeply influenced by his personal and academic relationship with Schmitt, and the effects of *Political Theology* as well as other works by Schmitt appear throughout *Futures Past* in subtle form.[36] By contrast, Koselleck's earlier *Critique and Crisis* (1959) explicitly engages Schmitt's theory and its political fate as it attempts to explain the rise of National Socialism and the cold war in terms of European philosophies of history. Political crisis, for Koselleck, "presses for a decision," in association with "the philosophies of history that correspond to the crisis and in whose name we seek to anticipate the decision, to influence it, steer it, or, as catastrophically, to prevent it."[37] "Critique," therefore, bears the heavy responsibility of decoding European history in order to avoid its repetition. The eighteenth century serves as both example and the "common root" of this history, in that "it failed to note any connection between the critique it practiced and the looming crisis," and thus unwarily hastened toward "an unexpected decision."[38] Koselleck's early work, then, is driven by an attempt to take responsibility for European violence and to cultivate a more politically and historically aware brand of criticism.

In its effort to understand how Europe's utopian hopes went wrong, *Critique and Crisis* is also indebted to the "secularization theory" popularized by Löwith, whose argument and the response to it by Blumenberg were integral to the politics of time inhabiting "secularization" by the time Koselleck wrote *Futures Past*. Likewise integral to this argument was the degree to which periodization had become the linchpin of the controversy. Blumenberg had criticized Koselleck's *Critique and Crisis* for its confirmation of "the process of secularization that transposed eschatology into a progressive history," and while Koselleck does not explicitly acknowledge the "secularization" debate in his essays in *Futures Past*, he takes up its central issue as articulated by Blumenberg: the qualitative difference of modernity [*Neuzeit*] from a "Middle Ages" oriented to eschatology.[39]

Koselleck focuses his argument on changing historical conceptions of time, and stipulates from the outset of *Futures Past* that "historical time, if the concept has a specific meaning, is bound up with social and political actions," each with its own temporal rhythm.[40] Agreeing with Johann

Gottfried von Herder that at any one time in the universe there are innumerably many times, he posits that each epoch evinces its own understanding of the interlinkings among events and that, indeed, such historical understanding is precisely what determines an epoch. In contrast to his earlier work, he identifies a change in the comprehension of temporality as exactly what constitutes the dissolution of one epoch and the emergence of another. In order to study this change he takes as his central question, "How, in a given present, are the temporal dimensions of past and future related?"[41] The title *Futures Past* (*Vergangene Zukunft*) thus refers in part to a bygone way of experiencing a relationship with the future, particularly that of a "medieval" past sealed off from the future through its own closed and now past sense of the future.[42] Some of Koselleck's essays explore temporalities of "modernity" in rich ways—such as negotiating the gap between experience and expectation, or encountering a once imagined future—but they never come untethered from the foundational exclusion of "medieval" time.

Koselleck's goal of identifying such historical-political conceptions of time in any "given present" engages directly with the definition of epochality that Schmitt had already set out in *Political Theology*: "The metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organization. The determination of such an identity is the sociology of the concept of sovereignty."[43] Schmitt never hesitates to explain this "identity" as one that results from conquest and territorialization of both land and ideas, principally as determined by Europe's mapping of the world.[44] Koselleck's "given present"—at its core a political question of "the now" as I discuss it above (that is, "a certain figure of the now" that masks the historicity of its fundamental concepts)—must be understood in these terms. His theory of periodization may be persuasive when viewed from within the self-defining "modern European" political discourse in which he is situated, and indeed it has accrued many advocates. But it cannot be separated from the contemporaneous and interrelated discourses of "world order" such as anthropology and Orientalism, which defined Europe's Others in precisely the terms Koselleck applies to the Middle Ages. In effect, his characterization of the Middle Ages extends and strengthens these discourses.[45]

World order is a central issue for *Futures Past.* These essays developed

out of Koselleck's work on the multivolume dictionary of historical concepts, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, which he coedited throughout the 1960s and 1970s with Werner Conze and the medieval historian Otto Brunner.[46] Brunner is best known for his *Land and Lordship* (1939), an important text in the movement of the 1930s and 1940s against the dominant state-oriented models of medieval German history. *Land and Lordship* reconceptualized late medieval Austrian constitutional history and advanced a model of a Germanic *Volk* state meant to shatter liberal-bourgeois versions of medieval antecedents to the modern national state and to shore up the political theory of the Third Reich. In Brunner's own terms, his critique evinced "present-day relatedness" (*Gegenwartsbezogenheit*) in that it secured "the historical foundation of the Third Reich's law and constitution, not those of the 'bourgeois *Rechtsstaat*' and its basis in absolutism."[47] After the war Brunner redirected his theory from German to European civilization—the origin, he believed, of what would inevitably become a global culture rooted in the social structure of premodern Europe (stretching from tribal roots up to 1800)—and he continued to pursue the relatedness of that structure to Western civilization as a world order.[48] Indeed, this is the task of the dictionary of historical concepts, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, which in Koselleck's terms aimed to examine "the dissolution of the old world and the emergence of the new in terms of the historicoconceptual comprehension of this process."[49] Koselleck's historical semantics, then, grew out of an intense need to revise and to reconcile the account of history with a workable but singular vision of "the now," understood in terms of temporality itself, and legitimated through a narrative of periodization.

Throughout his essays Koselleck focuses on the years 1500 to 1800 ("early modernity" or *frühe Neuzeit*) as "the period in which modernity is formed" and argues that during this time the possibility opened—gradually and sporadically—for history to become "temporalized."[50] All of the essays are variations on this central tenet, explicitly stated and glossed in the opening essay, "Modernity and the Planes of Historicity," which I use as my base text, so to speak, for exploring Koselleck's theory of temporalization and for working through its implications for the relation between periodization and sovereignty. I read, as does Koselleck, within the double frame he provides for his opening scene.

The scene is that of Albrecht Altdorfer's famous *Alexanderschlacht*

("The Battle of Alexander and Darius on the Issus"), a painting commissioned in 1528 by Duke William IV of Bavaria for his newly built summer home. It is epochal in every sense:

> Upon an area of one and a half square meters, Altdorfer reveals to us the cosmic panorama of a decisive battle of world-historical significance, the Battle of Issus, which in 333 B.C. opened the epoch of Hellenism, as we say today. With a mastery previously unknown, Altdorfer was able to depict thousand upon thousand of individual warriors as complete armies; he shows us the clash of armored squadrons of horse and foot soldiers armed with spears; the victorious line of attack of the Macedonians, with Alexander far out at the head; the confusion and disintegration which overtook the Persians; and the expectant bearing of the Greek battle-reserves, which will then complete the victory.[51]

Standing at the opening of Koselleck's transitional early modern period, William IV's "Christian-Humanism" and Altdorfer's unprecedented mastery align with the initiating moment of Hellenism, thus confirming humanism's self-proclaimed association with classical antiquity, and, more importantly, linking this aesthetic moment to military conquest, empire, and the trajectory of world history. Despite the initiatory status he grants it, however, Koselleck views this scene and its ducal setting as irrevocably tied to the past, a point he explains through discussion of anachronism. He first notes the deliberate and artful use of anachronism by Altdorfer, who had researched the battle and inscribed upon each army's banner the number of its combatants, including the number of dead, even though in the painting these future dead remain among the living. But Koselleck posits a second element of anachronism as more apparent "to us" *as* anachronism, by which he means Altdorfer's invocation of contemporary figures and battles, such as the Emperor Maximilian or the defeated Turks at the siege of Vienna, whom Altdorfer's Persians resemble "from their feet to their turbans," to the effect that the painting is both historical in the minutest detail *and* contemporary in its typologically charged political nuance.[52]

To Koselleck, however, this anachronism attests not to a deft handling of historical time, but to an absence for Altdorfer of a temporal dimension: for him, fourth-century Persians look like sixteenth-century Turks not because he does not know the difference, but because the difference does not matter.[53] The *Alexanderschlacht*, in other words, exemplifies a pre-

modern, *untemporalized* sense of time and a lack of historical consciousness. In contrast to Friedrich Schlegel, who at the end of Koselleck's early modern period admired the *Alexanderschlacht* from a critical-historical distance "as the greatest feat of the age of chivalry," Altdorfer's historical overlays evince an eschatological vision of history, evidence that the sixteenth century (and by degrees also the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) remained locked in a static, constant temporality that proleptically saturates the future as always a repetition of the same: "*Sub specie aeternitatis* nothing novel can emerge."[54] In such a system, there can be no *event* as such: anticipation and arrival are together sucked into the black hole of sacred history, which is not temporalized because its time is essentially undifferentiated. Koselleck thus emphatically reasserts the periodization of the philosophy of history that Löwith had critiqued.

Despite Koselleck's intense focus on Christian ideas, his version of premodern untemporalized history never acknowledges the earlier periodization instantiated by the incarnation—that is, the temporal logic whereby Christianity subsumed and superseded Jewish history—as it had been explicated, for instance, by Löwith. Koselleck's analysis thereby confirms that even when it is most introspective, the "purported 'secularization' of modernity," as Kathleen Biddick argues, "has never overtaken this core Christian conception of supersession."[55] Koselleck once has occasion to reference this history as he argues for the subsumption of Altdorfer's historical consciousness by an impending End: "Altdorfer, who had assisted in the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg . . . knew the signs."[56] The choice of Altdorfer's politically charged *Alexanderschlacht* thus encrypts the problem of supersession and the temporal rupture of the incarnation, even as it bonds the painting's vision of the future to a medieval, fully closed, and untemporalized past.

Koselleck's method of reading the *Alexanderschlacht* also allows him to absorb medieval and early modern state politics into the "plane of historicity" he theorizes. Prior to modernity, he argues, "this always-already guaranteed futurity of the past effected the closure and bounding of the sphere of action available to the state. . . . [T]he state remains trapped within a temporal structure that can be understood as static movement."[57] Because Koselleck's analysis of periodization is tied to the issue of religion, the Reformation opens both his early modern period and the possibility of politics. It initiates the possibility of breaking from "medieval" stasis for

two related reasons that are now familiar from many accounts of a period break. First, as a movement of religious renewal it "carried with it all the signs of the End of the World," yet the End did not happen, but was increasingly deferred, weakening the grip of the Church over the future. Second, the bloodbaths of religious war prompted the Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555), which set aside the requirement of religious unity and thus "concealed within itself a new principle, that of 'politics,' " a principle further advanced by the Peace of Westphalia.[58] Politics thus begins to break the cyclic grip of prophecy, for which it substituted rational foresight and planning.

In his own postwar analysis of transitions in world order, Schmitt had already discussed the historicity of stasis and action, prophecy and politics, and, like Löwith, he refutes medieval/modern periodization upon the basis of conceptions of history. Insisting upon the powerful sense of history inherent to Christian politics since the time of Paul, Schmitt invokes the concept of *katechon*, the "restrainer" (or *anomos*, "lawless one"), named by Paul in the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, which had long been interpreted as the Roman Empire's function of staving off the coming of the Antichrist.[59] I address this idea and the limits of Schmitt's argument elsewhere, but the salient point here is that Schmitt refuses the eschatological, atemporal paralysis that Koselleck attributes to the Middle Ages.[60] He argues instead that the concept of *katechon* signaled a time full with a "secular" meaningfulness of history:

> I do not believe that any historical concept other than *katechon* would have been possible for the original Christian faith. The belief that a restrainer holds back the end of the world provides the only bridge between the notion of an eschatological paralysis of all human events and a tremendous historical monolith like that of the Christian empire of the Germanic kings. . . . [T]his took the form of a lucid Christian faith in potent historical power. Anyone unable to distinguish between the maxims of Haimo of Halberstadt or Adso and the obscure oracles of Pseudo-Methodius or the Tiburtinian sibyls would be able to comprehend the empire of the Christian Middle Ages only in terms of distorting generalizations and parallels, but not in terms of its concrete historical authenticity.[61]

As if in ironic response to Schmitt's warning that the inability to distinguish between medieval prophetic and historicist genres would result in "distorting generalizations," Koselleck insists upon a binarized and linear

sorting that moves from stasis to action, prophecy to politics, religious to secular. For Koselleck this linear transition does not culminate with the Enlightenment (which only shimmered at the edge of the period), since "the reoccupation of a prophesied future by a predicted future had not yet fundamentally ruptured the plane of Christian expectations. This is what harnesses the republic of rulers to the Middle Ages, even if it no longer conceives of itself as Christian."[62] It is the French Revolution, unsurprisingly, that inverts the horizon of expectations, as the coup d'état that closed the old era and opened the temporalization of historical time.

Medievalists have long since tired of such attributions of stasis, closure, and homogeneity, so distortive that they nearly defy response. But response on an empirical basis would in any case be beside the point, for the problem that engages Koselleck as well as his predecessors and successors on this topic is not at all empirical, despite frequent recourse to empirical evidence. It is a philosophical struggle concerning the radical newness—or the possibility of the radical newness—of *Neuzeit*, and its arguments, as well as its relevance for us today, turn on the structure of sovereignty and its relation to theology.

This relation and its dissociation from empiricism coalesce in Koselleck's conclusion, which returns us to the *Alexanderschlacht*, now hanging in Napoleon's bathroom. Through a chiasmic exemplar that sets a "premodern" Napoleon on the later side of the 1800 marker, and a "modern" Denis Diderot on the earlier, it teaches us that the temporalizing cut of modernity can easily absorb forerunners and backsliders into its logic, as any master category will. Diderot, well prior to the Revolution but from a "point of departure [that] is modern," had augured the advent of Napoleon, not with a commonplace premonition of the Revolution, but more presciently, with a prediction of its aftermath and the authorial void into which Napoleon would step. Beyond that, Diderot could only say, "What will succeed this revolution? No one knows." (Quelle sera la suite de cette revolution? On l'ignore). Steeped though his reasoning was in "classical literature on civil war, ancient theories of despotism and historical cycles, and the critique of enlightened absolutism," Diderot's thought of an undetermined future made his viewpoint "modern." Napoleon, however, envisioning himself as a parallel to the great Alexander, pondered the *Alexanderschlacht* in his private chambers, drawn, at least sometimes, to "premodern" thoughts: "The power of tradition was so strong that the

long-lost, salvational-historical task of the Holy Roman Empire shimmered through the supposedly new beginning of the 1789 Revolution."[63]

So we end where we began, with a ruler pondering his own figuration in the scene of the *Alexanderschlacht*'s cosmic, typological sweep. Nothing, yet everything, has changed. How has this happened? Koselleck has explained the emergence of modern politics by narrating the elimination of religion and religious expectations from the realm of political decision.[64] In this he accords with Schmitt's historical account that together deism and the idea of the constitutional state had "banished the miracle from the world," by which he refers not to "private religion," but to religion's authorization of political legitimacy. Until the nineteenth century, Schmitt argued, the conception of God and the conception of the sovereign were aligned (rightly in his opinion) vis-à-vis transcendence of the world and of the state.[65] But unlike Schmitt, Koselleck has all along been narrating a double break: a historical break with a religious mode of ruling the state, and a qualitative break within the conceptualization of temporality itself. In his account, the elimination of religion and religious expectations yields not only politics, but meaningful historical time, and at the critical juncture they fuse. His example is Maximilien Robespierre, who looks into an accelerating, open future and sees "a task of men leading to an epoch of freedom and happiness."[66] Politics and meaningful time unite in this "human" task.

Koselleck's argument, however, is far from utopian. Like Löwith, he sees conceptions of historical time as tied to political calculation, and considers the "modern" orientation toward an open future as susceptible to utopian goals that become prescriptive and thus rob this future of its actuality. But his periodization and linearity can figure such recuperation only as backsliding or—to put it in terms of the "theology" he would disavow—apostasy. In his analysis of sovereignty, Schmitt had stayed focused on the problem of the *exception*. His tenacious insistence that the exception must be thought by analogy to the theological because by definition it requires a sovereign decision unfounded in norms, and his insistence that this analogy underlies a materialist, not a spiritualist, philosophy of history, offer strong grounds for questioning versions of political sovereignty founded upon the qualitative exclusion of a "past" and claims to occupy the space of "secular" world order. By contrast, Koselleck's definition of politics as the evacuation of theology from political decision would seem to leave the basis of decision unexplored. But this is not the case. His

merger of political decision with the temporalization of time indicates that its explanatory basis, as we saw in Blumenberg, is "modernity" itself. In just this way, modernity becomes a sovereign period, and its periodization the basis of sovereignty.

This configuration relates directly to the centrality of "religion" to "politics" in bids for "world order" today. It is important to emphasize that Koselleck's historical semantics grew out of an intense effort to describe "the dissolution of the old world and the emergence of the new"—in effect to revise and to reconcile the account of history with a workable vision of "the now." He attempts, we could say, to find a discrete identity for the present that nonetheless, in Fredric Jameson's terms, affirms "its integration into a context from which it can be posited as breaking."[67]

This question of historical time and modernity has exercised philosophers of history throughout the twentieth century, and as Jameson's work attests, it continues as a core issue for theories of modernity. Jameson's argument in his book *A Singular Modernity* is doubtless one of the more prominent examples in its assessment of the structure of periodization. Working from Martin Heidegger's double temporality, one an internal temporality of representation and the other an external temporality "in which a theological or medieval conception of the certainty of salvation overlaps the emergence of the new system for one last moment and coexists with it long enough to allow the function of certainty to pass from the outgoing structure into the new one, in some wholly different form," Jameson observes that this double structure allows the emergence of the event to be told in narrative form. It is in this context that he offers his pithy description of the structure of periodization: "any theory of modernity must both affirm its absolute novelty as a break and at one and the same time its integration into a context from which it can be posited as breaking."[68] Medievalists have often noted a similar double structure at work in periodization—the Middle Ages serves as both the revered origin of nation or culture and the despised space of barbarism, the stranger, the Other.[69] What Jameson's analysis of modernity as narrative misses, however, is the connection of this periodizing structure to political sovereignty. To be sure, Jameson acknowledges the untenable reductiveness of the periodizing operation, yet proffering this operation as a function of narrative choice elides the constitutive work of sovereign "decision" as the history of periodization.

The omission is even more visible in Peter Osborne's book *The Politics of Time*, which situates itself in relation to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, of course, but also relies heavily upon Koselleck as it analyzes the "purely anticipatory, timeless end" that "temporalizes historical time (historicizes temporality) in the same way that the anticipation of death temporalizes time in general." (According to this argument, as the indebtedness to Koselleck suggests, there could be no such sense of temporalized historical time in the "Middle Ages." It must also be noted, although I cannot address it here, that Heidegger's contemplation of time followed upon his *Habilitationsshrift* on scholastic medieval theology.[70]) Arguing against Löwith, and insisting upon the importance of a period break, Osborne states that refuting the secularization theory is crucial to a philosophy of "secular modernity," one that would posit an ontological structure of historical time without relegitimating theology on post-Hegelian grounds:

> In particular, to what extent can [this ontological status] be understood independently of the *theological* connotations with which it is inevitably associated in the context of the Judaic-Christian tradition? After all, is not the idea of a timeless exteriority, productive of history yet in principle outside its grasp, even more unequivocally theological than the immanent end of Hegel's "true theodicity", which we would have it displace? Does the philosophy of history not reveal itself here, once again, as an inherently theological genre, even in the new, apparently secular garb of a post-Hegelian philosophy of historical time?[71]

It would be possible to find in such an argument an idea of the "secular" without the "secularization" described by Löwith—if it were not for its reinscription of Christian Europe's basic logic of sovereignty: that is, to eliminate "theology" on the basis of medieval/modern *periodization*, and thence to yield a reified "modernity." To do so is already to eliminate, as I have argued above, the "incalculable" in history and politics.

HISTORY INTERRUPTED: BENJAMIN AFTER SCHMITT

Periodization must be thought with respect to sovereignty, both in the sense of the sovereign subject and in the sense of political rule. By this I do not mean simply that periodization is totalizing and therefore hegemonic, in a general sense that has often been recognized, but rather that in a very

precise sense periodization is inextricable from sovereignty structurally and historically. Indeed, recent theoretical work on sovereignty would seem to make this relation self-evident, as this theory increasingly gravitates to the problem of "political theology" and to Carl Schmitt's dictum that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts." Like the work of his contemporary, Walter Benjamin, Schmitt's *Political Theology* probes the fundamental bond between "theology" and "politics," unsettling simple definitions and wishful dichotomies through an interrogation that never strays far from the question of periodization. The intersections between the works of these two men despite their opposed positions in Third Reich politics, their intense engagement with the crisis of their own moment, and the obvious attraction of their work today suggests that we should contemplate the pertinence of their critical matrix and its fascination with historical time to current crises of "the now." The focus on sovereignty in each case, particularly with respect to theology and to executive power, turns upon the recurrent problem of constituting law, or, as Derrida puts it, the *épokhè*, the instance of non-law that is also the whole history of law.

Despite the later antipathy between the two men, Schmitt's and Benjamin's early investigations of theology and law were complementary—they tracked the same philosophical problems, crucial to their moment, though sometimes with differing vocabularies. In their mutual concern with the total suspense of the law, both considered what today we would call the "performative," the ability of language to do what it says. For Schmitt, the suspense of the *exception* opens the space of the sovereign decision, which "becomes instantly independent of argumentative substantiation and receives an autonomous value."[72] This decision is constitutive, that is, fully performative, even though it may be false; indeed, such falsity proves the purity of the decision in its invulnerability to challenge. Schmitt understands the structure of the decision perfectly well: its occasion is utterly singular, an "independently determining moment," and it cannot respond to the multiple interests of the population that it will affect; for precisely this reason it requires a single individual, the sovereign. It depends, like any speech, upon former institutions and could thus miscarry, although Schmitt's sovereign acts under Hobbes's principle "autoritas, non veritas facit legem," and thus maximizes the chance of success. The theological analogy enters here on two counts: the *exception*,

like a miracle, exceeds all norms, and the *decision*, like an act of God but also a means to an end, performs law. Periodization can, and historically does, operate in just this way, as a simultaneous abeyance and instantiation of law. Its history, as Koselleck rightly notices, is the history of the law, and thus leaves a trail of constitutive violence.

In Benjamin's terms such decision is not "divine" but "legal" violence, and justice will not be served. For Benjamin "divine violence" is law-annihilating, a pure means that does not advance to an end, never moves to the imposition of a decision. His example is the "general strike," which like an extended miracle nullifies law "in the determination to resume only a wholly transformed work, no longer enforced by the state, an upheaval that this kind of strike not so much causes as consummates."[73] In this consummation it, too, performs. The idea of such abeyance enables Benjamin in his later work to imagine a form of history that destroys the continuity of historicism (an economy of violence dissembling as progress) through *interruption*, which annihilates from within itself the idea of progress, and from the perspective of "now-time" (*Jetztzeit*) it constellates historical events without continuity.[74] Like the general strike, it is a "cessation of happening" combined with "recurrence," and its goal is redemptive. By imagining a form of history that keeps the miracle but shuns decision, Benjamin offers, as is often noted, a radically alternative method of thinking events in time. A brief, concluding anecdote might illustrate the difference this perspective offers with regard to periodization.

In his *Imagined Communities*, a book that medievalists have long berated for its uninformed caricature of "the Middle Ages" and its theory of the nation based on temporal exclusion, Benedict Anderson cites Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* to support his origin story: "What has come to take the place of the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar."[75] But Anderson misquotes Benjamin, and his error shuts down precisely the possibility of opening history and imagining redemption without exclusion, toward which Benjamin strives. Here is what Benjamin says in Thesis fifteen, following his statement in Thesis fourteen that "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now":

"The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. And, basically it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. Thus the calendars do not measure time as clocks do; they are monuments of historical consciousness."[76] Anderson's misreading of Benjamin denies both forms of temporality to the Middle Ages, the times of clock and calendar, and collapses the distinction between the two into precisely the homogenized indistinction of the present that Benjamin argues is *not* the structure of history and the "now." The difference between clock and calendar, between the ticks of chronology and an act of present remembrance, between origin stories that exclude and an openness to the *event*, is the difference between the sovereign cut of periodization and the abeyance of that sovereign closure. It is the difference, too, between a Middle Ages that serves historicism, and a "Middle Ages" that explodes the historical continuum. At its most radical, it is the difference in the sense of an epoch.

NOTES

1 Chakrabarty, "Where Is the Now?" 459.

2 With the escalation of bloody political struggles over "secular" or "religious" government around the world, scholarship on these categories continues to expand with little consensus, and I make no attempt here to engage the full compass of this debate. For different viewpoints, see for instance Anidjar, "Secularism"; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Bhargava, *Secularism and Its Critics*; Neeham and Sunder Rajan, *Crisis of Secularism in India*; Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*; and Vries and Sullivan, *Political Theologies*.

3 I consider "secularization" together with the history of the concept of "feudalism" in Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*.

4 For important discussions by medievalists regarding the implications of periodization for world politics, see Wallace, *Premodern Places*, as well as his "Carving Up Time and the World"; Biddick, *Shock of Medievalism* and *Typological Imaginary*; Lampert, "Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages"; and, generally, the essays collected in Cohen, *Postcolonial Middle Ages*, and Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*.

5 We find, for example, both introductory textbooks and postcolonial novels adopting this organization. See, for example, Damrosch, *Longman Anthology of*

World Literature, which divides all world literature into two volumes and six subcategories. Volume 1 covers the Ancient World, the Medieval Era (fourth through the fourteenth centuries), and the Early Modern Period; Volume 2 covers the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, the Nineteenth Century, and the Twentieth Century. For the interrelation of medievalism and Orientalism, see Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism*.

6 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 31.

7 A special issue of *Cultural Critique* addressing (among other things) Schmitt's work unfortunately appeared too late for consideration here. See Hohendahl, "Radical Conservative Thought in Transition."

8 Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?* 135. For Schmitt's popularity with the left early in his career, and his similarities to the Frankfurt School, see Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School"; for opposing views, see the response in the same volume by Preuss, "The Critique of German Liberalism," and Jay's more polemical "Reconciling the Irreconcilable?" Schmitt's connections with the Frankfurt School and with Leo Strauss remain topics of intense debate. Schmitt's connections to Strauss are both personal and theoretical; most obviously, Strauss provided "notes" to Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (first published as *Der Begriff des Politischen* in 1932), which are appended to the English edition. For Schmitt's personal assistance to Strauss and their correspondence, see Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss*. For various views of the relatedness of their theories, see ibid.; Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*; and McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*.

9 The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following example from 1820: "The number of periods performed depends . . . [on] the thickness of the plate, and whatever other cause or limit of periodicity may happen to prevail" (J. F. W. Herschel, *Philos. Trans.* [Royal Soc.] 110 65). Matthew Kohl, a researcher for the OED, informs me that this reference has now been antedated by an 1818 use in the *New England Journal of Medicine and Surgery, and Collateral Branches of Science*: "From attentive observation to the complaint under consideration, for some years past, we are convinced that tic douloureux is very frequently an arthritic affection, en masque. The violence and periodicity of its attacks, as well as many other of its phenomena, corroborate this opinion." My thanks to Mr. Kohl for providing this information.

10 See Fredric Jameson's comments on this subject in *Postmodernism*, 400, as well as his discussion of the structure of periodization in *A Singular Modernity*.

11 Schmitt, *Political Theology* (first published as *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* in 1922).

12 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 6 (emphasis added).

13 Ibid., 31–32.

14 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" (first published as "Zur Kritik der Gewalt" in 1955). Benjamin's example of such suspension is the general strike, which is "beyond all legal systems, and therefore beyond violence," and which he con-

trasts to legal violence (292–300). For a thorough analysis of "Critique of Violence," see Butler, "Critique, Coercion, and Sacred Life." The most famous response to Benjamin's "Critique" is Derrida's "Force of Law."

15 Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 62 (translation modified; first published as *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* in 1963).

16 Ibid., 65.

17 Ibid., 56.

18 Ibid., 69, 71. See also Samuel Weber, "Taking Exception to Decision."

19 Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 70. One might note here a similarity to Ernst Kantorowicz's discussion of "the king's two bodies," which resonates with arguments by Schmitt, as in Schmitt's discussion of the priesthood being made into an office: "The fact that the office is made independent of charisma signifies that the priest upholds a position that appears to be completely apart from his concrete personality. Nevertheless, he is not the functionary and commissar of republican thinking. In contradistinction to the modern official, his position is not impersonal, because his office is part of an unbroken chain linked with the personal mandate and concrete person of Christ" (Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, 14 [first published as *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form* in 1923]). Kantorowicz, who had fled Germany during the war, acknowledged but also distanced the connections of his book to "some of the idols of modern political religions," which, he asserts, were not its inspiration. Nonetheless, he wrote: "Such as it now stands, this study may be taken among other things as an attempt to understand and, if possible, demonstrate how, by what means and methods, certain axioms of a political theology which *mutatis mutandis* was to remain valid until the twentieth century, began to be developed during the later Middle Ages" (*The King's Two Bodies*, xviii).

20 Löwith, *Meaning in History*. Löwith had been a pupil of Heidegger and was himself a teacher of Reinhart Koselleck, whom I discuss later.

21 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 191. Löwith also discusses Giambattista Vico, whom he treats, of course, as an exception to this pattern.

22 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 1–2.

23 Löwith had bitterly critiqued Schmitt's theory of the "decision" in an earlier essay, "The Occasional Decisionism of Carl Schmitt" (first published as "Der Okkasionnelle Dezisionismus von Carl Schmitt" in 1935). For discussions of Löwith and the relation of his work to "secularization" and to Schmitt, see Wolin's introduction to his *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism* and Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*; for discussion of Löwith in relation to Benjamin, see Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints*, 30–32.

24 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 193.

25 Auerbach, it is worth noting, shared with Schmitt a background in German legal training. Schmitt received his doctorate in jurisprudence from the University of Strassburg in 1910; Auerbach received his from the University of Heidelberg in 1913.

26 Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, 18–19. For discussion of Schmitt's theory of political representation and its implications, see Samuel Weber, " 'The Principle of Representation.' "

27 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 225n2. Löwith further discusses the destructive, imperial trajectory of secularized messianism on 202–3.

28 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 190.

29 For Löwith's discussion of "incalculability," see ibid., 199–200.

30 Schmitt's alignment of sovereign decision with the friend/enemy distinction, which I do not have space to elaborate here, is the topic of his *The Concept of the Political*.

31 Blumenberg chose the term "legitimacy" to counter the "illegitimacy" attributed to secularization, particularly since "the 'Final Resolution of the Reichstag's Special Commission' [*Reichsdeputationshauptschluss*] of 1803 established the term 'as a concept of the usurpation of ecclesiastical rights, as a concept of the illegitimate emancipation of property from ecclesiastical care and custody' " (*Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 20).

32 Ibid., 119.

33 Ibid., 18–21. Blumenberg sometimes tries to validate his periodizing claims with the familiar narrative of a modern age (*Neuzeit*) that self-legitimates by proclaiming the "legitimacy" of knowledge, in contrast to the "medieval" rejection of *curiositas*. (The claim for such an overarching "medieval" rejection of curiosity and knowledge is, of course, not only reductive but ludicrous.) For him the modern age constitutes not a "transformation" of medieval, theological forms, but a "reoccupation" of their place by a "new consciousness of nature and the world" and "the legitimacy of the new, free endowment of meaning." Unsurprisingly, Petrarch furnishes the liminal, exemplary case, and Petrarch's gaze from the heights of Mont Ventoux explicitly literalizes the *spatio*-temporal stakes of periodization: "The description of the ascent of Mont Ventoux exemplifies graphically what is meant by the 'reality' of history as the reoccupation of formal systems of positions" (342). This description comes at the end of a chapter on medieval scholasticism (325–42), which according to Blumenberg had the opportunity with Siger of Brabant to accept a "consciousness of reality" but rejected it in favor of Augustine's condemnation of *curiositas*.

34 Ibid., 99.

35 Koselleck, *Futures Past*. All page references are to the 1985 edition except where noted.

36 See Keith Tribe's "Translator's Introduction" to the 1985 edition of Koselleck, *Futures Past* (ix). Koselleck was also heavily influenced by his relationships with Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss, and to a lesser degree (personally) by Heidegger, all of whom were colleagues at some point in his career. He was also a student of Löwith.

37 Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 5 (first published as *Kritik und Krise, Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bügerlichen Welt* in 1959).

38 Ibid., 9.

39 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 32.

40 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, xxii.

41 Ibid., xxii–xxiii.

42 Koselleck's translator Keith Tribe comments in his "Notes on Translation and Terminology" in the 1985 edition of *Futures Past* that *Vergangene Zukunft* might be better translated as "The Bygone Future" (xix). In a note to the book's first essay, "Modernity and the Planes of Historicity," Koselleck refers to the use made of *vergangene Zukunft* in Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 289n1).

43 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 46.

44 In discussing the title of Schmitt's postwar book *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, Balibar provides a useful explanation of Schmitt's idea of world order as a form of incarnation accomplished through territorialization:

> In its *abstract* aspect, this refers to the principle of territorialization of the life of men and of right, incarnated in "original juridical acts" Schmitt calls *Landnahmen*: occupation of land, founding of cities and colonies, conquests and alliances, and the like. In its *concrete* aspect it refers to a certain centrality of Europe, from the sixteenth until the twentieth century, in the determination of the regions and borders that "map" the world. Passing over a number of complex transitions, we can say that territorialization allows the secularization of the state-form characteristic of modernity by subordinating religion (*cujus regio ejus religio*, the principle of the Treaty of Westphalia) and organizing the "domestication of war." (Balibar, *We the People of Europe?* 138)

45 For discussion of the interrelations of anthropology and Orientalism with Europe's narrative of secularization and the discourse of "world religions," see Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*.

46 In his revised introduction to the 2004 edition of *Futures Past*, Keith Tribe works to distance Brunner's involvement in the dictionary project, in part perhaps because of his strong past association with the National Socialist party (an association he treats delicately), and in part perhaps to claim the achievement primarily for Koselleck (xi–xiv). In this revised introduction, Tribe also discusses more extensively Koselleck's debts to Gadamer, Schmitt, Jauss, and Heidegger, and fends off suggestions (which followed the translation's initial publication) that Koselleck was influenced by the "Cambridge School" of history, to which he has some similarities.

47 Brunner, cited by Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton in the translators' introduction to Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, xx. (*Land and Lordship* was first published as *Land und Herrschaft. Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Österriechs im Mittelalter* in 1939.) Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton's translation is based on the fourth edition (1959), Brunner's final revision. In earlier editions of *Land und Herrschaft*, Brunner argued that the basic German structure of political association (*Volksstaat*) endured despite the interruption of the un-German,

French-derived bourgeois *Rechsstatt* (xxi); however, he excised this discussion in the fourth edition. An indirect link between German *Landesgeschichte* and the *Annales* school is often noted. Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton cite the suggestion that the French movement may have derived from "the experience of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre at the University of Strasbourg after 1918, when the French took over a German university with a seminar and library of *Landesgeschichte* that had no equivalent elsewhere in France." In 1972, Fernand Braudel suggested: "Is it by chance that Henri Berr, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and myself all came from eastern France? That the *Annales* began at Strasbourg, next door to Germany and to German historical thought?" (cited in Kaminsky's and Van Horn Melton's translators' introduction to Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, xxv–xxvi).

48 Brunner's probing for historical roots and for a narrative of transition between "Old Europe" (*Alteuropa*, as he called it, following Burckhardt) and a new world order must be understood, as his translators Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton argue, within a historic and historiographical framework that includes not only the scholarship of "Marc Bloch, [and] the philosophy of Martin Heidegger but also of Georg Lukács, the social science of Carl Schmitt but also of Max Horkheimer" (translators' introduction to Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, xxvii).

49 Koselleck quoted in translator's introduction to Koselleck, *Futures Past*, xi.

50 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 4–5.

51 Ibid., 3.

52 Ibid., 4.

53 Ibid., 4–5.

54 Schlegel quoted in Ibid., 4 and 16.

55 Biddick, *Typological Imaginary*, 1. Biddick also attends to the role of Altdorfer's architectural etchings in the encryptment of "Jews within the tomb of the typological imaginary at the same time that it fabricates a writing surface constitutive of a new graphic regime of 'scientific' representation" (65). The typology of Altdorfer's etchings could be productively read against that of the *Alexanderschlacht.*

56 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 6.

57 Ibid., 17.

58 Ibid., 6–8.

59 The difference between this potent historical sensibility and an eschatological emptying out of history is one topic of Agamben's *The Time That Remains.* Working with the texts of Schmitt and, particularly, Benjamin and Paul, Agamben relabels this time "the time of the now," which is to say "messianic" time, a contraction of past and present never reducible to unitary chronology and associated, structurally and juridically, with Schmitt's "exception." See Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, especially 59–87 and 104–12.

60 See Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, chapter 4.

61 Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, 60.

62 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 16.
63 Ibid., 19–20.
64 Ibid., 11.
65 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36, 49.
66 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 7.
67 Jameson, *Singular Modernity*, 57.
68 Ibid., 56–57.
69 See, for instance, Spiegel, *Past as Text*; Davis, "National Writing in the Ninth Century"; and Lampert, "Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages," 393. See also Robert Stein cited in Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, 158.
70 For more on Heidegger and time, see the editors' introduction and Ethan Knapp's essay in the present volume. For discussion of this topic and of the reliance of other German philosophers upon study of the Middle Ages, see Holsinger's introduction to his *Premodern Condition*, 6–7.
71 Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 113–14.
72 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 31.
73 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 291–92.
74 See Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 442n24.
75 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.
76 Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in *Illuminations*, 261–62.

The Sacrament of the Fetish, the Miracle of the Commodity

Hegel and Marx

ANDREW COLE

Ea demum est miserabilis animi seruitus, signa pro rebus accipere.
[It is, in the end, slavery of the soul to interpret signs as things.]
—Augustine

Karl Marx's theory of the commodity remains valuable for what it can explain besides commodities. In fact, it is because Marx can be seen to theorize so many critical problems avant la lettre that contemporary thinkers have named him, for instance, the inventor of the Lacanian symptom, as in Slavoj Žižek, if not an exponent of deconstruction, as in Jacques Derrida.[1] One may even find in the Marxian theory of the commodity the very conflicts that generate "the postmodern" as a term full of paradoxes, wherein abstraction is anchored to embodiment, consumption moored to production, rationality yoked to irrationality, secularism conjoined to religious fundamentalism. In light of these correspondences, it may seem particularly ironic that, as I shall argue, Marx addresses all of these problems not through prognostication but by a curious sort of retrospection both to the medieval Eucharist and to the work of G. W. F. Hegel.

For Marx, there is no better way to talk about commodities than to talk about the Eucharist. This may seem to be an obvious point, as Marx speaks frequently of the transubstantiation of raw materials into commodities and finally into money. But the fact that he is referring fundamentally to a medieval Eucharist drawn from Hegel has not been appreciated.[2] Marx's analysis of the commodity fetish has its foundations not in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, where, as Herbert Marcuse pointed out, one can discover some Marxist thinking about commodities and labor, but

rather in Hegel's differently energetic work on religion and the sacramental feelings and fetishism of early and medieval Christianity.[3] The germane texts are his early theological writings and the *Philosophy of History*, which, taken together, disclose the prominence of Hegel's explorations of fetishism as a cultural, religious, and institutional mandate to produce, praise, value, and consume that one Thing at the very center of medieval culture —the Eucharist. Marx, I will suggest, translates the Hegelian Eucharist into the commodity; more broadly, he accepts from his predecessor a sacramental theory of fetishism that explains, in ways never before recognized, Marx's most memorable words: "[the commodity-form] is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."[4] This Hegelian reading is not meant to flatten to a thin wafer the conceptual fullness of the Marxian commodity, theory of fetishism, or theory of value, but to begin to explain the *other* secret behind the secret of the commodity—not the fetishism per se but the medievalism of the fetishism. In turn, this reading points us to a specifically Hegelian background in which fetishism is resolutely *social* (*pace* Auguste Comte and Sigmund Freud) and is therefore a question of *relation* and *materiality* rather than a function of private fantasy and disavowal, or an abstraction from materiality, as most poststructuralist accounts have it.

This essay intends not only to build upon W. J. T. Mitchell's and William Pietz's foundational papers on the sources and problems of Marx's theory of fetishism—even though of course this paper is about different Marxian sources and problems.[5] It is also a polemic on the Hegelian Marx, exploring how Marx recognizes (and conceals) Hegel at his best. If there is a larger issue of secularization at work here, it is of Marx's secularization not of the Middle Ages but of the Hegelian Middle Ages. In that chapter on commodity fetishism in *Capital*, I shall argue, Marx evokes the Middle Ages as a means to empty out or neutralize Hegel's trenchant critique of medieval Christianity, which, when viewed as a critique of the modern, presupposes and predicts Marx in startling ways. This may initially sound odd—Hegel's critique of the Middle Ages as a critique of the modern?—but we must bear in mind that Hegel does indeed view the Middle Ages as rife with those characteristically modern struggles toward self-consciousness and freedom that typify the all too familiar section in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* concerning the lord/serf dialectic.[6] By default, Hegel offers

just what Marx would need—a critique of *modern* European fetishism and not, as we shall see below and as most other theories of fetishism would have it, a critique of "primitive" fetishism, as in Comte's influential model (discussed below). Marx's debts to Hegel never quite vanish, then, not even in the "misty realm of religion," where they are meant to be obscure.[7]

THE THING RETURNS

First, some summary about the Marxian commodity, so that we may outline where Marx seems to explore medieval sacramentality as an alternative to classical logic and the categories of identity and difference. In this section we shall attend to how Marx moves from the philosophical problems of quantity to those of quality and, last, to the miraculous substantiations that go by the name of fetishism.

In capital, according to Marx, commodities are exchanged when they are viewed as possessing the same value. Four mugs will get you one stool; or twenty dollars, which can buy you four mugs, will get you one cheap table. Through such measures, commodities can be viewed as equivalent to one another, possessing the same exchange value such that you can exchange one for another. What you give out is returned to you—a Thing for a Thing. Putting it that way, we can see that lurking behind all of this is a classical logical problem: how can Things be equivalent, and in some respects qualitatively identical, without violating the principle of the noncontradiction of identity, whereby two qualitatively different things cannot be both formally *and* substantially equivalent? Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, calls the noncontradiction of identity "the most certain of all principles."[8] And Marx accepts this logical principle.[9] He posits that the equivalence of two things is strictly a question of *quantitative* equivalence in the amount of exchange value (which is based on equivalent quantities of abstract labor in the production of commodities).

Yet the problem of quality lingers when the value between two things is expressed by a "third thing"—a certain quality of exchange value they share: "both [things in exchange] are therefore equal to a third thing, which in itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange value, must therefore be reducible to this third thing."[10] Yet what is this "third thing"? Does it exist only as an epistemological category, as

some mediating cognitive element generated out of dialectical difference? Or does it have a material basis as a thing in its own right, hovering above other things? The metaphor of this "third thing" is not Marx's favorite, both because of the questions it raises and because Marx wants the "third thing" to be real. He therefore enfolds the "third thing" into the commodity itself, which he names consequently the "twofold thing":

> A commodity is a use-value or object of utility, and a "value". *It appears as the twofold thing it really is* as soon as its value possesses its own particular form of manifestation, which is distinct from its natural form. This form of manifestation is exchange-value, and the commodity never has this form when looked at in isolation, but only when it is in a value-relation or an exchange relation with a second commodity of a different kind. *Once we know this our manner of speaking does no harm, rather as abbreviation.*[11]

In a "value-relation or an exchange relation," one commodity stands as the "form of appearance" of the value of the other. This is the basic interplay of identity/difference; in exchange, the identity of one commodity's value is expressed in its material difference from another. Yet because the "twofold thing" that is the commodity subsumes the "third thing," we are right to ask a very literal, realist question. If all commodities are identical with respect to value, why can't a commodity express its *own* identity in its *own* difference, rather than always expressing the identity of another commodity? Can the commodity literally be a twofold thing, consubstantial, two things at once, two versions of itself in one place—both its identity in identity and its identity in difference?

It would sound as if we were approaching the postmodern Marx, avant la lettre, were it not for his own "manner of speaking," as he calls it above, which enables some wondrous materializations seemingly at odds with classical logic. Witness how Marx translates "determinate" and "congealed quantities of homogenous labour" into a quality—a quality left over when complex labor and use value are subtracted[12]: "If we leave aside . . . the useful character of the labour, what remains is its quality of being an expenditure of human labour-power."[13] In the face of seemingly impossible materializations, Marx speaks wondrously about what is "hidden within the commodity," the "visible incarnation" of "all human labour," itself "materially different" from use value, but material or "objective" no less.

When he says that exchange value is crystallized, "congealed," "materialized," "objectified," and embodied in the commodity, he is arguing for the existence of the mysterious twofold thing—literally consubstantial.[14]

Our problem now is to approach the mystery with Marx and visualize what the twofold thing might be, and how it might be equivalent to the other twofold things that are commodities: "Despite its buttoned-up appearance the linen recognizes in it a splendid kindred soul, the soul of value. . . . As a use-value, the linen is palpably different from the coat; as value, it is identical with the coat, and therefore looks like the coat. Thus the linen acquires a value-form different from its natural form. Its existence as value is manifested in its equality with the coat, just as the sheep-like nature of the Christian is shown in his resemblance to the Lamb of God."[15] Marx is explicit about what it takes to see a twofold thing. You have to assume its own vantage point within an intersubjective space comprised of other twofold things looking back at you. You have to imagine that difference disappears and that linen looks like a coat. This is, of course, Marx's take on the intersubjective logic of Christianity, so mystifying as to be beyond belief itself, yet so subjectively structuring as to be precisely the right explanation to describe the relations between commodities. We will soon see that Marx draws this all from Hegel. Suffice it to note here that Marx validates this way of seeing and this form of relation: "In a certain sense, a man is in the same situation as a commodity. . . . Peter only relates to himself as a man through his relation to another man, Paul, in whom he recognizes his likeness. With this, however, Paul also becomes from head to toe, in his physical form as Paul, the form of appearance of the species man for Peter."[16] In several places in *Capital*, Marx asks us to identify with commodities within this intersubjective space—the fetishized space of capital: "[the commodity-form] is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and the human race."[17] These are Marx's most memorable words on fetishism, and we shall be especially concerned with them. For therein lies Marx's sacramental theory of fetishism—a theory that is largely, and surprisingly, Hegelian on this question of intersubjectivity, relation, value, and fetish-

ism.[18] Simply put, Marx's "fantastic form of the relation between things" is best read through Hegel's discussion of sacramental fetishism, which Hegel studies both in early Christian practices, where sacramental feelings disclose the relations between persons and things as those relations per se (that is, as "visible" and not mystified), and in the practices of the later Middle Ages, where fetishism renders the relations between persons as invisible and only as a relation between things. On Hegelian foundations, Marx will build a sacramental theory of commodities, sustained by forms of fetishism that are a veritable communion in capital.

Let us go now into "the misty realm of religion."

THE SACRAMENT OF THE FETISH

In Berlin, in 1826, a group of Catholic priests complained to the Ministry of Religious and Educational Affairs about Hegel, citing "allegedly offensive comments on transubstantiation . . . in his lectures."[19] It must have been interesting to hear Hegel vent about the Eucharist. But we have to take his polemic in bits and in order of escalating vehemence. Even though Hegel's early work on this subject is not vituperative, in retrospect it is conceptually rich and supplies the entire philosophical apparatus that supports his strident critique of medieval Catholicism in his lectures in the *Philosophy of History*, and which eventually, I believe, supplies Marx the foundations on which to build an argument about commodity fetishism as intersubjective, social, and material. Even so, Hegel's theory of fetishism actually begins in his earlier theological writings and then extends all the way to his late works, such as the lectures. As we shall see, the trajectory of this theory of fetishism is one of increasing politicization: Hegel starts with the communal rituals of sacramental feeling in early Christianity, when he perceives the relations between persons and things to be authentic, but as he approaches late medieval Christianity, he sees compulsory rituals of fetishism and enjoyment, in which value attaches to arbitrary yet sacred Things. As a consequence of this fetishism, the relations between persons and (sacramental) things becomes alienating—a formulation that mirrors Marx's claim about the relations between persons and things in capital.

Let's begin with Hegel's view of sacramental intersubjectivity. In "Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal [The Spirit of Christianity and

Its Fate]," Hegel addresses the Gospels' accounts of the Last Supper, among other things, and offers an interpretation of sacramental communion that will begin to resemble, prospectively, Marx's "fantastic form of a relation between things." Hegel explains that the bread and wine consumed at the Last Supper symbolize an aspiration, a hope to render visible the relations of love between Christ and his disciples: "since Jesus calls the bread and wine, which he distributes to all, his body and blood given for them, the unification is no longer merely felt but has become visible."[20] How do Things play a part in making these relations visible? By being ordinary. They are neither overly meaningful as sacred symbols nor are they allegories, signs of something sacred. And, above all, they are approachable and enjoyable, never alien or alienating: the bread, for instance, is simply "linked to a reality, eaten and enjoyed in a reality."[21] Hegel elaborates:

> Objectively considered, then, the bread is just bread, the wine just wine; yet both are something more. This "more" is not connected with the objects (like an explanation) by a mere "just as": . . . "just as you all share in this bread and wine, so you all share in my sacrifice"; or whatever other "just as" you like to find here. Yet the connection of objective and subjective, of the bread and the persons, is here not the connection of allegorized with allegory, with the parable in which the different things, the things compared, are set forth as severed, as separate, and all that is asked is a comparison, the thought of the likeness of dissimilars. On the contrary, in *this* link between bread and persons, difference disappears, and with it the possibility of comparison. Things heterogeneous are here most intimately connected.[22]

Note that Hegel here is not thinking of identity and difference in the terms of classical logic, which would reduce "the thought of the likeness of dissimilars." Logic is not enough, nor is allegory, because what visibly unifies the "Things heterogenous" is a communion of "feeling."[23] Hegel, in other words, replaces classical logic with sacramentality and expounds upon the sacramental relation that erases the difference between persons and things: "difference disappears. . . . Things heterogeneous are here most intimately connected." Yet the sacramental relation remains a visible one: "since Jesus calls the bread and wine, which he distributes to all, his body and blood given for them, the unification [of persons] is no longer merely felt but has become visible."[24]

Before we can associate these ideas with Marx, we have to be clear that Hegel likes this subjective state; he does not name it "fetishism." Rather, he is here speaking of "feeling" as that "something more" whereby difference disappears: "The spirit of Jesus, in which his disciples are one, has become a present object, a reality for external feeling. Yet the love made objective, this subjective element become a *thing*, reverts once more to its nature, becomes subjective again in the eating."[25] Yet it is important to bear in mind that Hegel does have fetishism in mind, insofar as he realizes that in history these ideal sacramental relations eventually go wrong and are institutionalized within the later forms of "private religion" that encourage "fetishism" (*Fetishglauben*, *Fetischdienste*). For instance, Hegel argues that the early practices of "folk religion" (i.e., early Christianity) have transformed over time into the rituals of "private religion," in which "feelings [are] artificial and forced": "The indispensable characteristics of ceremonies designed for a folk religion are . . . that they contain little or no inducement to fetishistic worship [*Fetischdienste*]—that they not consist of a mere mechanical operation devoid of spirit. . . . A folk religion must be a friend to all life's feelings."[26] Hegel's pronouncements on feeling, the relations of feeling, and the eventual objectification or thingification of feeling are all commentaries on what we now recognize, thanks to Marx, as "fetishism" proper.

A case in point is Hegel's admittedly unusual theses about contemporary sacramental practices, in which "our most human feelings seem alien":

> Our religion would train people to be citizens of heaven, gazing ever upward, making our most human feelings seem alien. Indeed, at the greatest of our public feasts we proceed to the enjoyment of the holy eucharist dressed in the colors of mourning and with eyes downcast; even here, at what is supposed to be a celebration of human brotherhood, we fear we might contract venereal disease from the brother who drank out of the communal chalice before. And lest any of us remain attentive to the ceremony, filled with a sense of the sacred, we are nudged to fetch a donation from our pocket and plop it on a tray. How different were the Greeks![27]

We can now see how Hegel would vex priests in Berlin! Starting with his earliest writings, he writes against modern religious fetishism and its attendant pathologies of sacramentality while constructing a historical past before fetishism. Early Christianity is that time before fetishism, while

medieval Christianity is, as we will now see, the age of fetishism and "private religion."

In the lectures in the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel offers a case study of medieval sacramental feeling little different from his views of contemporary Catholicism. Medieval Christianity places one Thing "at its very center," as Hegel says elsewhere, "the Host."[28] This central Thing of unity, the Eucharist, appears first as institutional mandate to *enjoy* and *adore* something arbitrary, sacramental bread and wine. Hegel goes on (not surprisingly) to credit Luther for being the first to recognize the Host for what it was, valueless yet valued only by compulsion—"a mere external thing, possessed of no greater value than any other thing."[29] There is no "folk religion" here, only a "private religion" that sustains objectification, Thingification for its own sake, without any subjective connection. "The most prominent feature in this sacrament," Hegel writes, "is, that the process by which Deity is manifested, is conditioned by the limitations of particularity—that the Host, this *Thing*, is set up to be adored as God." The need for this adoration, Hegel says, is "infinite," if not automatic: "for the Host is adored even apart from its being partaken of by the faithful."[30] It is as if the thing requires a relation of expropriation precisely because the sacramental relations between persons are invisible, subordinated to Things that are valued for their own sake: "The Holy as a mere thing has the character of externality; thus it is capable of being taken possession of by another to my exclusion: it may come into an alien hand, since the process of appropriating it is not one that takes place in Spirit, but is conditioned by its quality as an external object [*Dingheit*]. The highest of human blessings is in the hands of others."[31] And so it is that medieval social relations are imagined as already alienating—"a separation between those who possess this blessing and those who have to receive it from others—between the Clergy and the Laity. The laity as such are alien to the Divine."[32] This separation does not appear as such in the social relation, since the relation itself is mediated by the religion whose "essence" is mediation.[33] That "element of mediation" is, as Hegel says, the Host,[34] which is, fundamentally, the medieval commodity—both the figure and the screen for uneven social relations.

We can now draw together what might still seem like two very different threads in Hegel and Marx and demonstrate how Marx follows Hegel's lead on these issues of feeling and fetishism. We can be clear about the larger issues concerning both thinkers:

1 Fetishism is a sacramental alternative to the logical operations of identity/difference.
2 Fetishism requires consumption for the fetish to be produced as a sign of value.
3 Fetishism is systemically social.

These three simple points serve to remind us that Marx did not view fetishism as a generally available idea after Comte, for Comte's work on fetishism is concerned more narrowly with the animation of things (on this point, critics have overemphasized his connection to Marx) and more broadly with the Orientalist or colonialist fantasies about non-European religions.[35] Rather, like Hegel, Marx is fascinated with Western, modern fetishism.

Marx communicates that there is something perversely religious about relations in capital: "[the] definite social relation between men themselves . . . assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and the human race." It is in this "misty realm of religion" that Marx takes something from Hegel's sacramental ideal in early Christianity—"Things heterogeneous are here most intimately connected"—and calls it "fetishism." While Hegel would call those sacramental ideals "feeling" and not "fetishism," he articulates fetishism as the reification of those very sacramental practices—any practice that translates feelings into Things for expropriative purposes. Marx, then, gets Hegel right (and perhaps even does him one better) in calling these sacrament-like practices in capital "fetishism." Indeed, both see fetishism as a modern (not primitive) problem.

What also draws the Hegelian and Marxian formulations together, and differentiates them from Comte's model, is the notion that fetishism is not necessarily a question of belief so much as, more plainly, a question of

relation: a theory of fetishism involves necessarily the investigation of how, subjectively and objectively, "relation relates," or, as Marx writes, how things "*enter into relations* both with each other and the human race."[36] As he puts it in one summary of the problem of commodity fetishism, "the mysterious character of the commodity form . . . reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers."[37] As we know already, Marx disagrees with Hegel about the *character* of the relations—and how they are "visible," how they "appear." For Hegel, the visibility of relations turns precisely on the ideals of early Christian sacramentality—"the unification [of persons] is no longer merely felt but has become visible"—only to become distorted and invisible in the Middle Ages. For Marx, it's the reverse: the *visibility* of social relations characterizes the Middle Ages, where "individuals . . . [do] not appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are"[38]; in feudalism, "the social relations between individuals . . . appear at all events as their own personal relations, and are not disguised as social relations between things, between the products of labour."[39]

We shall attend more closely to this difference between the Hegelian and Marxian Middle Ages below; suffice it to say here that a certain Hegelian premise remains in Marx's most memorable passage cited above and that it has not been fully appreciated by his readers. For Marx, the mystery of commodity culture is this: relations between persons are not *replaced* by relations between things (as most readers have understood these lines). It is rather the reverse: the relations between things now appear *as* relations between persons. Things are personified, in the same way that for Hegel Things in the Middle Ages seem falsely to embody a Real Presence and are God.

That is one miracle of the commodity. Another miracle in Hegelian sacramentality is how the sacraments take on value in consumption. Hegel could not have offered a better example of consumption as the production of value than he did when writing about the sacraments. Fetishism and feeling, for Hegel, arise in consumption, which in turn produces the signs of fetishism or, more simply, the fetish. As we saw above, in early Christianity the bread and wine are signs of communion—or of relation per se—not at the moment of consecration, when "Hoc est enim corpus meum" is spoken and the Real Presence is embodied, but upon the oblit-

eration of the sign, the bread that is "eaten and enjoyed."[40] More fully, Hegel explains that sacramental objects do not replace the visible relations between persons as signs or allegories of those relations; rather, they are a part of them: "unification is no longer merely felt but has become visible. It is not merely represented in an image, an allegorical figure, but linked to a reality, eaten and enjoyed in a reality, the bread."[41] This sort of devotion must involve, as Hegel would put it in more phenomenological terms in the *Philosophy of Religion*, negation.[42] Adoration requires, in other words, the destruction of the "external thing" via its incorporation with the believer, both bodily and subjectively. He makes this point clear in another work, the *Phenomenology of Mind*, in his remarks cum polemic against Catholicism (which he views as a religion of "externality," "bondage," and "superstition"): "And, first of all, God is in the 'host' presented to religious adoration as an *external thing*. (In the Lutheran Church, on the contrary, the host as such is not at first consecrated, but in the moment of enjoyment, i.e. in the annihilation of its externality, and in the act of faith, i.e. in the free self-certain spirit: only then is it consecrated and exalted to be present God.)"[43] Catholicism, for Hegel, forecloses the unifying possibilities of sacramental practices whereby (he says parenthetically) sacramental objects appear as sacred in consumption—in a moment when Thingliness, subjectivity, and the communal relations between persons and things combine and flash up all at once, in a moment of value combining enjoyment, destruction, acts of faith, and exaltation.

There seems to be something here in Hegel for Marx, for whom the value of commodities "appears" similarly; value is expressed, in the last instance, in consumption—as he explains in *Grundrisse*:

> Production, then, is also immediately consumption, consumption is also immediately production. Each is immediately its opposite. But at the same time a mediating movement takes place between the two. Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter's material; without it, consumption would lack an object. But consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are products. The product only obtains its "last finish" in consumption. A railway on which no train runs, hence which is not used up, not consumed, is a railway only [potentially], and not in reality.[44]

Marx's examples here are telling; what gives the railway its utility as an exchange value is its use, its destruction, its consumption—the moment at

which use value flashes up, reaches a kind of perfection or "last finish," and then disappears: "Only by decomposing the product does consumption give the product the finishing touch"; "a product becomes a real product only by being consumed."[45] So if, with Fredric Jameson, we wonder why use values seem to vanish from the opening pages of *Capital*, we might say that Marx wants to show that they literally vanish in capital—appearing and disappearing and graspable only as concepts in the circuit of production and consumption.[46] This is, then, effectively appearance as a mode of disappearance.[47] This is also an effectively Hegelian point, a double explanation of the subjective and the objective: "production thus produces not only the object but also the manner of consumption, not only objectively but subjectively."[48] Place a bit more emphasis on "subjectively," and we get at precisely what is Hegelian fetishism, continuously generated out of the turns of production and consumption.

All in all, then, it seems that the Hegelian version of fetishism should be our preferred model for reading Marx. While Freud and psychoanalysis have much to contribute to a critique of late capitalism—much of the Frankfurt School argues for this, as does Žižek in his penetrating work—I cannot see that it is always absolutely necessary to read Marx with Freud on this question of fetishism, a reading that seems only to obscure Hegel's invention on this topic and Marx's debts to him. Hegel's theory of fetishism is notably distinct from Freud's, even though most theories of the fetish must admit some patrimony to the latter. Freud writes: "The meaning of the fetish is not known to other people, so the fetish is not withheld from him: it is easily accessible and he can readily obtain the sexual satisfaction attached to it. What other men have to woo and make exertions for can be had by the fetishist with no trouble at all." The fetish is private—Freud says. Hegel says it is public, systemically social, objective.[49] This is not to mischaracterize the psychoanalytic version. Rather, it is to say that, barring Hegel, a theory of fetishism must go through a variety of reconfigurations before it can explain social wholes.[50] Not even Comte's nearly originary model of fetishism works here, since Comte foreclosed the explanatory possibility of a *systemic* model of fetishism: "the only real fault of the Fetichist regime . . . is its unsuitability to the formation of vast societies"; "Fetichism afforded [feeling] no field for development except private life. . . . Here therefore we find Fetichism laying the necessary foundation of the social state, but not able to build it up."[51] Comte, in the

long run, explains Freud much better than he explains Hegel or Marx, because both Comte and Freud hold the fetish to be private: "Fetichistic adoration always proceeds from personal motives," writes Comte.[52]

THE MATTER OF FETISHISM: FROM WARENKÖRPER TO WERTKÖRPER

At this point, we can begin to acknowledge that one "miracle of the commodity," in addition to its sociality, is its persistent materiality. Issues of materiality, as Pietz rightly suggests, offer us an opportunity to rethink the critical consensus about Marx.[53] Yet for many readers, Marx, whose theory of fetishism explains how all Things are equalized by the disavowal of their use values and materialities, seems to insist that we worry only about quantities, abstractions, and exchange value. We have already examined passages in Marx that demonstrate that this view is not sustainable. But, of course, from a certain theoretical perspective, it is. This view obviously betrays a poststructuralist, if not prescriptively postmodern, consensus about Marx that best characterizes Jean Baudrillard's "semiological reduction," by which exchange and use values are collapsed in postmodernity so as to render the commodity as an *in*substantial image.[54] (Immateriality, insubstantiality, and the like serve well the adjacent but later notions of fetishism as "absent presence.") Indeed, much of Marx's thinking on the commodity, and of what is possible and impossible with the traditional logical categories themselves, has been read through largely poststructuralist frameworks, which risk translating Marx's Hegelian semiotic into a play of differences of the kind generated by a stabilized, hyper-Saussurean version of identity/difference.[55] Such versions do an injustice to Marx's Hegelian theory of fetishism, if we are to view fetishism as an alternative to identity/difference, let alone as an alternative informed by sacramentality.

The sacramentality of Marxian fetishism is best approached by returning to Marx's "manner of speaking" and to the question of the "twofold thing." Marx says that our task is to understand that while all kinds of human labor (or "complex labor") produce diverse useful objects (use values), as commodities they all share that "substance," which he names "simple labor" or "homogenous" labor—the very "substance of their values" within the social field of exchange.[56] In this substantial insistence,

Marx's choice of terms, his "manner of speaking," is further revealing in the German. What would seem to be an Aristotelian substance afoot, in which the German *gleicher Substanz* or *gemeinschaftliche Substanz* should always suffice, he prefers instead to modify "substance" as "body," *Warenkörper*, which roughly translates as "use body" but which is frequently rendered by translators as "use value."[57] He also speaks of *Wertkörper*, which roughly translates as "value-body" or "embodiment of value."[58] The point here is that, for Marx, it is always a question of the commodity's two (sacramental) *bodies*, a question of equalized differences within one belief, one fantasy of *Körper*, one aspiration for the leveling of differences as in Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 10:17, "we, being many, are one bread, one body." Marx, in demonstrating the linguistic existence of "the twofold thing,"[59] shows that the relation between *Warenkörper* and *Wertkörper*, concrete and abstract labor, use and exchange value, involves a set of primary terms whereby bodies, *Körper*, always remain. We are, in short, always dealing with materiality, insofar as Marx posits that two bodies or *Körper* can exist in one slice of space: "A commodity is a use-value or object of utility, and a 'value.' "

It is easy to see that this idea of the twofold thing approximates consubstantiation, itself a thesis about twofold things most often associated with Luther, who also holds that God's body and bread, God's blood and wine, are coexistents.[60] No doubt, sacramentality itself, in the scholastic and Aristotelian traditions, had always pressed up against orthodox logic and belief, so much that it would be characterized as heresy from time to time—as in the case of John Wyclif in the early 1380s in England. And it is sacramentality that allows Marx an unorthodoxy of his own in the discipline of logic, a way of willfully distorting identity / difference so as to solve the problem of how " 'unlike things can be commensurable' i.e. qualitatively equal," which, as Aristotle knew, " 'is . . . in reality, impossible' "—in fact only possible in what Theodor Adorno calls the "utopia of the qualitative."[61]

Hegel brought Marx to sacramentality. And Marx explored it.

TRANSUBSTANTIATIONS: USE VALUE AS FETISH, EXCHANGE VALUE AS MATTER

We can now take up an epistemological consideration. It is not that with the advent of modernity, "use value," once properly regarded in the Middle Ages, becomes fetishized into abstraction in capitalism. Rather, it is that, oddly enough, with the appearance of capital come the conditions of *knowing* and *seeing* Things as use values. To put it another way, capital offers a new perspective on Things, and use value seems to designate precisely one such perspective. Statements such as these express the idea that use value is only *recognizable within* commodities, rather than somehow appreciated outside of capital, outside of history and commodities: "The totality of heterogenous use-values or physical commodities [*Warenkörper*] reflects a totality of similarly heterogenous forms of useful labor"; "Commodities come into the world in the form of use-values or material goods [*Gebrauchswerten oder Warenkörpern*], such as iron, linen, corn, etc."[62] Commodities show up, as it were, within the subjective conditions that had been established by "the manner of consumption." This must mean that, on the one hand, *use value itself is a fetish rather than a place holder for "the authentic" or the "useful"*—a shifting descriptor equally predicated upon the *relations* in which the Thing is situated. On the other hand, *exchange value is no farther from the matter, from the material, from the bodily, than use value*. We can, therefore, read these following remarks by Marx as a statement about epistemological or even ideological conditions: "Hence we see that whether a use-value is to be regarded as raw material, as instrument of labour, or as product is determined entirely by its specific function in the labour process, by the position it occupies there: as its position changes, so do its determining characteristics."[63]

Many years later, Adorno and, more recently, Žižek, would show that use value and exchange value are subject to such dialectical exchanges, whereby one incorporates the substance of the other. It is interesting that in both cases, transubstantiation figures centrally. For his part, Adorno tellingly states that commodity fetishism is "the auto religion [that] makes all men brothers in the sacramental moment with the words: 'That is a Rolls Royce.' "[64] He goes on to say: "The masochistic mass culture is the necessary manifestation of almighty production itself. When the feelings seize on exchange value it is no mystical transubstantiation."[65] In more plain terms,

there is no "mystical transubstantiation" in view of what is, to Adorno, a social fact: all has already been transubstantiated, because all things have been commodified. His larger point, however, is to return to Marx's important sacramental metaphors (without acknowledging their Hegelian origin) and revise them in such a way that use value itself becomes a creation of capital. For Adorno, it is not that exchange value destroys use value (as per the common reading) but rather that exchange value, by some odd, reversed transubstantiation, *becomes* use value: "If the commodity in general combines exchange value and use value, then pure use value, whose illusion the cultural goods must preserve in a completely capitalist society, must be replaced by pure exchange value, which precisely in its capacity as exchange value deceptively takes over the function of use value."[66] Adorno's point, therefore, is consistent with the Hegelian reading of Marx, confirming the instability of the term "use value" yet verifying its status as an epistemological category, if not an item of ideology itself.[67]

Žižek, like Adorno, revises the concept of use value and does so through, among other things, an analysis of Coca-Cola, which peculiarly exhibits the logics of postmodern commodification, in which the formerly secret essence of the modern commodity is miraculously materialized as the postmodern commodity-Thing itself. We have at hand yet another transubstantiation: "The paradox . . . is that Coke is not an ordinary commodity whereby its use-value is transubstantiated into an expression of (or supplemented with) the auratic dimension of pure (exchange) Value, but a commodity whose very peculiar use-value is itself already a direct embodiment of the supra-sensible aura of the ineffable spiritual surplus, a commodity whose very material properties are already those of a commodity."[68] Coke materializes the immaterial in a process akin to a medieval Host miracle, where the fetish (Christ's body of which the bread is the appearance) is materialized into an actual bleeding Host: appearance becomes essence, accident becomes subject, the bread becomes Christ's crucified flesh.[69] Whether this means that Žižek is as Hegelian as he is Lacanian, or whether a latent Hegelianism is imported through Lacan is not at issue here. The point is that Žižek's new sense of the commodity must be returned to its proper Hegelian, as opposed to strictly Lacanian, background. That way, we can discern that in commodities, as Adorno had put it, the "relation to the irrelevant manifests its social essence."[70] That seems to be precisely Žižek's point: the irrelevance of Coke—its "Nothing-

ness," its "pure semblance"—is consumable, potable.[71] Coke is the Real Thing but it is also the sacramental, Hegelian thing—to be consumed, enjoyed, and fetishized.

MARX'S MEDIEVAL HEGEL

From Marx's point of view, Hegel's critique of the Middle Ages can be theoretically productive only when configured as a critique of capital—such that the mysteries of the Middle Ages translate into those of capital, and the critique of capital involves simultaneously a critique of the Middle Ages. Marx, we might recall, first presents the Middle Ages—that "medieval Europe, shrouded in darkness"—in that pertinent section in *Capital*, the part on fetishism.[72] He puts them there to set capitalism into relief but, just as polemically, to supply the anti–Middle Ages to Hegel's own. Insofar as the very critique of capital grows partly out of the Hegelian Middle Ages, the very site where Hegel's critique of the sacramental fetish is most poignant and most presciently Marxist, Marx has to render his Middle Ages as exactly the reverse of Hegel's concerning the crucial question of the relations between Things and persons. As Marx says of the Middle Ages, "the social relations between individuals . . . appear at all events as their own personal relations, and are not disguised as social relations between things."[73] Hegel would advance the idea that, in terms of the structures of fantasy and feeling in the late Middle Ages, the relation between things is the rule of the day. This is what Marx would say of modernity and capital. It could not be clearer that what both mystifies *and* demystifies the commodity, what both describes the fantasy of capitalism and what critiques it, is a sacramental sense about commodities in capitalism—which is, in many respects, a Hegelian view of both the Eucharist and the Middle Ages.

For all of these reasons, strangely enough, Marx's modernity often looks like Hegel's Middle Ages.[74] Were one interested in tracing the continuities of subjective states, fetishisms, and ideologies from the Middle Ages to modernity, one might find that Hegel and Marx complete one another rather well, explaining the transformations of Eucharists into commodities; priests into philosophers, political economists, or capitalists; and laborers into "priests" transubstantiating use values into exchange values by virtue of the capitalist relations of production in which they find

themselves. Such a project would be one way to rationalize what Walter Benjamin meant when he said that the "Christianity of the Reformation period did not favor the growth of capitalism; instead, it transformed itself into capitalism."[75] But we ought not to view these transformations as a result of Marx's own relationship to the Middle Ages, mediated by the larger impulses toward secularization that may have characterized his own age. More narrowly and, as a consequence, more identifiably significant, we are witnessing Marx using the figure of "the medieval" to mediate his relationship to Hegel—predictably using "the medieval" as the figure of difference from his predecessor but powerfully imputing to it all that is critically persuasive, original, and plainly visible in Hegel.

NOTES

1 See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*; chapter 1, and Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. The epigraph to this essay comes from Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 83 [3.5.9].

2 To his credit, William Pietz comes the closest in noticing these Hegelian sources (in his "Fetishism and Materialism," 137, 140), but Pietz does not finally draw the connection between Hegelian sacramentality and the Marxian version, which he glosses so well: "They (we) are members of the body of Capital, whose value-essence transcends and yet incarnates itself in these material beings like the divine salvational power of Christ in the faithful members and sacramental objects of His church. Indeed, just as the mystery of the Catholic church as the body of Christ is concentrated and expressed in the sacrament of the Eucharist, so the whole mystery of capitalist society appears at its most visible and, at the same time, most mysterious in the form of interest-bearing money-capital" ("Fetishism and Materialism," 149). Most other readers refer tangentially to the Real Presence metaphoric in Marx's discussion of the commodity and of money. Gallagher and Greenblatt do not so much illustrate Marx's particular philosophical debts as demonstrate that Marx's Enlightenment, Protestant cynicism carried on in the later nineteenth century; see their *Practicing New Historicism*, 165–66.

3 Marcuse's analysis of Hegel's views of labor are revealing: "The tone and pathos of the descriptions [in the *Philosophy of Right*] point strikingly to Marx's *Capital*" (Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 79).

4 Marx, *Capital*, 165. Marx, of course, had written this ponderous statement in his analysis of money: "The transubstantiation, the fetishism, is complete" (*Theories of Surplus Value*, 498). As suggestive as that sentence is, I shall here have to limit my inquiry to Marx's initial discussion of commodity fetishism—particularly, the commodity's sacramental materialities.

5 Mitchell identifies Charles de Brosse's *Du Culte des Dieux fétiches* as informing Marx's theory of fetishism; see Mitchell, *Iconology*, 186, 190–91. In addition to the sources mentioned in note 35 of this essay, Pietz nominates Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as the text most analogous to Marx's thinking on the commodity; see Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," 140–43.

6 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111–19. More simply put, Hegel locates the Middle Ages in the Romantic era, which is modern. For more on this question of modernity and Hegel, see my "What Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic Really Means."

7 Marx, *Capital*, 165.

8 More fully, Aristotle says: "Clearly, then, such a principle is the most certain of all; and what this principle is we proceed to state. It is: 'The same thing cannot at the same time both belong and not belong to the same object and in the same respect.' . . . Indeed, this is the most certain of all principles. . . . For it is impossible for anyone to believe the same thing to be and not to be" (*Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 58–59).

9 When referring to "logic" and "classical logic" throughout this essay, I have in mind this principle of Aristotle.

10 Marx, *Capital*, 127. Of course, that "third thing" points us to the entire relationship of production in which surplus capital is generated, and in which labor itself becomes a commodity.

11 Ibid., 152 (emphasis added).

12 Ibid., 135–36.

13 Ibid., 134.

14 Ibid., 153, 159, 142, 128, 135, 150, 129, 147.

15 Ibid., 143.

16 Ibid., 144n19.

17 Ibid., 165.

18 However, Marx's talk of "magic and necromancy" (*Capital*, 169) resonates historically as aspersions against Catholicism.

19 Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, 531. Hegel stubbornly answers the charges in a letter dated April 3, 1826.

20 Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity," in *Early Theological Writings*, 249.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 A word on "allegory" is in order as a point of clarification. Hegel, in several places in his lectures on aesthetics, associates "allegory" with "symbol" (see especially *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 2:303–14)—a view that also runs through Benjamin's reflections on allegory (vis-à-vis collecting and Baudelaire). Both Hegel and Benjamin find allegory to be extractive or decontextualizing: Hegel argues that in allegory things "are set forth as severed, as separate" (as quoted in the main text), and Benjamin writes that the allegorist "dislodges things from their context" (*Arcades Project*, 211; see also 21–22, 204–5, and 206 [on Baudelaire and symbol versus allegory]). Yet both offer alternatives to allegory: Hegel posits sacramental fe-

tishism as a way of drawing dissimilars together through subjectivity and feeling, whereas Benjamin offers up the "collector" who "brings things together . . . keeping in mind their affinities and their succession in time." The question of allegory, symbol, and temporality would, of course, be picked up by Paul de Man in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight*, 187–228.

24 Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 249.

25 Ibid., 250–51.

26 Hegel, *Three Essays*, 54; 55. The German is taken from "Fragmente über Volksreligion und Christendum," in *Werke*, 40.

27 Hegel, *Three Essays*, 56.

28 Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, 531.

29 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 377.

30 Ibid., 390. Mitchell's notion of iconoclasm necessarily assumes the Protestant (iconoclastic) polemic against Catholic, fetishistic image worship; see Mitchell, *Iconology*, 196–97.

31 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 377–78.

32 Ibid., 378.

33 Ibid., 377.

34 Ibid., 378.

35 According to Pietz ("Fetishism and Materialism," 134 and 134n44) works that were relevant to Marx included Karl August Böttiger, *Ideen zur Kunst-Mythologie* (1826), and Benjamin Constant, *De la réligion* (1824). For Marx's particular reading of these and other texts, see Marx, *Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*. On the colonial encounters with the so-called fetish religions of West Africa and South America, and how these encounters generated a relevant discourse on fetishism that applies to Marx, see Mitchell, *Iconology*, 205; Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," 130; 143; and McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 181. Mitchell also points to how some contemporaries viewed Catholic and "Negroe" fetishism as analogous (*Iconology*, 197).

36 Comte's theory of fetishism concerns primarily the animation of Things and is not an investigation into subject–object relations as I describe them here. Hegel and Marx, in other words, are not *only* concerned with the idea that, as Comte puts it, "the Fetichist spirit . . . looks on all objects in nature as animate" (*System of Positive Polity*, 68). Comte had also partitioned "Fetichism" from theology, viewing the former as "spontaneous" and the latter as "systematic" (ibid., 67). Hegel would draw fetishism and theology together, and of course Marx would speak of "theological niceties" (*Capital*, 163) in discussing commodity fetishism.

37 Marx, *Capital*, 165.

38 Marx, *German Ideology*, in the *Marx-Engels Reader*, 154.

39 Marx, *Capital*, 170.

40 Stuart Barnett makes some instructive points:

> The bread and wine are not signs that have a natural, ostensive function. There is no real connection between the sign and referent. Hegel thus defines the sign in a

very modern way. It is defined as a relation between a signifier and a signified. Community, in turn, is defined as the establishment of this relation, as the harnessing of the potentially arbitrary nature of the sign. In as much as a sign cannot by definition be private, the sign comprises the space of community. . . . This is why bread is for Hegel the consummate sign. It is consumed and destroyed in the very act of signification. ("Eating My God," 138; 139)

41 Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 249.

42 Speaking of devotion and the sacraments, Hegel says the following in his lectures on the philosophy of religion: "Negation exists within devotion and even maintains an outward configuration by means of sacrifice. The subject renounces something or negates something in relation to itself. It has possessions and divests itself of them in order to demonstrate that it is earnest. . . . Thus from this negation or from the sacrifice one advances to enjoyment, to consciousness of having posited oneself in unity with God by means of it. Sensible enjoyment is linked directly with what is higher, with consciousness of the linkage with God" (*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 446). In these lectures, Hegel's aim is to discuss religion as philosophy rather than as theology.

43 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, 284–85.

44 Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 229.

45 Ibid.

46 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 231.

47 See also Marx, "Simple Reproduction," in *Capital*, 711–24 and 199.

48 Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 230. One other telling formulation is this: "Once a commodity has arrived at a situation in which it can serve as a use-value, it falls out of the sphere of exchange into that of consumption" (*Capital*, 198). Of course, despite Marx's chiasmatic approach to production and consumption, we have to bear in mind their conceptual differences, at Marx's own urging: "Thereupon, nothing simpler for a Hegelian than to posit production and consumption as identical" (*Grundrisse*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 231).

49 Freud, *Standard Edition*, 21:154. Also see Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), in *Standard Edition*, 7:125–243 (especially 153–55); and Freud, "On the Genesis of Fetishism," discussed in Rose, "Freud and Fetishism." See also Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I"; "The Problem of the Fetish, II"; and "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa."

50 One of the mysteries of Freud's take on fetishism is not the rather familiar final sentence about the "inferior organs" of women, but the penultimate sentence on "social psychology," a moment where Freud could have theorized social fetishism further but does not: "Another variant, which is also a parallel to fetishism in social psychology, might be seen in the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it like a fetish after it has been mutilated. It seems as though the Chinese male wants to thank the woman for having submitted to being castrated" ("On Fetishism," in *Standard Edition*, 21:157). That's all he said, leaving the pieces here for readers to pick up and reassemble with other fleeting

references to social fetishism, such as the odd social displays of "thrashing of the fetish" in Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 74. However, a Hegelian, always ready to theorize fetishism from the social vantage point, would proceed from this particular statement and claim that we are all fetishists; we are always making distinctions between Things by valuing one Other over another Other in successive moments of discovery, satisfaction, lack, and disappointment. An interesting recent discussion of Freudian fetishism, and this famous passage, is McCallum, *Object Lessons*.

51 Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, 117; 123.

52 Ibid., 90; see also 85.

53 See Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," 119–51.

54 See Baudrillard, "Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction," in his *For a Critique of Political Economy of the Sign*. For an analysis, see Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," 122–23.

55 This criticism holds true for Agamben's formulation in *Stanzas*, 37 and 42 especially.

56 Marx, *Capital*, 136; 135–36. Marx goes on to speak of the ubiquity of this substance, by way of other examples: butyric acid and propyl formate, while different chemicals, are constituted by the same "substances": carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen.

57 For "gleicher Substanz," see Marx, *Das Kapital*, 11 (*Capital*, 134). For "gemeinschaftliche Substanz," see 25 (151) and 31 (151). For "Warenkörper," see 4 (126); 5 (128); 9 (132); 10 (133); 14 (138); and 23 (148).

58 For "Wertkörper," see *Das Kapital*, 18 (*Capital*, 143); 19 (144); 22 (147); and 23 (149); see also 24 (150).

59 Yet fetishism was, and some respects still is (especially in the Kleinian line of psychoanalysis), a discussion of bodies and body parts; see Rose, "Freud and Fetishism."

60 Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism*, 214; *Adoration of the Sacrament*, 275–305.

61 Marx, *Capital*, 151; Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 120. Adorno's full comment is: "The utopia of the qualitative—the things which through their differences and uniqueness cannot be absorbed into the prevalent exchange relationships—takes refuge under capitalism in the traits of fetishism."

62 Marx, *Das Kapital*, 9 (*Capital*, 132); 14 (138). Marx also writes, "It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire a socially uniform objectivity as values, which is distinct from their sensuously varied objectivity as articles of utility" (*Capital*, 166). See also ibid., 163, 177.

63 Marx, *Capital*, 289.

64 Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in *Culture Industry*, 39.

65 Ibid., 40.

66 Ibid., 39.

67 Also: "What might be called use value in the reception of cultural assets is being

replaced by exchange-value. . . . The use-value of art, its essence, is a fetish, and the fetish—the social valuation which they mistake for the merit of works of art—becomes its only use value, the only quality they enjoy" (Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 128).

68 Žižek, *Fragile Absolute*, 22–23.

69 For examples, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*.

70 Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," in *Culture Industry*, 39.

71 Žižek, *Fragile Absolute*, 23.

72 Marx, *Capital*, 170.

73 Ibid., 170; see also 168–69; cf. 165 to 170 to 173.

74 For more on this idea, see my "What Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic Really Means."

75 Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 290.

Empire, Apocalypse, and the 9/11 Premodern

BRUCE HOLSINGER

Amid all the commentary generated in the wake of 9/11, one particular line of thought seems especially germane to those of us invested in the continuing "legitimacy of the Middle Ages" to our own moment. The topos of apocalypse became a dominant one in the aftermath of the catastrophe, which seemed to embody a sudden and final end to an era of Western self-indulgence and self-satisfaction. David Simpson sums up this strand of commentary very well, characterizing the psychic reverberations of the attack as follows: "It has been widely presented as an interruption of the deep rhythms of cultural time, a cataclysm simply erasing what was there rather than evolving from anything already in place, and threatening a yet more monstrous future. It appeared as an unforeseen eruption across the path of a history commonly deemed rooted in a complacent steady-state progressivism (the well-known 'end of history' mooted after the fall of the Soviet empire)."[1] September 11, then, functioned as a form and moment of temporal irruption. If the attackers themselves intended 9/11 "as a cataclysmic imposition of revelation and apocalypse, of eternally present time, on the complacent faith in merely historical and evolutionary temporality,"[2] Euro-American intellectuals envisioned the world-shattering implications of the event in equally hyperbolic terms. Thus the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen described the 9/11 attacks as "the greatest work of art that is possible in the whole cosmos," bringing howls of derision from critics both left and right.[3]

Disruption, irruption, cataclysm, revelation—and, above all, apocalypse. The attacks of 9/11 both produced and realized a logic of "alternative temporality," to use a currently favored academic phrase: a way of imagining time and its passing that is insistently antilinear, cyclical, and

attuned to the persistence of the past in the unfolding of the present and future. In a whole host of ways, though, the September 11 attacks continue to expose the perils and limitations of such innovative temporal imaginings—most of which are, in fact, quite old. Apocalypse is one of the most venerable of alternative temporalities, whether in its academic or journalistic guise. As I'll suggest, the particularist aims of apocalyptic discourse often entail a more general alliance with coeval idioms in the same vein, sometimes with unfortunate results.

In this spirit, I want to pursue two lines of inquiry concerning the deployment of apocalypse in the years surrounding the attacks, and my argument might be understood as an effort to explain and justify how these seemingly discrete questions are in fact mutually constitutive. The first question, and ostensibly the simpler one, might be posed as follows: Why did the aftermath of the September 11 attacks inspire an immediate, deliberate, and truly ecumenical discursive recruitment of the medieval among the world's political classes and within the journalistic organs transmitting and mediating their languages? I characterize this opening question as simple because its putative answer seems frankly banal, and the few commentators who have addressed it with any directness have treated it as such. For whatever else it wrought, 9/11 undeniably functioned as a prolific generator of new Manichaean allegories, of dualisms rooted in self-consciously medieval rhetorics of crusade, religious fundamentalism, and divine right. "This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take awhile," President George W. Bush said days after the attacks; just weeks later, in one of his taped broadcasts aired by the Al Jazeera network, Osama bin Laden responded in kind: "This battle is not between al Qaeda and the U.S. This is a battle of Muslims against the global crusaders. . . . Bush stated that the world has to be divided in two: Bush and his supporters, and any country that doesn't get into the global crusade is with the terrorists."[4] On the face of it, then, the medievalism of 9/11 conspires with the white hat versus black hat rhetoric of the war on terrorism by simplifying the real-world complexities of geopolitics: when the "axis of evil" turns, it brings medium-range ballistic missiles from North Korea to Yemen, a nation that was highly coveted by the Pentagon for potential bases in the lead-up to the war against Iraq, as often as it smuggles grenade launchers from the Iranian theocracy to Hezbollah.

The second question I want to pose here arises from my own, more

parochial interests in the extent to which medievalisms and medieval studies of various sorts shaped some of the more influential critical problematics of the twentieth century. Georges Bataille and Martin Heidegger, for example, both began their careers as practicing medievalists: Bataille as a paleographer and an editor of Old French texts, Heidegger as a student of late scholasticism who in fact wrote his *Habilitationsschrift* on categories of cognition and meaning in medieval philosophy of mind. The medievalism of the postwar French avant-garde includes Jacques Lacan's seventh seminar with its long excavation of the psychic formation of courtly love, Pierre Bourdieu's 1967 translation of Erwin Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, and Roland Barthes's extensive reworking of fourfold scriptural hermeneutics in *S/Z*, among many others.[5] The premodern figures centrally as well in critical theories of postnationalism and postcolonialism: problematically in the unexamined homogenizations of the premodern by critics as distinct as Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha, enablingly in the deployment of medievalist historiography among the Subaltern Studies collective during the 1980s, just to give two examples. And it is in relation to this particular epiphenomenal medievalism that my second question asks why the following sentences appear as the concluding paragraph of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's manifesto *Empire*, published in 2000 (the italics are authorial):

There is an ancient legend that might serve to illuminate the future life of communist militancy: that of Saint Francis of Assisi. Consider his work. To denounce the poverty of the multitude he adopted that common condition and discovered there the ontological power of a new society. The communist militant does the same, identifying in the common condition of the multitude its enormous wealth. Francis in opposition to nascent capitalism refused every instrumental discipline, and in opposition to the mortification of the flesh (in poverty and in the constituted order) he posed a joyous life, including all of being and nature, the animals, sister moon, brother sun, the birds of the field, the poor and exploited humans, together against the will of power and corruption. Once again in postmodernity we find ourselves in Francis's situation, posing against the misery of power the joy of being. This is a revolution that no power will control—because biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution remain together, in love, simplicity, and also innocence. This is the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist.[6]

Printed as the final words of the book that was dubbed "the *Communist Manifesto* for our time" by Slavoj Žižek and "the most successful work of political theory to come from the Left for a generation" by a reviewer for the *London Review of Books*, this extraordinary passage proposes the thirteenth-century rise of Franciscan mendicancy as the veritable adumbration of the postmodern redirection of communist militancy embodied in the masses organizing both within and against Empire.[7] *Empire* thus concludes by arguing for an almost typological reeanactment of the origins and spread of mendicant poverty and religiosity as a conceptual model for the counterimperial radicalism of the present. "This inside is the productive cooperation of mass intellectuality and affective networks," Hardt and Negri write, "the productivity of postmodern biopolitics. This militancy makes resistance into counterpower and makes rebellion into a project of love."[8] However much *Empire* renders its argument in terms of the economic and technological globalizations, postindustrial formations of value and exchange, and newly transnational relations of labor shaping the present, the future to which it aspires will embrace all of these within a renewal of medieval affective spirituality in its Franciscan incarnation; a coming politics of *caritas* will ideally embody within the Empire of the future a resistant love revived from the premodern past.

If 9/11 rendered visible a dualist medievalism of crusade and Samuel P. Huntington's "clash of civilizations," then *Empire* proposes a countermedievalism rooted in its particular version of the theology of Franciscan mendicancy in an attempt at reconciliation and revolutionary cooperation. The aim in what follows will be to suggest several ways in which the diverse medievalism theorized and at some points even advocated in *Empire* might help both to complicate and to clarify the terms of what I have elsewhere called the 9/11 premodern—the ubiquitous deployments of the medieval in the wake of the September 11 attacks as well as the already deeply engrained medievalist rhetorics 9/11 brought to the surface. At the same time, I want to propose a more rigorous critical relation than those suggested so far between the book and the attacks it both could and could not have anticipated.

As my own rather murky language here suggests, though, what I am most interested in is not the relationship of these rhetorics (academic, political, theological, and so on) to the facts on the grounds and the real-

world politics of international relations and terrorism. Quite the contrary: as one of the press's readers for this project helped me to see, what all of the discourses examined in this chapter have in common—whether George W. Bush's proclamations during the runs-up to two wars, Osama bin Laden's fatwas, or Hardt and Negri's *Empire* itself—is their enlistment of particular languages and logics (apocalypse, allegory, dogged literalism, and so on) in order to elude or at least bracket the question of their philosophical and political responsibility to history. In the case of *Empire*, this is why I believe that critiques such as Timothy Brennan's (discussed below) have fallen somewhat flat, for they have misread the book's rhetorics, misunderstood its genre, and thus miscomprehended the conditions of its reception. If the Anglo-American academic left favors the politics of *Empire* over the politics of the war on terror, this should not blind us to the rhetorical machinations and tactics often harnessed to our own idealism.

An important subtext to what follows will thus be the predictable extent to which *Empire* was co-opted into the prologue and aftermath of 9/11 through a post hoc, ergo propter hoc relation that some of its reviewers postulated between the September 11 attacks and *Empire*. At its most egregious, this co-optation involved the invention of creative intellectual genealogies linking '68ist intellectual culture with 9/11; as Walter R. Newell wrote in a review published in the *Weekly Standard*, "Just as Heidegger wanted the German people to return to a foggy, medieval, blood-and-soil collectivism purged of the corruptions of modernity, . . . so does Osama dream of returning his world to the imagined purity of seventh-century Islam. . . . [T]he birthplace of Osama's brand of terrorism was Paris 1968."[9] Conversely, Newell argues, aiding and abetting Osama bin Laden's destructive return to the premodern has been the agenda of American postmodernism, specifically in its academic form:

> *Empire* is currently flavor of the month among American postmodernists. It is almost eerily appropriate that the book should be the joint production of an actual terrorist, currently in jail, and a professor of literature at Duke, the university that led postmodernism's conquest of American academia. . . . Still, it doesn't kill people—unlike the deadly postmodernism out there in the world. Heirs to Heidegger and his leftist devotees, the terrorists don't limit themselves to deconstructing texts. They want to deconstruct the West, through acts like those we witnessed on September 11.[10]

If this assessment of *Empire*'s imbrication with the events of 9/11 seems beneath comment, that should not keep us from recognizing its status as an institutional production of some considerable influence and prestige. Given its venue—one of the most widely read weekly journals among the nation's political elite—Newell's is the one assessment of *Empire* that those who actually prosecuted the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are most likely to have read. In this sense, I think it important to take seriously the specifically historical claims on which this sort of argument founds itself, claims related in complex ways to the more general historical conversations 9/11 has provoked.

One way we might approach the interrelation of the two questions I have posed here is rather conventionally literary-historical: from the perspective of genre. If *Empire* has received both acclaim and denigration as a work of political theory, a manifesto, a Heideggerian and terroristic "deconstruction" of the rhetoric of globalization, and so on, what both its promoters and its detractors have overlooked is the book's overriding generic affiliation with apocalyptic writing, from the biblical Apocalypse itself to the *Divine Comedy* to the neoconservative millenarianism of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*. More than a bland utopianism, this apocalyptic affiliation goes a long way toward explaining some of the book's strategies of totalization, its dialectical habits, and perhaps especially its metaleptic relation to 9/11. How else but apocalyptically to explain the book's initial invocation of its subject through the rhetoric of personification allegory of the sort favored by Marx in those apocalyptic moments in the first volume of *Capital*? (Recall those commodities "speak[ing] through the mouth of the economist" in the discussion of commodity fetishism, or that description of exchange as "a born leveller and cynic."[11]) *Empire* resuscitates this rhetorical mode with engaging directness: its name beginning always with a capital *E*, Empire possesses the kind of expansive corpus and massive appetite that has always been at the center of apocalyptic discourse. As Hardt and Negri describe this personification, "Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command."[12] Here is the Whore of Babylon reborn at

the second millennium, the apocalyptic body that encompasses the entire earth as well as its networks of exchange and identity in one all-consuming embrace.

If its enlistment of prosopopoeia affiliates *Empire* with the formal rhetoric of apocalypse, equally intriguing is the self-reflexively apocalyptic tone its authors adopt in key sections of their diagnosis. The book's idiom exemplifies in this respect that recursivity of apocalyptic language nowhere more defensively analyzed than in Jacques Derrida's "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy":

> Several times I have been asked . . . why . . . I had or had *taken on* an apocalyptic tone and put forward apocalyptic themes. That is how they have often been qualified, sometimes with suspicion, and above all, I have noticed, in the United States where people are always more sensitive to phenomena of prophetism, messianism, eschatology, and apocalypse-here-now. That I have multiplied the distinctions between closure and end, that I was aware of speaking of discourses *on* the end rather than announcing the end, that I intended to analyze a genre rather than practice it, and even when I would practice it, to do so with that ironic genre clause I tried to show never belonged to the genre itself; nevertheless . . . all language on apocalypse is also apocalyptic and cannot be excluded from its object.[13]

Derrida recognizes somewhat reluctantly the apocalyptic mode's vulnerability to solipsism. Perhaps his bemused comment on the Americanization of eschatological fetishism helps explain at least in part the apocalyptic tone of *Empire*, directed in part to an American public captivated by those embarrassing apocalypticisms of Pat Robertson, David Koresh, and Theodore Kaczynski while trying to formulate a newly secular apocalypse that might inspire its readership's collective investment in the singularity of the millennial moment. As Hardt and Negri put it near the end of the book, "We are situated precisely at that hinge of infinite finitude that links together the virtual and the possible, engaged in the passage from desire to a coming future."[14] The language of the good infinity here and elsewhere in the book registers the authors' clear investment in apocalyptic logic, as does a longer passage from the preface that records their initial attempt to define Empire as concept rather than metaphor:

> The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits

a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality. . . . Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be. In other words, Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside of history or at the end of history.[15]

This passage's apocalyptic gestures (particularly the neo-Hegelian suspension of history) render it particularly susceptible to miscomprehension, especially by those not attuned to its apocalyptic rhetoric. Timothy Brennan, for example, contends that the paragraph above "conjures an irrepressible mass subject that conquers the state by virtue of capitalism's need for 'maximum plurality'—a gathering of subjectivities (the multitude) who never actually meet or converse and who therefore can never be guilty of repressing their political foes or, for that matter, of exercising their political wills."[16] Despite his insistence on Hardt and Negri's conflation of dissidence and affirmation, internationalization and globalization, and particularly their supposed misunderstanding of the Marxist traditions in which they write, what Brennan himself misses here is the book's calculated relation to that difficult history of totality in Western Marxism from Georg Lukács through Jürgen Habermas rigorously uncovered by Martin Jay.[17] In its attempt to understand "the new political order of globalization," in their words, *Empire* must of course totalize without apology; that it chooses to do so in an apocalyptic or millenarian register is not an affirmative strategy so much as a generic requirement. If this is precisely the idiomatic aspect of *Empire* that seems to have rubbed Brennan the wrong way, it is also what allows for some of the book's most provocative critical insights into previous attempts to totalize about new forces of globalization: for example, the suggestion that works such as Fukuyama's *The End of History* represent symptoms rather than diagnoses of Empire, indices of the ideological triumphalism and chiliasm that bolster the phenomenon of Empire as well as its endless confidence in its own futurity.

This coming future, however, necessitates a long and arduous excavation of the past, and it is the reading and revival of this past that makes the historical dimensions of *Empire*'s apocalyptic project particularly germane to a consideration of the 9/11 premodern. Near the end of the first chapter, titled "World Order," Hardt and Negri propose one of many historical analogies between the present domain of Empire and the Roman Empire that serves as its conceptual model; but if Rome represents the initial attempt to theorize the various juridical and political claims made by Empire, "the birth of Christianity in Europe and its expansion during the decline of the Roman Empire" furnish models for fighting against it.[18] As the authors write,

> In this process an enormous potential of subjectivity was constructed and consolidated in terms of the prophecy of a world to come. . . . This new subjectivity offered an absolute alternative to the spirit of imperial right—a new ontological basis. From this perspective, Empire was accepted as the "maturity of the times" and the unity of the entire known civilization, but it was challenged in its totality by a completely different ethical and ontological axis. In the same way today, given that the limits and unresolvable problems of the new imperial right are fixed, theory and practice can go beyond them, finding once again an ontological basis of antagonism—within Empire, but also against and beyond Empire, at the same level of totality.[19]

Perhaps it should come as no surprise, then, that the primary internal theorist of the premodernity of Empire throughout the book is Saint Augustine, whom the authors directly credit with conceptual and theoretical inspiration at least a dozen times. The fourteen-page Intermezzo on "Counter-Empire," the conceptual and rhetorical centerpiece of the book, makes most explicit the motivation for this Augustinian enlistment: "Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization, Empire with a counter-Empire. In this regard we might take inspiration from Saint Augustine's vision of a project to contest the decadent Roman Empire. No limited community could succeed and provide an alternative to imperial rule; only a universal, catholic community bringing together all populations and all languages in a common journey could accomplish this."[20] Worth emphasizing here is not so much Hardt and Negri's stated resis-

tance to the "transcendent telos" assumed in the Augustinian theology of the two cities, earthly and divine, but rather their tactical choice to enlist a model of resistance from Augustine's own moment, and even more specifically from the historical milieu of the *City of God*: the early fifth century, indeed the years immediately following the sack of Rome in the year 410 by Alaric and his army of Goths.[21]

Empire's deployment of Augustine thus needs to be understood at least in part in the context of what we should properly call a New Augustinianism percolating through the critical cultures of the last century's final decade, a millenarian tendency worthy of much further study in its own right. This Augustinianism most obviously embraces the Radical Orthodox theologians such as Catherine Pickstock, John Milbank, and Graham Ward, who advocate a return of Augustine in the guise of a new Christian ethics; but it also must include Jean-François Lyotard's final work, the posthumously published *Confession of Augustine*, as well as Derrida's *Circumfession*. Augustine seems to have answered a particular intellectual call at a moment of almost incomprehensible transition between one geopolitical formation and another, and indeed Augustine is appropriated in *Empire* for his apocalyptic theology of the two cities as adumbrated in the *City of God* rather than for the language of transformative confessionalism that inspires Lyotard and Derrida. "The telos of the multitude must live and organize its political space against Empire and yet within the 'maturity of the times' and the ontological conditions that Empire represents."[22] "Maturity of the times": the phrase, scare-quoted several times in *Empire*, is resonant with Augustine's sensibility late in life, when his own old age became indistinguishable from the *senectus mundi*, the "world grown old" around him, as he remarked in a sermon written shortly after the sack of Rome: "The world is passing away, the world is losing its grip, the world is short of breath."[23] The Augustinian apocalyptic of *Empire* reaches its apogee in part 4 of the book, which is actually given the title "The Decline and Fall of Empire" and exhibits all of Gibbon's apocalyptic fervor with virtually none of his pessimism. Hardt and Negri write:

> Empire creates a greater potential for revolution than did the modern regimes of power because it presents us, alongside the machine of command, with an alternative: the set of all the exploited and the subjugated, a multitude that is directly opposed to Empire, with no mediation between them. At this point, then, as

Augustine says, our task is to discuss, to the best of our powers, "the rise, the development and the destined ends of the two cities . . . which we find . . . interwoven . . . and mingled with one another." Now that we have dealt extensively with Empire, we should focus directly on the multitude and its potential political power.[24]

The phrase quoted from Augustine is lifted directly from the first chapter of book 11, which is also the opening passage of part 2 of the *City of God*.

Yet Hardt and Negri propose Augustine as just one of two models of counterimperialism derived from the world of late antiquity. For if Augustine models the theoretical edifice sustaining what they call "the multitude against Empire," the against-in-practice receives its premodern guise in the bodies and actions of the Goths, the "new barbarians,"[25] the subject and title of another section of the Intermezzo: "Those who are against, while escaping from the local and particular constraints of their human condition, must also continually attempt to construct a new body and a new life. This is a necessarily violent, barbaric passage, but as Walter Benjamin says, it is a positive barbarism. . . . The new barbarians destroy with an affirmative violence and trace new paths of life through their own material existence."[26] This counterimperialism of the "multitude" operates through a series of what Hardt and Negri call "barbaric deployments" aimed at refiguring political relations, both at the boundaries and at the centers of Empire. One of the most crucial of these transitions is represented by yet another strategically revived medieval formation, the "modern processes of primitive accumulation."[27] If Marx placed the origins of primitive accumulation in English localities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Hardt and Negri want to see this process as part of the current ideological work of Empire. "As we pass from modernity to postmodernity, the processes of primitive accumulation do indeed continue," they write, though by means of different mechanisms: primitive accumulation in its global, imperial frame entails new mobilizations of "social relations, communication systems, information, and affective networks," all now embraced by the accumulative impulses of capital rooted archaeologically in late medieval England and the Statutes of Laborers discussed in *Capital*.[28] Here again Hardt and Negri are writing history apocalyptically: "In postmodernity the social wealth accumulated is increasingly immaterial," and its place has been taken by what the authors call "informational

accumulation," which in turn "destroys or at least destructures the previously existing productive processes."[29] Located by Marx at the expropriative beginnings of capitalism, primitive accumulation under Empire endures as one of its possible ends, heralding the apocalyptic demise of materialism as such.

This typically Marxian paradox, this accumulative process that is nevertheless destructuring at the same time, registers not simply or even primarily the book's often abnegated Hegelian frame, but more specifically the dialectical apocalypticism that underwrites its vision of Empire and that *also* implicated Hegel. As Malcolm Bull, one of the most provocative recent theorists of apocalypse, has argued, it was Hegel who laid bare for Western philosophy the true nature of the apocalyptic as "the revelation of excluded undifferentiation." The apocalyptic not only describes the "reinclusion of the undifferentiated," but goes on "to reveal a new system, a new millennium that operates on principles different from those of the old." Most crucially for a reading of *Empire*, "Apocalyptic texts often describe a process in which undifferentiated chaos is the prelude to a new order: but where sacrifice is cyclical and conservative . . . apocalyptic is dialectical and revolutionary. It is not the oppositions dissolved in the period of undifferentiation that are re-established, but a new set."[30] There could be no more accurate paraphrase of Hardt and Negri's claim that the critical work of *Empire* as a book and the ideological work of Empire as a concept is to refigure the very dialectic of modernity; in their own words, "The systemic totality [of Empire] has a dominant position in the global order, breaking resolutely with every previous dialectic and developing an integration of actors that seems linear and spontaneous."[31]

THE CHILIASTIC MODERN

This striking philosophical oxymoron—the proposal that a particular historical formation might be in any way capable of breaking with *all* previous dialectics—may be the book's most compelling claim to generic status as an apocalypse. As such, it may also illustrate the unacknowledged sense in which *Empire*'s debts to high medieval Christianity may be owed more profoundly to Saint Francis's older contemporary, Joachim of Fiore, than to Francis himself. In his Trinitarian understanding of history's unfolding, and particularly in his radical notion of the "third age," the age of

the Spirit, the Cistercian visionary Joachim of Fiore had a discernible influence on Hegel's triadic sense of contradiction in *The Spirit of Christianity*. Far from the strategic oppositionalism Hardt and Negri would locate in Saint Francis, the fundamental dialectical notion of "contradictory unities" postulated in Joachite exegesis figures centrally in the Western genealogy of apocalypse that embraces much of Hegel's own most original apocalyptic thought.[32]

There are, to be sure, certain objections one might advance against the premodernities that sustain *Empire*'s vision of the present and the future. There is a certain irony, for example, in Hardt and Negri's recruitment of Augustine as a model of counterimperial thinking, for it was Augustine who would provide the most articulate justifications for the later medieval notion of *translatio imperii*, the translation or carrying over of the Roman Empire and its culture into a Christian guise. Hardly an "absolute alternative" to the Roman Empire, the Augustinian theology of the two cities might be understood instead as ideally commensurate with the decentering, totalizing, and apocalyptic compulsions of Empire as Hardt and Negri understand them—thus perfectly illustrating Empire's own tendency to swallow and incorporate putative opposition. Likewise, only a highly stereotyped Saint Francis could be imagined as in any way resistant to capitalism. From the beginning, the Franciscan program of voluntary poverty provided one of the most elegant justifications for urban commercialism, private property, and the rise of the profit economy in the later Middle Ages,[33] and the institutionalization of the Friars Minor would become perhaps the Church's greatest weapon in its ongoing struggle against religious and intellectual dissent in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council.

As I pointed out earlier, however, such inaccuracies are, for my purposes at least, less revealing than they are indicative of the larger historical rhetoric that sustains the book's vision of past, present, and future. By the authors' own logic of periodization, the history that *Empire* envisions repeating itself, neither as tragedy nor as farce but as apocalypse, is the history of the Middle Ages born in the ruins of the Roman Empire, the momentous historical transition which passes the world, both then and now, into counter-Empire. The millennium separating Augustine from Saint Francis shadows forth that chiliastic epoch to which all millenarian texts by definition must look forward. *Empire*'s appropriation of the pre-

modern thus also constitutes an unspoken argument, one aimed at revivifying the medieval as the translated millennium we are beginning to inhabit as we live in the age and the aftermath of Empire. And in this provocative sense, and in a syncretism that is perhaps not as surprising as it might at first seem, *Empire* augurs a sudden global compulsion to mobilize the medieval in the immediate wake of its publication.

COUNTER-MEDIEVALISMS

As I noted above, the most visible articulations of the 9/11 premodern have involved the rhetoric of crusade. If Bush was widely criticized for the political offense of invoking this history just after the attacks, he was in an important sense following al Qaeda's polemical lead. Months before the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden had released a videotape to his supporters that left little doubt about the archaic iconography through which al Qaeda's past and future designs would be envisioned: "We will again see Saladin carrying his sword, the blood of unbelievers dripping from it."[34] A year and a half later, in the November 2002 "Letter to America" attributed to a bin Laden, readers are warned, "If the Americans refuse to listen to our advice and the goodness, guidance and righteousness that we call them to, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began, just like the other previous Crusades in which you were humiliated by the hands of the Mujahideen, fleeing to your home in great silence and disgrace."[35] Osama has become the new Saladin, the divinely inspired leader of the original mujahedeen, the anticrusaders of the Middle Ages; and in a twisted historical chiasmus, these medieval freedom fighters have come to life again, embodied in the freedom-fighting mujahedeen who humiliated the Soviet army in Afghanistan and promise to do the same to the American crusaders occupying the holy places of Islam.

The Manichaean calculus of the Crusades became a kind of lingua franca after the attacks, as commentators, columnists, and television pundits took up the rhetorical cross with relish. Bill Press, the voice of the left on CNN's *Inside Politics*, observed of the Christian right's stereotyping of Islam as an inherently violent religion, "It's like a repeat of the Crusades: Christians versus Muslims. But in this case, Richard the Lionhearted is the Reverend Pat Robertson."[36] Orientalizing speculations about a supposed "Muslim sense of history" all came around in the end to the imaginative

and political legacies of the Crusades; thus Mary-Jane Deeb, an American University scholar of Middle Eastern studies, asserts that Muslims in general "have a very fluid sense of time. . . . For them, events like the Crusades, a thousand years ago, are as immediate as yesterday. And they are very, very powerful events in the Arab mind. A lot of Islamic rhetoric revolves around the crusaders."[37]

Yet the Crusades have played a much more than rhetorical function in this war on terror, a war whose American prosecutors have made an attempt at a kind of ersatz intellectual buttressing by arguing for the exemplarity of the various historical pasts they have selected as most conducive to their policies. Here I refer to the widely promoted "history lesson" that George W. Bush started receiving at the initiation of his senior political advisor Karl Rove in the months following 9/11. As the *New York Times* reported in January 2002, "One of the books recommended to [Bush] in the immediate wake of September 11 was James Reston's *Warriors of God*," a popularized history of the Third Crusade that focuses on the personalities of its avowedly chivalrous and noble antagonists, Richard the Lionheart and Saladin, and that was published just months before 9/11.[38] According to Rove, who was quoted in a sidebar to the article, the president "was sort of dismissive in the beginning of the Saladin book. But then he got into it and told me he enjoyed it." This putative enjoyment on Bush's part works to instill admiration for a chief executive willing to learn from the past, and medievalists will surely be flattered to know that the period they claim as their own object of scrutiny has made its studied presence felt at the highest echelons of American power. Even while prosecuting a war against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan and elsewhere, the American president reads diligently an ostensibly true and accurate account of the medieval past as a way to help understand and reiterate as part of international policy the enemy's investment in distorting this past so violently.

What the *Times* failed to report on was the sheer enormity of the errors of fact, omission, and construal characterizing Reston's *Warriors of God*, a book that had been roundly dismissed by practically every reviewer who touched it yet has proved by far the most widely cited account of the most crucial premodern backdrop to 9/11. Throughout the book, propagandizing chronicles are uncritically presented as straightforward historical documentation, mistranslations of Latin appear in numerous geographical

and biographical descriptions, and so on.[39] And if we take Karl Rove at his word—a big if, of course, for it implies that Bush would actually have read the books recommended to him—in *Warriors of God* the president would have come across the author's description of Richard the Lionheart, in a simply breathtaking phrase, as "the greatest Arab-slayer on earth."[40] Aside from its obvious genocidal resonances, this description of the medieval English king contains an error that nevertheless makes the book perfectly appropriate reading for the leader of this self-described Western crusade: the Europeans' opponents during the Third Crusade were mostly Turks, Kurds, Mamluks, and Ashkenazic Jews. "Arab-slayer" becomes for Reston a conveniently amalgamating sobriquet that conflates the Christians' opponents and victims into a single entity and forgets central parts of the medieval history it pretends to examine responsibly.

Here again I think we have to reckon with one of many instances of Osama bin Laden's prescience in regard to the Bush administration's rhetoric of historical comprehension. Just two months earlier, in the October 2001 Al Jazeera interview, bin Laden had warned, "This is a recurring war. The original crusade brought Richard [the Lionheart] from Britain, Louis from France, and Barbarus from Germany. Today the crusading countries rushed as soon as Bush raised the cross. They accepted the rule of the cross."[41] It may well be that Reston's book was given a space on Bush's historical reading list as a direct result of this interview, which finds bin Laden himself tactically manipulating the multinational iconography of the Crusades. If the Third Crusade led by Richard of England, Louis of France, and Frederick Barbarossa of Germany united disparate kingdoms and empires under the cross of Christian orthodoxy, bin Laden's image of Bush "rais[ing] the cross" and the American allies' unquestioningly "accept[ing] the rule of the cross" transforms the original pre- or paranational medieval collectivity that launched the Crusades into the postnational formation of NATO. In bin Laden's implied formulation, Bush now raises the cross just as Clement III did in 1189; the United States assumes the mantle of global illegitimacy embodied in the medieval papacy; and America's European allies, rather than joining the new crusade in the spirit of voluntary servitude in which the medieval crusaders like to cloak themselves, kowtow to the American president's imperialist whims.

It is this medievalist tactics of postnationalism, this recognition by bin Laden of the old-style imperial dominion of the United States as a residual

force at the center of an emergent mode of global sovereignty, that most powerfully illustrates the intercalation of the 9/11 premodern with the medievalism of *Empire*. Whatever its authors' intentions, *Empire*'s critical advocacy of a pantheon of new medievalisms must negotiate between the U.S. triumphalism embodied in the militarized violence of Bush's "new crusade" against Islamism and emergent Islamic medievalisms with all the anti-Semitism, neofascism, and eliminationism that accrues to them. For this negotiation to be successful, we need to understand *Empire*'s relation to the events of 9/11 not as causal, it goes without saying, but—precisely—as apocalyptic. In other words, we must understand it as part of that prognosticatory mechanism that Russell Samolsky locates as inherent to modern apocalyptic writing: the mechanism that allows Franz Kafka to be read by critics from Walter Benjamin to George Steiner as the veritable prophet of the Holocaust, that allows Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to be claimed retroactively as the literary script of the Rwandan genocide.[42]

If this seems too much of a metaleptic burden to lay on *Empire*'s doorstep, consider the medievalism that inspires the book's centrally important discussion of nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs in the widely used acronym Hardt and Negri adopt. NGOs are part of the legitimation project of Empire: they are "interventions," "actions within a unified world by the ruling structure of production and communication . . . that involve the exercise of physical force on the part of the imperial machine over its global territories."[43] As Hardt and Negri argue, these ostensible instruments of "moral intervention" are more important to an adequate comprehension of the mechanism of Empire than military force itself, and I want to quote from *Empire* at length here to illustrate how this can be so:

> What we are calling moral intervention is practiced today by a variety of bodies, including the news media and religious organizations, but the most important may be some of the so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which, precisely because they are not run directly by governments, are assumed to act on the basis of ethical or moral imperatives. The term refers to a wide variety of groups, but we are referring here principally to the global, regional, and local organizations that are dedicated to relief work and the protection of human rights, such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, and Médecins sans Frontières. Such humanitarian NGOs are in effect (even if this runs counter to the intentions

of the participants) some of the most powerful pacific weapons of the new world order—the charitable campaigns and the mendicant orders of Empire. These NGOs conduct "just wars" without arms, without violence, without borders. Like the Dominicans in the late medieval period and the Jesuits at the dawn of modernity, these groups strive to identify universal needs and defend human rights. Through their language and their action they first define the enemy as privation (in the hope of preventing serious damage) and then recognize the enemy as sin.[44]

More insidiously, the NGOs exemplify the process by which "moral intervention has become a frontline force of imperial intervention": a deployment of these "mendicant" NGOs, they suggest, will more often than not "set in motion a process of armed containment and/or repression of the current enemy of Empire. These enemies are most often called terrorist, a crude conceptual and terminological reduction that is rooted in a police mentality."[45]

This is of course where *Empire* has gotten itself into the most trouble, for that last sentence has been lifted from the book more than a few times in those reviews that take its authors to task for their alleged theoretical complicity with, if not promotion of, terrorism.[46] While Hardt and Negri are making what seems to me an incontrovertible point about the relativism of definition, I do think the distinction they promote between NGOs as the "mendicant orders of Empire" and the discursive construction of "terrorist" groups as the "enemy of Empire" has led to a certain vulnerability in the book's reception. If Saint Francis, the prime mover of the medieval mendicant orders in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, embodies for Hardt and Negri the "ontological power of a new society" by "refus[ing] every instrumental discipline," how can it be that present-day NGOs replicate the thoroughly affirmative works of "Dominicans in the late medieval period" as an instrumental function of moral intervention? To be sure, the "global exodus" performed by what the authors call the "new nomad horde, a new race of barbarians, . . . aris[ing] to invade or evacuate Empire"[47] gives us one possible answer, but nomadism alone can do enough conceptually here to stem the book's desire to have mendicancy both ways: as Franciscan resistance to and Dominican instrumentalization of Empire at the same time.

Nevertheless, the book's ambivalent treatment of mendicancy perfectly

encapsulates the historical and social oscillation between the "NGO" and the "terrorist," lending a certain clarification to the tendencies of some of its readers to affiliate its argument with the mission of the 9/11 hijackers. Consider, for example, the history of those transnational organizations that began to gain strength and visibility with the increasingly dramatic appeal of some forms of Wahhabist and Salafist Islam in response to the Iranian revolution and other events in the Middle East during the 1970s: the Saudi Muslim World League, a proselytizing antinationalist organization formed in the late 1960s, has sponsored relief efforts for decades throughout the Mediterranean while providing a prestigious institutional front for numerous bombings of civilian targets; the Muslim Brotherhood, with its direct and self-proclaimed links to Hamas, constructed dozens of refugee camps for displaced Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo and in many cases was on the ground well before the United Nations; the Islamic Salvation Front provided immense amounts of relief aid in the wake of catastrophic earthquakes in Algeria in 1989 and in the Cairo suburbs in 1992 while hijacking an Air France flight and sponsoring a series of bombings throughout France.[48] As Matthew Levitt notes, "Saudi-sponsored humanitarian organizations such as the Mercy International Relief Organization . . . played central roles in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings" in Africa.[49] And the Philippine office of the International Islamic Relief Organization, run by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, funneled money directly to al Qaeda during the late 1990s. All of these organizations model their relief efforts directly and self-consciously on the work of such interventionist NGOs as the Red Cross, Oxfam, and Doctors Without Borders, entities that have in turn given these emergent Muslim groups lexical and infrastructural paradigms for cloaking their politics in the rhetoric of (for lack of a better word) their ecclesiology.

Their theology, by contrast, has aimed for a wholesale revival of post-Koranic Islam. It was these same Islamic NGOs that in the 1970s began distributing millions of free Korans as well as Wahhabist and Salafist tracts throughout the Muslim world. A lynchpin in the new transnational dissemination of this particular version of Islam was the theology of Ibn Taymiyya, a thirteenth-century Syrian dissident whose writings have provided perhaps the most powerful justification for the eliminationist strain of Salafism for the last forty years. His writings are cited regularly by Osama bin Laden, most notably in his 1996 tract "Expell the Polytheists from the

Holy Places," where he draws on Ibn Taymiyya's injunction to battle illegitimate rulers such as the Saudi regime, which, he claimed, "by opening the Arab peninsula to the crusaders, . . . disobeyed and acted against what has been enjoined by the messenger of God."[50] By the early 1980s, in Jeremy Harding's words, "The ruling of a learned, highly political medieval scholar was rapidly becoming a point of reference in the ragbag of justifications for the violent overthrow of 'impious' 20th-century regimes. So it was that the Egyptian electrical engineer Abdessalam Faraj, whose writings inspired the assassination of Sadat in 1981, was able to call the President a 'pharaoh' and 'an apostate of Islam fed at the tables of imperialism and Zionism' in a work that quoted freely from Ibn Taymiyya—a source he had probably encountered in a Saudi-sponsored hand-out."[51]

Thus, as *Empire* reaches back to thirteenth-century Italy to lay claim to the joyful legacy of Saint Francis and a theology of communist love, bin Laden and others reach back to thirteenth-century Syria for a theology that will justify a political adherence to the letter of the Koran. These two medievalist religiosities of the contemporary could not contrast more starkly in their content, of course, but their rhetoric must be understood as both syncretically and synchronically related in the very terms of apocalypse. For if the apocalyptic mode specifies the genre and much of the style of *Empire*, apocalypticism is as well the rhetorical hallmark of bin Laden's medievalism that most distinguishes it from the West's flat-footed rhetoric of crusade. In his 1996 proclamation of jihad, bin Laden laid the groundwork for an apocalyptic appeal to his global readership by naming the "American crusader armed forces in the countries of the Islamic Gulf" as "the main cause of our disastrous condition." The rhetoric and form both reached their zeniths in the widely distributed 1998 fatwa, "Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders," a title that also gave a name to his organization. Bernard Lewis, in what is widely cited as a prophetic 1998 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, went so far as to call this declaration "a magnificent piece of eloquent, at times even poetic Arabic prose," an assessment predicated in large part on bin Laden's deft interweaving of Koran, crusade, and exhortation within a single apocalyptic tapestry: "Since God laid down the Arabian peninsula, created its desert, and surrounded it with its seas, no calamity has ever befallen it like these Crusader hosts that have spread in it like locusts, crowding its soil, eating its fruits, and destroying its verdure; and this at a time when the

nations contend against the Muslims like diners jostling around a bowl of food."[52] Bin Laden's revisionism here argues not simply for a moral equivalence and historical continuity between the medieval Crusades and the presence of American troops in the Islamic holy lands, but for an unprecedented rupture: these "Crusader hosts" *currently* occupying the Arabian Peninsula are the very locusts held up in the Koran itself as a harbinger of the apocalypse of unbelievers.

Perhaps the political West's most unsettling intellectual error since 9/11 has been to miscomprehend this apocalyptic medievalism—crusades, locusts, spears, and so on—as a willed rejection of modernity: to mistake the intellectual apparatus of the premodern for a juridical refusal of the contemporary, archaic reference for emergent desire, an intricate strategic deployment of the medieval past for a will to inhabit that past. This miscomprehension has been a long time coming, of course, characterizing as it has the self-understanding of organizations such as NATO and other international alliances led by the United States. In a 1999 article published in the Turkish journal of public policy, *Private View*, Burcu Bostanoğlu argued for a greater acquiescence on Turkey's part to American programs of globalization: "In practical terms, the Eastern and Southern frontiers of Turkey constitute the physical boundary between 'modernity' and 'non-modernity,' " Bostanoğlu asserts. "At this point, the issue of the continuity and indivisibility of the Judaeo-Christian modernity raises political and security concerns involving the problematic of including the Islamic tradition in the collective historic experience of the West. The modernist West looks at a 'premodern' world on its immediate periphery and contemplates the dilemma: How to maintain a vitally important geography reasonably peaceful, secure, but sealed so its populace will not 'contaminate' the world with essentially (unwanted) 'premodernities.' "[53] After 9/11 these contaminating premodernities emerged with dizzying rapidity in the public sphere, where writers of every political persuasion armed themselves with adjectival batteries of historicizing abjection. Christopher Hitchens, our age's enthusiastic apostate, warns in the *Atlantic* of the Taliban–al Qaeda nexus's "program of medieval stultification," adding that "capitalism, for all its contradictions, is superior to feudalism and serfdom, which is what bin Laden and the Taliban stand for."[54] Anatole Kaletsky writes in the *London Times* of "the ruthless medieval theocracies of Saudi Arabia and Iran."[55] An editorial in a leading Malaysian daily addressing Islamic fundamentalism

contends that "the medieval ghosts have made a comeback, teaching that the past is a perfumed glory on a magic carpet."[56] Malapropisms abound in this climate of vulgar historicism; Thomas Friedman is the master here, writing just three days after the attacks of the "civil war within Islam . . . between the modernists and the medievalists."[57] And Fouad Ajami proposes in the *New York Times Magazine* that the September 11 bombers "were placed perilously close to modernity, but they could not partake of it."[58] Only in a public discourse predicated on this sort of globalized catachresis could al Qaeda's acts of destroying the World Trade Center and severely damaging the Pentagon—acts that necessitated the use of transnational financial networks, enrollment in flight schools, intensive training on passenger jets, knowledge of security and screening procedures at airports, and so on—comprehensibly be described as "medieval," better yet as acts of "medievalism." Perhaps we owe these metaphorics in part to *The Anarchical Society* (1977) of Hedley Bull, who (with no nods to Umberto Eco) promoted the phrase "neo-medievalism" to designate the undermining of state sovereignty by nonstate actors in the pursuit of transnationalist aspirations that often work against the interests of nations. Over the last quarter century, Bull's neo-medievalism has caught on in the strange lexicon of political science as a veritable buzzword for a new, postnational form of sovereignty in the age of globalization, an "international state" in which states themselves must find alternative modes of coexistence and coherence in order to survive.[59]

Things, it seems, have come full circle, and surely no amount of academic hand-wringing and peer-reviewed correction will be capable of disengaging these strange new medieval worlds from the metaphorical economies that now define them. Indeed, the 9/11 premodern radically situates our own field's longstanding and ongoing critical work on the ideological stakes of temporality, historicity, and periodization by exposing the guiding axioms of this work—that the past inhabits the present, that any argument over the past is at heart a political claim on the present, that collective memory and trauma complicate linear models of temporality, that the writing of history is inevitably a narrative production, or even that, in Bruno Latour's newly resonant phrase, "We have never been modern"—as symptomatic of the globalizing rhetoric of modernity. How can any theoretical interrogation of modernity and its discontents hope to get critical purchase on a social formation in which its claims have been

rendered meaningless in their ubiquity? By the all-consuming recursivity of the apocalyptic, such propositions are now exposed as belated tautologies: not just true on their faces, but integral parts of the language of public policy as well as the absorbed substance of journalistic and political rhetoric.

Finally, it may seem absurd to suggest that the problematic of the 9/11 premodern can be resolved through the adoption of a more rigorous sense of genre, especially when this relapse into textuality is itself of course a quintessentially apocalyptic gesture. Books are eaten or otherwise consumed throughout apocalyptic discourse, which theorizes its prophetic textual apparatus as part of the world it both delineates and devours. Most famously, in the tenth chapter of the Apocalypse, John reenacts Ezekiel's eating of the scroll in a vision that became a frequent reference point for medieval apocalyptic discourse:

> And I went to the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the book. And he said to me: Take the book and eat it up. And it shall make thy belly bitter: but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the book from the hand of the angel and ate it up: and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey. And when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said to me: Thou must prophesy again to many nations and peoples and tongues and kings. (Rev. 10:9–11).

More than the metaphorical absorption of doctrine by an individual, the eating of the book is as well an injunction to the global transmission of knowledge. Lacan concludes his seventh seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis in July 1960 with a haunting evocation of this passage at the end of a decade that saw a mountainous proliferation of nuclear weapons and the testing of the hydrogen bomb: the adventure of Western science, Lacan avows, is "not in truth an adventure that Mr. Oppenheimer's remorse can put an end to overnight. . . . The future will reveal [this end] to us, and perhaps among those who by the grace of God have most recently eaten the book—I mean those who have written with their labors, indeed with their blood, the book of Western science. It, too, is an edible book."[60] Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, that bitter "flavor of the month," in Newell's demonizing phrase, has proved more edible than most books in the wake of 9/11. An apocalyptic text full of chiliastic optimism for a "new world, a world that knows no outside,"[61] *Empire* constructs this millenarian renewal nevertheless as the return of a very old world—not a "world grown old," in

Augustine's terms, but a global commonality that harnesses the energies of a defamiliarized premodernity it envisions as a possible horizon of our own. How apocalyptically appropriate, then, that another medieval return should have materialized in *Empire*'s wake to reveal the true onus of this book's claims upon the past: the 9/11 premodern may be the belly that renders its text bitter rather than sweet.

NOTES

1 Simpson, *9/11*, 4.
2 Ibid., 6.
3 On Stockhausen's comments and their context, see Spinola, "Monstrous Art."
4 Ford, "Europe Cringes at Bush 'Crusade' Against Terrorists," 12; Kurtz, "Interview Sheds Light on bin Laden's Views," A12.
5 See Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition*.
6 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 413.
7 Žižek, dust jacket of *Empire*; Bull, "Hate Is the New Love."
8 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 413.
9 Newell, "Postmodern Jihad," 26–27.
10 Ibid.
11 Marx, *Capital*, 163–77.
12 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xii–xiii.
13 Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," 47.
14 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 361.
15 Ibid., xiv.
16 Brennan, "The Empire's New Clothes," 350.
17 See Jay, *Marxism and Totality*.
18 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 21.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 207.
21 Interestingly, as Jameson has noted, on a certain reading Augustine seems to have served the same function (though more implicitly) for Peter Brown himself, author of the classic biography *Augustine of Hippo*; see Jameson, "On the Sexual Production of Western Subjectivity."
22 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 407.
23 Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 298.
24 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 393.
25 Ibid., 214.
26 Ibid., 215.
27 Ibid., 258
28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.
30 Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 84, 79.
31 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 14.
32 See the provocative discussion of Joachite apocalypticism and its influence on Hegel in Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 130–35.
33 See in particular Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy*; cf. Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*.
34 Quoted in Burns, "America the Vulnerable Meets a Ruthless Enemy," 23.
35 Bin Laden (attributed), "Letter to the American People."
36 CNN *Inside Politics*, February 28, 2002.
37 Ringle, "The Crusaders' Giant Footprints," C01.
38 Berke, "In the White House, a Sense of What History Can Teach," A18.
39 Tyerman, review of *Warriors of God* by James Reston Jr.
40 Reston, *Warriors of God*, 291.
41 Reported on CNN *World News*, February 5, 2002.
42 On Kafka and Shoah, see Samolsky, "Metaleptic Machines."
43 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 35.
44 Ibid., 36.
45 Ibid., 37.
46 See, for example, Alan Wolfe's review in the October 1, 2001, *New Republic*.
47 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 213.
48 On these complexities, see in particular Gilles Kepel's superb analysis in *Jihad*.
49 Levitt, "Tackling the Financing of Terrorism in Saudi Arabia."
50 Bin Laden's 1996 fatwa quoted in Doran, "Long War in the Making," 28.
51 Harding, "The Great Unleashing."
52 Translated in Lewis, "License to Kill," 14.
53 Bostanoğlu, "The New Paradigm of Security and Democracy."
54 Hitchens, "Stranger in a Strange Land."
55 Kaletsky, "All's Well with the World, Except in Blair's Head," 24.
56 Unsigned editorial, *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), July 21, 2002; 10.
57 Friedman, "Smoking or Non-Smoking?" 27.
58 Ajami, "Nowhere Man," 13.
59 See the discussion in Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State." I have discussed the post-9/11 implications of neomedievalism at greater length in *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror*.
60 Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 325.
61 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 413.

Response

More Than We Bargained For

MICHAEL HARDT

It is striking how the three wonderful essays in this section by Kathleen Davis, Andrew Cole, and Bruce Holsinger make medieval thought so present and contemporary. In doing so, they demonstrate clearly the inadequacy of a periodization that defines European modernity by its complete break with the Middle Ages. Not only do these authors identify for us some of the continuing medieval elements in modern and contemporary thought, but also, as good scholars of the Middle Ages, they challenge some of the commonplace notions of the medieval, undermining the alternatives by which modernity has often been distinguished from it: religious versus secular, static versus dynamic, homogeneous versus heterogeneous, and so forth. This does not amount to a rejection of periodization, it seems to me, but it does force us to reconsider some of the functions that periodizing arguments can serve.

Kathleen Davis most directly confronts the issue of periodization. She demonstrates how the coherence, autonomy, and, ultimately, legitimacy of the modern is established through a foundational exclusion of the medieval, even in an author as subtle as Reinhardt Koselleck. She makes this clear, for example, by investigating the modern construction of "the feudal" as a category that groups together the various negative characteristics of the past and signals them as being cast off by modernity. The modern claims of secularization and secularity similarly rely on the rejection of the religious past. What I find most fascinating, in fact, is the double play of continuity and break that Davis finds in these periodizing schemes: the Middle Ages are made to serve for modernity as both revered origin (of national character, racial integrity, and so forth) and despised Other (in terms of religiosity, economic production, and social organization). Davis's ultimate

goal is to think this complex periodization with respect to notions of modern sovereignty, to which I will return shortly.

Andrew Cole's essay serves, in part, as a complement to Davis's by illuminating the other side of one of her arguments. Whereas Davis focuses on modernity's obsession with separating itself from the Middle Ages, Cole demonstrates a strong continuity of thought between the medieval and the modern. Specifically he constructs a two-part relay back in time to link capitalist commodity culture to medieval understandings of the "thingness" of the Eucharist: Marx's theory of commodity fetishism relies strongly on Hegel, who in turn is drawing on medieval Christian theological notions of the sacrament and transubstantiation. By uncovering these relations, Cole casts a new light on the mystical, religious nature of commodities both in Marx's theory of fetishism and in capitalist culture in general. The common assumption that the commodity is a quintessentially modern artifact makes all the more effective Cole's revealing the medieval connections at its core.

Bruce Holsinger's essay also demonstrates how elements of medieval thought and images of the Middle Ages are present in contemporary public and political discourse, showing us, in particular, the many inappropriate uses to which the medieval is put. Like Davis, he very intelligently points out that the medieval is not one thing and that, indeed, many different versions of the medieval are called up today. Despite the fact that he criticizes the many bad contemporary invocations of the medieval, he clearly thinks that some uses of the medieval today are not only legitimate but also important. It is not only, then, a matter of good scholarship and getting medieval thought and history right (although that certainly helps). It seems to me that Holsinger's work is leading toward drafting a positive set of criteria, something like a guide to the legitimate and illegitimate uses of the medieval today.

The three essays together, then, demonstrate the continuities between the Middle Ages and modernity and highlight the persistence of concepts and figures associated with the Middle Ages in the contemporary world. They thus form a message something like Faulkner's famous formula: the Middle Ages are never really dead; they are not even past. But that does not invalidate periodization arguments in my view, as I said earlier. Periodization is not only legitimate but also necessary. I read these essays instead as a caution against simple and absolute conceptions of historical break

and a call to develop more complex understandings that include both rupture and continuity.

Allow me to use my own work as an example of some of the difficulties of periodization. I am invited to do so, in fact, by Holsinger's essay, which details how in our book *Empire* Toni Negri and I are much more engaged with medieval European thought and history than I had imagined. In general we use examples from the Middle Ages and other periods of the past as analogies to illuminate some aspect of the present. Reading Holsinger's essay, though, leads me to a concern that when we employ medieval concepts or historical events as analogies to the present we get more than we bargained for, that our readers (and perhaps we ourselves) tend to extend the limited comparisons in a general way and thereby import unintended or inappropriate elements into the present.

Our book *Empire* is built entirely on a theory of periodization. Most of the book is dedicated to analyzing an historical break that took place in the last half of the twentieth century. (To mark the event we sometimes choose 1968 or 1971 or 1989 or other dates.) We explore this rupture in a variety of different social fields, investigating, for example, the shift in imperialist practices of rule, capitalist regimes of accumulation, the dominant forms of labor, structures of racial hierarchy, and forms of cultural production, among others. Our relentless claim throughout the book is that we are entering a new era, and we use the term "Empire" to name the figure composed of all these historical shifts. Although our focus is clearly on the present and its break from the past, our argumentation constantly draws on historical analogies, hence the numerous references and borrowings from the Middle Ages that Holsinger details. This combination might, in fact, be a distinctive aspect of our writing: between, on the one hand, claiming a historical break of the present from the past and, on the other, positing analogies of the present to the past; between periodization and positing certain forms of historical continuity.

The most obvious example of bridging historical periods is our attempt to understand the current global order through comparisons to the ancient Roman Empire. (The ancient world, not the medieval world, is at issue here, but the same concerns apply.) For us the analogy with ancient Rome helps illustrate the universal pretensions of today's global order as well as the combination of fluid, expansive boundaries and severe internal

hierarchies. In addition, the mixed constitution of the ancient Roman Empire that Polybius famously analyzed provides us with an initial approximation of the internal structures of today's global order. Here, though, is where the difficulty I mentioned earlier arises: with these analogies, we sometimes get more than we bargained for. I have found that readers of this argument tend quickly to generalize the comparison and assume that we are saying, for example, that Washington is the new Rome and the U.S. president the new Caesar, despite our protestations to the contrary. The invocation of ancient Rome illustrates our point but also tends to import unwanted elements that confuse the argument.

A second example follows directly from this first. If one accepts the comparison between today's global order and the ancient Roman Empire, then it is logical to compare today's forms of resistance to the early Christian movements as a form of counter-Empire. (Holsinger highlights our repeated references to Augustine in this regard.) In this case too we find the comparison rich and instructive. We have been inspired by the metaphor of the two cities, by the investigations of love, and other themes that this analogy opens up for us. But here too I have noticed that our analogy creates some confusion. Some readers, for example, take our analogy as an indication that we seek to revive today the spirit of the early Christian cults and that we are advocating Christianity as a political alternative to the current global order, just as Augustine condemned the decadence of Rome. Our intention, however, is to invoke Augustine along with early Christian practice and theology with reference to their political character, not their religious beliefs.

Cole's essay, it seems to me, provides us with another example of this same difficulty. I find very convincing, as I said, his analysis of the links between Marx's theory of the commodity via Hegel to medieval notions of the Eucharist. And I would not be surprised if Marx himself were conscious of this connection. But, for just the reasons that I have been discussing, one can imagine why Marx might want to underplay the relationship between the commodity and the Eucharist. The sacrament does help us understand some aspects of the "magic" of commodities, but think of all the baggage that it brings along with it! Perhaps Marx was aware of the risk in being too convincing and thus linking to the commodity the numerous aspects of the Eucharist that really are not attributes of capitalist commodities.

These examples are not intended to resolve the problems of periodiza-

tion but rather to emphasize how complex and persistent they are. As the essays by Davis, Cole, and Holsinger make clear, it is not a matter of choosing either historical rupture or continuity or, in this case, either modernity's break from the medieval or the medieval's continual return in the modern. What is necessary, it seems to me, is both periodization and recognition of the real connections that persist or return. What the examples from my own work illustrate, I hope, is some of the difficulties that arise when attempting that combination.

As a final note, I would like to propose an idea that might complement Davis's very interesting reflections on the modern concept of sovereignty with a slightly different approach to periodization. My hypothesis in this regard is that at the end of modernity reappear some of the unresolved problems that marked its beginnings. From this perspective, some of the challenges of the late medieval world that early modernity sought to address spring forth again when the powers of modernity today wither or collapse. Let me just give one brief example: the permanent state of war. To a certain extent, the first problem of one stream of modern thought and politics was putting an end to the interminable and expansive civil wars in Europe. Think of Hobbes reacting to the English civil wars and Descartes to the German Thirty Years' War. Modern sovereignty, one could say in extreme shorthand, both national sovereignty and the sovereign individual, was meant to put an end to that state of war. Now, in our postmodern world, a permanent and expansive state of war is once again our condition and, correspondingly, the problem of sovereignty has once again taken central stage in political theory and practice. I would say this has little to do with any substantial similarity between the medieval and the postmodern, but rather points toward modernity itself: a problem that modernity failed to resolve and held in suspension reasserts itself when modernity's powers fall. This view recasts the various ways that—as Holsinger argues so well—the medieval returns in contemporary discourse as conjunctural phenomena that signal the collapse of modernity. The developments in the postmodern world, such a perspective suggests, will not repeat the medieval in any substantial way, but move in an entirely different direction. In addition, perhaps recasting the contemporary returns of the medieval in this way might allow us to avoid getting more than we bargain for when we make comparison to the medieval in order to understand the present.

SCHOLASTIC MODERNITIES

We Have Never Been Schreber

Paranoia, Medieval and Modern

ERIN LABBIE AND MICHAEL UEBEL

In place of Lancelot, we have Judge Schreber.—Michel Foucault

It is a rhetorical topos to note that Daniel Paul Schreber is the most frequently quoted psychiatric patient in the history of mental health.[1] The remarkable fame of Schreber's autobiographical book, *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* (1903; *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*),[2] rests upon its status as an extraordinarily rich narration of the prototypical form of madness, psychosis. From the time of his death in 1911 in a state asylum—Schreber had spent about half of the last twenty-seven years of his life in mental institutions—he became recognized as the iconic madman, with his *Memoirs* shaping psychoanalytic conceptions, first articulated around deformations of desire in the only case study Freud wrote concerning a psychotic patient, his famous "Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" of 1911.[3] Elias Canetti's estimation of the *Memoirs* as "the most important document in psychiatric literature," whose author is thus the most influential patient in the history of psychiatry, is perfectly justified, given the enduring iconic status of Schreber's self-described symptoms in the history of descriptive psychiatry.[4] As a textbook for how to read lapidary psychosis, and, as we will suggest, how to interpret religious, scientific, and poetic relays from the medieval to the modern (and back again and forward to the contemporary), the *Memoirs* have achieved precisely the status that Schreber believed they would.

One of our principal interests in this essay is to highlight the special and extreme sensitivity of the psychotic to his cultural environment, to history, and to future possibility. The psychotic's multiple and complex relation to present, past, and future is for us a register of how psychosis rebuilds the world, where the delusional system amounts finally to a quasi-heroic "reconstruction after the catastrophe."[5] In a key passage in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault marks the transition from the medieval to the modern disciplinary-scientific society:

> And if from the early Middle Ages to the present day the "adventure" is an account of individuality, the passage from the epic to the novel, from the noble deed to the secret singularity, from long exiles to the internal search for childhood, from combats to phantasies, it is also inscribed in the formation of a disciplinary society. The adventure of our childhood no longer finds expression in "le bon petit Henri," but in the misfortunes of "little Hans." The *Romance of the Rose* is written today by Mary Barnes; in place of Lancelot, we have Judge Schreber.[6]

Citing two famous case studies by Freud concerning phobic little Hans and paranoid Schreber, and another text by a schizophrenic artist,[7] Foucault suggests that the maturation of the disciplinary society is reflected in transitions marked by iconographic heroic and creative ideals. These ideals have altered from a perception offered by medieval treatments of them to their modern diagnosable counterparts. Although, in this passage, Foucault finds the presence of these pasts in the dominant cultural schema of a disciplinary modernity, the pasts are also overtaken by their negative and disenfranchised counterparts as dramatized in the shift, for instance, from Lancelot to Schreber. This shift from the fantasized heroic knight to the paranoiac signals a telling transition in the construction of the past itself. In this scene of cultural history, the mythologies that govern the perception of the medieval past as ideal, by which a certain nostalgia for misperceived simplicity or innocence is derived and performed, are in fact offered and created by the modern moment that distinguishes itself from the past.

Thus, given the replacement of medieval heroism by private fantasies generated in the context of new technologies of power and knowledge (e.g., the judicial system and the then new science of psychoanalysis), it is

not surprising that Schreber, having imagined a world-historical catastrophe, undertook to legitimate his own solitary mission as redeemer of mankind, a kind of crusader fighting on God's side and "a champion" for the German people.[8] Certain that the world around him had been subject to plagues ("holy diseases") and that he was surrounded by only reanimated corpses ("fleeting-improvised-men"),[9] Schreber inserts himself into a medieval history of "holy times," refusing to dismiss visionary experiences, such as his own communications with souls and God through "rays," as fabulous inventions:

> To avoid going back as far as biblical events, I consider it very likely that in the cases of the Maid of Orleans, of the Crusaders in search of the Holy Lance at Antioch, or of the Emperor Constantine's well-known vision *in hoc signo vinces* which was decisive for the victory of Christianity: that in all these cases a transitory communication with rays was established, or there was transitory divine inspiration. The same may also be assumed in some cases of stigmatization of virgins; the legends and poetry of all peoples literally swarm with the activities of ghosts, elves, goblins, etc., and it seems to me nonsensical to assume that in all of them one is dealing simply with deliberate inventions of human imagination without any foundation in real fact.[10]

Schreber's certainty about spirituality's deep roots in divine communication necessitates a return to the mixture of heroic strength and innocence that Foucault characterizes as departure points for modernity. Judge Schreber, as modern Lancelot, did the precise opposite of what Hans Blumenberg considered characteristic of modern culture, that is, to fill traditional spiritual forms with a modern secular content. He conveyed to the modern *Weltanschauung* (worldview) a traditional religious content, one remarkably consistent with medieval aesthetic theory and practice as realized, for instance, in the mystical aims of Gothic architecture. The Gothic cathedral, such as that of St.-Denis, embodied a Neoplatonic vision, based upon analogies between Dionysian light-ray metaphysics and Gothic luminosity.[11] Within Schreber's Gothic vision, the rays, or souls, by which he felt himself connected to the divine, were "proof of God's miraculous creative power which is directed to earth." His supporting evidence reflects the intimacy common to the mystic: "the fact that the sun has for years spoken with me in human words and thereby reveals herself as a living being or as the organ of a still higher being behind her."[12]

Despite his identification with forms of medieval heroism, Schreber's will to power, what Freud saw as his megalomania, was never remotely as strong as his will to truth.[13] Schreber was more mystic than knight. "I lived," Schreber writes, "in the belief—and it is still my conviction that this is the truth—that I had to solve one of the most intricate problems ever set for man and that I had to fight a sacred battle for the greatest good of mankind."[14] Certain that truth, as communicated to human beings from the divine, was being interrupted and perverted and that his own will was subject to the influence of others (a condition he called "soul murder"), Schreber attempted to create his own private world shaped and unshaped by metaphysical truths and supernatural events that he deemed resistant to human language and beyond understanding.[15] To preserve the world as sacral became Schreber's preeminent concern, and his chief obstacles to this were condensed in the figure of his first psychiatrist, the chair of psychiatry at Leipzig University, Dr. Paul Emil Flechsig, in whose *Irrenklinik* (mental hospital) Schreber voluntarily placed himself on two different occasions following mental breakdowns. Schreber's new place at the margins of the social order, his "disappearance" from the center where he had held one of the higher positions in the German court system with the title of *Senatspräsident*, or presiding judge, of the Supreme Court of Appeals, signified for him that he had been replaced: "I further thought it possible that news had spread that in the modern world something in the nature of a wizard had suddenly appeared in the person of Professor Flechsig and that I myself, after all a person known in wider circles, had suddenly disappeared; this had spread terror and fear amongst the people, destroying the bases of religion and causing general nervousness and immorality. In its train devastating epidemics had broken upon mankind."[16] In Freud's reading of Schreber, emphasis was placed on the persecution complex in which Schreber's physician was understood as God/Father. Schreber's paranoid system was naturally assumed to rest on universal, Oedipal tension[17]; yet this interpretation, which takes the religious dimension of his paranoid system as a secondary rather than primary aspect of its construction,[18] does not adequately account for belief in a wizard demolishing the foundations of religion and thereby triggering mental disorder and corruption.

Seelenmord, the murder of souls, was Schreber's strongest term for describing the catastrophes affecting him and his world. Schreber did not

invent the term—he might have picked it up from any number of sources, including the playwrights Henrik Ibsen (*John Gabriel Borkman*, 1896) and August Strindberg (discussing Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* in 1887), Ellen Key's international best seller *The Century of the Child* (1900), or another popular book by Anselm von Feuerbach, a well-known German judge, whose volume of 1832 on the Kaspar Hauser case was likely known to Schreber.[19] He did, however, introduce the term into the psychiatric literature, defining it as a kind of demonic bond with one person absorbing the life of another, wherein the victim's identity is forfeited in such a way that he is unable to reason about what has happened. In the most basic sense, soul murder is a crime, a violation of selfhood that may, as in the case of Schreber, cross multiple existential areas, including the sexual (his famous "unmanning"), the spiritual and moral, and the political, including the racial.[20]

Dr. Paul Flechsig, soul murderer, was appointed *außerordentlicher Professor* (also known as *Extraordinarius*, or a university professor not holding his own chair) of psychiatry and was promised to be made head of the psychiatric hospital to be opened at Leipzig University. The *Irrenklinik* was opened in 1882, and it included a brain-anatomical laboratory specially designed by him. In 1884, with the psychiatry chair having been vacant since Johann Christian August Heinroth's death in 1843, Flechsig was appointed chair, or *ordentlicher Professor* (also known as *Ordinarius*). Heinroth, a *Psychiker*, worked in the tradition of soul psychiatrists, a humanistic tradition dominating the German psychiatric scene at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Flechsig's inaugural speech, in clear opposition to his predecessor, was entitled "On the Physical Basis of Mental Diseases,"[21] establishing his position as *Somatiker* and supporter of a scientific paradigm given the title *Hirnmythologie* ("brain mythology") by the neuropathologist Franz Nissl (1860–1919).[22]

Zvi Lothane has emphasized the extent to which brain mythology is an ideology and not a methodology. Anchored in philosophical reductionism, it views the mind as caused by the brain, rather than the mind acting in the brain, at the same time that it ignores the reality of the tertium quid, or the person.[23] There is thus a sense in which brain mythology was itself a paranoid system, operating through depersonalization and with a sense of absolute certainty that the realities of the mind are to be replaced with the realities of the physical body. The replacement of Heinroth by Flechsig

as chair of psychiatry at Leipzig University marked a transition, as Flechsig announced in his inaugural lecture, from the "mistaken doctrine" of mental disorders understood as guilt- and sin-based to an understanding of mental disorders as information- and experiment-based.[24] That is, a "chasm . . . gaped" between him and Heinroth, one "no less deep and wide than the chasm between medieval medicine" and modern science.[25] Heinroth, the *Somatiker* claimed, had regressed psychiatry to medieval exorcism rather than advanced it forward into modern science. Flechsig, as a neuroanatomist renowned for his work on the myelination of nerve fibers and the localization of nervous diseases in the brain, "ushered in a new epoch," claimed Freud.[26] "In one fell swoop," writes Lothane, "the tradition of the soul ended and the reign of the brain began."[27] Medieval psychological understanding had been murdered, only to be psychotically resurrected.

Schreber's concept of "soul murder" should thus be seen as a dialectical comment on Flechsig's neurobiological paradigm. Schreber's paranoid alienation was historically inflected—"I felt," he writes, "like a marble guest who had returned from times long past into a strange world."[28] This strange world, however, was fast becoming one populated with subjects who, just like Schreber, began to record their mental illnesses for an enthusiastic modernist audience. Walter Benjamin expressed his joy at finding a copy of the *Memoirs* in a used bookshop in Berne in 1918,[29] and his shelf of "books by the mentally ill," while formerly it might have been "disconcerting," even "terrifying," "nowadays . . . the situation is different. Interest in the manifestations of madness is as universal as ever . . . more fruitful and legitimate."[30] The publication of texts by mentally ill persons, we suggest, is *a marker of modernity*. Both professionals and laypersons noted their appearance with greater frequency by the turn of the twentieth century. Examples include the Moscow physician Viktor Kandinsky, who in 1880 described his psychopathological symptoms under the term "mental automatism" (telepathy, reading and broadcasting thoughts, and enforced speaking and motor movements).[31] Karl Rychlinski, of the Warsaw psychiatric clinic, presented a case of hallucinatory psychosis.[32] One of the most widely read and discussed accounts, in this case of mania, was that of Auguste Forel, a retired professor of psychiatry in Zurich, published in 1901.[33] By 1906, such texts were available in popular German literary periodicals.[34]

In the texts of psychotics, then, a modernity was inaugurated in which science, poetics, and religion attempt to legitimize themselves in relation to the Middle Ages in two simultaneous and contradictory ways. On the one hand, modernity contrasts itself to the barbarism (and innocence) and presumed illegitimacy of the Middle Ages. In this case the idealization of science asserts the supremacy of the technological progress of modernity over what is seen to be an archaic premodern scientific culture. On the other hand, modernity is precisely dependent on the citation of the past as a site of authority, therefore marking the Middle Ages as a legitimizing power in which a reliance on the theological foundations provided by scholasticism provides a cultural grounding for potential knowledge. In both of these contradictory approaches to the Middle Ages, the juxtapositions of science and religion are primary fields by which modernity justifies itself in relation to the past, and in both cases a relationship between the present and the past takes the form of paranoia. Thus, we will argue, the case of Judge Schreber is a complex embodiment of the medieval within the modern.

SCHOLASTIC SCHREBER

Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, through a focus on language as a primary element dictating the subject's relationship to reality and to the theological potential to explore the limits of knowledge, illustrates the medieval foundations upholding the modernist crisis in representation, a crisis that informs science, aesthetics, theology, and the field of psychoanalysis. Because paranoia is in part a linguistic disorder, it also calls into question the very possibility of writing history. As Michel de Certeau asserts, the writing of history has much to learn from the writing of the psyche, and both history and psychoanalysis are informed by what is considered to be a premodern sensibility.[35] Additionally, our concept of the Middle Ages is dependent upon, and constructed by, a modernist academic agenda.[36] The idealization of the past as a source for developing nationalist identities led the modernist medievalists to couch their literary criticism in scientific terms.[37] Schreber's memoirs, then, perform a complex layering of the modern onto the medieval that illustrates a nonlinear continuity between the Middle Ages and modernity. Indeed, the construction of the Middle Ages is grounded in what we call modernity.[38]

The links between science and legitimacy have been addressed widely in light of the "two cultures" debates and the idealization of a positivism that is promised by scientific discourse. Fredric Jameson, in his foreword to Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, succinctly states, " 'Doing science' involves its own kind of legitimation."[39] For Lyotard, this indicates a particular legitimacy at stake in the legislature of scientific discourse such that "the question of the legitimacy of science has been indissociably linked to that of the legitimation of the legislator since the time of Plato."[40] Science relies on the "game" of language; the narrative structure of science calls for the observer to turn a scrutinizing gaze toward the question of the legitimacy of language as a mediator.[41] In his quest for truth and his desire to offer a contribution to scientific discourse, Schreber's memoirs narrate and document the multifarious dynamics at stake in the experience of psychosis.

Offering his autobiography as a contribution to medieval scholastic debates, Schreber participates in the dynamics of dialectical thinking. Paranoia resembles the conventional dialectical process of thesis, antithesis, synthesis; however, there is no synthesis in the paranoiac field. Presenting as parallel the disciplines of science as an assertion of truth (thesis), poetics as an interrogation or negation of this positivist assertion (antithesis), and religion as a promise for hope and an awareness of the real (synthesis) allows an understanding of paranoia that explains why it is one of the central questions at stake in psychoanalysis as well as in the study of modernity.

1 Science (Thesis)

One of Schreber's purposes in the writing of his *Memoirs* involves the explicit desire to contribute to the discourse of science. Offering himself as a case study—indeed, as a living corpse for the members of the scientific establishment to examine—Schreber contributes to the formation of a peculiarly legitimate form of knowledge at the limits of knowability.[42] Schreber claims that God is capable of relating only to corpses: "*A fundamental misunderstanding* obtained however, which has since run like a red thread through my entire life. It is based upon the fact *that, within the Order of the World, God did not really understand the living human being* and had no need to understand him, because, according to the Order of the World, He dealt only with corpses."[43] Needing to present himself as al-

ready dead, Schreber makes his body into an object of scrutiny. In Schreber's view, the scientific and theological systems become elided such that Flechsig is another god who can relate to him only through a "policy of vacillation in which attempts to cure my nervous illness alternated with efforts to annihilate me as a human being who, because of his ever-increasing nervousness, had become a danger to God Himself."[44] As a scribe recording his own ontotheological experiences and hallucinations, Schreber seeks to attain the legitimacy that he associates with scientific discourse and systematicity, and, despite his avowed agnosticism and skepticism, he longs for the legitimacy that he also associates with God, who has the power to recognize Schreber.

With Schreber as theoretical touchstone, the analysis of psychosis pervades the work of Jacques Lacan. Even before the completion of his 1932 doctoral thesis on paranoia, Lacan translated Freud's paper "On Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality" and published "Structure des psychoses paranoïaques" (The structure of paranoid psychosis) in 1931.[45] Although these early papers seek to distinguish between psychosis and the "normalcy" of neurosis, by the end of his career in 1975 Lacan would conclude that we are all paranoiacs and that personality is premised on paranoia. The very structure of desire, dependent as it is on the desire of the Other (the *Che Vuoi?*), is paranoid. As an "expert" in paranoia, then, Lacan spends the third seminar (*The Psychoses*) reading the case of Schreber in order to devise a line between psychosis and neurosis.[46] Such a line is never in fact drawn, but in his effort to determine the fragile and elusive difference between the two, Lacan diagnostically marks the speech of the psychotic by way of its detachment from signification. Despite his alienation from the external world, the urges to participate in a social order and to be recognized by God lead Schreber to assert his voice in the form of idealized scientific discourse. The fantasmatic desire to be recognized compensates for the impossibility that the solipsistic paranoid will ever be able to participate in a social community. Scientific discourse, then, accommodates, while it symptomatically displays, Schreber's desire for legitimation.

Yet, in Lacan's terms, science is itself akin to psychosis; science exceeds the lines of the discursive structures at stake in ideological systems. In a discussion of these fragile boundaries in *Television*, Lacan suggests that the discourse of science is akin to that of the hysteric.[47] The discourse of the

hysteric, like that articulated by Schreber, replaces the empty subject with the illusion of mastery and believes that jouissance is the truth of the product of knowledge. The discourse of science appeals to the hyperbolic vigilance that seeks to record its own desire.[48] Schreber's appeal to the fetishized discourse of science foregrounds the very status of psychoanalysis as a pseudoscience. Based, as it is, on linguistic narrative, the "talking cure" becomes *the* discursive product that, by calling into question the ability to narrate perceptual reality, enables an articulation of the subject in the field of history.

Schreber's recognition of the imbrication of science and what will be called juridical discourse is tied to his professional status. A powerful figure in the *Senatspräsident* of the Supreme Court, yet the youngest to take this position among other "legitimate" patriarchs, his precarious relationship to the law in fact appears to catalyze his second psychotic break.[49] Discussing the legitimacy of Schreber and his exclusion from the law, Janet Lucas speculates that "*there is no legitimate place for him in the Law*."[50] This exclusion is, according to Lucas, due to the split between the Name-of-the-Father and Schreber's system of knowledge. Schreber does not have access to the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father because his psychic system of replacement has created wholeness where there is lack. Schreber therefore imagines that he is in a constant state of illegitimacy (and that this is true despite his juridical success). Concluding that this illegitimacy is the "trigger" to his psychosis, Lucas then agrees with many scholars who perceive the oppression of ideology at play in Schreber's participation in the disciplinary structure of the hegemonic system that, prior to his incarceration, he helped to organize and lead.[51] As a means of addressing and approaching a form of *truth*, Schreber's desire to participate in scientific discourse (itself a form of replacement for a lack in language) reflects the illegitimacy of the law itself by way of the foreclosure of the Father. Since there is a protective barrier against the concept and the signifier of the Father, there is no access to the Law of the Father in its proper form; the Name and the Law of the Father are absent from the first then, and this is reflected by Lacan's "absent" seminar on the Name-of-the-Father.[52]

In the analytic scene, however, joining science is structurally prohibited. In Serge Leclaire's view of psychoanalysis as a discipline that is utterly dependent on the letter, the signifier is materialized in its very abstraction.

This paradoxical view of language is most evident in the linguistic field of the paranoid schizophrenic: "The materiality of the letter manipulated by the schizophrenic seems to be in fact doubly abstracted from any corporeal reference, so that it is nothing more, finally, than the shadow of a letter, that is, a materiality that refers to nothing other than the materiality of any and all letters."[53] The fantasy of a pure scientific discourse becomes impossible for the paranoiac to achieve because scientific narrative is bound to the poetic qualities of language.

Before allowing the shadowy signifier to take us into a discussion of poetics, we will address the element of the visual as a scene of pseudoscientific proof. In the performance of his subjectivity and the desire to seduce God (as well as his other Father figures including but not limited to Flechsig and Guido Weber[54]), and in his concomitant desire to ward off the voices that barrage him with persecutory messages, Schreber engages in what he calls picturing. Seeking a means of maintaining a self-presentation that confirms his imago, Schreber relies on picturing as a visual contribution to the scientific discourse he attempts to achieve with his text. Picturing is crucial in Schreber's production of the proof of his experience. Through it, he presents himself as evidence offered up as a sacrifice for the examination of the scrutinizing eyes of God, Flechsig, the rays, and the multiple father figures that persecute him.

Imagining, or believing, that he is being constantly watched, Schreber performs for the gaze of the Other. He dresses up as a woman in order to make himself available to God's advances, and in his transvestism he makes his external appearance conform to his internal image of himself. Picturing constitutes one of the chief strategies that Schreber devises in order to ward off the constant influx of voices and rays. In his own words, " 'Picturing' in this sense may therefore be called a reversed miracle. In the same way as rays throw on to my nerves pictures they would like to see especially in dreams, I in turn produce pictures for the rays which I want them to see."[55] Despite his awareness of its illusory nature, Schreber relies on picturing as a defense mechanism by which he tests his reality.[56] The endurance of Schreber's picturing is a testimony to its efficacy as well. At the end of treatment, his picturing remains a stable defense mechanism that allows him to negotiate the social order of the world.

The externalized or projected visibility of Schreber's internal psyche calls attention to the public character of paranoia. In addition to its

obvious connections to the rise in technological advancements that accompany modernity, the function of picturing participates in the scopic drive toward knowledge and truth that was dominant during the Enlightenment.[57] Picturing also places Schreber within the present moment. Considering the location of knowledge within a historical moment, Jean-Claude Milner understands Alexandre Koyré's thesis regarding the intersection of modernity and mysticism to indicate that "science means only modern science."[58] If this is the case, then by considering his own discourse to be scientific, Schreber marks his experience as *immanent presence* and as an expansion of the horizon of the *present*.

Schreber's concern with the self as a subject who exists in history is evident in his drive to record his experiences. Working toward an understanding of the centrality of the trace as a means of understanding the subject, the historian comes to resemble the psychoanalyst. Indeed, the very process of narrating history is at the core of the discourse of psychoanalysis, and the process of interpretation leads the subject to imagine the Other as an inquisitive audience. Narration, like desire, is then caught within the discourse of the desire of the Other, and the process of constructing the self as present is fraught with the fantasy of the Other's desire. The precise narration of history, then, as a drive toward the construction of a properly scientific record of experience, is also paranoid. In Bruno Latour's characterization of history we are able to perceive the function of this discursive paranoia as it translates to personal and political matters:

> Historians reconstitute the past, detail by detail, all the more carefully inasmuch as it has been swallowed up for ever. But are we as far removed from our past as we want to think we are? No, because modern temporality does not have much effect on the passage of time. The past remains, therefore, and even returns. Now this resurgence is incomprehensible to the moderns. Thus they treat it as the return of the repressed. They view it as an archaism. "If we aren't careful," they think, "we're going to return to the past; we're going to fall back into the Dark Ages." Historical reconstitution and archaism are two symptoms of the moderns' incapacity to eliminate what they nevertheless have to eliminate in order to retain the impression that time passes.[59]

The repetition and return of the image of the Middle Ages as a promise or a threat further reinforces the power dynamic at the heart of the narrative

process as it relates to the desire of the Other. The very treatment of the past as the eruption of the repressed intensifies the desire to further repress, revealing, symptomatically, the desire to perceive time as a force of progression. The paranoid tendency to construct walls between the present and the past is manifested, in part, through the desire for science and reason in the form of historical documentation.

As a model of this form of the historical play between modernity and the Middle Ages, Schreber's self-documentation appeals to history as a rational expression that will save him from a lapse into the unreason associated with the Middle Ages. Attempting to repress that which does not fit into a logical system or order, Schreber asserts a hyperrationality that is affiliated with modernity and relies on the logic of scholasticism. Rationality must be conceived of in a historicized context;[60] notably, this is not the same as saying that rationality must be contextualized historically. Latour and Schreber both demonstrate the impossibility of epochal distinctions as temporality shifts, eliding that which is called medieval and that which is called modernity.

In accord with a sympathetic reading of the paranoiac, many critics have suggested that Schreber's deity is the Judeo-Christian God. As such He is also the contingent God of modernity and classical antiquity that Niklas Luhmann describes in his analysis of Aristotelian observation. This God induces and produces paranoia. Everyone who believes in God, Luhmann writes, "knows that he is being observed, not only in violation of his private space, that is, with data security, but also in everything that surrounds and motivates him. God knows now, even before now, when we are in error—and leave it be! Therefore, He also knows the 'futura contingentia.' "[61] Thomas Aquinas's concept of contingency (which is central to Luhmann's argument regarding observation) signifies the precise manner in which the paranoid subject relates to and conjures the Other. Scholasticism is thus historically bound to a concept of paranoia.

Schreber's paranoid relationship with God is indeed secured by technological Otherness to the extent that "private space" is not at all private. In the cosmology of the paranoiac, there is no such thing as private space.[62] Similarly, we are introduced to a perspective of ourselves as the Other when we locate our own position as observer in the scene of Schreber's self-display. As his readers, we stand in for the gods for whom he dresses his language; we are the Others he is seducing—Schrebers are

we. Since God is purely reasonable, He is in control of His passions.[63] Therefore, the question of rationality in regard to the perception of the impossible knowledge of God shifts to one of our potential to observe God. Luhmann characterizes this dynamic by recalling the very problem at stake in both premodern and postmodern understandings of the unknown: "In engaging in the same task of observing the observation of God, theologians come dangerously close to the devil and must therefore maintain their distance. This occurs within the values of the nobility by distinguishing between agitation and humility; through a sense of social standing, or in folk variants through a demonization of the devil—in short, through an observation of the observer of the observation of God."[64] The meta-level upon which the subject is observed situates the paranoid subject as one who logically and rationally offers himself to the view of the Other. In this manner, the subject who is paranoid is in fact ahead of the game. He is not within the scene of social order, yet he leads the drive of the social sphere to form a community. As the legal norms of the Enlightenment privileged the spoken over the written, the testimony of the illiterate was equated with that of the literate, thus placing the element of picturing within the statist view of legal testimony.[65]

Schreber's picturing, however, evinces a complex scientific gaze that accounts for both visually "proven" empiricism and linguistically driven narrative. In his reading of Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy Lesson* (1630), Francis Barker demonstrates that the lines of the gaze are focused on the text, not on the body at stake in the image. The scientific gaze is blind to what becomes the invisible body, and it aims its trajectory instead at the textualization of evidence: "thus reduced, the body has ceased to mean in any but residual ways, sinking away from vision into the past."[66] The scientific gaze that becomes the textualized gaze is situated on a threshold of visibility and a horizon of perception. It refers back to the practice of scholastic medieval anatomy and simultaneously "points forward to the modern aversionary textualization of the flesh."[67] In this manner, the scientific gaze gives way to the textual gaze of poetics. As Friedrich Kittler states, "Only when sciences localize madness in 'language itself' does its literary simulation become possible and important."[68] Or, in Lacan's view, "science is a collusion with hyperreality" and as such is overtaken by poetics.[69]

2 *Poetics (Antithesis)*

According to Lacan, Schreber has no claim to being a poet.[70] Yet, like Lacan's own expression of neologism, euphemism, and metaphor, and like Freud's literary case studies, Schreber's *Memoirs* consistently expresses a drive toward poetics and a recourse to metaphor and metonymy. From the outset of his autobiography, Schreber confesses that his discursive register is a poetic one:

> To make myself at least somewhat comprehensible I shall have to speak much in images and similes, which may at times perhaps be only *approximately* correct; for the only way a human being can make supernatural matters, which in their essence must always remain incomprehensible, understandable to a certain degree is by comparing them with known faces of human experience. Where intellectual understanding ends, the domain of belief begins; man must reconcile himself to the fact that things exist which are true although he cannot understand them.[71]

The limits of knowledge find their expression in the poetic register. Gesturing toward the shift from proof to belief, poetics are asserted as a counter to scientific discourse.

For Julia Kristeva, this poetic dilemma is linked precisely to the nominalist function in which language constructs reality: "the subject of poetic language continually but never definitively assumes the thetic function of naming, establishing meaning and signification, which the paternal function represents within reproductive relation. Son permanently at war with father, not in order to take his place, nor even to endure it, erased from reality, as a symbolic, divine menace and salvation in the manner of *Senatspräsident* Schreber."[72] The generational conflict at stake in the historical recording of the poetic experience links Schreber's internal tragedy to a transcendent reality. Through poetics, he is able to produce that which he cannot physically produce in life. And, though, like the demonically possessed early modern painter Christof Haizmann, Schreber risks losing his soul, he maintains it through the poetic register which conquers discourse itself.[73] As Kittler neatly summarizes it, "All of Freud's case histories demonstrate that the romanticism of the soul has yielded to a materialism of written signs."[74] Poetics remain central to the move toward the necessary technological inquiry of the influencing machines that dom-

inate the embodiment of schizophrenia. Avital Ronell identifies Lyotard's recourse to poetics: "The electric flow installs the paradigm for a language opposed to a signifier that strangles and overcodes the flows and in which no flow is privileged, 'which remains indifferent to its substance or support, inasmuch as the latter is an amorphous continuum.' The electric flow serves to illustrate 'the realization of such a flow that is indeterminate as such.' In this regard, consider also Lyotard's generalized critique of the signifier in which the signifier's coded gaps are short-circuited by the 'figural.' "[75] The poetic determination of language as an organizing force within the psyche then also determines the somatic display. The letter indeed becomes materialized.

Even Schreber's grammatical structure is poetic, depending on emotion to inflect and direct his logic. As Freud defines paranoia in his case study of Schreber, the paranoid turns the statement "I love him" into "He hates me." By way of transition and projection, the paranoiac defies his own desire to claim, "I do not *love* him—I *hate* him, because HE PERSECUTES ME."[76] Freud thus institutes a grammatical structure of emotion that is supported by a concern regarding poetics. Paralleling this connection between language and feeling is the grammatical structure of melancholy. According to Kristeva, the malady is emphasized linguistically by way of introjection: " 'I love that object,' is what that person seems to say about the lost object, 'but even more so I hate it; because I love it, and in order not to lose it, I imbed it in myself; but because I hate it, that other within myself is a bad self, I am bad, I am nonexistent, I shall kill myself.' "[77] Kristeva's explication of melancholy precisely describes Schreber's relationship to God and to the *poetic* expression of the self. As a scholarly malady, poetics is precisely linked to melancholy.[78] On the one hand, Schreber wants to be able to claim that God persecutes him, and, on the other hand, he wants to take control of this persecution so that he punishes himself for his ill will toward his oppressor. Ultimately, we find ourselves in a scene of cynicism. This dynamic also characterizes and is characterized by modernity's relationship to the Middle Ages. We view the past only with the eyes of a paranoiac.

We cannot find a way out of the paranoid system, because language itself is founded on the structure of lack and alienation. François Roustang calls attention to this primacy of paranoia within language when he declares, "Language is at the center because it must confront that which is its

enemy, that which threatens to dissolve it, and because it owes its salvation solely to the fact that it becomes the servant of what is foreign to it."[79] Psychosis is entrenched within language and the gaps in signification that are rendered when the subject speaks.

The fantasmatic structure of language as a mediator renders it a replacement or supplement for the ideal form.[80] In Friedrich Nietzsche's terms, this means that we exist in a world of illusion. Further, we must give ourselves over to the illusion in order to pretend as though reality is sedimented through perception. In this way, we delude ourselves, and we doubly delude ourselves when we necessarily *forget* that we have in fact deluded ourselves. Nietzsche articulates this process in "Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," where we find that language is always already metaphorical and metonymical.[81]

In the expression of his desire to contribute to the scholastic debates known as the quarrel of the universals, Schreber articulates the wish to be a poet. Self-conscious of his own play with language and his discursive construction of his reality, he idealizes the role of the poet as one who is able to convey significance by way of metaphor and metonymy, even while offering a unique fusion of expression and meaning. The automatic elimination of nonsense rendering signification everywhere and nowhere, evident in Schreber's statement that "all nonsense cancels itself out," calls into question the potential for meaning in the perceptual reality of the paranoiac.

Schreber's search for a *Grundsprache*, a basic language or a root language, is manifested in a focus on the sounds and voices of the "miraculously created birds" he imagines. Organic in nature, Schreber does not know the "mechanical" language of the birds, but he nonetheless understands their utterances despite their emptiness. Knowing their significance by rote or parroting, Schreber is able to communicate with them. Indeed, he claims that the birds themselves do not know the sense of their song. Rather, they have a "natural sensitivity for the *similarity of sounds*."[82] Schreber records:

> It has already been said that the sounds need not be completely identical; a similarity suffices, as in any case the birds do not understand the *sense* of the words; therefore it matters little to them—in order to give some examples–whether one speaks of

"Santiago" or "Cathargo"
"Chinesentum" or "Jesum Christum"
"Abendroth" or "Athemnoth"
"Ariman" or "Ackermann"
"Briefbeschwerer" or "Herr prufer schwört," etc., etc.[83]

Taking the birds as a challenge to create unity of sound, Schreber seeks to fulfill the order toward homogeneity that he imagines to derive from God. The precise significance of the sounds is unimportant given the extreme auditory identification that enables Schreber and the birds to understand each other. Neither his language nor theirs requires translation. Instead, the full significance of the utterances rests in the lack of a need for translation. In fact, this communication with the birds then represents a scene in which transference has the potential to succeed in a case of psychosis.

By displacing his own sense of the difference between words that sound the same but have different meaning, Schreber unites language, making it a system based on sameness and identification rather than on difference. He becomes one with all he hears. This unity, however, is achieved only by dispossessing himself of his own knowledge and awareness that the words that sound similar and therefore seem to have similar signification, such as "Santiago" and "Cathargo," nonetheless remain separate and different. In a desperate attempt to preserve and prove his rationality, Schreber must sacrifice his sense of linguistic logic in order to identify with God and achieve mystical unity.

At the limits of understanding, Schreber offers a mystical unity that promises a union between belief and proof. His concept of eternity as that which cannot be precisely proven but which must be taken on faith is a primary example of that which must be believed yet not understood. In his mystical experience of these transrational moments, Schreber seeks to articulate that which exceeds the capacity of language and human understanding. If understanding is perfectly bound to language, then we are stuck in the realm of paranoia by way of nominalism. Language determines the way in which we know the world, and so we enter a constructionist mentality. Schreber's desire to articulate the inarticulable is in fact an indication of his poetic drives, even as he seeks to systematize his experience. In the course of his discursive strategy to seduce God and to defend

himself against the multitude of persecutory voices he hears, Schreber also claims a particularly complex relationship with language. He relies heavily on metaphor and metonymy in his quest to communicate his personal *Weltanschauung* as he determines the Order of the World. Poetics take over the role of epistemological activity in this scenario.

Schreber's desire to understand the order of the world and the unknowable elements of the cosmos find limits similar to those located within the poetic. When he says that "an intimate relation exists between God and the starry sky," he notes that "such things are also known to our poets 'Far above the starry sky, surely dwells a kindly father,' etc."[84] Schreber's frequent citations of poets, including this passage by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and other references to Tannhäuser and Richard Wagner, situate his poetic knowledge as a discursive register of authority that is akin to, and the inverse of, the scientific register he emulates. Unlike science, which cannot prove the existence of eternity, poetry has the potential to assert the immanence of being and the presence of souls across time.[85]

3 *Religion (Synthesis)*

As he states in his open letter to Professor Flechsig of March 1903, Schreber's explicit goal in the writing of his autobiography is "solely to further knowledge of truth in a vital field, that of religion."[86] Scholasticism contributed to philosophical theology what Louis Dupré characterizes as "a science of God based exclusively on rational arguments."[87] Seeking the proof of God's existence and his availability to human interaction, Schreber hopes to posit a scholastic theory. He claims that his examples of God's knowledge "illustrate exactly the way in which for centuries scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages treated predestination and related questions."[88] Speculating about God's potential to know the future and to "determine the number which is to win in the lottery,"[89] Schreber imagines that God in fact is the *tuché*, the encounter with the real. However, by way of his certainty and his omniscience, God precisely takes chance out of the *tuché* and inserts a constant state of the fantasy that marks the real.[90] The very impossibility of properly knowing God insures that this fantasy is in fact a brush with the real. Schreber articulates God's knowledge in light of scholastic concerns. Moving from a concern with human life to flies in the spider's web to the numbers in the lottery to a political assertion of global conflict, the particularities and the generalities of God's omniscience ren-

der moot any concern with causality, as God dominates cause itself. Causality is premised on fragmentation and schizophrenia. As Étienne Gilson explains, "That we may have causality in the strict sense of the term means that we must have two beings and that something of the being of the cause passes into the being of that which undergoes the effect;" thus "being is the ultimate root of causality."[91]

Not content with a split between the soul and the body, and resisting the alliances with Cartesian vigilance and the state of constant thinking that barrages his mind, Schreber imagines that his union with God will occur by way of copulation. The *proof* of God's existence, then, will be materialized in the form of the maternal Schreber's children. In this way, Schreber inverts not only the trajectory of desire (shifting an expression of love into a threat of persecution), but also the dynamic by which we have come to know the power of the phallic mother. His picturing is precisely linked to his need to become the mother of the new world order and, as such, binds him to representation. Lacan reflects on this connection when he wonders, "Could we not say that desire itself is an effect of representation, of the bringing-to-presence, and that insofar as desire is always desire for something (something that would be God or a representation thereof), it is bound up with the teleological thought of meaning?"[92] The neurotic block preventing representation becomes the psychotic flow in which representation abounds by way of Schreber's desire to disseminate his experience through the *Memoirs*.

This scene of representation calls attention to the relationship between belief and proof. As David Tracy points out, "God, religiously construed, is not primarily the problem of consciousness but the question of the unconscious. Mystics (and Jacques Lacan) know this."[93] It is precisely the gap between the signifier and the signified that establishes the foundation on which the paranoiac builds his airy castle. This is one of the paradoxical elements of paranoia: heterogeneity fails the subject by reminding him of the difference between the signifier and the signified; yet homogeneity fails the subject by eliding difference and denying crucial subjective distinctions among words, things, objects, and beings. If both realism and nominalism are paranoid—if, in fact, the quarrel of the universals is paranoid—how do we know God?[94] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari perceive an aporetic structure of schizophrenia such that the assertion and its simultaneous negation, "I am God I am not God, I am God I am Man," do

not synthesize but remain parallel, ambivalent statements and beliefs. For them, this failure to synthesize is the reason that "the schizophrenic God has so little to do with the God of religion."[95] Alon Kantor reframes this question when, in "Ethics and Simulacrum," he asks, "Can God be 'known' otherwise than in Schreber's way?"[96] Schreber synthesizes poetics and science to imitate Meister Eckhart's paradoxical prayer, "I pray to God to save me from God."[97]

Schreber achieves his goal of contributing to the fields of scholasticism, religious knowledge, and scientific knowledge by illustrating that in the field of psychosis the distinctions between realism and nominalism collapse. The articulation of the fantasized relationship between the word and the thing itself, in which the solipsistic reality of the speaking subject perceives a unity of internal thought and external reality, suggests a dialectical synthesis of the nominalist and the realist epistemic systems. In this manner, Schreber's cosmology gestures toward a fantasmatic state of omniscience akin to that epistemic system projected onto, or imagined in, God. As such, his mystical approach to knowledge and language fuses belief and proof, religion and science, and realism and nominalism in a manner that indeed contributes a unique theological imaginary to the scholastic debates and to psychiatry—the so-called science of the soul.[98]

WE (SYNTHESIS II)

We are all budding paranoids.—François Roustang
With schizoids anything is possible.—Peter Sloterdijk

The psychotic appears as the antithesis—or is it antidote?—to the Enlightenment. "Enlightenment," writes Sloterdijk, "means to affirm all anti-schizophrenic movements."[99] The same can be said for modernity and its inveterate practice of marking off the lines between self and not-self, sane and insane, treatable and untreatable. Schreber was a kind of lightning rod for the modern psychiatric power of defining madness as something containable within categories of affect, behavior, and thought, which are taken to symbolize pathological difference. Schreber both saw himself in terms of that psychiatric discourse, consulting, for example, the sixth edition of Emil Kraepelin's *Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie* in order to compare his halluci-

nations with those described in the textbook, and saw himself as an exception to such a "rationalistic and purely materialistic" way of describing what for him were certainly "supernatural" phenomena.[100] Indeed, it was precisely by sifting through a psychiatric textbook, determining what "fit" and what did not, that Schreber unsettled the older metaphysical dualism of sanity and insanity through the new empiricism. He experiments with the possibility of a supernatural subjectivity, offering his readers a sense of how it would be to live simultaneously at the very heights of connectedness to the divine and at the very depths of social isolation and psychic pain brought by malevolent others. In this sense, Schreber truly is our modern Lancelot, split between radically different worlds that are only superficially so.

The "legitimation crisis" that, according to Jürgen Habermas, represents political modernity and, according to Eric Santner, calls upon Schreber to negotiate a world that is worthy both of paranoia and more so of trust and solidarity, radically alters the conditions in which something like enlightenment may have any meaning at all.[101] The stage has been set for a kind of schizoid "free-for-all" wherein strategies such as cynicism and paranoia become appropriate for functioning in a morally ambiguous world. Sloterdijk's cynic behaves like Freud's paranoiac:

> By day, colonizer, at night, colonized; by occupation, valorizer and administered; officially a cynical functionary, privately a sensitive soul; at the office a giver of orders, ideologically a discussant; outwardly a follower of the reality principle, inwardly a subject oriented toward pleasure; functionally an agent of capital, intentionally a democrat; with respect to the system a functionary of reification, with respect to the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld), someone who achieves self-realization; objectively a strategist of destruction, subjectively a pacifist; basically someone who triggers catastrophes, in one's own view, innocence personified.[102]

A delusional system supports this ethical concoction; knowledge is fragmented, and the paranoiac, like the cynic, uses disavowal strategically, carving out a quasi-utopian space, even if it never objectively seems to be one. Despite its sociocultural pervasiveness, a schizoid position is hard to maintain for the simple reason that it ultimately issues in the violence of depersonalization, self-destructing in the process, only to begin another cycle.[103]

R. D. Laing once observed that, phenomenologically speaking, nothing separates the scientist or physician, who turns persons into objects of

study, from the psychotic patient, since both engage in acts of intentional depersonalization.[104] Laing was a powerful advocate for psychotic subjectivity, carefully placing it in the context of how, given untenable circumstances, a "rational" person might act. "*Without exception*," Laing notes, "the experience and behavior that gets labeled schizophrenic is *a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation*."[105] Citing Schreber's preoccupation with soul murder as an example of strategic self-murder in order to survive, Laing notes that all types of psychosis share a formal feature, namely, "the denial of being, as a means of preserving being."[106] The strategy is essentially masochistic, though Laing does not use that term, and is consistent with everyday neurotic and perverse formations of subjectivity that convert passivity into activity in order to achieve what the master theorist of masochism, Theodor Reik, neatly summarized as "victory through defeat."[107]

This masochism has the power to temper somewhat the violence of depersonalization. For the most part, Schreber's violence is linguistic, consisting in specific speech acts such as bellowing, hearing voices denouncing him as *"Luder!"* (filthy whore), or experiencing himself "represented" as a soul murderer just like Flechsig. Indeed, acts of being represented are most acutely felt by Schreber as attacks against his innermost self; in short, his identity is up for grabs.[108] In an important footnote elaborating upon the notion of representing, defined as "giving to a thing or a person a semblance different from its real nature," Schreber emphasizes that the familiarity of souls and God with human beings is based only upon the singularity of a momentary impression through nerve contact.[109] This fleeting contact, owing to the interference of Flechsig's "tested soul," prevents an understanding of "living man as an organism." Schreber then reasons that even though one may be acted upon according to impressions, or represented, such treatment ultimately amounts to a "self-deception quite useless in practice" since "a human being naturally has in his actual behavior, and particularly in the (human) language, the means of establishing his true nature against intended 'representing.' "[110]

Schreber's paranoia finds its own antidote in the symbolic realm where the rift between signifier and signified can be healed. The trace of the rift must, however, remain within the paranoid system; to close it forever would be to take up the position of the neuroanatomist Flechsig, for whom no gap can be admitted since the physiology of the brain or body is the pre-

eminent site where signifier and signified become indistinguishable. Schreber's catalog of "miracles," including the excruciating "chest-compression miracle" and the miracle of the little men, or "little devils," who assemble on his head and pull his eyelids up and down, is to be understood then as that which "represents" him as psychotic. Yet precisely because they represent him, the miracles in effect protect him by demonstrating that there is a gap between how he is made to appear and what he is.[111] To dismiss the whole system of knowledge at work here as delusional would be to miss the central, indeed the only, issue for the paranoiac, namely, as Lacan has identified it, knowing in relation to certainty, not in relation to reality.[112] Put simply, what marks Schreber as different from putatively sane persons is not a failure to distinguish reality from unreality—that the judge can do—but his radical certainty. "The very nature of what he is certain of," argues Lacan, "can quite easily remain completely ambiguous, covering the entire range from malevolence to benevolence. But it means something unshakable for him."[113] If the litmus test for madness is, therefore, not whether one can distinguish reality from unreality, but instead where—the inner world or the outer world—and the intensity with which one directs certainty, then clinical descriptions of paranoia, including those by Freud, can easily be confused with "the most wonderful descriptions of the behavior of everyone."[114]

The nonpsychotic relates to the world with a firm sense of reality precisely because he or she lacks absolute certainty. The inverse relation between reality-sense and certainty may at first be counterintuitive until it is recognized as underpinning the aims of analysis and, we suggest, as grounding contemporary subjectivity. "What guarantees," Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen asks, echoing Lacan, "that the so-called normal personality is not fundamentally paranoid?"[115] The answer, as far as Lacan is concerned, is little. Indeed, a form of paranoia marks the emergence of human subjectivity and constitutes the aim of analysis.[116] Apropos forms of "paranoiac knowledge," Lacan suggests in "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis" that the "highly systematized, in some sense filtered, and properly checked" mechanism of analysis aims at "inducing in the subject a guided paranoia."[117] But outside the analytic setting, persons routinely reject certainty in order, it seems, to cope with the possibility that reality is worse than it appears. Lacan's illuminating summary of ordinary avoidances of seriousness returns us to the problem of cynicism:

What characterizes a normal subject is precisely that he never takes seriously certain realities that he recognizes exist. You are surrounded by all sorts of realities about which you are in doubt, some of which are particularly threatening, but you don't take them fully seriously, for you think . . . that the worst is not always certain, and maintain yourselves in an average, basic—in the sense of relating to the base—state of blissful uncertainty, which makes possible for you a sufficiently relaxed existence. Surely, certainty is the rarest of things for the normal subject.[118]

The ethical and political consequences of "blissful uncertainty" should be clear, even certain. In the name of existential calm we avoid conclusive relations to the threatening realities everywhere around us. Likewise, in the name of consumption, we surrender to the seductions of the capitalist sensurround without the paranoia often required to resist, and ultimately replace, our reality. One of Jean Baudrillard's keenest insights is that seduction is stronger than production; that is, if capitalism worked by direct force rather than by techniques of pampering, stupefaction, and the debasement of minds, it would not be nearly as effective as it is.[119] Realities of force typically engender reactions associated with trauma-related psychic sequelae, including a spectrum of increasingly prevalent mental defense conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse, somatic disorders, dissociation, and anxiety.[120] Seduction and, concomitantly, alienation engender psychotic (schizoid and paranoid) defense reactions. The question we would-be Schrebers may ask is: Are we willing to forfeit our reality-sense, such as it is, for the certainties that may alter it forever and perhaps for the better? Or, put another way, will we choose, with Schreber, how we wish to be represented?

Paranoia, then, as florid sign of cultural health: Benjamin had already pointed us here in his 1928 reflection on the new "fruitful . . . legitimate" quality of books by the mentally ill.[121] Reading and, as we have suggested, writing paranoia are important markers of modernity, and living (our) paranoia has emerged as another such indicator, one posing a wide range of sociological questions that transcend individual psychopathology and private morality.[122] Engaging the meditations on schizo-existence by Gregory Bateson, R. D. Laing, David Cooper, Thomas Szasz, Franco Basaglia, Joseph Gabel, and Deleuze and Guattari, one is led to the conclusion that we are already enjoying our symptoms, perhaps a bit too much in the sense that we have become prisoners of a reality that largely forecloses

dissociation and, with it, a sense of the possible. Gabel called this existential condition "morbid authenticity," a state of being in which, we might say, one is not paranoid enough to be able to lie.[123] Schreber was an astonishing liar who was able to deduce possibilities, of which he was certain, from realities of which he was profoundly uncertain. That he could trade on the Middle Ages in order to produce something new appears to be less than we can hope for and more than we can bear.

NOTES

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1 For example, the translators Macalpine and Hunter, in the 1988 edition of the *Memoirs*, note that "Schreber is now the most frequently quoted patient in psychiatry" and that he is mentioned in nearly all textbooks of mental disorders, including the *Casebook* accompanying the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-III-R*); see Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1988 edition), 8; 11.

2 Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*; all page references are to the 2000 edition except where noted. Zvi Lothane has suggested that a more accurate translation of the title might be *Great Thoughts of a Nervous Patient*; see Lothane, *In Defense of Schreber*, 1–2.

3 Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)," in *Standard Edition*, 12:3–82.

4 Canetti, *The Conscience of Words*, 25. Important early psychiatric texts using Schreber to illustrate schizophrenia include Bleuler, *Dementia Praecox*; Jaspers, *General Psychopathology*; and Jung, *Psychology of Dementia Praecox*.

5 Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," in *Standard Edition*, 12:71.

6 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 193–94.

7 See Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (1909), in *Standard Edition*, 10:5–149; and Barnes, *Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness*. Barnes discovered her artistic talent after psychotherapeutic treatment for schizophrenia with R. D. Laing.

8 See Schreber, *Memoirs*, 87. Notably, Schreber's theological vision of history is based on the medieval principle of *translatio imperii* (transference of empire); see his historical ordering of "God's chosen peoples," which moves from East to West, culminating with the Germans (*Memoirs*, 27).

9 Ibid., 94–95.

10 Ibid., 82.

11 See Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 91–141. On the influence of Dionysian

thought on Suger's aesthetic visions, see Suger, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis*.

12 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 22.

13 See Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," in *Standard Edition*, 12:65; 72.

14 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 139.

15 See ibid., 16.

16 Ibid., 93.

17 See, for example, Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," in *Standard Edition*, 12:47; 18.

18 In the years since Freud analyzed Schreber's writing, the religious fantasies of psychotic patients have been discussed in the psychoanalytic literature. See, for example, Fairbairn, "Notes on the Religious Phantasies of a Female Patient," and Kaufman, "Religious Delusions in Schizophrenia."

19 See the discussion in Shengold, "Child Abuse and Deprivation Soul Murder" and *Soul Murder*. For the relevant discussion in Kaspar Hauser Feuerbach, see Anselm von Feuerbach, *Kaspar Hauser*, 55–56. Feuerbach, *Lost Prince*, is a new translation of the case by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson.

20 See Shengold: "Soul murder has to do with crime: there is an inherent moral protest in the term. Soul murder is a crime characterized by man's inhumanity to man. One man uses his power over another to crush his individuality, his dignity, his capacity to feel deeply (to feel joy, love, and even hate); and, as implied in von Feuerbach's description, to stifle the victim's use of his mind—his capacity to think rationally and to test reality" ("Child Abuse and Deprivation Soul Murder," 536). For the linkages of unmanning to soul murder, see Schreber, *Memoirs*, 67; for morality, see ibid., 66. On the racial meanings of Schreber's delusional system, see Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 132–68.

21 Flechsig, *Die körperlichen Grundlagen der Geistesstörungen*. See also his *Gehirn und Seele*.

22 Karl Jaspers notes that "even provisional anatomical constructs are preferable to mere psychological investigation. These anatomical constructions, however, became quite fantastic (e.g., Meynert, Wernicke) and have rightly been called 'Brain Mythologies' " (*General Psychopathology*, 1:18). On Franz Nissl as the first to use the expression, see Bumke, "Fünfzig Jahre Psychiatrie," 1141.

23 See Lothane, *In Defense of Schreber*.

24 Heinroth's psychiatric concepts were preeminently guided by Protestant Christian doctrine; according to Heinroth, the etiology of mental disorders (*Seelenstörungen*, or disorders of the soul, by which he understood only the endogenous disorders) was located in guilt caused by the mentally ill person himself. This guilt was grounded in sin, a turning away from God and the commandments, as exemplified in a life of physical or earthly satisfaction. See Heinroth, *Lehrbuch der Störungen*. For an excellent discussion of Heinroth's religious and ethical conceptualization of sin, see Steinberg, "The Sin in the Aetiological Concept of Johann Christian August Heinroth (1773–1843), Part 1" and "The Sin in the Aetiological Concept of Johann Christian August Heinroth (1773–1843), Part 2."

25 Flechsig, *Die körperlichen Grundlagen*, 3–4.

26 Freud referred, in his 1893 obituary of Jean-Martin Charcot, to Flechsig's scientific findings as having "ushered in a new epoch in our knowledge of the 'localization of nervous diseases' " (Freud, "Charcot," in *Standard Edition*, 3:15).

27 Lothane, *In Defense of Schreber*, 205; see also Santner, *My Own Private Germany*, 70.

28 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 92.

29 Benjamin was well acquainted with Schreber's case, and kept the judge's memoirs in his library on a special shelf reserved for works by the mentally ill. See Benjamin, "Books by the Mentally Ill: From My Collection." See also Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, 57; and Benjamin's letter to Scholem (July 21, 1925), in Benjamin, *Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, 279. On the "strange similarity between the feminized posture of the translator (or translation), and Schreber, who attracted Benjamin's interest," see Clej, "The Debt of the Translator," 13.

30 Benjamin, "Books by the Mentally Ill," 130.

31 This syndrome was later called the Kandinsky-Clerambault syndrome. See Kandinsky, "Zur Lehre von den Hallucinationen."

32 Rychlinski, "Ein Fall hallucinatorisch-periodischer Psychose."

33 Forel, "Selbst-Biographie eines Falles von Mania acuta."

34 See, for example, David, "Halluzinationen."

35 Certeau, *The Writing of History*. See also Freccero, "Toward a Psychoanalytics of Historiography."

36 For thoughtful accounts of the various ways that modernity has constructed the Middle Ages, see Bloch and Nichols, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*.

37 See Nichols, "Modernism and the Politics of Medieval Studies," 29.

38 See Leupin, "What is Modernity?" Leupin's discussion is central to this essay as a means of addressing the secularization thesis at stake in the debate between Blumenberg and Löwith. See Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*; Löwith, *Meaning in History*.

39 Fredric Jameson, foreword to Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, viii. See also Leupin, *Lacan and the Human Sciences*, and Glynos and Stavrakakis, *Lacan and Science*. Erin Labbie has addressed Lacan's idealization of the hard sciences and the role of science within psychoanalysis in her *Lacan's Medievalism*, 151–81.

40 Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 8.

41 Ibid., 24–31. For an analysis of Schreber's "language games," see Wiethaus, "*Cherchez la femme*."

42 On Schreber as a body of writing, see Rickels, *Aberrations of Mourning*, 267; Lukacher, "Schreber's Juridical Opera"; and Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, 194–95.

43 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 62.

44 Ibid.

45 Lacan, "Structure des psychoses paranoïaques."

46 Lacan, *The Psychoses*.

47 Lacan, *Television*, 19.

48 For a clear discussion of the role of discourse in the scene of schizophrenia, see also Copjec, "The Anxiety of the Influencing Machine." An important avenue of inquiry that we are addressing in our extended work on Schreber is the role of the idealization of science and the *techne*. As a disorder that is characterized precisely by way of technological defense mechanisms, paranoid schizophrenia is a disease of the subjective refusal to assimilate modernity and the technological "advances" that accompany it. For an argument along these lines, contextualized in early Russian cinema, see Yampolsky, "Mask Face and Machine Face"; and, for ones contextualized in terms of cyberculture, see Roberts, "Wired," and Marsden, "Cyberpsychosis."

49 See Lothane, *In Defense of Schreber*, and Israëls, *Schreber: Father and Son*.

50 Lucas, "The Semiotics of Schreber's *Memoirs*" (emphasis in original).

51 Ibid. See also Santner, *My Own Private Germany*.

52 Jacques-Alain Miller discusses this lack in "The Names-of-the-Father."

53 Leclaire, *Psychoanalyzing*, 91.

54 Dr. Guido Weber was director of the Sonnenstein Asylum, where Schreber was confined from June 1894 to December 1902. Weber was a forensic expert for the court, and his reports on Schreber were submitted as documents adjudicating the issue of Schreber's guardianship and confinement. Schreber included these reports as appendices to his own *Memoirs*, 327–48; 388–404.

55 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 181.

56 See also Labbie, *Lacan's Medievalism*, 208–15.

57 These advancements include apparatuses such as the camera, which lent new potential for empiricism (as well as fantasy) to culture by way of photography and film. See Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)," in *Selected Writings, 1935–1938*, 101–33. And consider that Frederick Engels mourns the obsession with the copy and the object rather than the original and the signifier in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*.

58 Milner, "Lacan and the Ideal of Science," 29. See also Koyré, *Galileo Studies* (originally published as *Études galiléennes*, 1939).

59 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 69.

60 Luhmann, *Observations on Modernity*, 39.

61 Ibid., 51–52.

62 Schreber's architectural sketches of his location in the asylum support a perception of his attempts at a social relationship. In sketching his physical position within the asylum, Schreber demonstrates his need to draw the space in which he dwells, providing us with an image of his atomic location within the panoptical view of the institution, of ideology, and of God as the Father and Other. Additionally, Freud's own account of his apartments mirrors Schreber's paranoid display. For a smart parallel between Freud and Schreber's paranoid system, see Farrell, *Freud's Paranoid Quest*.

63 Luhmann, *Observations on Modernity*, 52.

64 Ibid., 53. See also Certeau, "The Gaze of Nicholas of Cusa." Schreber's hallucinations of the devil recall the famous case of Christof Haizmann, as studied by Freud, "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis," in *Standard Edition*, 19:69–105; and Macalpine and Hunter, *Schizophrenia 1677*.

65 In fact, the spoken testimony of an illiterate witness took precedence over the written testimony of a literate witness, as documented in Barker, *Tremulous Private Body*.

66 Barker, *Tremulous Private Body*, 70.

67 Ibid., 73.

68 Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, 307.

69 Lacan, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, 178.

70 Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 78.

71 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 16.

72 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 138.

73 Freud, "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis" in *Standard Edition*, 19:69–105; Macalpine and Hunter, *Schizophrenia 1677*.

74 Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, 283.

75 Ronell, *The Telephone Book*, 454n147; Lyotard quotations from *Discours, figure*.

76 Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," in *Standard Edition*, 12:63.

77 Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 11.

78 See Kittler, "The Scholar's Tragedy: Prelude in the Theater," in *Discourse Networks*, 3–24; Rickels, "Faust, Freud, and the Missing Entries into War."

79 Roustang, *How to Make a Paranoid Laugh*, 37.

80 In *The Telephone Book*, Ronell explains that the "always already" is different from the a priori and that, as a temporal priority, the former refers to an "anteriority of essence and presence" (430n89). This temporality is crucial for an understanding of the play of the medieval and the modern as dislocated concepts that are not bound by time. See Uebel, "Opening Time."

81 Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" ("Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn," 1873), in *Philosophy and Truth*, 79–91. Lacan's classic treatment of metaphor and metonymy is "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud," in *Écrits*, 412–41.

82 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 192.

83 Ibid., 192–93.

84 Ibid., 21.

85 The poetics of the soul is in constant conflict with the end of time. Immanence is poetic knowledge: "The soul of a child . . . might only have preserved it for the same number of years it had lived" (ibid., 29).

86 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 7.

87 Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 178.

88 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 230.

89 Ibid., 231n104.

90 See Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*.

91 Gilson, *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, 86.

92 Lacan, "Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father Seminar," in *Television*, 90.

93 Tracy, "Mystics, Prophets, Rhetorics," 260. See also Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, and Harshorne, *Man's Vision of God*. For Burke, human beings learn by learning negatives ("thou shalt not"); this is important for an understanding of the grammar and consciousness of the paranoiac. The shifting of a positive into a negative functions to sediment a consciousness of God's language.

94 See Plotnitsky, *The Knowable and the Unknowable*.

95 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 77. This volume and its companion, *A Thousand Plateaus*, argue for the centrality of schizophrenia within culture. See also Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 192–95. Other thinkers positing a deep connection between modernity (or capitalism as modernity) and schizophrenia include R. D. Laing, David Cooper, Joseph Gabel, Franco Basaglia, and Peter Sloterdijk.

96 Kantor, "Ethics and Simulacrum," 488. Kantor also asserts that Schreber's God is the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition; see ibid., 487–88.

97 Tracy, "Mystics, Prophets, Rhetorics," 270.

98 For a developed discussion of psychiatry as the science of the soul, as well as the relationship between the soul and the brain, see Jung, *The Psychogenesis of Mental Disease*, in *Collected Works*, 158–78. "Unfortunately only too often no further knowledge reaches us of the things that are being played out on the dark side of the soul, because all the bridges have broken down which connect that side with this" (178).

99 Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 120.

100 Schreber, *Memoirs*, 269.

101 See Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, and Santner, *My Own Private Germany*, 145. According to Santner, Schreber acts out and works through an "investiture crisis" (xii, 40, 143).

102 Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 113.

103 The characterization of contemporary culture as schizoid is most elegantly articulated by Rollo May; see, for example, his *Love and Will*.

104 See Laing, *Divided Self*, 23

105 Laing, *Politics of Experience*, 78–79 (emphasis in original).

106 Laing, *Divided Self*, 161.

107 See Reik, *Masochism in Modern Man*.

108 See, for example, Schreber, *Memoirs*, 34; 124–25; 151.

109 Ibid., 124n62.

110 Ibid., 125n62.

111 The question of what the miracles protect Schreber from is a complex one, the full answer to which exceeds the limits of this essay. Schreber had and has a lot to defend himself against—from the cruelties of asylum life to misinterpretations and mishandlings at the hands of psychiatrists and analysts continuing until the

present. For a complete "defense" of Schreber, see Lothane, *In Defense of Schreber*. A good case for the ways Schreber defends himself against the dehumanizing effects of mechanization can be made; for one such attempt, see Roberts, "Wired."

112 See Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 75–79.

113 Ibid., 75. Cf., on this point, Boothby, *Freud as Philosopher*, who reads Schreber's "unshakeable sense of certainty" in the context of the loss of the sense of reality (279). "Absolute certainty without reality" is thus a shorthand definition of psychosis (ibid.).

114 Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 19.

115 Borch-Jacobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, 32.

116 Lacan sees paranoia as structurally necessary for the emergence of human subjectivity. The subject emerges when, in the mirror stage, the ego is constituted as a specular Other and as an object of paranoid identification. The mimicry of the mirror stage structures the "specular I," which is turned, with the intrusion of the symbolic, into the "social I." Entry into the symbolic inevitably entails what Lacan calls the "paranoiac alienation" of the subject ("The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits*, 79). As Muller and Richardson comment, "captivation by the image of the other in transitivism leads to paranoiac identification" (*Lacan and Language*, 40).

117 Lacan, "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis," in *Écrits*, 91; 89.

118 Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 74.

119 See Baudrillard, *Seduction*.

120 For a fine study of trauma-related disorders from a mind-body perspective, see Bremner, *Does Stress Damage the Brain?* For readings of the potentially positive aftereffects of trauma on identity, see Wilson, *Posttraumatic Self*.

121 Benjamin, "Books by the Mentally Ill," 130; see also note 29 in this essay.

122 One of the more important studies along these lines is Gabel, *False Consciousness*. Gabel sees false consciousness as a purer form of schizophrenia than clinically observable schizophrenia, due to false consciousness's intense powers of reification. However, he is clear about his adherence to a dualist conception of schizophrenia in which paranoia (in contrast to schizophrenic false consciousness) does not de-dialecticize cognition or necessarily defeat praxis (Gabel, *False Consciousness*, 209).

123 Ibid., 158–59; this is not a moral condition, but a failure to deduce the possible from the actual. See also Cassirer, "Pathologie de la conscience symbolique."

Medieval Studies, Historicity, and Heidegger's Early Phenomenology

ETHAN KNAPP

More than many other academic subdisciplines, the field of medieval studies has often defined itself through its relationship to the historiographical category of the modern. One sign of this relation is the particular mode of interdisciplinarity that has long been considered to be a distinguishing practice of the field. Unlike the interdisciplinarity so often touted in the social sciences, medieval studies does not transgress geographical or linguistic boundaries primarily in the interest of comparative syntheses or synergistic collaboration between local experts.[1] On the contrary, the greatest expressions of such work, texts such as Marc Bloch's *Feudal Society* or Ernst Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, seem less interdisciplinary exercises than studies that dissolve any notion of disciplinarity, producing not so much the heterogeneity of an ensemble drawn together for tactical comparison but rather an effect of previously unimagined unity across what had been taken to be diverse materials. Even chronology, the category one might think most essential to such an endeavor, has often seemed surprisingly extraneous to a field flexible enough to swallow much of what was once the late classical at one end and take as its terminus ad quem a modernity that closes and defines the medieval with a series of gestures stretching chronologically from print to Reformation to capital.

In short, just as the Middle Ages are the historiographical example par excellence of definition through negation—the name itself having been invented to mark simply a hiatus, that which was not antiquity and not Renaissance—so the institutional parameters of medieval studies themselves seem marked off largely through a series of negations. Medieval studies is not bound by the usual linguistic/national categories of human-

istic study; nor is it defined by a precise chronological moment. Refusing such disciplinary boundaries, the substance of medieval studies is determined primarily by its supplemental opposition to the modern, and the disciplinary innocence of work such as that by Bloch and Curtius is similarly guaranteed by the pure unity of this negation.

This centrality of the modern to the self-understanding of medieval studies has taken many forms over the long history of such scholarship. The dominant trend over the last thirty years has been a series of attempts to undo Jacob Burckhardt and find conceptual and cultural bridges over the divide between modernity and the premodern. Much of the most innovative work of the past few decades has been generated by calls for medievalists to abandon the institutionally powerful sense of their professional alterity and acknowledge that, in some way or other, they and their objects of study have always been modern. We can see this impulse manifested in a wide variety of influential recent accounts of medieval culture: in the attempt to nudge the birth of the complex modern subject back into the medieval period; in metacritical attempts to expose the continuing ideological influence of nineteenth-century philological nationalism on the field; and, more recently, in an interest in adapting the categories of postcolonial analysis to the history of medieval cross-cultural interactions.[2] But despite the power of such work, the very pervasiveness of metaphors of bridging, of transgression, of suturing together disparate cultural fields, provides eloquent testimony to the structural reliance of the field on notions of its own essential alterity. Most immediately, I would argue that the structural homologies linking much of the most powerful theoretically inclined work in medieval studies, the sense that the work to be done is a matter of bridging, of discovering the hidden and subterranean linkages across these materials, is due to the lingering effects within the field of the so-called theory wars of the eighties and nineties. In a classically metonymic structure, polemical questions within medieval studies about the use of "theory" were transcoded into debates about the proper relation of medievalists to some notion of the modern. For example, did the integrity of medieval studies as a discipline rely on the exclusion of modern canons of aesthetic and ethical judgment, or did its survival as a vital intellectual field depend on the recognition of a modernity already internal to medieval studies? Was the urge toward modernity a betrayal of medieval alterity or a deeper homecoming to the essentially

modern formation of the discipline? Through debates such as these, the category of modernity has been made to function as a gathering point of energies much in excess of the purely historiographical.

Of course, it is not only medievalists who have been thinking about the modern of late. The very ease of the metonymic transfer between allegiance to theory and allegiance to the modern must also be read as a local effect of a recent intense interest in the categories of modernity and the modern. Indeed, the much reiterated discovery that we are all modern has echoed across the human sciences with a suspicious unanimity. Perhaps the most bracing response to this chorus has been Fredric Jameson's recent argument that if modernity is not to be anchored semantically simply by the substitution of capitalism itself, the term should be denied any real historiographical reference. Instead, the "modern" might better be understood as a narrative category, or as a "unique kind of rhetorical effect," one distinguished by the fact that it bears a particular libidinal charge in branding the discovery of "the first time," the suddenness of the new emerging as a sign of a future already mysteriously discernable in the present moment.[3] Among many such narratives, one Jameson singles out for particular attention is Martin Heidegger's use of the Cartesian cogito as a point from which to generate an account of the emergence of the subject and of modernity in the dominance of the category of representation. As Heidegger famously argued in "The Age of the World Picture" (1938), René Descartes's depiction of thought as representation (the theater of the mind) was bound up with a decisive historical transition, one in which the subject is newly imagined as a perspectival construction, as the localized site from which the object is perceptible as object.[4] This micronarrative produces the subject as a purely epistemological function (the modern subject embodied in methodological self-reflexivity), and it purchases the desired Cartesian certainty at the cost of a breach with earlier accounts of more proximate and inseparable relations between subjects and objects (accounts such as Thomas Aquinas's analogy of being). As Jameson glosses Heidegger, the historical context evoked here "is the conventional one which sees the Cartesian moment as a break with medieval scholasticism and indeed with the theological world in general."[5]

It is this convention and this narrative of modernity that I wish to disturb in the present essay. Of all the ur-narratives of a transition from premodernity into the modern, what could be more fundamental than the

moment at which the free, secular mind escapes the bondage of theology and scholastic authority? And what modern thinker strove to recreate, and then to disrupt, this gesture with more persistence than Heidegger? Even his obsessive polemic against Latin terminology ought to be read, in part, as a means to draw the thread of his scornful rejection of medieval scholasticism (and its ontotheology) into the weave of arguments far removed from any but the most oblique engagement with scholasticism per se. But, of course, anyone who knows the trajectory of Heidegger's thought knows that his own work was deeply and inescapably marked with the traces of medieval and scholastic traditions, traces stretching from textual echoes of scholastic authors to a more general reliance on mystical and hypermystical language in his later work, language that, at a minimum, risks a circling back to the revelatory thought he had denounced earlier.[6] And this inability to disengage with the Latinate, scholastic remnants of a medieval premodern cannot simply be taken as individual idiosyncrasy or mere error on Heidegger's part. Rather, his hesitations about this scholasticism, and his prevarications and ambiguities about his own Catholic background, should be taken as representative signs of what I am going to suggest is a specific historiographic and methodological problem tied to both Heidegger's development of a hermeneutics of facticity and to the medieval subject matter that provided one of the first objects for this hermeneutics.

Heidegger's relationship to medieval thought underwent profound transformations over the course of his long career and successive "turns," but the recent publication and translation of his early teaching notebooks has opened up a Heidegger who ought to be of particular interest to contemporary medieval studies. It has long been known that his scholarly career began with the study of medieval scholasticism, but these new materials allow us to track the growth of his hermeneutic method as it developed through his early analyses of Scotist grammar and then onwards into Pauline and Augustinian theology. I will focus here on two works from this period, looking first at the context and content of his 1915 *Habilitationsschrift*, "The Theory of the Categories and of Meaning in Duns Scotus," and then at the new mode of hermeneutic analysis that he began to present in the 1920–21 Freiburg lectures on *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. As we will see, Heidegger began his career searching for a way to overcome the apparent chasm between medieval scholasticism and

modern philosophy, working first in an explicitly theological context in which the stakes were determined, in part, by polemics deriving from the Vatican's attacks on its own projected forms of modernity. As he abandoned his interest in both Catholicism and such a synthesis, moving into the hermeneutical examination of factical life (the reconstruction of the historical forms of pretheoretical experience), Heidegger confronted a challenge that still haunts medieval studies (and, to a certain extent, any historically oriented cultural study): how is one to overcome the locked binary between the idealism of an all-devouring modern theoreticism and the reverential ascesis of a historicism determined to disavow its own modernity?

HEIDEGGER, CATHOLICISM, AND THE MODERNIST CRISIS

In 1915, the young Heidegger, casting about for a topic for habilitation, considered two alternatives—the late medieval speculative grammar of Thomas of Erfurt and the concept of number. In the retrospective light of biographical reconstruction this choice appears as one between two different intellectual and professional trajectories: on the one hand, the lure of possible appointment to the university chair in Catholic philosophy at Freiburg as a specialist in medieval philosophy, and, on the other, the desire to explore the affinities between his long-held interests in mathematics and the Husserlian phenomenology that he had just encountered. As the story traditionally has been told, Heidegger decided to pursue the study of scholasticism but was frustrated in his bid for the chair, whereupon he set the topics of the *Habilitationsschrift* aside, commencing a long period of gestation that resulted in the publication of *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) some twelve years later. Heidegger himself reinforced the outlines of this biographical trajectory, discouraging speculation about continuities between his early and later work, a position exemplified by the decision to make a rare exception to the comprehensiveness of the *Gesamtausgabe* in omitting the juvenilia he wrote for certain Catholic publications.[7] As with the more notorious silences surrounding his engagement with National Socialism, so the early biography has often circulated in a carefully shaped form.[8]

Study of Heidegger's early life has advanced significantly in the past fifteen years, producing a new category, the Young Heidegger (in addition

to Early and Late) and allowing us to set aside, or at least question, many of the assertions Heidegger had made about his student years, particularly his assertions of a stark division in his own thought, a division that marked the writings that preceded *Being and Time* as irrelevant to his true *Seinsfrage*. For the purposes of this essay, I will group the advances in this research into two categories. As will concern us first, the careful biographical studies of Hugo Ott, Thomas Sheehan, and Theodore Kisiel have drawn closer attention to both the biographical and intellectual significance of Catholicism in Heidegger's early life.[9] Secondly, as we will explore later, the recent publication of Heidegger's teaching notebooks from the late teens and early twenties has spurred a crucial rethinking of the sources of *Being and Time*, with scholars such as Kisiel, John van Buren, S. J. McGrath, and Christian Sommer drawing on these new documents to demonstrate the vital role played by Heidegger's reading of Paul, Martin Luther, and Aristotle in shaping the thematics of *Being and Time*.[10] In essence, these two developments have made it increasingly possible to sketch a detailed picture of Heidegger's early intellectual development, demonstrating that his precocious interest in the analysis of facticity, of care (*Sorge*), and of the essential historicity of being all appeared well before the composition of *Being and Time*. We are now faced not with the discontinuities of the traditional account, but rather with a set of new sources, a set of new paths leading to and through the early work.

Of all these paths, perhaps the one most surprising to many readers of the later Heidegger is his long and intense involvement with scholastic philosophy and Catholic faith. Heidegger was born in 1889, the son of the sexton of the Catholic church of St. Martin's. At the age of eleven, he began private lessons in Latin as preparation for entrance to the Gymnasium in Constance, with the likely plan of an eventual career as a priest.[11] His intention to enter into an ecclesiastical career was confirmed with his attendance at the Constance Gymnasium as a seminarian, set apart from his secular classmates. His seminary training at Constance lasted for three years; he then spent another three years as a seminarian at Freiburg.[12] Indeed, Heidegger's vocation at this time was serious enough to result in a brief (two-week) stint as a novitiate with the Jesuits. This novitiate ended abruptly, however, as Heidegger was asked to withdraw because of a heart condition. This same condition would lead, in 1911, after he had spent two more years as a seminarian at Freiburg University, to a

final judgment by his superiors that his health was too uncertain for an ecclesiastical career.

This judgment left Heidegger, at the age of twenty-one, in what he himself characterized at the time as a complete crisis, with letters to friends indicating his uncertainty as to whether he should begin the serious study of mathematics (a path he in fact seems to have begun), whether he should turn to philosophy, or whether he should continue his training in theology, with the new goal of an academic career. In the end, Heidegger opted for the third path, theology, partly because he considered it the most financially secure. He secured a grant from the university and completed his doctoral dissertation under the direction of Arthur Schneider, only to be confronted with another potential crisis. In 1913 Schneider left Freiburg for the Reich University in Strasbourg, leaving Heidegger without a patron, but also leaving vacant Schneider's chair of Catholic philosophy, a position that Heidegger was led to believe might well become his. Indeed, it was his designs on this position that provide the most immediate context for his choice of speculative grammar as the topic for his habilitation thesis. His new academic patron, Heinrich Finke, encouraged him to set his interests in number theory aside and work on a topic that would demonstrate his expertise in medieval scholastic thought, the better to bolster his candidacy when the time came to fill the position left vacant by Schneider. This new academic direction was also encouraged by the fact that Heidegger was offered a substantial grant for the completion of his habilitation; this grant came from the Schaezler foundation, an endowment aimed strictly at encouraging young scholars in the study and propagation of the work of Thomas Aquinas.[13] All the conditions of Heidegger's life thus came together at this moment to urge the choice of some aspect of scholastic philosophy as a habilitation topic. Heidegger accepted the grant, writing a letter in which he promised his benefactors "to devote himself to the study of Christian philosophy." He completed his habilitation thesis and then, to his great frustration, failed to gain Schneider's chair, coming second in the competition. By 1916, then, Heidegger had been disappointed a second time in his hopes for some vocation connected to the Church. One must be wary of exaggerating the long-term importance of this blow (as Ott perhaps does, taking it as the root of Heidegger's anticlericism), but the disappointment seems to have been substantial enough to contribute to what has been called Heidegger's "first

Kehre," a turn anticipating the later movement away from what he came to see as the subjectivism of *Being and Time*, here a turn of confessional allegiance.[14] Within a year of this disappointment, Heidegger would be engaged in an intensive study of Luther. And Edmund Husserl, beginning to warm to the younger philosopher, would report to Paul Natorp that Heidegger had "freed himself from dogmatic Catholicism."[15]

As biography, this series of hopes and disappointments has a certain pathos, but a truly adequate understanding of the stakes of Heidegger's work in the habilitation thesis requires a turn to the larger social and intellectual context of these personal trials. There may be no way in which Heidegger was more a figure of his own time and place than in his fraught relationship with his Catholic roots. Messkirk, his place of birth in southwest Germany, was a village deeply marked by sectarian conflict. Such struggles, of course, had been a perennial part of the history of this region since the Reformation. More recently, this region and its inhabitants, especially Heidegger's family, had been powerfully affected by the late nineteenth-century crisis known as the Kulturkampf, Bismarck's attempt to neutralize what he saw as the threateningly pan-national influence of the Catholic church over German educational institutions and cultural life. Indeed, the very church in which Heidegger's father served and the house in which they lived had been hostage to this conflict since 1875; the state of Baden had supported the Old Catholic movement (which, despite its name, allied itself with Bismarck and aimed at the modernization of the Church) by giving this group, a minority among Messkirk Catholics, possession of the old St. Martin's Church. (There is even a story, told by his brother Fritz, that when the Baden government finally relented in 1895 and returned St. Martin's to the majority Catholic sect, the Old Catholic sexton refused to give the keys to the home back to Heidegger's father, instead returning them to the six-year-old Martin.)[16] Thus, the landscape evoked idyllically by Heidegger in later essays such as "The Pathway" was also a landscape riven by sectarian conflict, conflict in which Heidegger's family was located firmly among the less well-to-do anti-Bismarck Catholic faction.

In addition to the political drama of the Kulturkampf, there was also an explicitly philosophical dimension to these crises of Catholic identity, one that would engage Heidegger from his earliest youth. This story begins in 1879 when Pope Leo XIII, partially in response to the perceived encroach-

ments of secular, nationalist power such as that wielded by Bismarck, released the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. This document announced that there would henceforth be a privileged relationship between the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Catholic theology as a systematic endeavor. In particular, it decreed that the young, especially ordinands, should be instructed in Thomistic thought, and that the Dominican order was to be charged with the task of preparing new scholarly editions of Aquinas's texts.[17] The encyclical did not itself initiate the modern revival of scholastic thought (which had begun in Italy in the 1830s), but it contributed substantially to the institutional power and prestige of the particular neoscholasticism based on Aristotelian-Thomistic principles.[18] In the words of the Belgian historian Maurice de Wulf (writing from Louvain in 1903), "Leo XIII did not create the merit of the new scholasticism by virtue of a decree, but he understood its merit and saw his opportunity."[19] The institutionalization of Aristotelian-Thomistic scholasticism was less dominant in German universities than in some other parts of Europe, largely due to the proximity of Protestant critics, but this movement still had the effect of codifying the boundaries of a specifically Catholic philosophical approach in such a way as to suggest, to many, that this philosophy was committed to separating itself from the main currents of modernity.[20]

Increasing the sense of a rift between two distinct philosophical worlds was another encyclical, the *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, issued in 1907 by Leo's successor, Pius X. The burden of *Pascendi* was a catalogue of errors such as agnosticism, Darwinian evolutionism, and "symbolism," all subsumed under the heading of "modernism."[21] Though this sense of modernism has nearly fallen into oblivion, it was in its time a central cultural battleground, a vortex drawing in social, cultural, and academic conflicts both in Europe and North America. One might even argue that the durability of the association between modernism and the early twentieth century (of all the periods to have seen some cadre of professed *moderni*) is due in part to the wide organizational and polemical reach of the Vatican in asserting this category. As those who came under the suspicion of being modernists asserted, there was, to their minds, no such thing as modernism before *Pascendi* disseminated the category. Indeed, *Pascendi* itself came near to admitting as much in its charge that "the Modernists . . . employ a very clever artifice, namely to present their doctrines without order and systematic arrangement into one whole."[22] Alfred Loisy, one of

the modernists, went so far as to retort that *Pascendi*'s depiction of some organized cabal was simply "a fantasy of the theological imagination."[23] Looking back from our own more thoroughly secular universities, we may struggle to imagine the impact with which *Pascendi* arrived. Although it did not stir the level of controversy that the Syllabus of Errors had some fifty years earlier, the encyclical was still taken by many, particularly in the aftermath of the Kulturkampf, as a blow against academic freedom and the notion of *Wissenschaft*. This impression was only solidified by the so-called antimodernist oath of 1910, which required the active obedience of all clergy to *Pascendi*. As had been the case earlier with *Aeterni Patris*, the antimodernist oath seems to have been met with particular resistance in Germany. Of the fewer than fifty clergymen who refused to take this oath, the majority were German.[24] The result of these two encyclicals, then, was the creation of a central debate in the academic institutions of the time between a modernity allied with Protestant confession and *Wissenschaft* and an antimodernity allied with the Vatican and the propagation of a Thomistic neo-scholasticism.

To what extent was Heidegger personally caught up in these conflicts? The controversy over modernism continued to engage massive polemical energies throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, and several of Heidegger's earliest publications (including those omitted from the *Gesamtausgabe*) may be found in the orbit of this debate. As Ott has discovered, Heidegger published several poems in 1910–11 in the conservative Catholic weekly *Allgemeine Rundschau* and other juvenile articles in *Der Akademiker*, the journal of the German Association of Catholic Graduates.[25] *Der Akademiker* was a staunchly antimodernist publication, and many have assumed that Heidegger's publications here signaled an unproblematic antimodernism on his part, creating a smooth continuity between his rejection of modernism in this sectarian battle and the later Heidegger's attacks on the modernisms of technology and metaphysics.[26] The reader of these early publications will find much to confirm such an impression, as the young Heidegger fulminates enthusiastically against "unfettered autonomism" and a modern obsession with "personality." In addition to the evidence of these publications, Heidegger's interest in questions of such modernisms at this time is suggested by his devotion to his teacher of those years, the Freiburg theologian Carl Braig, a staunch defender of *Pascendi*, though also one committed to an ongoing dialogue with modern (that is,

post-Kantian) German philosophy.[27] Heidegger refers to Braig numerous times in grateful reminiscences, singling him out for particular prominence in his 1957 Heidelberg Inaugural Address (in which Heidegger credits Braig with introducing him to the ongoing dialogue between Catholic theology and G. W. F. Hegel and F. W. J. Schelling).[28]

As his late praise of Braig suggests, Heidegger's tone of allegiance to an explicitly antimodern Catholicism in much of the juvenile writings is tempered by signs of important ambiguities in his position, tensions that will intensify and resonate in the pages of his later *Habilitationsschrift*. Along with its praise for Braig, the 1957 address also emphasizes Heidegger's enthusiasm between 1910 and 1914 for what would have seemed at that moment a distinctly "modernist" set of authors, including Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Wilhelm Dilthey. Even in the *Der Akademiker* essays themselves, we find some strains of what might best be called an anti-antimodernism. An essay from 1911, "On a Philosophical Orientation for Academics," mixes its hopes that "the basic truths of Christianity . . . appear before the soul of the Catholic student" with the sense that this individual can claim true possession of such truths only if "the young mind searches . . . to secure for *itself* the basic outlines of the necessary pre-knowledge."[29] Thus, although the essay as a whole comes down strongly in favor of "apologetic education," there is also an unmistakable emphasis here on the existential autonomy of what Heidegger labels simply "thinking," an emphasis ill at ease with *Pascendi*'s requirement for philosophy to be strictly guided by authority and tradition.

Moreover, there is also a certain tension here in a matter that will be fundamental to the *Habilitationsschrift*, the question of whether the "patrimony" of Thomistic-scholastic thought (as the *Pascendi* calls it) has any need for assistance from modern philosophy. No issue was more central to the position of the antimodern front than this. The opposition between an already sufficient, eternal truth and a mobile, partial vision of a progress toward truth gathered up so many key epistemological and cultural tensions that it was in many ways the central crux of the battles between the modernists and antimodernists. This crux governed debates between the progressivist triumph of science and the timelessness of textual revelation, between a Darwinian vision of an essentially historical and evolutionary creation and the category of sacred time, and between the Protestant tradition of historical textual criticism and hermeneutics and Catholic

exegesis. In a 1912 essay for *Der Akademiker*, Heidegger approvingly quotes the unimpeachably orthodox Maurice de Wulf on a point that tries to balance out these contrary positions, suggesting that "[the doctrines of the neo-scholastic philosophy] remain, as the truth remains; however, their development is called to progress and to be modified along with the general state of human knowledge. From this point of view, neo-scholasticism is mobile like everything which lives; *the stopping of its evolution would be the sign of a new decadence*."[30]

By echoing Wulf's rather astounding metaphor of a Darwinian and evolutionary Thomism, Heidegger declares a crucial difference between his views and the antimodernism of the papal camp. He implicitly announces the need for some synthesis of neo-scholasticism and modernity, of perdurable truth and historical progression. This synthesis will be the aim of the habilitation thesis. He will be, in the end, perhaps unsuccessful in crafting such a synthesis, but his attempt produces a series of illuminating transformations in the fundamental relation between modernity and scholasticism, or, as it will come to signify along a chain of homologous relations, between modern logic and the medieval analysis of grammar. There is certainly space to draw historical distinctions between the content of modernism as it was excoriated by Leo and then by Pius (and even greater distinctions, of course, may be drawn in relation to Heidegger's later thinking on modernism and technology), but as we turn to the *Habilitationsschrift*, it suffices to say that Heidegger's ambition to unite medieval and modern philosophy was driven by a hope to find the secret unity between two modes of thought that the curial position had declared to be fundamentally incompatible.

SCHOLASTIC HISTORY AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY IN THE *HABILITATIONSSCHRIFT*

Entitled *Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning*, Heidegger's habilitation thesis is a three-part text.[31] It begins with an examination of the theory of categories in Duns Scotus's work, concentrating particularly on the transcendentals *unum* and *verum*, with the overarching intent of exploring the relationship between grammar and logic in various of Scotus's works. The second section then turns more directly to Heidegger's main exemplary text, the *De modi significandi*, in order to produce a general

theory of signification/meaning (*Bedeutung*) out of the work of the medieval grammarians. Methodologically, these opening two sections are a compound of three philosophical traditions: the scholastic ontology of the medieval thinkers; neo-Kantian meditations concerning the relation between logical categories and their objects; and a Husserlian interest in the conditions of possibility of the process of signification itself. After completing these two sections in 1915, Heidegger prepared the text for publication in the following year and added a supplemental conclusion, one that has struck many commentators, perhaps especially John Caputo, as being in profound tension with the main body of the work.[32] Its expressions of what Heidegger calls "mental unrest [*Unruhe*], long suppressed" testify to his growing impatience with his work's neo-Kantian framework and devotion to a world of pure logic, an impatience that would lead him away from the world of scholastic ontology and into the new factically and hermeneutically oriented versions of these questions as a preparation for the eventual publication of *Being and Time*.[33] While it is certainly true that this conclusion signals Heidegger's growing dissatisfaction with the neo-Kantian tradition in which he had been trained, I would like also to suggest here that the unrest registered in the conclusion is not exhausted by a consideration of method but also belongs to the problem of topic—the problem, as Heidegger will begin to call it in the early Freiburg lectures, of the What as opposed to the How. Specifically, this unrest stems from Heidegger's growing sense that his research into medieval philosophy will require both an adjustment of method and a redefinition of the object of study, aiming not just to reconstitute medieval thought but attempting to recreate what he will call (adopting a Husserlian-Diltheyan vocabulary) the lifeworld of the Middle Ages. Over time, this question of the What will be resubsumed into a How, but the alteration in the constructed objecthood of the Middle Ages will itself be fundamental to that change.

The specification of the object of analysis is a tricky matter from the outset of the habilitation work. First, and most prosaically, Heidegger was incorrect about the authorship of his main text, the *De modi significandi*. Though it was long thought to have been written by Scotus, the historian Martin Grabmann proved in 1922 that it had actually been written by Thomas of Erfurt, a later grammarian. Not that Heidegger would have been much troubled by the error. His interest in the Scotist text came less from a desire to explicate its grammatically minded treatment of linguistic

forms than from his hope to distill from the Scotist texts a systematic theory of meaning that, he candidly admits, is present only implicitly in the original. As Heidegger puts it, "our investigation of a specific level of the *categorial* should make this side of Scotistic philosophy more explicit and distinct than perhaps it was for Duns Scotus himself. That doesn't change the fact that everything that will be presented belongs to the realm of thought of the philosophy and *this alone is what matters*."[34] In other words, Heidegger's study insists on its fidelity to the objective historical content of Scotus's thought, but does so through a decidedly eccentric version of historical fidelity. The challenge, as Heidegger insists in one of the few metacritical passages in the work, is to generate a rare simultaneity of historical and philosophical understanding. In his somewhat exasperated words, "Since pure philosophical talent and a truly fruitful capacity for historical thought are found all too seldom in a single personality, it becomes understandable that it is possible only in extraordinary cases that there is an actual *philosophical* evaluation of scholastic philosophy."[35] It will be the task of a pure philosophical understanding to penetrate beneath the historically contingent expressions of the scholastic grammarians to the fundamental philosophical problem that inspired the investigation of grammar in the first place, or, as Heidegger puts it, to investigate "the possibility that scholastic and modern reasoning might be concerned with the same problems in the same intellectual domains."[36]

Two points are in order here. First, if we recall for a moment the particular institutional pressures on scholastic philosophy at this time (five years after the antimodernist oath), it is hard to escape the conclusion that Heidegger is aiming to use his own philosophical talent to heal a rift, either to bring together the modern and scholastic or perhaps to do away with, one might even say destroy, the difference. Second, as I suggested above, the procedure indicated for bringing together the medieval and modern is one that might be characterized as a transformation in the status of the objects of investigation. Through a sort of alchemical shift, the rigor of Heidegger's discourse aimed to produce an object that was simultaneously medieval scholasticism and modern logic—the two apparently warring elemental modes of thought would be conjoined into one substance. But how exactly was this to be done? I will outline here two of what I take to be Heidegger's procedures for transmogrifying the relation between scholasticism and modern thought: his analogizing between Scotist and Husserl-

ian systems and his interest in contesting the notion that the medieval and modern were to be distinguished by their differing attitudes toward the importance of "method" in philosophical analysis.

One of the central arguments of Heidegger's text is the assertion of a general analogy between the modistic analysis of grammar and Husserl's "doctrine of meaning." John van Buren glosses this aspect of the text with particular clarity in his suggestion that "Heidegger claimed that Scholasticism and its doctrine of intentionality were already a 'noematically oriented' phenomenology without an explicit 'phenomenological reduction' back to the psychical acts of the human subject."[37] The doctrine of intentionality at stake here derives from the writings of the Modistae, a school of grammarians active in northern Europe in the latter half of the thirteenth century.[38] Language, for the Modistae, was to be understood within the framework of a tripartite structure, consisting of the *modus essendi rei*, the *modus intelligendi*, and the *modus significandi* (in essence, the things themselves, intellectual knowledge of the things, and the act of signification). This three-part structure was derived from the traditional Aristotelian study of language, and it is only a particular reinterpretation of the third term (the act of signification itself) that distinguishes the tradition of modistic grammar from other medieval grammatical traditions.[39] The crux of the Modistae's innovation lay in their use of the category of the *modus significandi* to center their investigations not on the grammatical facts of language per se, but rather on the cognitive processes that made signification possible. Medieval grammatical theory, in both its nominalist and realist manifestations, often verges rapidly into ontological speculation, into a sense that the workings of language are a window into the structure of reality and the mind of God. Energized by this possibility, the Modistae were particularly caught up in a confrontation with the mysterious process by which arbitrary signs could be deployed to express significance within a coherent system, a system whose rules were entirely conformable with logical strictures and thus indicative of something beyond mere grammatical fact. But because the signs themselves were admittedly arbitrary, the grammarians needed to produce some bridging concept that led from the signs into this system of pure logic. For the Modistae, the bridge was created by an act of will, by the *intentio* of the speaker.[40]

It was this aspect of modistic theory that captured Heidegger's imagination. The category of intentionality was a deeply charged one in the context

of the neo-Kantian and Husserlian doctrines with which Heidegger was engaged at this point in his career.[41] Franz Brentano, who deeply influenced both Heidegger's teacher Heinrich Rickert (to whom the habilitation work was dedicated) and Heidegger himself (by introducing him to the topic of being in Aristotle), had been responsible for grounding a school of descriptive psychology largely through the category of intention. For Brentano, Aristotelian logic was in need of reform that would draw greater attention to the primacy of judgment as a form of cognition, reform that emphasized Brentano's doctrine that all acts of cognition must be understood in relation to some object and, further, to some teleological purpose in relation to that object: or, in other words, to the intentionality of the subject.[42] Husserl had adopted this category of intentionality in his *Logical Investigations* (specifically in the Fifth Investigation) but had also opposed Brentano's original formulation as a naïve version of intentionality, one that mistakenly relied on the assumption that the object toward which consciousness was directed might be taken as the material object itself rather than some presentation of the object.[43] The space opened up in Husserl's critique was that between the noetic and the noematic, between the object of intentional consciousness and the object in itself. As such, this space also raises the problem of a certain relation (Brentano himself often used the phrase "intentional relation") between the subject and object. And it was into this space that Heidegger would bring the doctrines of the Modistae. The Modistae themselves had imagined signification to be a fundamentally relational process (hence the emphasis on the *modus*, or process, of signification). In refusing the empiricism of their moment, which limited grammar to a purely descriptive activity, and insisting instead that the object of study had to be the *ratio significandi*, the relational quality of signification, these thinkers provided a phenomenology avant la lettre. Like Husserl, they bracketed off the materials of descriptive grammar in favor of the investigation of an "idea of pure grammar."[44] By drawing an analogy between their constructions of intentionality, Heidegger was able to credit Husserl and Scotus with thinking the same philosophy, with sharing the discovery of "the psychic world of objects," and with destroying the vacuity of a persistent heretical error in the world of logic—naïve psychologism.[45]

In addition to making this argument, which runs through the whole of the text, Heidegger also posits a surprising connection between medieval and modern philosophy on the unlikely grounds of a consideration of the

importance of *method* in the two traditions. Heidegger begins the foreword to the work with a brief contextualizing discussion of the task of a history of philosophy, considering how it must be different from a history of science or mathematics and also how the specific eras at stake in the history about to be commenced (the medieval and modern) had to be taken into account. His first point about the history of philosophy is that it is not developmental, in the sense that we would expect from a history of science, an account of errors yielding to solutions. Rather, in the history of philosophy, "there is mainly to be found here an always fruitful [*fruchtbarere*] attempt to uncoil and exhaust a limited domain of problems."[46] We can gloss this opening remark by adducing the analogy we have already examined between Husserlian meaning and Scotist signification, in which the philosophical problem is so clearly recurrent; we might add here that this language of fructification (with its echoes of biblical hermeneutics) seems a telling foretaste of the Pauline vocabulary that will become so central to the later Freiburg lectures.[47]

If the history of philosophy is essentially reiterative, Heidegger then asks, is there nonetheless some form of forward progress marked out through these reiterations? Specifically, can modern philosophy claim an advantage over its medieval precursors in virtue of its increased focus on *method*, a focus that might be understood as a manifestation of the increased self-awareness of the modern period? Heidegger's answer to this question is complex and somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, yes, there is a profound difference in that medieval inquiry was marked by "the absolute devotion and submission in temperament to the material that was known and handed down by tradition."[48] This difference means that medieval thinkers were literally dominated by their material; although they were not unfree to think new thoughts, they tended to privilege the mastery of the object over the extension of the varieties of subjectivity (an imbalance leading to the development of the summa as the privileged form of medieval philosophical writing). On the other hand, Heidegger suggests that the modern interest in methodology may well be a sign of weakness: "Constant knife-sharpening gets to be boring if there isn't anything around to cut."[49] The criticism is not a surprising one, but Heidegger's response to the potential trap of modern self-reflexivity is striking. In the face of this weakness, medieval philosophy reappears in his account to chasten the modern and offer it a new sense of method. Method, he

suggests, might be taken to mean not just preliminary epistemological concerns but also an understanding of the principles that are irreducibly connected to a given set of research objects or domain of problems. (And here we should recall the intense interest in *relations* that distinguished the speculative grammarians, a logical form that was embedded already in the linguistics objects of a syntactic analysis.) Method in this sense might be "a demonstration of totally singular principles which are the foundation of a determinate cognitive complex which receives its meanings from these principles."[50] In other words, the intensification of the interest in methodology (and of self-reflexive consciousness) is a determining difference between the medieval and modern only if we insist on a diminished sense of methodology. In the dialectical solution offered in the foreword, scholasticism appears not so much a failed precursor to modern philosophy as a necessary supplement in restoring the role of the object (a topic that Heidegger will further explore through his developing interest in haecceity).[51] It is this supplement that makes the methodological into something other than endless knife-sharpening.[52] Moreover, this supplemental arrangement vastly diminishes the putative distinctiveness of the modern interest in methodology, as the modern thinker (here Heidegger) is able to achieve an adequate methodological standpoint only once the Scotist analysis is incorporated into the modern position.

As we come to the 1916 conclusion, these ingenuously constructed equivalencies between the medieval and modern begin to unravel. The conclusion testifies to a growing sense on Heidegger's part that this hard-won synthesis has been achieved only at the cost of emptying out something vital from his materials. As Heidegger comments, "This is now the appropriate place to give the intellectual *unrest* a chance to speak that until now has remained suppressed and that the philosopher must experience every time he studies the historical formations of his world of problems."[53] His analysis of the system of categories, he confesses, has left behind "the impression of a certain deathly emptiness [*tödlichen Leere*]."[54] Heidegger is here suggesting two reservations. First, the notion of emptiness takes us back into the world of method, as the word comes to serve in Heidegger's lexicon as a way of criticizing the knife-sharpening of a modern philosophy dominated by methodology. (In the 1925 Marburg lecture published as *History of the Concept of Time*, he will accuse his former teacher Rickert of practicing "empty methodology.")[55] Second, the "deathly emptiness" of

this phrase resonates metaphorically in a system of oppositions that run through the text between the threat of a corpselike, mortified philosophy and the promise of a philosophy that fructifies, that aims itself toward life as lived. I've already gestured to the clear theological overtones of this work. More important, however, this invocation of deathlike stillness seems meant to invoke the counterexample of Dilthey and his hermeneutic attempt to engage with the vivid lifeworld of the past. In essence, Heidegger seems to feel that his attempt to translate the Scotist enterprise into an analogue for the Husserlian idea of a pure grammar has resulted not in a dialectical balance but rather in an interpretation that brought the Scotist texts into a conversation with modern philosophy only at the cost of emptying them out, of eliminating the density of their lifeworld. As we examine Heidegger's next attempt to engage with such materials, we will see him turn to Dilthey and to his own growing system of the hermeneutics of facticity as an attempt to encounter the historicity of thought without creating the vacuity of a philosophical corpse.

THE TURN TO FACTICITY: AUGUSTINE, DESTRUCTION, AND *PAROUSIA*

The once shadowy years between 1916 and 1923 have come to be recognized as a crucial period in Heidegger's development.[56] In 1916, Heidegger completed the habilitation thesis and realized that he was not to receive the chair in theology that he had anticipated. Over the next few years, he developed two new intellectual affiliations that were to prove decisive in his career. First, it was in 1917 and 1918 that Heidegger began his close collaboration with Edmund Husserl, distancing himself from the intellectual program of neo-Kantian epistemology that had so marked the habilitation thesis and embracing, with increasing enthusiasm, the idea of phenomenology as the method that would inaugurate a new beginning for the philosophical enterprise.[57] Second, during these same years Heidegger made a firm break with what he referred to as "the system of Catholicism," moving into an intense study of Luther (and eventually into an engagement with Protestant theologians such as Rudolf Otto and Rudolf Bultmann at Marburg). But although it can be expressed in sectarian terms, this conversion was in many ways less a matter of theology or belief than it was a transformation in Heidegger's sense of the proper approach to

historical phenomena. In his early lectures, Heidegger insists that the great virtue of the phenomenological method lies in its ability to recover "factical" life—life as encountered in the immediacy of pretheoretical experience. The point of philosophy is not to understand the ideas or doctrines that govern cognition but rather to retrieve the experiences that precede and underlie these ideas. In Heidegger's version of this project, these phenomenological ideas merged with Luther's attack on Thomistic-Aristotelian ontology and with Friedrich Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's adaptation of hermeneutics to historical understanding to produce the conviction that Heidegger's new project would lie in the attempt to overturn the influence of Greek ontology and recover the traces of factical historical experience that would be thus revealed. He was converted, in other words, to a faith in a radically new historical project.

To understand the stakes of this work (and the crucial role of Dilthey in Heidegger's thinking), one needs a sense of the importance for Heidegger and his contemporaries of what Charles Bambach has described as the late nineteenth-century "crisis of historicism."[58] In the few decades that preceded Heidegger's work, classical Rankean beliefs in value-free judgment and versions of the idealist teleological causality (and meaningfulness) of the great march of European history had come under increasing pressure from the relativisms of psychologically minded interpretive systems and from Nietzschean attacks on the rationality of historical progress. As these pressures combined with the catastrophic end of the war in 1918, the old historicist project seemed to many to have collapsed completely.[59] Heidegger's teacher Rickert had attempted to salvage it by constructing ever more sophisticated ways of discussing the criteria for judgment, attempting to shore up the tradition by incorporating the language of psychology into a renewed vision of some transcendental observer. But as Heidegger began to find this approach less and less satisfactory, too much sharpening of the knife, he began to turn more definitively toward Dilthey's hermeneutics of historical existence. The problem, as Heidegger begins to see it, was neither that the knife was not yet sharp nor that the historian was whittling away at the wrong block of wood; rather, the impediment was the very conception of historical research as a matter of knives and wood, of neatly discrete subjects and objects. His solution, with the help of Dilthey's work, would lie in the development of a hermeneutic mode of analysis that was premised upon, and determined to uncover, the historicity of the observer himself in

an encounter with the experience of the past that would be unencumbered by the accretions of metaphysical systems.

I would add only one element to this analysis of Heidegger's trajectory—namely, the fact that his growing distance from traditional historicism was not just a reaction to the general philosophical and theological crisis of epistemology in early twentieth-century Germany. Heidegger's trajectory was also inflected by the attempt to find a mode of historical research appropriate to a specific *object*—the thought and lifeworld of the Middle Ages. The attempt to evade the aporias of subjects and objects was shaded here by the particular object that Heidegger wanted to reframe, or, as he will later express it, avoid en-framing at all. It is from out of the difficulties in approaching this object in particular, from out of the approach to a body of philosophy that Heidegger had analyzed already in the habilitation work as being too much in thrall to its own objects, to the material of its thought and tradition that Heidegger begins to move into a mode of analysis that would challenge the dominance of subject-object relations in neo-Kantian historicism. It was therefore, in no small part, the challenge of being a medievalist that led Heidegger down the path toward the hermeneutics of facticity. This challenge is particularly clear in the materials that will engage us now, those that make up volume 60 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (*The Phenomenology of Religious Life*).

These early teaching notebooks and student transcripts (dating from 1920–21) have revealed the extent to which Heidegger's project of a hermeneutics of facticity, so important to *Being and Time*, first arose in his lectures on Paul's epistles and Augustine's *Confessions* (as well as in the subsequent course on Aristotle, reread after absorbing Luther's animosity toward the philosopher). In their reconfiguration of Heidegger's historicism, they show the particularly strong influences of his readings in Luther and Dilthey. Dilthey is everywhere present in these courses, both in Heidegger's promises that these lectures will aid his students in recovering the lifeworld of his subjects and, even more importantly, in the very choice of Paul and Augustine as objects of analysis. In his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey had traced the birth of modern historical consciousness back to what he took to be the crucial moment of primitive Christianity.[60] Unlike the Greeks, for whom truth was timeless and self-development an approximation of the self to the timelessness of reason, the early Christian subject was thrown into a temporal suspension be-

tween the partiality of the now and the fullness of future redemption. In Dilthey's account, medieval scholasticism was therefore a betrayal of this moment, particularly in its Thomistic forms, as it reinserted the Greek reverence for the unchanging, for an ontology of the perdurable, into the radical historicity of early Christian experience. In basing his account of the birth of historical consciousness in this narrative of opposition between Greek ontology and primitive Christian temporality, Dilthey provided a conceptual scaffolding for Heidegger's growing hostility to neoscholasticism. Instead of redeeming scholasticism as a necessary partner for modern philosophy, Heidegger aimed in these courses to use the resources of phenomenology to strip away the excrescences of scholastic metaphysics.

But the teaching notebooks are not merely a recapitulation of Dilthey's historical thesis. They also present a new working methodology based largely on Heidegger's close study of a precursor to Dilthey's attack on Thomistic scholasticism—namely, Luther's categories of "destruction" and the "theology of the cross." As Christian Sommer has recently argued, with these categories Heidegger absorbed from Luther both a new conception of the task of philosophy and a new sense of the possibility of historical understanding, the two both rooted in "l'oeuvre étrangère de Dieu."[61] Central to Luther's attack on the church of his time was his distinction between the *theologia crucis* and the *theologia gloriae*. For Luther, the scholastic enterprise could be summed up as a "theology of glory," an attempt, grounded in Thomistic-Aristotelian principles, to discover certain knowledge of God through the understanding of the world as the emanation of God's glory. But the ontological project of the theology of glory was, for Luther, a deep and troubling error derived from, and reinforcing, the nature of postlapsarian humanity: it was, in fact, explicable simply as a reiteration of human pride and a denial of the gap between humanity and divinity (a gap also crucial to Karl Barth's contemporary work). The desire to grasp truth through an ontological investigation of the nature of creation was nothing other than a stubborn denial of the bounds of human cognition. As Heidegger translated this critique of scholastic ontology into the terms of his own philosophical agenda, he took Luther as a powerful focal point for his developing critique of speculative knowledge and the Aristotelian tradition of empirical investigation. As he puts the point in his course on "The Phenomenology of Religious Life":

"For the explication, the task arises to determine the sense of the objecthood of God. It is a decrease of authentic understanding if God is grasped primarily as an object of speculation. That can be realized only if one carries out the explication of the conceptual connections. This, however, has never been attempted, because Greek philosophy penetrated into Christianity. Only Luther made an advance in this direction, and from this his hatred of Aristotle can be explained."[62] We can see here how Luther's critique of Aristotle provided much of the foundation for Heidegger's later critique of ontotheology. Even more important, however, Luther also provided Heidegger with a new method that was to shape his attempts to surmount the ontology that had so penetrated the discourses of both theology and philosophy.

In order to combat this pervasive ontological complex, Luther called for a *theologia crucis* and a philosophy of destruction. Luther argued that the theology of glory had to be opposed by a theological standpoint that would incorporate the violence of the crucifixion. His argument was posited on a fundamental analogy that extended this event into an epistemological critique: just as the crucifixion was meant to be an event lived and relived as the old Adam died in every Christian, so the task of thought would reenact this death, destroying the speculative and scholastic accretions of the theology of glory in order to reach a reformed Christianity.[63] Here too, of course, Heidegger's main interest was not in the faith but in the usefulness of the example as a formal indication. As Luther's method was detheologized by Heidegger, it became for the latter a new version of the phenomenological project. No longer searching for a pure grammar, Heidegger would instead perform a rigorous destruction of the terminologies of scholastic ontology that obscured the lived experience of the early Christians. In a new version of the phenomenological *épokhè*, Heidegger would bracket off what he calls in these lectures the What of historical life (the beliefs and theological positions of his subjects) and instead aim at the facticity of the How. The new project of philosophy, if it was still even philosophy, would be to read the letters of Paul or the *Confessions* of Augustine in such a way as to indicate the pretheoretical shape of their historical consciousness.

Perhaps the clearest examples of Heidegger's procedure in these courses are his analyses of Pauline *parousia* and Augustine's meditations on memory in book 10 of the *Confessions*. Heidegger begins his discussion of

Augustine in the course "Augustine and Neo-Platonism" (1921) by summarizing Dilthey's thesis that Augustine is historically important as an example of the uneasy harmonizing of Greek science and Christian historicity. But the initial problem arises, as it had in the habilitation thesis, of how to avoid losing Augustine in the abstractions of the traditional history of ideas, how to avoid studying him as simply a case study and an exemplification. This approach, which Heidegger refers to here as the "object-historical approach" will not do, but what is to take its place? As Heidegger says: "Above all one has to guard against hasty constructs, and should not think that the 'opposite' of object-historical study is 'subjective,' 'non-scientific' and the like, or rather is founded on a 'subjective' perspective and a subjective purpose. This supposition achieves nothing but a stunted and inferior form of historical study—which, in itself, is entirely legitimate—for exactly in this, the meaning of the relationship between history and science remains undiscussed."[64] The object-historical method would produce nothing but abstractions, the *tödlichen Leere* of the *Habilitationsschrift*'s conclusion; conversely, a more "subjectively" oriented historical approach would abandon all that belongs to science and fall into pure psychologism. The solution for this dilemma will be to read Augustine in such a way as to experience our own historicity:

> Neo-Platonism and Augustine will become not an arbitrary case, but in the study their historicity [*Historizität*] is precisely to be raised into its own, as something in whose peculiar dimension of effect [*Wirkungsdimension*] we are standing today. History hits us, and we are history itself; and precisely in our not seeing this today, when we think we have it and control it in a heretofore unattained objective study of history, precisely in thinking this and in continuing to think and construct on this opinion culture and philosophies and systems, history gives us, every hour, the heaviest blow.[65]

In other words, we must read in such a way as to feel ourselves as objects, just as we feel Augustine as object, and to use our own historicity and his to make both evident.

Certainly, Augustine was an appealing site (we will not say object) for such an investigation because the *Confessions* wrestles with a similar problem, one that Heidegger will refer to as the problem of "access." In pursuing his knowledge of God, Augustine quickly sets aside his cognitive knowledge of the objects of the world as irrelevant and says that he must

resort to an internal search, a search that will be amplified into book 10's famous considerations on memory. Having turned to his own memory, Augustine then finds himself in the apparently paradoxical situation of being both agent and setting of his own investigation. As Heidegger paraphrases it: "I am not only the *one from* whose place the search proceeds and who moves towards some place, or the one *in* whom the search takes place; but the enactment of the search itself is something of the self."[66] In this early form of *Dasein* the aporias of subject and objecthood are turned into a consideration of the topography of selfhood. And with the turn into topography, Heidegger inverts the traditional investigative priority of content over form (the "object-historical approach") to insist that the aim of his investigation of Augustine is the recovery not of some content but rather of the form of experience itself, form now being the term that will surmount the opposition between object- and subject-based historiographies. Thus, as the investigation unfolds, Heidegger examines Augustine's depictions of categories such as "concern," "pleasure," and "temptation," but he avoids treating them, as Dilthey would have done, as a set of contents illustrating a given psychology or set of ideas. Rather, the What of these elements is displaced in favor of the How, so that the crucial question becomes not what concern is but rather what having concern tells us about the form of experience that is understood as concern.

The extent to which this is a historiographical problem, and one stemming from the particularity of the medieval materials, may be further clarified by a brief consideration of the treatment of the Pauline category of *parousia* in the course "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion" (1920–21). Heidegger is concerned in this course to draw out a phenomenological reading of the central phenomenon of Pauline "proclamation," arguing that the experience of primitive Christianity can be recovered most effectively through a reenactment of the How of proclamation. Crucial to this reenactment will be his investigation of the expectation of *parousia* (the coming or arrival).[67] For Heidegger, it is the experience of the expectation of *parousia* that conditions the historical consciousness, the factical experience of historicity, that Dilthey had attributed to primitive Christianity. But, unlike Dilthey, Heidegger does not want to characterize *parousia* as a psychological trait, as an affective disposition: "One could think, first of all: the basic comportment to the παρουσία [parousia] is a waiting, and Christian hope (ἐλπις) is a special case thereof. But that is entirely

false! We never get the relational sense of the παρουσία [parousia] by merely analyzing the consciousness of a future event. The structure of Christian hope, which in truth is the relational sense of Parousia [Parusie], is radically different from all expectation . . . The entire question for Paul is not a cognitive question."[68] Paul, Heidegger suggests, is not interested in the When of a Second Coming. Nor is he interested in the psychological impact of such a disposition, of whether it would lead to hope or despair. The When is not a concern, but is to be dissolved into a certain comportment of the self, a comportment based on the temporal dislocation of expectation (the "relational sense of the *parousia*") and on the enactment of proclamation. These two aspects will clearly develop into central tenets of *Being and Time*, appearing in this early analysis as embryonic forms of the temporally ecstatic existence and the deep discoursivity of *Dasein*. In this early form, however, these elements of the analysis of *parousia* serve to overturn the ontological uses that would have been made of such language in a scholastic context. Rather than allowing *parousia* to take us into the world of ontology (the What of the details of the Second Coming) Heidegger makes it oppose ontology in Paul's refusal of dates and times; rather than allowing the *parousia* to lift us out of history into the eternal, Heidegger makes it the form that structures the very experience of temporality.

The teaching notebooks give us abundant evidence that the method of formal indication and the project of a hermeneutics of facticity were forged originally in Heidegger's second attempt to come to terms with the materials of medieval thought. In time, of course, he would come to revise the Diltheyan narrative that undergirds these investigations and rediscover more in Greek thought than Luther's hated ontologies of permanence and stasis. But even then the medieval will persist as a goad and the main exemplar of the stubborn persistence of the ontological and of the speculative. We can recall the strange paradox in the habilitation thesis: the medieval appeared both as the moment whose materiality overwhelmed the modern observer and also as the moment whose dense objectivity was peculiarly vulnerable, apt to be emptied out by the historian. Heidegger's teaching notebooks offer us a brief example of an exception to this paradox, one in which the supplemental relation between medieval and modern is transformed into a deeper sense of historicity and connection.

POSTSCRIPT: ASCESIS, IRONY, AND MEDIEVAL STUDIES

The unrest that drove Heidegger into his phenomenological solution is still very much at large in medieval studies. Heidegger had initially diagnosed scholasticism as a system too much in thrall to its own material, to the objective pole of the dialectic between idea and matter. His attempt to remedy this imbalance, however, had driven him too far in the opposite direction, into the logical abstractions of a world of pure grammar. And, as John van Buren has suggested, this unsatisfactory solution had the additional problem of being purchased only at the cost of a certain ascetic restraint: "Given the pervasive Neo-Kantian atmosphere of the discipline of philosophy in the days of Heidegger's apprenticeship, his suspension of concrete historical life was an *ascesis* for the theology-student-turned-philosophy-student in the double sense of denial and institutional disciplining."[69] As Carolyn Dinshaw and L. O. Aranye Fradenburg have both argued, the professional discourse of medieval studies is still marked by more than its share of ascetic structuration. For Fradenburg, this ascesis is displayed in the field's fondness for gestures of renunciation, gestures that testify to the pleasures that can be had from the act of renunciation itself (of modern interpretive methodologies, terminologies, and so forth).[70] For Dinshaw, the traditional historicism that grounds much of medieval studies tends to collude with a policing of the boundaries of sexual identities in such a way as to rule out what she calls (following Roland Barthes) the "touch" of the queer historian, a historical approach to the object less speculative than caressing, less interested in setting proper bounds than in extending forms of transhistorical community.[71] Unlike Heidegger's moment, the ascesis at issue in contemporary medieval studies is one that clings to the hyperobjectivity of the Middle Ages, but each of these ascetic moments is generated out of the same fundamental interest in securing and ensuring the division between the claims of historical objects and those of philosophical (or theoretical) analysis.

I would like to conclude by looking briefly at what I take to be an illustrative example of this disciplinary ascesis as it took shape in the work of a leading medievalist and exact contemporary of the young Heidegger. The year 1915, in which Heidegger completed his *Habilitationsschrift*, saw also the publication of a short book that, for many, marks the inauguration

of a certain style of modern medieval studies: George Lyman Kittredge's *Chaucer and His Poetry*. Kittredge begins his study, as Heidegger had done, with a discussion of modernity:

> There is no great harm in the air of patronage with which our times, in their self-satisfied enlightenment, address the great who were of old; but we do use droll adjectives! If these great ancients show the simplicity of perfect art, we call them *naïf*, particularly when their irony eludes us; if they tickle our fancy, they are *quaint*; if we find them altogether satisfactory, both in form and substance, we adorn them with the epithet *modern*, which we somehow think is a superlative of eminence. . . . For it is we that are naïf; quaintness is incompatible with art; and as for modernity, what we mistake for that, is the everlasting truth, the enduring quality that consists in conformity to changeless human nature. *Naïf, Quaint, Modern,*—a singular vocabulary? Add *convincing,* and the critic has done his best, or worst.[72]

Beneath the easy gentility of this language there lies a very specific terminological and epistemological framework. The terminology here is that of Friedrich Schiller, and, if we recall Schiller's Kantian agenda, it seems clear that the opposition here between naïf and modern is very close indeed to Heidegger's distinctions between medieval and modern in the habilitation thesis. The naïf stands in, as it did in Schiller's analysis of ancient Greek literature, for a poetic practice in which poetry does nothing but absorb the world of objects with no mediation by the idea. The modern, in contrast, is the place of the sophistication of the idea, even, as in Heidegger, the place of *method* itself, as it is in the critical frame of modernity that we ask whether the aesthetic object is "convincing" or not.

Moreover, in a move that should again remind us of Heidegger, Kittredge's preliminary dismissal of the opposition between the medieval and the modern proves illusory as his study first sets the opposition aside but later reinstates it—significantly, in the form of a religious distinction. As Kittredge's work proceeds, we find that Geoffrey Chaucer was a man of his times in many ways, but lucky to escape them in one crucial aspect: "It is vastly fortunate that Chaucer was born high enough in the social scale not to need holy orders as a means of escape from cramping circumstances. Otherwise a great poet would have been spoiled to make an indifferent parson."[73] Kittredge goes on famously to nominate the figure of irony as the great virtue that allowed Chaucer to escape his moment. Is the Par-

doner's Tale just a sermon? No, it is an ironic commentary on a lost preacher. Is the Prioress's Tale about vicious Jewry? No, it is an ironic commentary on excessive pathos. The figure of irony in Kittredge serves to secure not Chaucer's modernity exactly, but rather his freedom from the medieval, from an unthinking subservience to that historical moment to which thought itself (and ideationally charged poetry) was alien.

Why this similarity between Heidegger and Kittredge? Like Heidegger, Kittredge had absorbed his sense of what it was to be a medievalist from the early twentieth-century conflict between value-free, nonsectarian *Wissenschaft* and a Catholic Middle Ages. Kittredge had studied in the late 1880s with the philologist Eduard Sievers at the University of Tübingen.[74] And, like many leading academics of his generation, particularly advocates of scientific philology, Kittredge both held his time in Germany dear and used it as part of his public self-presentation as a professor. (One of Kittredge's first published essays, "Zu *Beowulf* 107 ff." appeared in the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* with the byline "Tübingen, 18 Mai, 1887.")[75] Such a professional formation was far from unique to Kittredge. Many of the founders of modern medieval studies based their scholarly identities and worldviews on the virtues of a modern scientific philology that for many of them, perhaps especially the Americans, was intimately connected with the larger cultural values of *Wissenschaft* they acquired either in firsthand study in German universities or in study with leading scholars, such as Francis Child and Kittredge, who had attended such universities. And with this *Wissenschaft* came not just a sense of its scientific possibilities, but also a sense of its own imaginary struggle with other historical formations, particularly the ghost of a Catholic and anticritical premodernity.

The roots of contemporary medieval studies and Heidegger's phenomenology thus lie very close together. Steeped in the opposition between modern critical thought and the inert hyperobjectivity of the Middle Ages, scholars such as Kittredge acquired their own ascetic reflex in the habit of marking a strict division between historical scholarship and literary-critical interpretation, publishing in both modes, but, as Lee Patterson has pointed out, doing so only in separate publications.[76] In such a structure, irony served as the crucial element that allowed their investigations to honor both the objective nature of a Chaucer wholly submerged in his historical nature and the critical opening of a thought that was chronologi-

cally placed in the medieval period and yet free to speak to the aesthetic and ethical concerns of the present. As in Friedrich Schlegel's original deployment of the term, irony underwrote the dialectical split in the nature of the object. But it is also crucial to note that this use of irony smacks also of evasion, of a refusal to countenance the mutual historicities of the two eras. Irony acts as both a bridge and a device that forestalls any moment of mutual cognizance. For Kittredge, the evasion was derived in part from a desire to reinforce the claims of *Wissenschaft* by engaging in a dispute with a blinkered past—a motivation that, one suspects, persists.

We might ask, however, what this dispute would look like if we recognized the fact that it was based on a powerful historical mirage, a historical illusion that has grown up around the oblivion of a crucial moment in our discourses of modernity and the Middle Ages, a forgetfulness of the fact that the scholasticism so thoroughly repudiated in modern thought is itself a thoroughly modern representation of medieval thought, one deriving (in its present form) from conflict over the shape of early twentieth-century Catholic doctrine.[77] If this analysis of Heidegger's struggle with his own medieval precursors has a lesson for contemporary medieval studies, and, indeed, for any project of cultural history that includes the medieval in its orbit, it may be that we would do well to ask whether the specificity of medieval culture truly rests on a point of analysis about which Heidegger and many contemporary medievalists of a more traditional stripe would find themselves in close agreement: that the medieval is indeed best understood as the moment of ontotheology, as the temporal citadel into which the "destructions" of the young Luther have not penetrated and the city whose atemporal perfection has no need of Paul's *parousia*.

NOTES

I would like to thank Michael Uebel and the Committee on Social Theory at the University of Kentucky for an invitation to present an early version of this work. Thanks also to the anonymous readers from Duke University Press for very helpful criticism and advice.

1 Marks of this interdisciplinarity abound. Unlike most other fields in the humanities, medieval studies articulates its major conferences, journals, and publishing programs not around national geographies, chronological boundaries, or languages but around the interdisciplinary notion of medieval studies in general.

2 On subjectivity, see particularly Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, and Aers, "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists." On nineteenth-century philology, see Biddick, *Shock of Medievalism*; Bloch and Nichols, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*; Lerer, *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology*; and Matthews, *Making of Middle English*. On postcolonial medievalism, see Cohen, *Postcolonial Middle Ages*, and Heng, *Empire of Magic*.

3 Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 34. This account of the rhetorical function of invocations of modernity has a certain family resemblance to Paul de Man's discussions of the category. There is a crucial difference, however, in that Jameson's modernity, though recognized as a trope, is still anchored by a specific historical trauma—the slow disappearance of agricultural and feudal forms in Europe—and is similarly always oriented around the utopic possibilities that are brought into concrete figuration in the present.

4 See Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 57–85.

5 Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 49.

6 On Heidegger's mystical language, see Bourdieu, *Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, 67–69.

7 Hugo Ott has discovered and published a series of contributions to *Der Akademiker*, written between 1910 and 1913; see Ott, "Heidegger's Contributions to *Der Akademiker*." Two of these articles are conveniently reprinted in Heidegger, *Becoming Heidegger*, 11–16.

8 On Heidegger's self-consciously constructed autobiographies, see van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 3–27; and Kisiel, "Heidegger's Apology," 1–35.

9 For the relevant autobiographical statements, see Sheehan, "Heidegger's Early Years," in *Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker*, 3–19; Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Lehrjahre' "; and Sheehan, "Reading a Life." The Catholic milieu is explored most thoroughly in Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*.

10 See Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"*; McGrath, *Early Heidegger*; Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther*; and van Buren, *Young Heidegger*.

11 Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Lehrjahre,' " 83.

12 For the years at Constance, see Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, 10–13.

13 Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, 77.

14 Hans-Georg Gadamer called this "the turn before the turn" ("Martin Heidegger's One Path," 26). For a judicious critique of Ott's biography, see Kisiel, "Heidegger's Apology."

15 Quoted in Sheehan, "Reading a Life," 76. By 1919, Heidegger had left Catholicism behind, reporting to his friend Krebs that "epistemological insights extending to a theory of historical knowledge have made the *system* of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me" ("Letter to Father Engelbert Krebs," in *Supplements*, 69).

16 Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, 42–44.

17 On Leo's plans for this encyclical, see Chadwick, *History of the Popes*, 281–83. On

the complex affiliations of neo-scholasticism in late nineteenth-century Germany, see O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 33–47.

18 For a convenient synopsis of the impact of *Aeterni Patris* on the older movements of scholastic revival, see Boyle, "A Remembrance of Pope Leo XIII."

19 Wulf, *Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy*, 261. On the origins of Thomistic scholasticism at Louvain itself, see Steel, "Aquinas and the Renewal of Philosophy."

20 Chadwick, *History of the Popes*, 539. On the situation in Germany, see also O'Meara, *Church and Culture*.

21 See Jodock, "Introduction 1: The Modernist Crisis," 1–19. See also O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 169–72.

22 Quoted in Jodock, "Introduction 1: The Modernist Crisis," 2.

23 Ibid.

24 Chadwick, *History of the Popes*, 355.

25 Ott, "Heidegger's Contributions to *Der Akademiker*" and *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, 59–63.

26 This continuity is rather quickly inferred even in such exemplary work as Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, 19.

27 For a detailed treatment of Braig's theology, see O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 127–40. O'Meara credits Braig with the first use of "modernism" as a broad term of theological polemic, in 1882.

28 This address appears as "A Recollection," in Sheehan, *Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker*, 21–22.

29 Ott, "Heidegger's Contributions to *Der Akademiker*," 497–99.

30 Ibid., 519 (emphasis in original).

31 Heidegger's *Habilitationsschrift* was first published as *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*; then as *Frühe Schriften* (edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann) in 1972; then again as *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* in *Gesamtausgabe* (also edited by Herrmann) in 1978. Three English translations are available: Harold Robbins translated the complete work (Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning"), while the conclusion has twice been translated by Roderick M. Stewart (first as an appendix to Stewart, "Signification and Radical Subjectivity"; then in revised form as Stewart, "Conclusion: The Problem of Categories"). All page references are to the 1972 *Frühe Schriften* (whose pagination is marginally retained in the 1978 edition). They are followed by references to the most helpful translation (Robbins's for the body of the text and Stewart's for the conclusion), though translations have been modified.

32 Caputo, "Phenomenology, Mysticism and the *Grammatica Speculativa*."

33 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 341–42; Stewart, "Conclusion: The Problem of Categories," 62.

34 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 153; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 25 (emphasis in original).

35 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 136–37; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 4 (emphasis in original).

36 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 146; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning,"16.

37 Van Buren, "Reading a Life," 70; further discussion on 72. For the importance of this analogy in the *Habilitationsschrift*, see also the following treatments: Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas*, 36–43; Crowell, "Making Logic Philosophical Again," in *Husserl, Heidegger and the Space of Meaning*, 93–111; Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 25–38 (expanded significantly in Kisiel, "Why Students of Heidegger Will Have to Read Emil Lask"); McGrath, *Early Heidegger*, 88–119; and van Buren, *Young Heidegger*, 70–112.

38 For convenient accounts of this school, see Bursill-Hall, *Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages*; Kelly, *The Mirror of Grammar*; and Pinborg, "Speculative Grammar." Erfurt's text is generally taken to be a culmination of the most intense activity of this school, which declined soon after under the combined pressures of humanistic critique and the weight of its own exponentially increasingly categorical subdivisions.

39 On this point, particularly in its important relationship to the doctrine of intention, see Knudsen, "Intentions and Impositions," 486–87.

40 "Since the coupling of expression and meaning is arbitrary, it presupposes a deliberate act by which it is brought about, an *imposito* associating an expression with an object or content" (Pinborg, "Speculative Grammar," 257).

41 On intentionality, see Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 30–32.

42 Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 37–52.

43 Ibid., 113–18.

44 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 267; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 147; and Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 269–70; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 153.

45 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 226; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 103. As S. J. McGrath describes this convergence, "Husserl was inadvertently reviving Scotist metaphysics" (*Early Heidegger*, 104).

46 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 138; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 6.

47 This fructification metaphor occurs elsewhere in the foreword (Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 136; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 4) and is undoubtedly allied also to the various permutations of *leben* that recur throughout, which are opposed to the *tödlichen Leere* he complains about in the conclusion.

48 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 140; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 9.

49 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 142; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 11. Heidegger is quoting from H. Lotze, but the metaphor has also been attributed to Karl Rahner and to Husserl.

50 Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 143; Robbins, "Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning," 12.

51 On *haecceitas*, see Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 26–30; and McGrath, *Early Heidegger*, 110–16.

52 One might also note at this juncture Heidegger's related attempt to reinscribe several of the philosophical categories that had become fighting words in the Modernist controversy in such a way as to make them powerfully transhistorical, to discover them in the medieval materials in a new and chastening form (particularly "immanence" and "psychology").

53 Heidegger, *Supplements*, 62 (emphasis original).

54 Ibid.

55 The remark is quoted in Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*, 123.

56 For a recent survey of these years, see van Buren, "The Earliest Heidegger." For a contrasting view, disputing van Buren's somewhat Derridean reading of these years, see Crowell's introduction to his *Husserl, Heidegger and the Space of Meaning*, 6–13.

57 Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, 83–85.

58 My account of this crisis is very much indebted to Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*. See also the important account in Barash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*.

59 This crisis had its impact within the theological world as well, as Karl Barth's "crisis theology" created a new chapter in the liberal theological tradition (and thus a new moment in the "Modernist controversy") by insisting that the task of the theologian was to overcome the cool distance of historicist research and force instead an encounter with texts such as Paul's epistles in all their immediacy and urgency.

60 On Heidegger's debt to Dilthey on this point, see Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 76–80 and 100–105; see also Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, 17–24; and Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*, 127–85.

61 Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther*, 35–62. See also Crowe, *Heidegger's Religious Origins*, 44–66; and McGrath, *Early Heidegger*, 154–68.

62 The editorial situation of the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* is much more straightforward than that of the habilitation thesis. The notebooks and papers making up this collection were published as Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des Religiösen Lebens* (volume 60 of the *Gesamtausgabe*) in 1995 and have been translated into English as Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*. I will give page references to both versions. Heidegger, *Phänomenologie*, 97; *Phenomenology*, 67.

63 On destruction, see Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*, 187–266; Crowe, *Heidegger's Religious Origins*, 231–65; and van Buren, *Young Heidegger*, 161–65. As a side note, it is worth pointing out that for all of Heidegger's antipathy to Latinate terminology, one of his most well-traveled neologisms, *Destruktion*, is a Latin term, which he chose over a more familiar German

cognate (*Zerstörung*). Further, one of his sources for this term was probably the Modistae (and scholastic practice more broadly), for whom *Destructiones* were an acknowledged genre. On the Modistae and their *Destructiones*, see Kaczmarek, "*Modi significandi* and Their Destructions" and *Destructiones modorum significandi*.

64 Heidegger, *Phänomenologie*, 170; *Phenomenology*, 122.

65 Heidegger, *Phänomenologie*, 173; *Phenomenology*, 124.

66 Heidegger, *Phänomenologie*, 192; *Phenomenology*, 141.

67 On Heidegger's analysis of *parousia*, see Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther*, 289–307.

68 Heidegger, *Phänomenologie*, 102; *Phenomenology*, 71–72.

69 Van Buren, *Young Heidegger*, 88–89.

70 Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love*.

71 Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.

72 Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, 1.

73 Ibid., 5.

74 Hyder, *George Lyman Kittredge: Teacher and Scholar*, 39.

75 Ibid., 40. After he became famous, in 1913 Kittredge was criticized, in a notorious attack published in the *Nation*, for being a representative of a specifically Teutonic form of scholarship. See Sherman, "Professor Kittredge and the Teaching of English."

76 Patterson, "Historical Criticism and the Development of Chaucer Studies," in *Negotiating the Past*, 17–18.

77 For another study aiming at such recognitions, see Bruce Holsinger's admirable study, *Premodern Condition*.

Medieval Currencies

Nominalism and Art

C. D. BLANTON

Whether it was 'impossible for matter to think?'
Duns Scotus posed.
Unbodily substance is an absurdity
like unbodily body. It is impossible
to separate thought and matter that thinks.

"Described," in *Das Kapital*, "large-scale industry
Not only as the mother of antagonism, but as the producer
Of the material and spiritual conditions for resolving that antagonism.
It is true the solution cannot proceed along pleasant lines."

—Louis Zukofsky

In an understated moment near the chronological midpoint of his regular course on the history of philosophy, last offered in 1830, G. W. F. Hegel offers a remarkable (and uncharacteristically generous) aside: "There were some, however, among the Schoolmen who grasped the true conception that individuation, the limitation of the universal, and indeed of what is most universal, Being and entity, is a negation."[1] The grudging admission arrives in the midst of an otherwise contemptuous survey of the crudities and excesses of scholasticism, a painful passage through the last stretch of the way from pre-Socratic ontologies to the full elaboration of modern rationalism.[2] For Hegel, the grinding tortures of medieval thought abate only briefly, and only twice: in the establishment of a metaphysical basis for theological dogma—originating with Anselm's (otherwise misguided) ontological proof and refined in the intricacies of high scholastic logic and Aristotelian commentary (Lombard, Aquinas, Scotus, Albertus Magnus)—

and again in the nominalist critique of realism, culminating in William of Ockham's denial that "what is immediately and proximately denoted by the universal and by the generic name is a real thing outside of the soul, something intrinsic and essential in the things to which it is common and which are called by its name, and yet in reality distinguished from them."[3] There, circulating within a mass of "barbaric Latin" "as comprehensive and voluminous as it is barren and ill-expressed," two essential, if still unresolved, predicates of modern thought emerge.[4] As Hegel understands it, Anselm's proof anticipates its own refutation, offering the eventual ground of the Kantian separation of existence and thought. And in the articulation of a nominalist critique the formal poles of the dialectic itself appear: the question, as Hegel puts it, of "the manner of passing from the universal to the particular."[5] With the nominalist turn, then, "a barbarous philosophy of the finite understanding, without real content, which awakens no true interest in us, and to which we cannot return" oddly begins to prefigure "the epoch when the spirit gains confidence in itself and in its existence, and finds its interest in its present."[6] Late scholasticism, that is, projects a future history suspended somewhere between the medieval and the modern: a *figura futororum*, in Erich Auerbach's phrase, which "with all its concrete force, remains forever a figure, cloaked and needful of interpretation."[7] Indeed, with the theological revisions of nominalism, the negative sway of the dialectic itself is somehow glimpsed already: substance is relocated in the zone of the particular and the individual, ultimately of the modern subject, while the God of a realist ontology withdraws from the previously determinate categories of human logic, clearing the historical path for spirit and a thought "filled with the reality of the present."[8] What nominalism lacks is simply the thing that modernity will provide: a sense of the future for which it operates as a precondition, the moment at which (for Hegel at least) even nonidentity passes into the possibility of a concrete universal.

The most remarkable thing about Hegel's turn thus lies in its already dialectical quality, that curious twist of historical emergence through which the very thought of negation constitutes a moment of discovery and invention at once. A more familiar narrative orients the thought of the late medieval period toward some later, progressively teleological endpoint that retrospectively constitutes its historical significance: in Reformation theology perhaps, in Cartesian, Leibnizian, or Lockean rationalism, or in modern science. One way or another, modernity begins in nominalism's slow

disavowal of high scholastic thought. For Hegel nominalism reinvents and recovers the universal precisely by renouncing its actuality. Modernity seemingly emerges in that renunciation, in a recursive motion that inscribes the present as the content of a past future, as the product of a transition that remains ongoing. More crucially, however, modernity seems to borrow this labor of the negative as its own image. This negation accordingly names a type of work, a process of ideological dissolution or epochal bracketing that reconceives particularity as a historical condition, as a withdrawal through which concepts (and, quite literally, epochs) emerge. As Hans Blumenberg puts it, "The modern age was the first and only age that understood itself as an epoch and, in so doing, simultaneously created the other epochs."[9] But the figure of nominalism so conceived immediately generates two further paradoxes, obvious but no less constitutive. Logically, it strains to name a generalized condition under which it remains impossible to name a generalized condition, a universal absence of universals. Historically, it seemingly locates the origin of the modern outside itself, combining a metaphorical shorthand for the first breakage of a realist ontology (medieval nominalism as such) with the continuing foreclosure of universals into the commodified logical objects of modern production—and, in so doing, approaches the very claim for a substance of universality that it once resisted. It is with some justice, then, that Fredric Jameson wryly notes a certain currency of nominalism, its contradictory service as the "most recent" and "the oldest" version of a concept of modernity at once.[10] The ease with which the term warps, ready simultaneously to assimilate Ockham with W. V. O. Quine, theological disputes over predestination with academic debates over deconstruction, the post-Thomistic with the postmodern, seemingly divests it of meaning even as its evocative power increases, historicizing and dehistoricizing in the same gesture.[11] All of which is, perhaps, merely to admit that Hegel was perversely right: somehow it is upon and through the axiomatic nonidentities of nominalism that modernity discovers its capacity for negation. Ultimately the ground of the universal lies precisely in the turn from it.

In a darker moment and mood, more than a century removed from Hegel's optimism, Theodor Adorno would expand such a thesis drastically. In his 1965 lectures on metaphysics, the hoary specter of nominalism has become more pervasive still, now etched proleptically within the

folds of metaphysics as such. Just as one might find traces of enlightenment embedded in Homer's *Odyssey*, Adorno finds nominalism glimmering at any moment when idealism passes into critique. This vision of the negative, ultimately of the material, looms implicitly as a kind of perpetual second moment in the history of thought, forged not in a moment of metaphysical origins but always in the very next instant. Implied already in the turn from Plato to Aristotle, nominalism thus arises as philosophy's shadow. Adorno writes:

> Let me return now to what I indicated at the outset, that I should like to relate my exposition of Aristotle to the history and overall themes of Western metaphysics. It can be said that his doctrine that the universal is not a substantial moment contains the seeds of what is called nominalism, which holds that universal concepts exist *post rem* and not *ante rem*. But—and I say this to exclude all misunderstandings from the outset—it would be a grave misunderstanding to describe Aristotle himself as a nominalist. I could say that his *Metaphysics* circles around this theme; that its problem lies precisely in the contradictory situation whereby on one hand the universal is denied substantiality while, on the other, universal concepts are not mere abbreviations of the particulars subsumed under them—rather, they have an attribute which raises them above *flatus vocis*, above the mere breath of the voice. And if you want to understand the concept of metaphysics, you must pay attention from the first to this constellation of moments in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He says that, in contrast to the universal, only the particular is substantial; that only the single, apparent, concrete phenomenon is real.[12]

As Adorno's own excursus insists, it is precisely the irresolution of Aristotle's proto-nominalist gesture that impels the subsequent history of metaphysics. Traces of the theme will recur in discussions of David Hume and Immanuel Kant, of phenomenology, but it is only with Hegel that the implication of such a "contradictory situation" is fully grasped, with the possibility of a concrete universal and the subsequent discovery of a dialectical materialism, elaborated ultimately in the productive logic of capital and the categorical disappearance from view of a universal that exceeds apprehension, the emergent world-system in its totality. For Adorno, that is, the negative quality of "what is most universal" inheres already even within the structure of metaphysical affirmation, to be concretely realized in ever more encompassing but ever less visible universals,

systems of domination that progressively actualize the metaphysical dilemma. For Adorno, too, then, nominalism achieves its paradoxically conceptual status with the onset of modernity as capital, in the objective alienation of the subject and the progressive reification of culture. Under this account, however, enlightenment offers the symptom of an insufficient negation, the hypostasis of the nominalist thesis that arrests its historical movement: "where consistent enlighteners absolutize nominalism—instead of dialectically penetrating the nominalist thesis too—they recoil into mythology. Their philosophy becomes mythology at the point where, believing in some ultimate datum, they cut reflection short. To break off reflection . . . is nothing else but thoughtless conceptualized self-preservation."[13] In modernity at least, nominalism can never end.

For the later Adorno, this persistence of nominalism as a thematic or a pseudoconcept mediates a range of metaphysical problems. In *Negative Dialectics*, for example, it captures both the productive energy of an existentialist turn (in Søren Kierkegaard's resistance to essence) and the overdetermined lapse of a return to ontology (in Martin Heidegger's tendency to absolutize forgotten Being).[14] Characteristically, the trope plays a double role. Its refusal of the reification of an unalterable universal spawns the possibility of individualization and eventually of enlightenment (itself a "nominalist tendency," according to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*).[15] In this sense, the distinction between the seeds of nominalism found already in Aristotle and the nominalism of modern metaphysics is simply historical, produced by the progressive realization of a liberatory tendency embedded already within thought. As with Hegel, the emergence of nominalism as a defined philosophical position in the wake of medieval realism thus activates a formal possibility logically present already: the rediscovery of Aristotle as an instrument of immanent critique in medieval guise. And as with Hegel, the realization of that tendency and the corollary reorientation of thought to the structure of the concept fulfills at least one distinct condition of the dialectic of philosophical modernity.

For Adorno, however, nominalism also defines modernity's ultimate impasse. Already, in his 1931 inaugural lecture at Frankfurt, he had followed Edmund Husserl's sense to define the term as "a vast, inconsistent connection of simple this-here determinations," a sociological stripping of concepts that testifies to the broader reduction of philosophy from an idealist pursuit of "meaning" to a more localized practice of "interpreta-

tion."[16] In its relation to enlightened society, nominalism falsely venerates the subject, imposing an ideological blindness to that subject's own determination and administration. In relation to philosophy, it encrusts the particular and the subjective as functional universals, permitting those inductive Heideggerian leaps, for example, through which ontology is recovered as a last fateful twist of enlightenment and through which the mediations of the social are forgotten altogether. In his final lectures on sociology, a more wistful Adorno notes that such an absolute subjectivity has annulled every gesture beyond it, celebrating a state of alienation in which "the concrete has become a kind of utopia."[17]

To the degree that the term admits a definition at all, then, Adorno's nominalism only adds to the series of paradoxes. In Hegelian fashion, nominalism promises to reconceive the universal *under* negation, activating a materialist possibility latent since Aristotle. As a product of secularization and enlightenment, however, nominalism progressively reverses the formulation that Hegel found in medieval thought, understanding negation as universal rather than grasping the universal as negation. In the first case, it verges toward critique; in the second, toward simple ideology and the logic of the commodity that grounds it. In Adorno's usage, moreover, the term incorporates two shifting trajectories only provisionally related: "a philosophical tendency," as Jameson puts it, "which is at one and the same time a historical event."[18] Considered theoretically, that is, nominalism gestures toward the transhistorical problem of an evacuated ontology, the simple absence of transcendence or totality. Considered historically, it takes its place in a longer narrative through which the break with an older ontology opens the gap of modernity. But the persistence of nominalism as a tendency of thought and a form of forgetting troubles even that distinction. Even as a historical event, nominalism in fact happens *twice* for Adorno. For the schoolmen of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, nominalism opened the passage from theology to philosophy, inaugurating a set of still-unfolding narratives about modernity: from disenchantment and secularization to transition and revolution. For a post-Hegelian moment, conversely, a resurgent and transformed nominalism proclaims philosophy's effective end, a utopia of endless interpretation. Eventually, in fact, a modernity given over fully to "the law of value, which capitalism realizes over the heads of men" ends in nominalism as well.[19]

For Adorno, however, nominalism's last resurgence and transformation

happens elsewhere, not in thought but in art. In the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, it is in fact an art understood in its most extreme modernist forms that enacts the situation of nominalism most dramatically. Indeed, it is within the bifurcation of the nominalist event—the span of modernity that arches from the late medieval moment of "advancing philosophical nominalism" to the modern realization of "aesthetic nominalism" as "a process that transpires in the form and that ultimately becomes form"—that Adorno locates the history of art as such, an art now detached from myth and from earlier social relations that had denied its constitutive claim to autonomy.[20] "Nevertheless the history of the whole of bourgeois art was not possible except as the effort if not to solve the antinomy of nominalism then at least to give it shape, to win form from its negation. In this the history of modern art is not merely analogous to the history of philosophy: It is *the same history*. What Hegel called the unfolding of truth occurs as *the same process* both in art and philosophy."[21]

It is that odd claim, extravagantly exaggerated as it may seem, that I propose here to take seriously. It is a rare enough thing for the philosopher of nonidentity to assert an identity in such fashion, so insistently and without apparent qualification. But what I wish to note is the particular work that modernist *art* does (and continues to do) in such a formulation —and the importance of the medieval reference that guarantees and describes that work.[22] Among its other labors, such an art presents a history. Whether it narrates or represents that history, retells or represses it, the simple facticity of the work of art incorporates not only a history of art but also the particular history to which art attests: modernity taken most broadly as an arc stretching from philosophical (medieval) to aesthetic (modernist) nominalism. For Adorno, the antinomy of nominalism constitutes art, and art in return seeks to win form from the antinomy of nominalism. If nominalism's place in the history of philosophy runs from Aristotle to the later scholastics and traces the emancipation of the concrete, then that history merely prefigures (not by analogy but rather as "the same history") the actualization of philosophy in art. Art is therefore constituted not only as a historical product but more definitively as the *site* of modernity's history. Obviously, such a claim, in its willful conflation of modernity with modernism, its bold abrogation of both the syntax and the causal order of simple chronology, verges well beyond the boundary of

historical logic altogether. Even as a more modest account of modernist art, it certainly claims too much. When Adorno argues, however, that "art has been caught up in the total process of nominalism's advance ever since the medieval *ordo* was broken up," he gestures not only to an intervening history of artistic production but also to an emergent historical phenomenon that fundamentally disfigures such possibilities.[23] His attempt to formulate what Peter Osborne calls "a materialist metaphysic of modernism" entails, among its other effects, a decisive reconsideration of the possibilities of philosophy and historical narrative and a corollary reinvestment in the possibilities of formal identity.[24] If philosophical nominalism and aesthetic nominalism converge in the same history and bespeak the same process, then modernity and the Middle Ages share an identity as well as a difference. If nominalism marks the historical intersection of the medieval with the modern, its recurrence destabilizes both terms, recasting modernity as an archaic and distant fact and medievality as a situation still ongoing.

What Adorno asserts is therefore as bold as it is counterintuitive: modernist art recapitulates as form what modernity enacts as logical content. But in so doing, modernism completes a thought that is distinctively medieval, cryptically acknowledging a set of transformations to which it otherwise remains blind. In effect, the mere fact of modernist art presupposes a contradictory set of counterhistorical theses: in its extreme and late modernity, art becomes most medieval. But in its medievalism, such an art also acknowledges the fact of transformation, a muted possibility of revolution that inheres in artistic form; it inheres most deeply, in fact, as the promise of revolution grows more remote, as modernity insists most strongly on its inexorable permanence. The metaphor of nominalism is thus no mere metaphor. It is rather the detached and decontextualized evidence—"the unconscious writing of history bound up with what until now has been repeatedly vanquished"—that correlates the problem of art to its historical source and guards its dialectical function: the determinate negation of the medieval testifies to the possibility of a negation of the present.[25] In that weak utopianism of form, however, lies a premise only secondarily concerned with art, an effect that restages the entire dialectic of modernity with a crucial difference. In art, the nominalist thesis is (in Adorno's language) penetrated, pushed to the point at which totality itself

reemerges as an empty category. Perhaps more crucially, art emerges as the retrospective model for the task of social and historical analysis, disclosing the particularizing operations that recast modernity itself as historical totality: "The more specific the work, the more truly it fulfills its type: The dialectical postulate that the particular is the universal has its model in art."[26] Ultimately, I wish to suggest, Adorno's tactical medievalism underscores the operative antinomy of modernism itself, insisting that it is art's very need to refer to something *beyond* its own modernity that both ensures its persistence and preserves the possibility of negating modernity. By happening twice, nominalism recovers an alien historical content as a problem of form, incorporating a history it can no longer name.

Such a medievalism therefore testifies also to the failure of that reference. The fulfillment of nominalism signals also the limit point of modernist aesthetics and the end of a longer dialectic that includes the medieval and the modern together. Historically, Adorno's thesis underscores an observation offered more recently by Perry Anderson, that "the possibility of other social orders was an essential horizon of modernism."[27] The function of the concept of the medieval within modernism derives from its function within modernity more generally, its availability as an alternative social formation. With the extinction of that possibility, even art loses its utopian character, in a last echo of Hegel's notorious thesis, and ceases to recall its own source. In its inclusion of the medieval as a counterconcept or antinomy, Adorno's modernism completes a long-deferred end of the Middle Ages, its last transitional phase. It is with modernism that medievalism both ends and persists.

SECULARIZATIONS

> or Nomina sunt consequentia rerum,
> names are sequent to the things named
> —Louis Zukofsky

According to the Hegelian scheme, medieval thought exhausts itself in a combination of excessive ambition and misrecognition. Theology's turn to Aristotle permits "a handling of dogma in philosophic fashion," but also enables "a development of formal logical thought, the secularization of the absolutely existent content."[28] The emergence of a method straining to-

ward something like formal autonomy impels scholasticism to the elaborate scale of the summa, gathering content almost indiscriminately, even as the material world's infiltration drives philosophy to questions of the immanent, the material, and the political. In reality as in thought, the temporalization of the Church opens the space of the secular as such to the ultimate "ruin of the suprasensuous world, . . . the Holy of Holies degraded into finitude."[29] For Hegel, then, the Middle Ages secularize themselves, decomposing under the newly exerted pressure of a world that demands a different set of rational categories emerging from the very attempt to temporalize theology: "state, government, right, property, civil order."[30] Secularization subtends the passage to modernity as an underlying cause rather than an effect, as the sign that philosophy's turn to the particular has settled finally on the immanent world. In a sense, modernity is nothing more than the necessary accident of unfinished medieval business.

Hegel's idea of secularization has of course developed a long afterlife of its own, deployed usually to reverse the implicit teleology of his dialectical account. Invoked as a polemical assertion of modernity's derivative status, of its counterdependence on a medieval logic, the argument is given its most querulous political form in Carl Schmitt's claim that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development . . . but also because of their systematic structure," and its broader (if less forceful) philosophical version in Karl Löwith's thesis that "philosophy of history is . . . entirely dependent on theology of history, in particular on the theological concept of history as a history of fulfillment and salvation."[31] In either case, the claim for secularization inverts narratives of enlightenment or disenchantment in order to interpret one epoch in terms of another, risking tautology and anachronism simultaneously. Either the medieval period orients itself toward concepts that remain futurally extrinsic to it, or modernity divulges its own bad faith and borrowed character by metaphor, recasting God in the cloak of the Hobbesian state, theology in the guise of a post-Enlightenment concept of history. Ironically, then, the attempt to account for historical transition implicitly abrogates the concept of the epoch altogether, breaching the very boundary that it inscribes in order to postulate something like a secret identity or an epochal unconscious, a zone of demystification that in each case turns out to be nothing less than an antithetical term: the medieval is (in truth) the modern, the

modern is (in truth) the medieval. If the most familiar forms of a secularization thesis render the notions of medieval and modern pragmatically interchangeable, however, the need to trace such historical borders remains a different matter.

What links the two concepts most obviously—or binds the two terms together into something like a concept—is precisely their shared modernity, a common historical origin and a common function in the ideological consolidation of modernity as such. Reinhart Koselleck therefore suggests that the eighteenth century invented not only the shifting fashions of medievalism, but the Middle Ages as well—or, rather, invented the idea of the Middle Ages in the process of inventing modernity and transforming itself from a mercantile to an industrial age, constructing the concept of feudalism as its epochal antithesis along the way to *Neuzeit*.[32] The history of "the Middle Ages," that is (as opposed, say, to the history of the fourteenth century or the ninth), emerges alongside inquiries into the wealth of nations, aesthetic beauty, and the transcendental subject; it is produced along with the age of revolutions, bourgeois and industrial. All of which suggests, of course, that the idea of the medieval is not merely incidentally ideological but is rather produced as the very terrain of an ideological struggle over modernity, an event with which it remains historically contemporaneous. In this one sense at least, the medieval thus comes *after* the modern ideologically, actively constructing its futurity. But these Middle Ages accordingly reproduce the structure of a secret. As a space of undetermined history, extrinsic to modernity but somehow proceeding from it, the Middle Ages constitute a site where (unlike their modern counterpart) legitimacy, order, and meaning are either soluble questions or not questions at all. One way or another, the medieval therefore constitutes a site of modernity's demystification or even reproach. As Blumenberg argues in response to accounts like those offered by Schmitt and Löwith, this notion of the medieval accordingly stages an ongoing sociodrama of secularization through which modernity refracts its own attempts at self-definition: "Thus the apologia for the Middle Ages at once becomes the construction of a legacy, whose *open* neglect can only be explained by *secret* benefit. The historiographical recovery of the Middle Ages, which had originally been a triumph of the historiographical intellect over the distance of historical alienation, succumbs almost as a result of its own internal logic to the service of the category of secularization."[33] The attempt to impugn or

delegitimize modernity by reference to its medieval sources founders on the deeper interconnection of historical concepts: in a moment of rigorously Hegelian logic, medievality can exist in and for itself only within an epochal dialectic spanning the threshold of modernity.

Unsurprisingly, Blumenberg's reconstruction hinges crucially on the structure of the particular threshold disclosed by an incipient nominalism. The legitimation of modernity, it turns out, depends not on nominalism's anticipation of rational subjects or empiricist methods but rather on its most recognizably medieval aspect, the strict theological insistence on the divine capacity to elude the strictures of human logic, including the substantial existence of universals.[34] Nominalism's most decisive element lies in its corollary movement toward voluntarism, an absolute freedom ascribed not to men but instead to God, a God who is thereby rendered categorically inscrutable. As Blumenberg suggests, "The modern age began, not indeed as the epoch of the death of God, but as the epoch of the hidden God, the *deus absconditus*—and a hidden God is *pragmatically* as good as dead."[35] If modern forms of curiosity seem to echo nominalist concerns, it is because late scholasticism establishes the precondition for modernity's self-articulation in its otherwise modest premise that human reason could never affect a divinity impervious to the straits of human reason. The hidden God of nominalism may be "as good as dead" in a pragmatic sense, but dogmatically even a hidden God remains very much alive and endlessly active as the locus of an absent totality. What remains, indeed arises, in the nominalist critique of the universal is thus the locus of the absent cause and the presumption of an absolute predication, a transcendent totality no longer legible. Nominalism does not so much disown the possibility of ultimate meaning as reserve it to God (and pragmatically to concealment or invisibility), dispelling any reliable conceptual mediation and thereby foregrounding the ongoing necessity (as Adorno puts it) of interpretation. The universal does not cease to exist, or even to operate, but rather withdraws into itself, vanishing from speculative view or reposing in its own inscrutably willed forms. For Blumenberg, it is this withdrawal [*épokhè*] that constitutes the ground of the epoch, effectively and quite unintentionally bracketing theology altogether and opening a space of immanence or material concern liberated by its essential neglect. More importantly perhaps, this theological hesitation or pause opens what he labels an "epoch in the concept of an epoch," an informing assumption of

historical transformation that (whether justified or not) allows modernity to distinguish itself as a field of historical discontinuity. Blumenberg's contention that modernity programmatically "reoccupies" the ground of previous epochs (epochs that it simultaneously constitutes as such) inaugurates a paradox: by definition, modernity conceives history as a totality but itself as fragmentary, oriented always toward the absent structure of a larger whole.

To the degree that it develops an implication of the nominalist turn, modernity's radical character thus depends less on the secularization of God than upon the secularization of God's concealment and on the latent possibility of a resistance to what might be termed a political ontology, a structure of identity that regulates in the name of the absent concept. It is this crucially revised variant of a secularization thesis that informs Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's description of a "plane of immanence."[36] For Hardt and Negri, the conception of "being as an immanent terrain of knowledge and action," a terrain "on which the powers of singularity are realized," endows modernity with a revolutionary potential from the outset.[37] It is the seizure and subsumption of such a potential by a transcendentalizing apparatus of state sovereignty that initiates the history of modernity as crisis, as the experience of an ongoing noncorrelation between immanent forces of production and relations of domination that constitutes something like a perpetual counterrevolution.[38] Modernity lurches agonistically between political possibilities of immanence and transcendence, revolution and hegemony, possibilities arrayed according to the logic of a sovereignty that steps in to usurp the analogical function of a now absent God. It is certainly not accidental that, for Hardt and Negri, it is Augustine who first conceives the form of the transcendent apparatus, Duns Scotus who first articulates a countervailing singularity of the particular, Ockham who first names "the multitude of the faithful" as an immanent collective: modernity, under such an account, is configured primarily along the antinomies of nominalism.[39] More striking, however, is the simple fact that such antinomies remain unresolved. The reincorporation of a hidden God in the assemblage of the state mystifies power in a series of secular abstractions but fails to reconstitute the unity of the particular with the general. Modernity is thus neither a simple secularization of theological contents nor the elaboration of a nominalist premise, but is rather both, a concept perpetually riven by the countervailing forces

of what Hardt and Negri term "two modernities," each defined in its struggle and ultimate noncorrelation with the other.

The ideological persistence of the idea of secularization testifies not merely to the structure of an original epochal break, a formative threshold between the medieval and the modern, but far more importantly indicates the persistence of that structure across modernity generally. Nominalism's turn to the particular remains significant not because it dispenses with a realist order but because it conceives the plane of immanence upon which such an order can subsequently be resisted. By implication, however, such a bifurcated modernity remains conceptually unavailable to itself, inconceivable on modernity's own epochal terms. If the Middle Ages constitute a space of alienation or secrecy, a kind of historical ellipsis folded within modernity, then the attempt to theorize modernity leads inevitably to a supplementary historicism, a recurrent medievalism that resituates transcendence in an alternate historical space, creating what Paul Zumthor, following Hans-Robert Jauss, labels a situation of "relative otherness."[40] As an object of philological science or political nostalgia, the medieval perversely coheres by masking and mediating the tension between modernities, by assuming the role of a nominalist God and averting itself. As Blumenberg insists, the secularization thesis in any of its forms proceeds by way of unacknowledged metaphor, purporting to recover mystified keys to modern forms through a practice of ideological analogy.[41] History thus conceals eschatology; the transcendent apparatus of the state occludes its deeper identity with the transcendent apparatus of God. What is most crucial, however, is the inevitable breakage within such figures, the relentless process through which the medieval constitutes a lost reference only imperfectly restored in the substitution of a modern form. At stake in secularization, therefore, is the possibility of secrecy itself, of a relative estrangement from the present that maintains the idea of historical totality as compensation for the limitation of the present. Blumenberg's description of modernity's epochal threshold applies not only to a moment in time, as a transitional phase from one regulating order to another, but also to the mechanism through which modernity perpetuates its own motion, creating historical voids to be filled along the way.

If the idea of secularization stakes an ideological claim regarding modernity's origin, it also postulates an altogether different set of moments, thresholds and folds within the history of the modern when the secret

persistence of the medieval enables a very different mode of reoccupation. Metaphorically at least, medievalism is simply the possibility that other social orders remain possible but shrouded. What is important about the secrecy of the medieval is not that it is medieval, but rather that it is secret, that modernity compulsively generates epochs of which it can claim only a limited or relative knowledge. More important still, the profusion of epochal thresholds, stages of transition and moments of unevenness through which a modern historical curiosity moves, implies the possibility and indeed the necessity of other epochs, of a discrete threshold at which modernity ends. In this sense, Blumenberg's account of nominalism as a threshold of philosophical modernity resonates with the altogether different analysis of Alfred Sohn-Rethel, for whom philosophical abstraction derives from the deeper secrets of a monetary economy. If the nominalist thesis effectively liberates an ultimately transcendental subject—an individual subject of knowledge or a collective agent of politics—it does so indirectly, by creating the void into which modernity can cast its own real abstractions, through what Sohn-Rethel describes as "the secret identity of commodity form and thought form."[42] For Blumenberg, the legitimacy of the modern age rests on the recuperation of a structure of "theoretical curiosity" that drives the scale of scientific knowledge beyond the comprehension of the individual, rendering the totality of the world abstract but immanent. Knowledge, as a variation on method or (as Adorno would insist) administration, functions as a real abstraction, a cumulative project impelled by collective and continuous intellectual inquiry. But Sohn-Rethel's critique of epistemology, under which the very possibility of abstract thought (in either a classical or a modern context) depends upon the prior mediation of monetary value, potentially completes such an account. The theoretical curiosity of the modern age, expressed ultimately in the collective impersonality of science (the emergence of a structure of knowledge that exceeds the interest of the mere individual) is simply the product of what Sohn-Rethel terms "intellectual labor," a labor displaced and mediated through the historical limit of monetary alienation.

Significantly, then, Sohn-Rethel locates the turn of such a modern theoretical curiosity at a similar juncture, noting the emergence of a monetary theory that marks the late scholastic moment in England, linking Robert Grosseteste, Francis Bacon, Scotus, Thomas Bradwardine, and

Ockham.[43] What such a seemingly accidental connection implies is the epiphenomenal importance of the nominalist turn not as origin but rather as symptom, as a marker of the deeper ongoing transformation of a monetary logic to the pure abstraction of capital as such. In this sense, the importance of the conceptualist refinement becomes clear: the transformation of substance into real abstraction, into a social form that retains effects even as it forfeits its claim to simple being, opens the operative space of money's ultimate relation to the commodity. But in some sense it was the operation of money that was lurking in the trope of secularization all along. Etymologically, as Blumenberg points out, the term "secularization" refers to a temporalization of property, quite literally a taking that establishes both the power of an emergent state and an autonomous sphere of propertied relations. And it is no doubt worth recalling that when Kant sought to clarify the question of God's existence, he did so by referring to the problem posed by the existence of real abstraction—and accordingly to the problem of money.[44]

With every vacant abstraction and thing-in-itself, modernity encounters the enabling possibility of its own limit and makes the nominalist turn again. If nominalism happens twice, as an intellectual refinement and then as an aesthetic praxis, so does secularization. Following Arnold Gehlen's critique of a "posthistorical" or "late" secularized culture, Gianni Vattimo has indeed suggested that modernity's end be understood in such recursive terms, as a secularization of the very idea of progress, in effect a secularization of secularization through which even the regulation of a metaphysical notion of history finds itself weakened, ungrounded, and ultimately aestheticized by the absorption of curiosity into an increasingly autonomous mode of technology.[45] Like Adorno's nominalism, it would seem, secularization happens as both event and tendency, first as a withdrawal of theology and then as a covert end of history and metaphysics. The interregnum between philosophical and aesthetic nominalism also exhibits the dialectical completion of modernity's first break, a process that ultimately disowns even the latent theology of progress in favor of a radically aestheticized conception of novelty. Pragmatically, modernity transfers categories of meaning and value from past to future, from stable systems of reference to emergent formations and networks *post rem*. Ultimately, the idea of modernity itself retains its function only as the guaran-

tor of "that era in which being modern becomes a value, or rather, it becomes *the* fundamental value to which all other values refer."[46] As Vattimo notes, this reorientation of value inscribes itself most radically in those objects that seek most stridently to reify or encapsulate an element of futurity: in the very structure of a currency that operates by promise or expectation and in the notion of an art that "functions as anticipation or emblem."[47] By retemporalizing value, this "extreme secularization" effectively propels nominalism to a secular recurrence, rehearsing the withdrawal of God as a disappearance of foundational meaning and foundational value. In money and in art, pure forms of intention and will are preserved, but preserved elsewhere, as unknown and unknowable totalities that, in their simultaneous identity and antinomy, enact a potentially endless dialectic of determination and indeterminacy.

In Vattimo's scheme, this end of modernity is figured primarily in the agon of modernism and postmodernism, and in the corollary transformation of a modernist aesthetic into a postmodern state of aestheticized existence. What Adorno describes as modernism's extreme nominalism accordingly anticipates in art what late capital will develop in earnest, as a globalized orientation toward the generation and circulation of future-directed value. For Vattimo, that shift pervades ontology itself, recasting even Being as a slackening but ever-expanding system of credit, "purely and simply identified with faith in the value of the new."[48] Almost literally, such an ontology rehearses the withdrawal of a hidden God in order to describe the contour of an incipient threshold, a moment of transition that suddenly lacks the vocabulary for self-articulation except in the reoccupied languages of the modern and the medieval at once. Post- and prehistory fuse in the discovery of an absolute and autonomous value of things that remain unrelated (by definition) to authorizing prior categories. What Vattimo thus describes is a mechanism of historical forgetting, a moment of concealment in the future through which modernity realizes its secret medieval identity by conceiving its own transition: by ending.

> What the Nominalists call the grit in the machine, I call the fundamental element of the machine.—T. E. Hulme

The status of what Blumenberg calls theoretical curiosity, of what Hegel considers the emergence of "the world in reality," newly available to philosophy, reposes on the question of method. As Blumenberg argues, it is the autonomy of method as form, its abstraction from the epistemological or temporal frame of the individual, that authorizes the modern age, effectively removing it from the historical base of the medieval. In a sense, what unmoors modernity is the potential reattachment of abstraction to a plane of immanence. The irresolution of nominalism becomes the conduit through which theology reoccupies the world as philosophy. But if Sohn-Rethel's thesis regarding the abstraction of labor in exchange is taken seriously, then the simple possibility of such real abstractions depends above all else on the material development of one real abstraction in particular, on a monetary shift in the historical terrain underneath universals and particulars alike. Historically, under such an account, the episode of nominalism already signifies an alteration not merely in perspective but more decisively in the configuration of the world in need of description. The suggestion that universals exist only in the mind may eventuate in the construction of a transcendental subject, but it originates elsewhere, in the simple insufficiency of the philosophical category of substance when confronted with something real but insubstantial, with the actual power of a monetary relation. The odd fact that the metaphor of nominalism retains its operative philosophical currency even now is thus attributable less to the lingering power of an idea than to its formal adequacy and relevance to our own moment, its continuing debt to a system of production that has only intensified the historical quandary of the real abstraction as such. In that sense, nominalism does constitute a conceptual way station, refracting the experience of the onset of modernization's most intractable precondition: monetarization and the calculus of exchange value. If Hegel found the structure of negation in nominalism, it was because money was there. If Adorno found the trace of a prospective nominalism even in Aristotle, it was because (as Sohn-Rethel reminds us) money was there too, operating even in its earliest form as the systemic predicate of philo-

sophical abstraction. If the nominalists found their own authorization in the real abstractions of Aristotle and discovered the power of the insubstantial in the process, it was because they found there the capacity to name a world already in the process of transformation.

When Hegel invokes the image of secularization, what he notes is a shift in the historical content of abstraction, an investment of thought with material substance to which it nonetheless relates philosophically. The evacuation of universals allows substance to return in another form, as a nature wrought in particularity and separated from the mind that guarantees its coherence in a universal form. For Hegel, the process of subjectification that secularization ensures expresses itself in two important forms:

> With this commerce and the arts are associated. It is implied in the arts that man brings what is divine out of himself; as artists were at one time so pious that as individuals they had self-abnegation as their principle, it was they from whose subjective abilities these representations were produced. With this is connected the circumstance that the secular knew that it had itself the right to hold to such determinations as are founded on subjective freedom. In his handicraft the individual is taken in reference to his work, and is himself the producer. Thus men came to the point of knowing that they were free, and insisting on the recognition of that freedom, and having the power of exercising their activity for their own objects and interests.[49]

Lurking already within the narrative of secularization—as its implicit key, in fact—is a model very much like Sohn-Rethel's, one based not merely on the relocation of abstract forms but rather on the reattachment of production to a subject defined primarily by the progressive identification of intellectual and manual labor. Secularization, in this sense, marks little more than the detachment of activity from a substantial reality bestowed on theological universals and its reincorporation as labor power, an account that already anticipates and presumes much of Karl Marx's analysis of "so-called primitive accumulation" and the transition to capital. Commerce and the arts become privileged and definitive sites of secularization because they already mark a shift in the history of labor and the structure of value, because in the exchange of labor and the production of art, the subject is detached from its incidental place within medieval theology and oriented instead to a system of production.

Beneath disputes about secularization, then, lurk another set of narratives, another set of debates concerned with retracing the epochal threshold of modernity in other terms. Inverted from its idealist premises, of course, the narrative of modernity simply becomes capital, reshaping the questions of philosophy sociologically and reinvesting value quite literally. Of course, that transformation too has its historical moment, a historicist moment for which the Middle Ages are less a discovery than a problem, one in which historicism and medievalism indeed arise as aspects of the same phenomenon. Culminating with Marx and Max Weber, this narrative takes the medieval as the space through which to trace the question of freedom not as concept but as a real abstraction in its own right. Simultaneously, the medieval becomes not merely modernity's relative Other but also its dialectical antithesis, a formal vanishing point that appears *only* through the lens of the historical threshold. If the question of transition was an issue for the nineteenth century, however, it was to become something on the order of a crisis for the twentieth.

In 1946, Maurice Dobb sought to approach Marx's question of capital's vanishing point once again by adapting Henri Pirenne's analysis of late medieval trade and the incipient urbanization of feudal society.[50] For Dobb, the question primarily concerns the mechanisms through which feudalism met its own estrangement and eventual ruin: the slackening of those ordering bonds that had fitfully bound labor to lord (and both to land) over the course of several centuries. In the broadest terms, Dobb's analysis hews to Marx's own and to Hegel's behind it, tracing the vicissitudes of gradual depopulation and seigneurial overextraction that, in straining the attachment of producers to land, created a reserve of purchasable labor and thus unwittingly created the category of free labor itself. Dobb's account, however, notably refrains from locating in that reformation any positive origin of capital. The expansion of the late medieval city and the corollary rise in commerce undertaken over long distances accordingly represent not the proleptic form of a fully developed system of exchange but rather a mutation within feudalism itself, an intensification and elaboration of its own vestigial modes of monetary economy. According to Dobb's account, such symptoms indicate feudalism's slow confrontation with its own insufficiency, the process through which a mode of production divests itself of its own most formative elements in order to accommodate and evade its essential shortcomings. For Paul

Sweezy most notably, Dobb's suggestion reverses the order of historical precedence.[51] Insisting on the identification of measured forms of urban autonomy and the emergent commercial system that guaranteed them with the systemic incursion of capital as such, Sweezy accordingly posits a destruction of the medieval order from the outside. Feudalism thus cedes its own logic in the confrontation with extraneous elements, structures of production that announce already the ultimately more capacious logic of capital as a fully elaborated economic and historical system. Feudalism, he argues in effect, did not fall; it was instead pushed.

The controversy spawned in the exchange between Dobb and Sweezy still lingers quietly in a variety of critical attempts to chart a materialist genealogy of modernity at large, from excursions into the theoretical formulation of postmodernity to the attempt to produce some properly postcolonial account of subsequent moments of modernization.[52] In each case, however, it is one of the more provocative points of agreement that proves decisive. For Dobb, the transformation from feudal to capitalist structures of production necessitates two parallel but largely autonomous historical accounts, one concerned negatively with the limits of a feudal social order and the other charged positively with the incursion of broader patterns of monetarized exchange into the space vacated by obsolete modes. The refusal to assimilate the former to capital as a fully realized mode of production arises from the very impossibility of applying such a term in partial measures. As a result, the problem of the transition from feudalism to capitalism ambiguously occupies an epochal significance in its own right, properly designating a period (some two centuries or so in length) of incomplete or partial systems. Unsurprisingly, Sweezy's account produces a comparable compromise by opposite means, designating the transitional epoch in terms of a determinate hybridity, a slow penetration of capitalist forms into the enervated social husks of a feudalism in progressive decline. In either case, what mediates between feudalism and capital is a historical aporia, a space of nondesignation that in some sense eludes the concept of a mode of production altogether.

What is most important, then, is not the resolution of the debate but the simple fact that—theoretically and ideologically—it remains insoluble. Dobb's search for a trigger to feudal dissolution and Sweezy's corollary attempt to locate a less contingent origin of capital both encounter difficulty not in the provision of an economic analysis but rather in the

formulation of the broader term that also provides a categorical limit for Marx: the mode of production itself. At issue is not merely the question of transition from one system to another. Staged in the exchange is a more crucial insight as well, about the logical difficulty implied in conceiving *any* alternative totality, in imagining the structure of a mode of production beyond the historical regime of capital itself. What remains at stake, that is, is whether feudalism might be meaningfully figured in such terms at all. Immanuel Wallerstein has usefully distinguished between the extended phase of systemic transformation that gave rise to a world economy (between 1450 and 1640) and those transitions determined subsequently by the inexorable expansion of that system: "incorporations" of external local systems to the broader network and "proletarianizations" of labor which, alongside the commercialization of land, ensure the normalization of underdeveloped pockets already lodged within that network.[53] For Wallerstein, the singular moment of capital's formation implicitly lies somewhere between the accounts of Dobb and Sweezy: Dobb's elements of late feudal exchange constitute "abortive" transformations, moments of failed emergence that accordingly partialize Sweezy's sense of capital's inexorability. Wallerstein's insistence, however, on the totalizing and systematic character of even an embryonic world-economy usefully evokes one other qualification (albeit one not made directly). While maintaining the description of a feudal order as a mode of production, Wallerstein's forceful articulation of its latter-day dissolution into a world-economy suggests also that the content of such a formulation lies to a large degree in the coalescence of the system as such, in the integration of an economic order properly formed *as* a mode of production. Reframed in such a fashion, the Dobb-Sweezy exchange produces a second dialectical question, concerned not merely with the historical transition *from* feudalism to capitalism but also with the historical emergence *in* capitalism of the very possibility of an integrated mode of production, sufficiently all-consuming to recast a feudal order in its own prefigured image.

In that sense, it matters less whether feudalism presumes an organized social totality (to some degree, of course, it does not) than whether that totality can meaningfully be apprehended through the totalizing category of production. Or, rather, what matters finally is the process through which the concept and indeed the fact of production emerge as the fundamental anchorage of a larger social totality, the idea within which even

vestigial economies take their place. It is just such an inversion that Schmitt undertakes in his suggestion that the history of transition might be rewritten through the concept of *nomos*, or rather through its potential modulation not merely as a trope of production but also of appropriation and distribution.[54] For Schmitt, the political revolutions of bourgeois liberalism and ultimately of its Marxist or Leninist inversions arise here. According to Schmitt's account, it is precisely the possibility of conceiving a mode of production (rather than appropriation or distribution) that decisively marks the "philosophical" project of modernity in any guise:

> Progress and economic freedom consist of freeing productive powers, whereby such an increase in production and in the mass of consumer goods brings appropriation to an end, so that even distribution is no longer an independent problem. Apparently, technological progress leads to an unlimited increase in production. If, however, there is enough or even more than enough at hand, then, in an epoch of scarcity, to view appropriation as the first and fundamental precondition of economic and social orders appears atavistic and repressive, even to be a reversion to the primitive right of plunder. When the standard of living continues to rise, distribution becomes increasingly easier and less precarious, and appropriation ultimately becomes not only immoral, but even economically irrational and absurd.[55]

Among its other consequences, such a premise resituates the moment of feudalism's decline as a renegotiation of *form* rather than content: the truth of the medieval order, its potential conceptualization as a mode of production, arises only with its extinction as a mode of appropriation or distribution, with its translation into a historical logic fundamentally alien to it. In a necessarily revisionist gesture, the decline of the feudal order becomes a necessary precondition not only for the rise of capital but also for the redescription of feudalism itself. More practically, perhaps, the historical conundrum produced by the models of Dobb and Sweezy coheres around the deeper narrative of the emergence of production, understood not as an accomplished fact but rather as the quintessential ideological production of modernity at large. Ultimately, what modernity produces is the imperative of production, the locomotive historical force that conceptually situates capital at both the inauguration and the end of the modern age, as catalyst and asymptotic limit.

In that context, the actual character of a transitional phase, the conceptual contour of modernity's epochal threshold, may perhaps be appre-

hended more clearly. The overlapping boundaries of medieval and modern regimes represent not hybrid modes of production but rather hybrid *nomoi*, the historical admixture of the logic of production with a receding feudal order still constituted in other terms. The origins of modernity, then, must be sought in the dialectical consolidation of a logic of production, in a method able to account, as Luciano Pellicani puts it, for "the dissolution of feudalism and the parallel formation of a civil society capable of ending the subordination of production technology to power technology."[56] In other words, it is precisely the categorical transformation from a political to an economic calculus of history that modernity stages as its revolutionary gambit. But nowhere is such a thesis developed more powerfully than in the accounts that attempt to pose the original problem of the lagging boundary between medieval and modern. Christopher Hill's groundbreaking reconsideration of the English Revolution thus locates in the struggles of the mid-seventeenth century "the destruction of a whole social order—feudalism—and the introduction of a political structure within which capitalism could freely develop."[57] More broadly, Perry Anderson adapts Hill's suggestion to rename the transitional phase in the historical contradiction of absolutism at large, charting the lag between the rudimentary development of a modern economy and the ultimate political rearticulation of civil society in new terms, between a system of manufacture and a system of industry. The problem of bourgeois revolution, then, devolves not upon the radical transformation of the mode of production but rather upon the violent reaccommodation of the political structure to a mode of articulation that has entrenched itself already in all but legal title. Or, as Étienne Balibar's rewriting of the transition debates suggests, it relies upon the imposition of a correspondence between productive forces and relations of production, between epochal shifts that happen twice.[58]

Each of these debates is, in the fullest sense, a contemporary one, concerned less with the medieval than with what the medieval renders possible. It is the problem of an ongoing contradiction between forces and relations of production—of an Althusserian noncorrespondence—that underpins the revival of the transition controversy in Robert Brenner's argument against a neo-Malthusian demographic account and for the emergence of a set of capitalist class relations within agrarian feudalism.[59] In Brenner's view, political shifts propel economic ones, forcing the reor-

ganization of an underlying economic structure. More recently, Dipesh Chakrabarty has rejoined the transition debates in a radically different context, attempting to reconceive postcolonial histories and account for the status of the subaltern within post-Enlightenment discourse, renaming the trope of transition as a mechanism of translation.[60] Chakrabarty's reinscription of transition as translation, however, as the negotiation of a difference that is fundamentally ontological, merely underscores the importance of the original arguments. The questions at stake in those exchanges, after all, were not merely the specialized concern of academic historicism, but rather the product of a distinctively modernist set of political circumstances: from the Leninist problematic of incomplete modernization (echoed throughout the history of existing socialisms) to the attempt to develop a dialectical historiography in western Europe (on the British Left or with the Annales School, for example). As R. H. Hilton notes, "The concept of a general crisis of a social system was, of course, by no means far removed from the experience of historians from about 1930 onwards. Many believed, feared or hoped that the various political, economic and social crises were all part of a single crisis from which capitalist civilization would not recover. The vision was somewhat apocalyptic and in this resembled some aspects of thought in late medieval Europe."[61] The question itself, that is, testifies to a modernist problem.

Subsequently echoed throughout the twentieth century in moments of decolonization or nationalist revolution, those formulations of general crisis have understandably resisted the urge to postulate (in liberal fashion) the normative historical telos of a European modernity; they have in fact broached the question of transition precisely in order to conceive a transition not *to* capitalism but *from* it. The simple trope of transition therefore involves two dialectical edges at once, a medieval history and a modernist politics, oriented to past and future respectively. To this degree, the narrative of transition operates less as an account of modernity than as a framing device, a general form within which modernity can be estranged and inverted, restoring (as Negri insists) the instrumental category of *pre*history to account for "revolution in its synchronic and punctual aspect."[62] Transition now becomes the mechanism through which a "*radical inversion*" of modernity can be elaborated, the form through which a general concept of communism can be formulated not as a process of development but instead as an absolute historical break.[63] Tactically, tran-

sition denotes a possibility of becoming prehistorical, a deformation that projects (however wistfully) the idea of an emergent postcapitalism. The inevitable misrecognitions and misprisions that compose such a medievalism are indispensable in themselves. Inevitably, perhaps, they get the Middle Ages wrong. But in so doing they resculpt the present in that miscast image. The seemingly perverse affiliation of the medieval with the new holds the place of a content to come, an inverted production that medievalizes modernity itself.

The intuitive association, then, of a theoretical medievalism with the archaic, perhaps even the nostalgic, conceals its more decisive instrumental use. Whether grasped through the lapsarian slippages of secularization or reckoned dialectically through a developmental scheme of historical transitions, medievalism in theory points only secondarily to the problem of the past at all. More importantly, medievalism offers some faint evidence of the finitude of the mode of production, attempting to impose a dialectical limit to the logic of modernization. Necessarily, it proposes an exteriority, presupposes an antithesis in order to alienate the logic of capital, adducing alternative temporalities along the way. As the history of the transition debates suggests, however, such a project verges toward aesthetics at the moment when it conjures other social orders. In fact, it also recapitulates Adorno's fractured dialectic of art, tracing in fragments the contour of a totality already withdrawn into systemic invisibility.

PRESUPPOSITIONS: MARX'S SECRET MODERNISM

> This correct view likewise leads at the same time to the points at which the suspension of the present form of production relations gives signs of its becoming—foreshadowings of the future. Just as, on one side the pre-bourgeois phases appear as *merely historical*, i.e. suspended presuppositions, so do the contemporary conditions of production likewise appear as engaged in *suspending themselves* and hence in positing the *historic presuppositions* for a new state of society.—Karl Marx

In some sense, of course, all of this was implicit in Marx already, lodged in what Pellicani ironically labels a "hidden hypothesis."[64] To a large degree, the concealment of that hypothesis arises from the performative quality of Marx's analysis and the necessity of producing the term of production as

such. The account of "so-called primitive accumulation" offered in *Capital* offers fragmentary evidence of a theoretical shift so deeply embedded that it eludes a philosophical and historical vocabulary bound (even dialectically) to the epochal logic of political economy. The problem discerned and faced already by Marx (and implicitly posed in an earlier political economy), retraced in accounts of absolutism and of the political revolutions that dispensed with it, renewed again in debates over the transition from feudalism or over the latter-day incorporations of colonial and postcolonial societies under the broader circuit of globalization, resides in an irreducible historical circularity. As Balibar notes, Marx's formulation of the mode of production acknowledges the fact of noncorrespondence already: locating the "last instance" of the determinant of production precisely in the decision "which of the instances of the social structure occupies the determinate place."[65] The preponderance of politics in the classical world or religion in medieval thought, the contour of an epoch as a mode of appropriation or distribution, already presupposes another order of productive determination, what Schmitt calls an "order of ordering."[66] Production in its most absolute sense, then, as the singular term that informs the more variegated system of production-circulation-accumulation, emerges belatedly as the deeper totality that wrenches earlier systems from their provisional historical moorings. Production has its own history. But production is also the condition of that history, the material foundation upon which modernity constructs other epochs. Modernity is in fact distinguished by its production of such other epochs along with itself.

Another paradox, then—or rather the formative dialectical impossibility that lies, both theoretically and historically, at the very origin of capital. Medievality names a mode of production, the mode of production eclipsed in the transition from feudalism, from which the raw materials of the singular and totalizing fact of modernity assembles itself, against and over which modernity asserts itself in the thought of the system of production. That, certainly, is the insight (however contested) of the transition debates in general and, in fact, of medievalism in general, as nostalgic habit or academic object. Medievality, however, is also no such thing. It is rather and more properly a social and logical difference, reinscribed *as* a mode of production *only* with the emergence of production's pure concept. It is, following Schmitt's suggestion, also another sort of mode altogether: of

appropriation, of distribution, an alien form within which the concept of production germinates and from which it disentangles itself to return as the *nomos*, the order in disorder of the modern. In this sense, it is the dialectical antithesis of a mode of production. Certainly something like such a claim lurks already in Blumenberg's powerful historical inversion, in the metaphor of reoccupation that dislodges narratives of secularization. But it lurks also in Marx, at the very limit of the project of critique, as the ultimate proof of capital's power. What capital as a mode of production—and capital as the possibility of the mode of production as such—produces most decisively is not merely an account of its own naturalization (the project ultimately of that practice of political economy engaged and transformed by Marx himself) but also of its historicization, both its past and its pastness. If a narrative of secularization threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the modern age, then, a narrative of transition threatens the legitimacy of the Middle Ages, anachronistically but inevitably locating its foundation in a concept that emerges only later.

But that is exactly the point. To the degree that transition debates circle necessarily around the emergence of a concept of the mode of production and a theoretically boundless world-system, they chart a logical shift from an order of given realities to an order defined prospectively in futural terms. Unlike systems of appropriation and distribution, that is, production depends on emergent values and relations, on the status of objects that do not yet exist. Even totality—first banished from immanence with the unintended concealment of a nominalist God—becomes a futural function, rendering the present as a potential past defined only in the moment of its coming nominalization under the law of value. But totality thereby becomes prospective as well, capable of returning with the full and worldly realization of an immanent logic of production. For Marx, that double movement is etched already in the formative historical logic of capital, as the temporal inversion with which the first volume of *Capital* culminates: "On the one hand, it transforms the existing mode of production; on the other hand, this change in the mode of production, the particular stage reached in the evolution of the material forces of production, is itself the basis and precondition—the premiss of its own formation."[67] What capital presupposes is simply capital. And in that movement of presupposition is constituted not only the future production of capital but also the history of capital as a mode of production. The tortured

recirculation of Marx's logic emblematically reproduces the dialectic of its object. The attempt to envisage the structure of precapitalist relations is less a matter of unreflective teleology than of methodological necessity, the product of capital's contradictory ability to posit itself as historical origin and fulfillment at once. When Marx famously declares the coming end of "the prehistory of human society" in his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, he ensconces the simple enterprise of history in the future—not from utopian fervor, but rather from an insistence that historical reconstruction proceeds necessarily by a process of presupposition. Even the present coheres only in the unfolding of such a posterior relationship, shorn of the ideological interference of contemporaneity: "Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production."[68]

To the degree that the expression of such a conflict lags behind its original formulation, Marx's method inevitably privileges, even legitimates, a progressive or developmental unfolding of modernity. That narrative, however, is not identical with *history* in Marx's sense. Crucially, "prehistory" is not identical with "precapital": to the contrary, capital marks the culmination of a Marxian prehistory, a transition phase *into* history through the antinomies of bourgeois production. According to Marx's logic, it is precisely the attempt to reconstruct a feudal order that provides the most indispensable methodological template for an analytic of modernity and the relations of capital, not through any direct or analogical connection but rather because feudalism bears with it the afterlife that eventually permits its own critique. The attempt to understand the regime of political economy, to the degree that it rests on the revolutionary afterlife of capital and the ultimate expression of its latent contradictions, certainly requires an account of precapitalist formations, but more importantly it requires an anterior category, some projected space in which capital itself is rendered prehistorical. The price of that enterprise, however, is the concept of history itself. Strictly speaking, Marx's notion of history operates only in the future, a future that reinvests the past—but also mediates and obscures it inescapably. The invocation of secularization in an analytic of modernity's ending or the rise of Empire or the

return to questions of transition as a function of late capitalism rather than late feudalism may thus prove more apposite than anachronistic. Even the tales of secularization and transition may prove little more than ideologically opposed tendencies of a common historical imperative, a gesture to the medieval that proceeds by way of a simple paradox, straining toward something like an estrangement of the present. As Vattimo's reinscription of the logic of secularization and Negri's reversion to the notion of transition suggest, what is at stake in each case is the possibility of recoding the concept of modernity as an allegory of modernity's passage into a category of pure futurity. Even postmodernity, it turns out, implies a medievalism—for the simple reason that the medieval constitutes the logical fulcrum upon which the category of the future turns. More concretely still, even late capital continues to encounter the medieval as the conceptual matrix of difference, a dialectical metaphor that recognizes in capital's spatial expansions an image of its chronological limits as well.

For Marx, the effects of capital are simultaneously ontological and historical, measured most decisively in the recirculation of capital's own presuppositions as apparent histories. In effect, the content of the new will always prove some reinscription of the old, remolded historically as the recognition of the totality of the mode of production as such. The history of modernity passes necessarily through an articulation of that which it has eclipsed—not merely to articulate its own novelty or difference but more crucially to claim the right of production over historical being at large, a history that comes into being only with and as a transition from capital. Modern prehistory accordingly becomes the mark of ongoing production, pointing again to a reality that awaits in the future: "The conditions and presuppositions of the *becoming*, of the *arising*, of capital presuppose precisely that it is not yet in being but merely in *becoming*; they therefore disappear as real capital arises, capital which itself, on the basis of its own reality, posits that condition for its realization."[69] The disappearance of capital's presuppositions from the regime of real capital, however, is never absolute. As fragments or historical afterimages shorn of context, forms intimated out of time, such conditions offer the terms of subsequent antinomies, of the attempt to construct an idea of other social orders. In the becoming of capital, then, particulars of earlier conditions are abandoned—left without their corresponding universals, but left nonetheless. It is in this process, I want to suggest, that the trope of nominalism

resonates, as a description of art generally and of modernism in particular. And it is in this process that negated modes of production are restored as absent totalities, transposed onto a nonexistent futurity that art constructs for itself precisely in order to suspend (however momentarily or counterfactually) contemporary conditions of production. It is this temporal or conjunctural exchange, in fact, that constitutes medievalism's modernist currency.

Returning to this moment in Marx in order to chart the contemporary political strains imposed by the logic of transition, Chakrabarty has distinguished two embedded tendencies, two historical modes—History 1 and History 2—which are not so much opposed to each other as arrayed along a set of skewed vectors or produced at different orders of conceptual magnitude. Chakrabarty's History 1 offers the past as capital writes it, as a set of emergent presuppositions inscribed as history even as they are effaced as effects: incorporating, for example, the feudal mode of production or Wallerstein's periphery among the historical antecedents to capitalism. Classically, the onset or origin of capital entails a moment of simultaneous construction and destruction, creating the epistemological vacuum that Marx discovers in his search for "the antediluvian conditions of capital, . . . its *historic presuppositions*, which, precisely as such *historic* presuppositions, are past and gone, and hence belong to *the history of its formation*, but in no way to its *contemporary* history, i.e. not to the real system of the mode of production ruled by it."[70] But beyond History 1—and against the narrative practice of historicism itself—Chakrabarty discerns in Marx a second order of historical operation as well, produced by the fact "that the total universe of pasts that capital encounters is larger than the sum of those elements in which are worked out the logical presuppositions of capital."[71] This second history, for Charkrabarty, opens a different order of historical existence, composed of elements that "inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate the run of capital's own logic," elements "charged with the function of constantly interrupting the totalizing thrusts of History 1."[72] In Chakrabarty's analysis, this interruption offers a differentiated zone within the ceaseless becoming of capital, best described in the ontological language of Heideggerian being or Husserlian lifeworlds, impervious to the modes of dialectical necessity that a more conventional reading of Marx might presume. Indeed, it is the capacity of History 2 to resist or endure negation that seemingly defines it, its ability instead to shape

and inflect the flows of capital locally, modifying its most fearsome abstractions in the everyday realms of difference, use value, and particularity, ultimately undercutting capital's attempt at self-naturalization. It is History 2, for Chakrabarty, that regrounds abstraction and reattaches values to things: "No historical form of capital, however global its reach, can ever be universal. No global (or even local, for that matter) capital can ever represent the universal logic of capital, for any historically available form of capital is a provisional compromise made up of History 1 modified by somebody's History 2s. The universal, in that case, can only exist as a place holder, its place always usurped by a historical particular seeking to present itself as a universal."[73]

Despite its explicit disavowal of dialectics, Chakrabarty's account of History 2 finds its unerring but surreptitious way into an oddly inverted dialectical formulation, locating in Marx's histories the very tension of universal and particular that stirred Hegel's account of negation in the first place and discovering in the "place holder" of the universal an effect very much like a "true conception of individuation." Perhaps perversely, it is the nominalist strain between universal and particular that returns to enchant capital at the moment of its full realization and to complicate the productive structures of time. Moreover, it is precisely the lurking nominalism of Chakrabarty's reading that lends it such salience in the face of a globalized mode of production. Only through a nominalist disjunction is the concept of the mode of production both realized and deferred, when "the universal turns out to be an empty place holder whose unstable outlines become barely visible only when a proxy, a particular, usurps its position in a gesture of pretension and domination."[74] Significantly, Ernest Mandel has returned to the same moment in Marx to note the dialectical structure of capitalism's own productive temporality, arguing that "primitive accumulation of capital and capital accumulation through the production of surplus-value are . . . not merely *successive* phases of economic history but also *concurrent* economic processes."[75] Lodged in Chakrabarty's account (as in Mandel's) is an unwitting echo of Siegfried Kracauer's argument for "the nonhomogenous structure of the historical universe," the insistence that—under capital, at least—the particularities of microhistory and the generalities of macrohistory remain noncorrespondent, locked as it were upon different planes of determination.[76] And with that echo, one might hear both the discordant strains of Adorno's aesthetics, with its rigorous

plaint at the fate of universals no longer exemplified but instead dissolved in the modernist work of art, and a sketch of the historical structure of modernism itself, buffeted in the conjuncture between an overarching homogenous time of capital and the particular temporalities that imperfectly subtend and partially resist it.

To catch such a dialectical echo is not to impeach Chakrabarty's suggestion but to deepen it, to suggest that the traces of History 2 he finds obscured in the normalizing work of "historicism" are in fact to be discovered in abundance elsewhere, not in the practices of history but rather as the residual and contrary work of art. The usurpation of the universal by "a historical particular seeking to present itself as a universal"—a historical particular that claims the function of the universal without articulating or representing it directly, that indeed flees the categorical determination of the universal—rehearses the language of Adorno's nominalism quite precisely, seeking in the particular a refuge from the determinate totality of capital and finding there the reinvented future form of a negated universality with its model in art. Significantly, the limitations of History 1 and its historicist methods remain coterminous with those of capitalism itself and the associated figure of Europe, while Chakrabarty's History 2 admits what he terms (in reading Rabindranath Tagore) "the aesthetic moment, which resists the realism of history" and "creates a certain irreducible heterogeneity in the constitution of the political."[77] Indeed, from its dalliance with what Adorno calls the "shudder" of the cultic to its expression in the experimental forms of literary modernism, History 2 traces a set of counterhistories most recognizable through the frame of an aesthetic theory, one linked indissociably to the embedded history of capital, anchored to and in that history but resistant to its articulations of totality or substantial unity: in short, a counterhistory founded in the ideological breakage that aesthetic nominalism implies.

What I wish to suggest is simply that the incommensurability between History 1 and History 2, between history as presupposed and produced by the accumulations of capital and the history that modernity programmatically effaces, marks a torsion that inheres already in the aesthetic crisis of modernism, that in fact provides its constitutive metaphysical situation. When Chakrabarty notes the chronological ambiguity lurking in the category of the "precapitalist," "as something that exists within the temporal horizon of capital and that at the same time disrupts the continuity of this

time by suggesting another time that is not on the same, secular, homogeneous calendar," he discerns a tension that is reproduced not only in capital's external confrontations with alien modes but also within the internal dialectic of modernity, also as the problem of modernism.[78] To the degree that "precapitalist" insists on retaining its secondary sense, its gesture to the *non*capitalist, it maintains a utopian impulse perhaps untenable as straightforward history and unrecuperable with modernity's formative epochal narratives but nevertheless necessary in art, an opening to a negated totality that constitutes modernity's own emergent antithetical term, what Henri Lefebvre termed the "verso of modernity."[79] And in that slippage the distinctive historical problematic in the concept of modernism emerges as well, its service as an event or stage within a developmental narrative (alongside romanticism or realism perhaps, a narrative like those Chakrabarty resists) but also its most definitive and nominalistic tendency, a capacious blindness that incorporates the tropes of such narratives while simultaneously enervating their binding conceptual force. To the degree that a nominalistic art both incorporates and disarticulates its own historical grounding, its own debt to larger processes of secularization or transition, it strains against the interpretive sufficiency of History 1 and solicits a different mode of historical criticism. The protocols of History 2 are accordingly given in those particularities and placeholders that signal the insufficiency of a developmental narrative itself or, perhaps more precisely, signal its incompletion.

The unwitting power of art to outlast philosophy's grand narratives, to survive (in some negated form) dire Hegelian prophecies and even the posthistorical onslaught of postmodernity, derives from its ability to conjoin the two histories, to infuse the properly historical and the counterhistorical at once, as discontinuous elements of the same object. But if History 2 constitutes a provisional limit to universality, a "not yet" pointed toward the future expansions and incorporations of a totalizing system, it also remains linked with the developmental narrative it seeks to partialize. Even under Chakrabarty's model, after all, History 2 can claim its supplementary position only through an encounter with History 1, in its passage through the very Enlightenment narratives that it would haunt. In this sense, History 2 arises not from archaic or vestigial modes of an earlier prehistory but instead rears up at the moment when the totality of a mode of production has been conceptually realized—in fact, at the moment

when the heterogeneous becomes historical. The combination of History 1 with History 2 in a nonhomogeneous temporal structure occurs only when those two histories have begun to refract and interfere with the narrative structures of linear development: the moment when narrative no longer functions metonymically by correlating particulars to the general. In this sense, History 2 names a moment of posthistory, if by that we understand a moment that proceeds from an incorporation into history—or, more bluntly, from an absorption into the presuppositions of capital. By definition, History 2 thus remains a category of negation, a locus of resistance against the properly historical mechanisms of totalization.

In the end, however, to read History 2 aesthetically is also to read art back into the Marxian dialectic, as the trace of presuppositions that are past and gone, presuppositions no longer contemporary with the modernity of capital but nonetheless still fitfully operative in what Osborne labels modernism's "temporalizations of history."[80] It is to isolate the aesthetic element that inheres in theory itself and ensures its medieval returns, its second-order visitations of the problem of the medieval as such. Aesthetic nominalism, like the medievalism of theory, persists by affirming a negation, transforming the vestigial character of art into the logic of modernism itself, a referential or representational form deprived of its object. The capacity of modernist art to refer to nothing constitutes its most definitive historical engagement and its theoretical core, the space in which alternate social orders persist not as possibilities but as vanished presuppositions and historical secrets. To the degree that such secrets remain encrypted formally in art, as an unconscious writing of history or an unknowing anticipation of difference, the not-yet of modernism presupposes past and future at once.

NOTES

1 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 80. The epigraph to this essay is from Zukofsky, "A 8," in *"A,"* 46. Subsequent section epigraphs are from, respectively, Zukofsky, *Complete Short Poetry*, 67; Hulme, *Speculations*, 226; Marx, *Grundrisse*, 461.

2 "There is no good, however, in calling the Middle Ages a barbarous period. It is a singular kind of barbarism, and is not simple and rude; for the absolute Idea and the highest culture have sunk into barbarism, and that through the agency of thought" (Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 96).

3 Quoted in Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 83. For Ockham's refutation of the substantial reality of the universal and his argument against the moderate realism of Duns Scotus, see William of Ockham, *Ockham's Theory of Terms*, 77–88.
4 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 38.
5 See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 563–69; Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 80.
6 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 94–95; 106–7.
7 Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, 58.
8 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 106.
9 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 116.
10 Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 31.
11 For the varieties of nominalism's polemical uses in literary theory especially, see Rorty, "The Higher Nominalism in a Nutshell"; Clark, "Political Nominalism and Critical Performance"; and Bode, "A Modern Debate over Universals?" For a rather different version of the relation between nominalism and poststructuralist thought, see Jameson's reading of Paul de Man in "Immanence and Nominalism in Postmodern Theoretical Discourse," in *Postmodernism*, 181–259.
12 Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 26.
13 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 126–27.
14 Ibid., 125–27.
15 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 17.
16 Adorno, "Actuality of Philosophy," 130. For Husserl's refutation of "modern nominalism," see "Investigation II," in Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 1:235–313.
17 Adorno, lecture 6, in *Introduction to Sociology*, 49.
18 Jameson, *Late Marxism*, 157.
19 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 199.
20 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 203, 219. For the source of Adorno's invocation of nominalism in regard to modernist aesthetics especially, see Croce's critique of genre in *Aesthetic as the Science of Expression*, 36–43.
21 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 222.
22 See, for example, Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*.
23 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 199.
24 Osborne, "Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism," 27 (emphasis omitted). On the recuperation of form as the product of art's "material motive," see Bernstein, "Readymades, Monochromes, Etc.," in *Against Voluptuous Bodies*, 195–200.
25 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 192.
26 Ibid., 202.
27 Perry Anderson, *Origins of Postmodernity*, 92.
28 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 102.
29 Ibid., 103.
30 Ibid., 102.

31 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36; Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 1.

32 Koselleck, "The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity," in *Practice of Conceptual History*, 154–69.

33 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 146.

34 "Nominalism is a system meant to make man extremely uneasy about the world —with the intention, of course, of making him seek salvation outside the world, driving him to despair of his this-worldly possibilities and thus to the unconditional capitulation of the act of faith, which, however, he is again not capable of accomplishing by his own power" (ibid., 151).

35 Ibid., 346.

36 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 71.

37 Ibid., 73.

38 See Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*.

39 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 71, 73.

40 Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, 28–29.

41 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 77.

42 Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, xiii.

43 Ibid., 108. Sohn-Rethel's discernment of a correlation between nominalist theology and an emergent capitalist ethic is also anticipated by Max Weber, who distinguishes in passing between the mainstream of scholastic ethics and "some moralists of that time, especially of the nominalistic school, [who] accepted developed capitalistic business forms as inevitable, and attempted to justify them, especially commerce, as necessary. The *industria* developed in it they were able to regard, though not without contradictions, as a legitimate source of profit, and hence ethically unobjectionable" (*Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 73).

44 In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes:

> Thus the actual contains nothing more than the merely possible. A hundred actual dollars do not contain the least bit more than a hundred possible ones. . . . But in my financial condition there is more with a hundred actual dollars than with the mere concept of them (i.e. their possibility). For with actuality the object is not merely included in my concept analytically, but adds synthetically to my concept (which is a determination of my state); yet the hundred dollars themselves that I am thinking of are not in the least increased through this being outside my concept. (567)

45 Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*. For a critique of this notion of "acute secularization," as derived from C. H. Ratschow, see also Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 10–11.

46 Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 98.

47 Ibid., 101.

48 Ibid., 100.

49 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 106.

50 Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*. See also Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*.

51 Sweezy, "A Critique," in *Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, 33–56; see also Dobb's reply (Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, 56–67) and the ensuing debates.

52 For a recent survey of the transition debates and their relevance to medieval studies, see Holsinger, "Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique."

53 Wallerstein, "From Feudalism to Capitalism: Transition or Transitions?" in *Capitalist World-Economy*, 138–51.

54 Schmitt, "Appropriation/Distribution/Production," in *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, 324–35. In a related argument, Sohn-Rethel draws a distinction between societies of production and societies of appropriation, with the latter defined by the emergence of a division of labor and the need for social redistribution. Potentially, such an argument suggests the possibility of charting forces and relations of production separately and conceiving political relations as displaced indicators of productive forces. See Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 83–84.

55 Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, 59.

56 Pellicani, *Genesis of Capitalism and the Origins of Modernity*, 116–17.

57 Hill, "The English Revolution," 80.

58 Balibar, "Elements for a Theory of Transition," in Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 273–308.

59 Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure."

60 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 71.

61 Hilton, "A Crisis of Feudalism," 120.

62 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, 160.

63 Ibid., 165: "Communism is thus a concept that we can only formulate within the form of the transition. The movement of inversion is powerful, so much so that the form of the transition is not simply antithetical, but rather constitutive of a new subject, and its potential for total transformation."

64 Pellicani, *Genesis of Capitalism and the Origins of Modernity*, 123–24.

65 Balibar, "From Periodization to the Mode of Production," in Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 224 (emphasis omitted).

66 Marx, *Capital*, 176n; Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, 78.

67 Marx, *Capital*, 1065.

68 Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 21.

69 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 459 (emphasis original).

70 Ibid. (emphasis original).

71 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 64.

72 Ibid., 64, 66.

73 Ibid., 70.

74 Ibid.

75 Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, 46.

76 Kracauer, *History*, 104–38.

77 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 178.
78 Ibid., 93; on the conjunctural character of modernism, see Osborne, "Modernity: A Different Time," in *Politics of Time*, 1–30.
79 Lefebvre quoted in Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 196.
80 Osborne, "Modernism as Translation," in *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*, 58.

Response

Medusa's Gaze

JED RASULA

In 1910 Ezra Pound confessed, regarding the twelfth century, "Some temperamental sympathy may prejudice me in favor of this age. The keenly intellectual mysticism of Richard of St. Victor fascinates me, the Romanesque architecture, being the natural evolution from the classic, seems more admirable than the artificially classic models of the Renaissance."[1] Later, when he came to know Constantin Brancusi, the sculptor's remarks provided the poet with an epigraph to the 1929 postscript for the reprint of *The Spirit of Romance*: "Toutes mes choses datent de quinze ans." The medieval affiliations of modernists may be infrequent, but they are not uncommon (nor were they always voluntary: James Joyce was educated by the Jesuits). For poets, of course, the shadow of Dante kept the Middle Ages alive, from Pound and T. S. Eliot to Eugenio Montale and Osip Mandelstam[2]—not to mention, among their generational peers unaffiliated with modernism, the fabulists Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis. Another member of that generation, Ernst Robert Curtius, was translating "The Waste Land" and writing appreciations of James Joyce, Hermann Hesse, Jean Cocteau, José Ortega y Gasset, and others decades before his magisterial *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* appeared. Others, too, undoubtedly held modernity and the Middle Ages in focus at once; but what's so unique in that? What about the mutual resonance of modernism and Hellenism, or modernism and the Renaissance?

In the present context, of course, the medieval focus is taken for granted. Modernism is the upstart or the uninvited guest. But as the contributors know, the historical link between medieval and modern amounts to a taunt —or else an enigma, as in the declaration by one of David Lloyd George's Labour ministers that he was "trying to be a medieval modern."[3] As it

happens, this minister had been Herbert Read's university professor, setting him on his unique course as advocate of the international avant-garde as it developed, in the 1930s, along the lines of Constructivism and the unity of art and design promoted at the Bauhaus. As for the Bauhaus, that emblem of artistic modernism, its very name was derived from the *Bauhütten*, those medieval lodgings for guild craftsmen working on cathedrals.

What Ethan Knapp, C. D. Blanton, Erin Labbie, and Michael Uebel have in common is a keen sense of the historical privilege of modernity, a conviction shared with David Pike that "the very desire to view literary history in terms of successive movements, each surpassing the other, is a specifically modernist phenomenon."[4] Labbie and Uebel, following Walter Benjamin, claim the publication of texts by the mentally ill (such as Judge Schreber) as a "*marker of modernity*" (132)—a proposition from which I infer that the modernizing trajectory of perpetual overcoming is itself marked by a pathological exceptionalism. In Labbie and Uebel's resounding formulation, "We view the past only with the eyes of a paranoiac" (142). After citing Hans Blumenberg's pronouncement that the "modern age was the first and only age that understood itself as an epoch and, in so doing, simultaneously created the other epochs," Blanton adds another turn of the screw, claiming that "modernity compulsively generates epochs of which it can claim only a limited or relative knowledge" (196, 208). But where does the generative potential come from? Blanton's answer—that "what modernity produces is the imperative of production" (216)—sounds plausible, even as it renders "modernity" historically amorphous. To specify the consolidation of the modern university system with its various disciplinary cenacles would anchor at least one source of modernity's compulsive productivity. But Blanton has other fish to fry, pursuing the "seemingly perverse affiliation of the medieval with the new" because it "holds the place of a content to come, an inverted production that medievalizes modernity itself" (219). There are, in short, anthropological reasons for investigating the "medieval modern." For these authors, at least, the Hegelian-Marxist legacy provides an incentive.

Still, there's a difference between the neutrality of "the past" and temporal frames such as the Middle Ages or the Enlightenment. One prominent scholar of modernism offers a characteristically wry skepticism about such labels: "The Enlightenment lingers in our intellectual histories as a puzzling phenomenon, puzzling because it is so hard to say briefly what it

was. It lacks chronology, it lacks locality, it lacks identity," Hugh Kenner hyperbolically exclaims. "It perhaps hardly knew that it was happening, or not much more than the Middle Ages knew that they were happening, and we may perhaps speculate that the Romantic Movement was the first such event that did know that it was happening, and that this was where the romanticism lay."[5] Plausibly. But periodization is fickle,[6] as the smorgasbord of options during the debates about postmodernism attests, in which even Saint Augustine was recruited (by Arthur Kroker). Hesiod's division of the ages into gold, silver, bronze, and iron suggests that to periodize is the prerogative of poets, as Pound intuited when he said, "The Renaissance is not a time, but a temperament."[7]

What is at stake in periodizing? (What is *not* at stake?) The terminology of periodization took a while to develop, in fact, for even the use of "century" as a counter didn't achieve general vernacular usage until as late as the eighteenth century. To speak of "contemporary" events in a distinctively historicizing manner was, in turn, an invention of the Enlightenment, popularized by the French Revolution,[8] the momentous event that gave incentive to "a new way of thinking about time and about the violence with which it transported contemporaries from the past to the present,"[9] lending credence to novel theories of "world-historical" forces in thinkers such as Hegel. Jürgen Habermas writes that "it is characteristic of the historical consciousness of modernity to set off 'the most recent [*neuesten*] period' from the modern [*neu*] age."[10] Furthermore, according to Wolfgang Reinhard, only after 1780 did it become possible "to use the noun 'history' ('Geschichte') as a collective singular designating history in the abstract, whereas before that time 'history' had always been in need of an object or a subject."[11]

Dietrich Gerhard enumerates three types of periodization: simple chronological enumeration, the evolutionary or developmental, and the essentializing. The third (and most commonly pursued) type of periodization "professes to summarize the essence of an age, and it requires the period to have a meaning in itself"—the exemplary case, for Gerhard, being the Renaissance.[12] David Fischer warns of the temptation of such a "fallacy of essences," given the emotional allure of something that "supplies a sense of completeness and encourages a sense of certainty."[13] The next step, of course, is from *essence* to *instigation*. If, as Benedetto Croce maintained, periodization was largely "an affair of imagination, of vocabulary, and of

rhetoric,"[14] then the urge to engage in it in the first place is the desire to exercise imaginative control over something otherwise forever out of reach. For poets, such an exercise transforms the fallacy of essence into patterns of incidence—concerning which, truth claims are neither withdrawn nor brought to conclusion, but left dangling like some conceptual "middle ages" of sensory mentation, nourishing the style or manner in which such claims might be apprehended (that is, greeted, known, with apprehension or wariness) without being brought to eschatological finality.

To cite an aphorism by a poet, Wallace Stevens: "All history is modern history," which I take to mean that historical accounts emanate from their moment, and that moment is always "modern" in this twofold sense: it is *now*, and it is subject to fashion (*modern* after *modus*).[15] By "fashion" I mean simply "the way we do things now" (to vary the title of a novel by Anthony Trollope). Admittedly, Stevens also declared, "One cannot spend one's time in being modern when there are so many more important things to be," and this is equally true of the poet and the historian, for whom any compulsion to directly address the moment—which is to say, the *mode*—is to mistake the style for the subject.[16] As Knapp complains, for instance, "The figure of irony in Kittredge serves to secure not Chaucer's modernity exactly, but rather his freedom from the medieval, from an unthinking subservience to that historical moment to which thought itself (and ideationally charged poetry) was alien" (187).

So what is at stake in this struggle between flash and substance, between "modern" as mode or model and "modern" as contingency? In Blanton's terms, the Middle Ages are not a given, but the site of ongoing contention: "the idea of the medieval is not merely incidentally ideological but is rather produced as the very terrain of an ideological struggle over modernity, an event with which it remains historically contemporaneous" (204). Whether one speaks of "ideology" or its country cousin, the "fetish,"[17] the haplessly solicited archetype is Medusa and the averted gaze. The figure of Medusa is pertinent to any situation in which the errant knight (or, let's say, "historian") cannot see the material. For Labbie and Uebel, Judge Schreber is a veritable Lancelot in his dalliance with "supernatural subjectivity" in his effort to live locally (listen to the birds) and conceive universally (be sodomized by God); but this subjectivity might also be called, with reference to an encounter with Medusa, *preternatural*. Schreber's paranoia is exactly what anyone needs who ventures into that

realm where all encounters are full frontal, dead on, head to head; where seeing means looking awry, and thought assumes a saving obliquity. No one now, of course, can "see" the Middle Ages (and the Medusa principle doesn't stop there: those who lived during the Middle Ages couldn't see "it" either). Medusa is no guide (goad, yes), for she incarnates a vengeance always directed at the observer, with a "stare / that hardens the psyche's soft parts to rock."[18] The figure of Medusa either petrifies or deflects. Instructively, in book 9 of Dante's *Inferno*, Medusa is summoned by the Erinyes as Virgil and Dante come into view:

> "Fetch Medusa, turn him into stone,"
> they leered and glowered from their lurid height;
> "for Theseus's assault he will atone."
>
> "Turn round quick, and keep your eyes shut tight;
> for if the Gorgon show, and should you see
> her face, you'd ne'er return unto the light."
>
> Thus said my guide, and he himself turned me,
> nor did he trust my hands upon my eyes,
> but with his own he further hooded me.
>
> O ye of bright and agile mind, realize
> the esoteric meaning hidden threefold
> by the veil of these outlandish rhymes![19]

Charles Williams reminds us that Beatrice's maxim is always "look, look well." As for Dante, the pilgrim, "Attention is demanded of him and her expositions are the result of his attention. She is, in a sense, his very act of knowing."[20] But Beatrice cannot help Dante before he emerges from the Inferno, so her exhortation to look ("to make you see," Joseph Conrad will exclaim centuries later) does not apply to the realm in which the Gorgon appears with her serpentine hair and ghastly visage. And yet both figures, Medusa and Beatrice, combine in a sustained exhortation to behold, to bear witness, as if to insist on Williams's adage: "All images are to excite qualities in us," so he calls Dante's quest the Way of the Affirmation of Images.[21] But Medusa is a reminder of just how perilous images may be, or how complicit the act of regarding them. Macrobius, following Varro's etymology of *templum* from *tueri* ("to gaze upon"), finds assurance in

Scipio's dream that because "the omnipotence of the Supreme God can hardly ever be comprehended and never witnessed, he called whatever is visible to our eyes the temple."[22] If to behold is to enter the temple, is it possible to say that to encounter Medusa, to deflect one's gaze so that which is seen is what's in the mirroring shield, is to enter history?

When Perseus, approaching Medusa, looks not at her but at her reflection in his shield, the emblem of the shield brings to mind Achilles's legendary shield in book 18 of the *Iliad*, an armament fabricated by Hephaistos as a replication of the whole world, multum in parvo. It's as if to say that the historian in search of the Middle Ages can see it only reflected on a surface made up of other scenes and ages, or that any effort to *place* the Middle Ages inexorably leads to world-historical fabulation, the panoramic compulsion. *Our* twelfth century can't help but include a motley configuration of anachronisms like Plymouth Rock, the voyage of the Beagle, trench combat at the Somme, and the Ziegfield Follies. Our intuitive set of focal patterns, our way of sifting through data and imagining a form of life, are surreptitiously infused with the life and times we live in. To cite a crude but obvious example: Americans live in a world relentlessly purified of smells, and surely the most astonishing experience afforded by a time machine would be the overpowering aromas—whether in a medieval village or on the Thames embankment during Queen Victoria's reign. Is odor a necessary precondition for knowing something (anything) else? The point is not that medievalists (say) should bathe less frequently, use an outhouse, and keep a pig. Rather, I mean to suggest that a medieval world without smells is as improbable as the world of the twenty-first century without the Internet; for odors and the Internet are equally *agents of proximity*.

We persist in bearing two burdens of the Enlightenment: one is the doctrine of progress, another the awareness of proximity—a by-product, really, of the *Encyclopédie*. Reinhart Koselleck's influential *Critique and Crisis* calls the Enlightenment to account for endowing modernity with the critical spirit from which there is no immunity, no outlet or escape but into the future—hence its (and any subsequent) utopianism. The cost, the *crisis* of Koselleck's title, is that "politics itself, as a constant task of human existence, dissolved . . . into Utopian constructs of the future,"[23] evidence of which is continuous from Stalin's gulags to the American occupation of Iraq. In the name of progress, the utopian appeal invariably hoists an exonerating flag over scenes of carnage. Giorgio Agamben has developed

his theory of the state of exception to describe drastic procedures of political expediency for utopian ends.[24] There are clear affinities here with Koselleck's view that "in modern times the difference between experience and expectation has increasingly expanded; more precisely, that modernity is first understood as a new age from the time that expectations have distanced themselves evermore from all previous experience."[25] But Koselleck also concedes utopianism as a decisive mutation of temporality, conceived as progressively more open-ended. The contributors to this volume are clearly beguiled by utopia, or more precisely, open to openness. To be open to the past means *opening* the present, for the present is always the python that's swallowed the great pig of the past. For all their imputed derelictions, modernists were if anything hypersensitive to the past, feeling it "deep in their bones" as Eliot put it. Eliot's formulation hasn't been bettered and is always worth bearing in mind: "Someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know."[26] Lest this be taken as a bit of neohumanist moralizing, I'd draw attention to the most sobering feature of Eliot's scenario, which is that it's nonreciprocating. "We" always know *them*, but never vice versa; and however Borromean the knot by which we try to draw ourselves into a unity with historical precedent, there's always that distancing device ("the staff of life"), the Medusa of temporality inexorably swallowing up the material that, we hope, might offer common ground.

Utopian aspirations, however salutary in their optimism, risk placelessness. After all, "utopia" means "no place" (the place Dorothy, in Oz, couldn't help but mean when she said there's no place like home). The sense of stark unyielding adjacency, however, is a (I won't bombastically proclaim *the*) *condition humaine*—terra firma—ne plus ultra, take it or leave it; or, what we're left with when utopia is pared down to topos. The salutary itch behind "Medieval Currencies," "Medieval Studies, Historicity, and Heidegger's Early Phenomenology," and "We Have Never Been Schreber" is just this sense of uncomfortable but unavoidable proximity. I know no better (that is, both exemplary and messy) way of acclaiming this virtue but by way of another poet, Charles Olson, who shall have the last word[27]:

> Contemplating my Neolithic
> neighbors, Mother and Son, while Son mows
> noisily, with power mower the grass & Ma

hangs over the fence simply
watching—and Maiden, or Unmarried Sister
comes around the corner to see him,
too
& if you let the ape-side out the eyes
have died or become so evolutionary
and *not* cosmological (vertical
not the eyes any longer of the distinctness
of species but of their connections
And then Nature is a pig-pen or
swill, and any improvement or increase
[including the population] of *goods*—things,
in the genetic sense, plural, and probable,
in *that* lottery—are then what human beings
get included in, by themselves as well as by any
administrative or service conditions such as contemporary
States find the only answer, the ticketing or studying of
—or selling of—family relations among contemporary Americans and
not Africans but of the baboons as a kin group in
Africa: I prefer my boundary of
land literally adjacent & adjoining mid Mesozoic at
the place of the parting of the seams of *all* the Earth.

NOTES

1 Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 22.

2 Osip Mandelstam's essay "Conversation about Dante" (1934) approaches Dante from a perspective so unusual it's as if a hummingbird were possessed of speech, remarking on the poem as a colossal exfoliation: "A quotation is not an excerpt. A quotation is a cicada" (Mandelstam, *Selected Essays*, 7). There are other modernists, of course, who show no particular affinity with Dante, but for whom that's no impediment to nascent medievalism. W. H. Auden, for instance, or the Welsh poet David Jones, might be said to have medievalized themselves by way of their religious beliefs.

3 Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, 16.

4 Pike, *Passage Through Hell*, 3.

5 Hugh Kenner, *Stoic Comedians*, 1.

6 "Jede Epochengliederung hat etwas Mißliches an sich." (Every division into

epochs has something awkward about it.) (Koselleck, "Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert als Beginn der Neuzeit," 269)

7 Pound, *Spirit of Romance*, 166.

8 Reinhard, "The Idea of Early Modern History," 285.

9 Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*, 49.

10 Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 6.

11 Reinhard, "Idea of Early Modern History," 286.

12 Gerhard, "Periodization in History," 479.

13 Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, 68.

14 Ritter, "Periodization," 315.

15 Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*, 166.

16 Ibid., 175.

17 One might apply the term "fetish" to the embalmed Lenin, whose enshrined body is like a stake through the collective body of the czars, persisting like a medieval relic, as does the bullet extracted from Lincoln's brain (preserved in the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, D.C.).

18 I quote from Amy Clampitt's poem "Medusa" in *The Medusa Reader* (247), a robust portfolio edited by Marjorie Garber and Nancy Vickers, the contents of which take up a much broader range of associations than I have space to address here.

19 Dante, *The Inferno*, 59–60.

20 Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, 231.

21 William Anderson would concur: "Dante, on passing through the gate of Purgatory, begins the experience of what souls in that world have to experience: a reordering of their imaginative and dream life through the right use of images and through the training to endure the light of spirit" (*Dante the Maker*, 307).

22 Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, 142.

23 Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 12.

24 Taking the concentration camp as paradigmatic figure, Agamben argues that "the birth of the camp in our time appears to be an event that marks in a decisive way the political space itself of modernity. This birth takes place when the political system of the modern nation-state . . . enters a period of permanent crisis and the state decides to undertake the management of the biological life of the nation directly as its own task" (*Means without End*, 42–43).

25 Koselleck quoted in Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 12.

26 Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 16.

27 Olson, *Maximus Poems*, 166 (brackets in original).

Afterword

On the Medieval

FREDRIC JAMESON

To a nonspecialist, the Middle Ages appeal, if not to personal taste and idiosyncrasy, then at least to some transpersonal Imaginary, which cannot but be based on stereotype, caricature, prejudice, and misconception if not outright misinformation. I console myself with the conviction that all historical universals are constructed out of just such things, and that if we do not want to be submerged in what Theodor Adorno would have called the nominalism and the positivism of the current business society, we have to try to come to terms with interpretive conceptualities a little larger and more abstract than the immediate archival facts at hand. (I note in passing that the very notion of nominalism,[1] produced by the medieval philosophical tradition, is a sign of the untapped vitality of the latter, which I won't touch on further here.)

So I propose to identify the object of the inquiries in this collection as the Imaginary of modes of production, and, in this case, the Imaginary of the medieval or peasant/feudal mode. And I must first disqualify myself by affirming that I am, to use Max Weber's wonderful expression, "religiously unmusical," and am also often tempted to admire the Marquis de Sade's remark, "The idea of God is the sole wrong for which I cannot forgive mankind."[2] I will say something more about theology in a moment. But if I am unable to believe in the idea of belief,[3] I certainly don't want to disparage the priesthood, an institution for which I have some admiration (and some of whose individual members—the priests of liberation theology, for example—are genuine political heroes).

All of which leads me to say something positive about the theocratic state, which I take to be a central component of the Imaginary of the medieval; its other dimension, feudal brutality, is for me redeemable only

by way of the life of the peasantry (with one signal exception, which I will mention at the end of these remarks). This is not merely an antiquarian matter, since one of the most frequent arguments against socialism affirms the separation of church and state as the foundation of political and social modernity and identifies the collective project of socialism as one in which ideology and political structure have once again become conflated.[4] There is some truth to this, which is in my opinion not adequately addressed by further arguments about whether or not Marxism is a kind of religion.

Rather, the utopian core of both the theocratic state and the party state (of communist memory) lies in the role they assign to intellectuals,[5] a privilege to which any intellectual, no matter how ferociously antielitist and ashamed of his or her condition, must be obscurely sensitive. This unconscious attraction, better measured by just such once actually existing societies than by discussion of Plato and wholly imaginary philosopher kings, is not merely an expression of ideological self-interest and of class investment (although it is certainly also that, and the utopian impulse necessarily operates through that class-ideological form): it is above all the dream of a society organized around something radically distinct from business, money, acquisitiveness, and what is popularly known as "material interest"—an expression which has the disadvantage of identifying the critical and oppositional motive in question here as something somehow "spiritual" in nature. No doubt the clergy always thus identified it, but the party, equally certainly, did not. The point is to isolate what is for us attractive and utopian about societies organized in other than materialist ways, and conferring authority on people whose social function and psychology is disjoined from the world of business and the market (as in modern times the determination of artists will be). After that, both social formations—the theocratic and the communist—can be abandoned to the critique of bureaucracy without further nostalgia. And, it should also be added as a clarification of the utopian position implicit here, that it by no means excludes an identification of the utopian impulse inherent in business itself and in the excitement of entrepreneurial innovation and of the great caravans, indeed, even of the amassing of the great fortunes. The utopian imagination, like the unconscious, does not recognize contradiction, and indeed contains within itself "many mansions."

What of theology, then, to move on to another aspect of medieval Imaginary? I believe that its specific superiority over philosophy as a

discipline—it being understood that in terms of reason, conceptuality, thinking, theory, and practice alike, it is utterly disqualified by the latter, and in all other respects relegated to the ash can of history—lies in its figural nature. Like myth, it is a form of what Claude Lévi-Strauss called *pensée sauvage*,[6] which is to say nonconceptual thought and sensory or perceptual abstraction; but unlike myth it is an extraordinarily elaborated and articulated thinking, developed after the emergence of philosophy and in full awareness of the latter's conceptual and linguistic resources. It is the repository of a unique figural thinking whose dynamics were not recovered until modern times, with psychoanalysis and modern ideological analysis. But one must not confuse this rich legacy, which runs parallel to philosophy save for only a few mutual contaminations, with religion as such. I want to identify its fundamental mechanism as allegory, to which I now briefly turn.

Medievalists do not have to be given lessons in the multiple forms of allegory; and so I will restrict myself to an attempt to clarify (as much for myself as for anyone else) what it is I have always meant by this term, which somehow seems to originate in that other phenomenon I tend to call auto-referentiality or in other words the self-designation of the text; but this in a rather different fashion from its function in modernism and so-called modernistic works, where it replaces an absent public and furnishes the *mode d'emploi*, the instructions on the back of the box, for hermetic configurations.[7] In Dante, it is the great representational dilemma—also central to that figural "language experiment" I described medieval theology as—that governs all the lines, and which means that the poet's language must somehow act out what can, in any case, never be representationally expressed or rendered. People have rightly celebrated Dante's realism, but I have in mind a peculiar poetic structure in which syntax and image are themselves enlisted in a nonrepresentational and yet mimetic operation. I can't convey this any more effectively without examples and textual analysis; suffice it to say then that allegory, on my reading of it, is always intimately related to a crisis in representation, and that the medieval period is an extraordinary laboratory in which to witness its elaborations.

Now I come finally to romance,[8] of which for me the Arthurian mysteries are the fundamental expression in all of world literature. To be sure, all the genres of modes of production different from our own—myth, tragedy,

epic, Chinese lyric—all offer that unique "Luft aus anderen Planeten," that air from other planets, that signals a momentary release from the force of gravity of this one. And our own genres—modernism in one way, science fiction in another—also seek desperately to escape our force field and the force of gravity of our own historical moment. But romance—all the way from Chrétien de Troyes to its most modern echoes in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* or the *Lancelot* of Robert Bresson—has a charm for us that little else matches in its magical transfiguration of human relations: desire, combat, ritual, betrayal, adultery, obedience, collectivity, disaster, destiny, vocation are all uniquely recombined in the mode of fantasy and under the narrative category of adventure. (And it should be added that the rich tradition of Lacanian analysis of this "material" also testifies to its generic specificity.) But at this point I feel that my celebration of the medieval really begins to veer far too closely backwards to the area of sheer personal taste, and so I will end here.

NOTES

1 One of Adorno's central themes.
2 Quoted in Beauvoir, "Must We Burn Sade?" 41.
3 See Needham, *Belief, Language, and Experience*, in which it is demonstrated that no "primitive" language has a word for what we call "belief."
4 See, for example, Heilbroner, *Marxism, For and Against*.
5 Mao Zedong's "stinking ninth category."
6 Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*.
7 See my *A Singular Modernity*.
8 See also my "Magical Narratives" and *Political Unconscious*, 103–50.

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