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michel foucault

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SPECIAL ISSUE: MICHEL FOUCAULT

PREFATORY NOTE

This issue of SCE Reports begins a new phase of the Society for Critical Exchange. At their business meeting last December at MLA in New York, the Board of Directors voted to move SCE's headquarters to Oxford, Ohio, and to restructure SCE Reports. In order to facilitate these changes, they appointed the following administrative committee to handle the day-to-day business of the Society: James Creech, special projects secretary; Patricia Harkin, business secretary; Steven Nimis, recording secretary; David Shumway, executive secretary; and James Sosnoski, chair.

It is a particular pleasure to inaugurate this phase of SCE's history with a special issue on Michel Foucault. Peggy Kamuf, the editor of this issue, has brought together a group of papers on the work of Foucault from several disciplines. In addition this issue includes an essay by Cynthia Chase responding to her commentators from the last SCE MLA session and a brief account by Rick Barney of last October's SCE Indiana University conference on "Theories of Reading."

Our next issue of SCE Reports will be guest edited by Susan Elliott and will feature a position paper by Ralph Cohen on literary form change with commentaries by Michael Riffaterre, Hayden White and Murray Schwartz. The 1983 spring/summer issue will be edited by Steve Nimis and will feature a position paper by Fredric Jameson and commentaries on his work.

James J. Sosnoski
General Editor

INTRODUCTION

Peggy Kamuf

The idea for this collection of essays was prompted by a special conference on Michel Foucault, sponsored by the Center for the Humanities at the University of Southern California in October 1981. It was an occasion for theorists and researchers in many fields --philosophy, history, social science and literature--to converge on the common ground of the work of a thinker who has consistently questioned the purpose and effect of disciplinary divisions within the human sciences. It thus also provided an occasion to bring some of these questions to a forum on literary theory such as this one. With one exception, the contributors to this volume are institutionally defined within the literary disciplines, yet their essays defy such definition. One may ask, therefore, what it means that literary scholars such as these (and many others) choose to disregard the narrow definition of their certified competence. Secondly, what are the possible implications of this gesture for literary theory?

As to the first question, Foucault has argued extensively (especially in Surveiller et Punir) that institutions function to articulate knowledge with power in order to discipline subjects. This is most clearly demonstrated in the case of a social science like psychology which developed throughout the nineteenth century in intimate relation with state penal-judicial institutions. However, literature was also institutionalized beginning in the nineteenth century--that is, both a literary canon was defined and set apart

from other sorts of writing; then, increasingly, this canonical discipline has been confined to an institution. Yet, while the social sciences have tended to extend their range through proliferating social institutions, the literary discipline has not collaborated in the establishment of new institutional forms.

One result is the marginalization of a type of study which has relatively little direct exchange value within the network of other social institutions outside the university. The Foucaultian critique of humanist disciplines suggest that one should read the marginalization of "literature" in a much more heterogeneous context than the one commonly accepted by recent commentators (for example, by Gerald Graff in Literature Against Itself). Paradoxically, the argument that the study of literature has rendered itself largely irrelevant by giving in to theories of autoreferentiality is an argument made almost wholly in the context of the recent history of literary criticism in North America, as if this history could be assumed to be a self-evident, self-enclosed process. Instead of this sort of narrow determinism of literature's place, which, because it leaves unquestioned the historical forces that classify and cloister written texts, must end up accepting the very closure it wants to challenge, Foucault—among others--urges literary scholars, along with all researchers in the human sciences, to regard their object of study as always only provisionally designated and thus on its way toward redesignation. (See R. Knapp's essay for a number of suggestions of how to proceed with this redesignation.) The essays in this collection each contribute to this process of redesigning the literary object by neglecting to halt at the boundaries which have historically confined

literature and its study to a place in the institution. (See G. Van Den Abbeele's essay in particular for a discussion of how Foucault's own "histories" complicate the relation to "fictions".)

As to the second question about the implications of such heterogeneity for a theory of literature: This question seems particularly pertinent since, as already noted, Foucault's critique is most forcefully worked out through an archeology of the social sciences, although by using the French designation "sciences humaines" (particularly in Les Mots et les choses), this critique tends to dissolve the Anglo-American division between humanities and social sciences. Foucault's analyses have radically changed the questions being asked by empirical researchers and this shift has produced remarkable new critical perspectives on a broad range of social institutions. (See A. Frank's essay, for example, which effects this shift in examining the discourse of sex therapy.) If, however, the implications of this research for literary thought are less clearly set out, perhaps they have to be sought in relation to Foucault's larger project. This project has not always been grasped by his commentators, one reason, no doubt, that during his lecture at the USC conference, Foucault chose to spell things out with words to this effect: "I am not writing a history of power. What interests me are the historical processes which have produced the human as subject." In the production of the human as subject (and, consistently in Foucault's work, "subject" must be understood also as "subject to," as "subjection"), "literature," that nineteenth-century invention, has been called to play a considerable role. And it is this role that theorists have set out to revise. First, as we have seen, by opening up the closed discourse of a discipline and considering it in the context of other discourses, other forces at work in the production

of the subject of literature. Secondly, by letting neither the producer-subject of intentional criticism nor the product-subject of formalist criticism serve as an unassailable locus of meaning value and therefore as a center of power. Finally, (and it is here perhaps that current literary theory could have most to gain by familiarizing itself with Foucault's historical researches), the subjection of the reader, that is, his/her realization as subject, may derive its apparent theoretical necessity from the need to maintain and consolidate power's articulation of itself in identified subjects. To the series of such historically produced terms already analyzed--delinquents, inmates, pupils, patients, analysands--theorists of reader response and subjective criticism may even now be in the process of adding a new class of subject--the "reader." The juxtaposition of Foucault's historical analyses with a particular discourse on literature, in other words, can disclose how the continued preoccupation with a humanist, subjective "ethic" serves to disfigure texts by attempting to dismantle their resistance to a sure positioning of a subject. And from there, it may become possible to reassert that resistance to subjection which literary language performs for us and which is perhaps the only ethic we need to know. (See L. Mykyta's essay for a suggestion of how resistance may need to be asserted even as one reads Foucault's text.)

The following brief bibliography lists Foucault's major works and their English translations where available. For a complete bibliography of work both by and about Foucault, consult Alan Sheridan, Foucault: The Will to Truth (London and New York: Tavistock, 1980), pp. 227-234.

Folie et deraison, Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique. Paris: Plon, 1961; Histoire de la folie. Paris: U.G.E., Collection 10/18, 1961 (a shortened version); Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique. 2nd ed. Paris: Gallimard, 1972 (this edition contains two new appendices, the second of which /"Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu"/ responds to Jacques Derrida's critique in "Cogito et folie" /L'Ecriture et la différence, Paris: Seuil, 1967/).

Madness and Civilization, trans. Richard Howard. New York: Pantheon, 1965 (translation of a shortened version with additions from 1st edition).

Naissance de la clinique. Paris: P.U.F., 1963; 2nd edition, 1972.

The Birth of the Clinic, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1973.

Raymond Roussel. Paris: Gallimard, 1963.

Les Mots et les choses. Paris: Galimard, 1966.

The Order of Things, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1970.

L'Archéologie du savoir. Paris: Galimard, 1969.

The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

L'Ordre du discours. Paris: Galimard, 1971 (Foucault's inaugural address at the Collège de France).

"The Discourse on Language," trans. Rupert Swyer (included as appendix to translation of The Archaeology of Knowledge).

Surveiller et punir. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

Discipline and Punish, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1975.

La Volonté de savoir. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

In addition to the translations of the major works, selected essays and interviews with Foucault have been translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

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LIFE WITHOUT FATHER: WHAT FOUCAULT MIGHT MEAN FOR LITERARY CRITICISM

Robert S. Knapp

This is a working paper on the kind of work that I think Foucault makes necessary for literary critics. I do not pretend to be an expert about Foucault, not that he would appreciate any such will on my part to know him. So I attempt no exegesis of his archaeology, even though I doubt that his investigations block exegesis as much as their rhetorical posture suggests. Instead, I want to think about how his Nietzschean meditation on the problem of knowing has affected my theory and practice as a teacher and student of literature.

In the first place, it seems to me that the institutional history of English in America has ideally placed literary critics to profit from Foucault's analyses of discourse. Why? Because the whole enterprise of English studies looks very like the phantasmatic effect of other disciplinary discourses rather than the outcome of our own integral and systematic disciplinary practice.[1] Assessed by the criteria normal to other frameworks of research and intellectual empowerment, English studies seem to have contributed surprisingly little to either the advancement of learning or the demagogy of knowledge. We have been successful editors of texts and collectors of textuality inside and outside the boundaries of the literary "work"; as O.B. Hardison once observed, we have accumulated a great pile of bricks from which something might be made.[2] But apart from the honest janitorial labor of rereading the canon

so as to make it available for the next generation of readers, we have not constructed many edifices which count as knowledge, which let us control our "field," predict new patterns in it, or "see" the kinds of hidden goings on that panoptic strategies mean to pry into. Reading, make no mistake, secretly works up this kind of knowledge, but it can't count as such: it is both too private and too communal, and its fragile hypotheses fall far more swiftly than those in the Kuhnian model of science. But science, I take it, is part of what we must talk about when we talk of vouloir savoir. If literary criticism at all partakes in the scientific will to know, until quite recently we have labored--without quite knowing it--at the primitive accumulation of capital.[3]

Like every pre-disciplinary enterprise, however, we have had an artisan's set of devices with which to sort, work over, and preserve the symbolic capital we have been collecting and storing. At best, ours have been the inspired tactics of bricolage; at worst, the sour mannerisms of class dominance; in between, as Richard Ohmann shows us, the dispiriting techniques of fitting out intellectual cadres with a prose and habit of mind guaranteed to keep them securely within disciplined boundaries. As for us, though we may inflict micro-technical discipline upon others, we like to think of ourselves as sons of art: we inhabit a certain sacred space, the sounds of which we hear with preternaturally sensitive ears. Others may traverse that space, but only those who hear may stay there; and as Ohmann again points out, most of what passes for research in literature is just a social procedure for certifying one's professionally sensitive ears. But what, exactly, do we hear inside our own grove?

Can we give an account of what inward hearing is? The discourse of science has seemed framed to keep us from discovering what such an account might be: one knows, such discourse says, with outward ears, or not at all.[4] Viewed from the real world of power, therefore, English literature seems to be a liminal enclave within the juridical academy, an orthodox delinquency, a primary domain of the residual, the unfocussed, the interstitial, of all that knowledge has not yet claimed for its own. For all that, it is a place the authorities have wanted to keep—this interior place where symbolic capital is stored—so long as the murmuring which we hear never makes it out of the confessional, so long as no choric, incestuous play disrupts the serious business of meaning.[5] For that, after all, is what we are paid to preserve. Historically, we have preserved that meaning by being careful about what we let ourselves hear, by training the best of our students to gaze carefully into the text as if it were a simulacrum of the Lacanian Other. A fecund mother, dominated by Father; we at play in the female field of the text, but always restrained, chaste, loyal, knowing what to hear and what not.

Whence the appeal of Derrida: he appears to give us our freedom, and by telling us that all the world's a theater of textuality, just foul papers for scripting, he lets us play the field. By throwing in radical question the very idea of having a position from which to play or in the persona of which to encounter violent limits, Derrida escapes the dilemma that Foucault describes. For Foucault, instead, calls us to hear something else: discourse, beating the bounds, constructing the world's body, constructing us. For this reason, Foucault has a greater and more deeply

subversive import for literary criticism. Because it is harder to read him as one who would aestheticize the force or underestimate the effects of discipline, Foucault compels us to look at the imaginary architecture of our lives, to listen for the techniques that keep the show on the road, to feel how the surfaces of power constrain us. But he has no device for slipping us past the surfaces or for cutting through them: no Derridean trickster, he finally has nothing else to offer but sharper senses, nothing except the principled rejection of theory and a nearly chiliastic vision of a future when language comes back into its own (early version) or when the _scientia sexualis_ will be subverted, not through more "sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures" (latest version).[6] Modal, diremptive anarchy makes strong claims on our sympathies as literary critics; much of the pleasure in reading consists just in this. But anarchy of any sort simply cannot cut through disciplinary surfaces: it can only multiply them, causing us to make little simulacra (uncanny Derridean _abîmes_) of discipline within the privatized cubicles of our increasingly bureaucratic world.[7] I do not think that this conclusion should surprise Foucault, for he does not believe that anything exists _except_ surfaces.[8] This belief in turn denies that that there is anything to _hear_—except Beckettian murmur—within the space of literature. In short, viewed from the would-be (but always really foreclosed) perspectiveless position of Foucault's genealogy, there is no female voice within the _habitus_: just noise.

This ability to make us sensitive to bondage, coupled with an inability to give voice to the interior of the bounded space—and also to the bounded national and generic interiors of the

panoptic practice at issue—seems also to afflict the work of Edward Said, surely our leading Foucaultian analyst, despite the friendly distance he has tried to put between himself and the French "abecedarium."[9] This is no place to mount a discussion of _Beginnings_ and _Orientalism_, but it is worth noting—without, I hope, seeming fussy—that Said's very prolixity betrays a certain perhaps willful insensitivity to textual _style_, to the nuances of his own prose, to the subterranean markings which set off one kind of beginning from another, one national mode of Oriental analysis from another, and indeed, one region of the "Orient" itself from another. Said shows quite brilliantly how discourse shapes both literary and geographical territory, but despite his own evident intentions, he cannot avoid an hypnotic effect of his focus on the story-shaping of the world: inside the space of those stories and that shaping, there exists a blank in-itselfness. Orientalism in itself lacks differentiation—as Eqbal Ahmad points out, Said seems deaf to the relative disinterestedness in German orientalism, and fails to connect that effort at objectivity with Germany's own lack of oriental colonies—and the "orient" itself seems on Said's account unable to speak except with a Western voice.[10] But of course; in their own voices, denizens of the _habitus_ we have constructed in our acquisition of both symbolic and real capital speak in (different) tongues: in household gossip, let us say, or in a literature that seeks out the deadly, erotic play between the figures of our discourse and the performatives of their lives.[11]

Time does not permit, nor does this setting require, the attempt to lay out a program for escaping the impass that these remarks suggest.

Indeed, if we read Foucault carefully, we must realize that there is no way to know in advance what such a program might be; from this realization comes Foucault's chiliastic faith. There is nothing else to be had. Yet Utopias need not be so undifferentiated as his (surprisingly conventional) appeal to a union of language and bodies, for that would be the sum of his visionary endings in Words and Things and The History of Sexuality. Yet there is something slightly askew in this pairing, which is not quite that of the creating Word and the undifferentiated flesh, but rather that of pre-representational, disruptive play with an already somehow differentiated body, one capable of being pleased by that play. It would be more orthodox, though no less conventional to seek what poets (at least in the Christian West) have often sought: a union of language and desire, focussed in the person of a singing, speaking Muse who inspires. Orthodoxy can cripple, of course, yet there may be some reason figured in the nature of poetry as well as in the "nature" of human beings that works against heterodoxy, with its implicitly willful choices. I want therefore to (re)write out at greater length a little fantasy about this union, a fantasy about what a philological criticism might look like that could profit from Foucault without stumbling behind his special blindness. "Philology," the love of speaking, the love of the logos: we forgot something when we began to name our field "literary criticism." We forgot both language and desire, choosing instead to concentrate our powers on that which joins one to the other, the text. But it is too late to regret that choice.

To fantasize. I will plot my Utopia with a few bald assertions, give a couple of reasons for

thinking that literary criticism ought to be part science, and draw a few consequences from that belief. Some will be theoretical, concerning debates within the field. Others will be practical, pointing to areas where a new kind of work (a work that has been quietly going on inside our house for a long time) might yield fruit. For fruit is just the issue, fruit being a matter of public rather than private value. As a group of intellectual laborers, we have been much in need of demystification. We have had to learn that much of what we took for fruit was just the artefact of other's chaff, that our participation in the meaning industry has employed us in the production of doxa, not sapientia and not scientia either. "Naturally" enough, finding ourselves duped, caught within the bounds of the symbolic without having known it, we chafe; we seek to show, many of us, that there is nothing but doxa anywhere, that the play of opinion is freedom, that the pleasure of textuality is the only reality there is, and that appeals to the readerly facts of "experience" can help us break out of the iron cage that Max Weber saw closing in on us long before Foucault gave it his more compelling theorization.[12] For this lesson, we have gone abroad, to the dangerous continent which the Anglo-Saxons have always tended to tour in their vita nova. Foucault—like others of the immensely literary French schooling to which we have recently subjected ourselves—has a convenient dislike for ordinary Western science (which is not the chimerical science of Althusserianism, though I suspect that this is the iron law which Foucault is really in flight from) and a disbelief that hermeneutics can ever lead to knowing something (in principle because there is nothing but surface, binding or exhilarating, depending on one's view of the

"subject").

But the view that however hard we look we only find surfaces, never depth, need not be incompatible with knowing something. We can know how surfaces join and divide, in the Derridean déhiscence that figures genetic replication as much as the continuing play of textuality. What we know--or more strictly, see, for our representation is already too late to be true--is configuration. To be sure, within the "total," perhaps looped field of the configural, no privileged panopticon can let us survey the scene. But at any configural site, we can see at least something of the procedures which preserve--which successfully reproduce, without catastrophic noise--one or another of the osmotic membranes that encell the world's body. When we try to talk about what we see happening at these disciplinary junctures, the thresholds across which something is always being led, all ways, we must resort to models. A model is a kind of machine through which we trick configural processes to flow; and all genuine explanation, as Ernst Gellner insists, is mechanistic, a matter of repeatable process.[13] Mimetic, too: for both plays and engines have plots. And plots, when they work without errors, are nothing but chains of logical operators; programs that will run with a predictable, delimited result. This, I think, simply reformulates what Aristotle told us about plots: that a mythos is a necessary and/or probable concatenation of events; that drama crucially depends upon error. A genealogy we might think of as a very long plot full of errors, not yet terminated, but bound to be: the line of the Father is always extinguished, in time, eternity being an interestingly different question.

As we all know, error always sneaks into the best laid plots: "junk" masquerades as sense, crashing the system. "Junk," it seems, is a kind of outside that builds up inside; it is dirt, invasion, distraction, subversion, something which allies the inside of a system with the outside not in the expected configuration, but in a way that damages the always precarious integrity of the system's auto-déhiscence. For in any encelled world-system, two axes of déhiscence always exist: inevitably, one is metonymic, the other metaphoric; one a matter of contiguous displacement, the transportation of a wave, the other of discontinuous exchange, the particulate business of interpretation, of setting a price.[14] And when it comes to setting a price, for each insider every outsider makes noise rather than sense, and vice-versa: thus boundaries maintain themselves only through the erotic, masquerading behavior of their respective insides, each letting in only those tokens which will fit the internally coded process, which will energize it, make it eudaimonic, flourishing. Or which will make the system a profit, we might say.

If you want to make a profit, then, the standard trick is to pretend that you have no inside: don't let anyone speak to your women, don't defecate in public, don't allow that your literature has cognitive value. If we let some outsider know about our insides, they might be seduced into his discipline rather than ours. At the same time, in the discontinuities of self-preservation, we must lure the other to seek his signs in us; we thereby--perhaps knowingly--throw up the fictive image of an inside: a lie, a trope, a mask with holes in it. And the inevitable result of guarding against letting some outsider get a subversive

hold on your insides while at the same time making gaps that lure him in, is a genuine forgetting that we have real insides. *In effect--in fact--*we cannot simultaneously calculate velocity and position: we can know that we are moving (someone, by means of our mask) or that our mask now sits at level 27a of our "person"ality, thus dividing outside from inside. But we cannot know both facts at once. Thus we must repress the truth about our surfaces: the truth that they are full of holes which something else has made, full of a noise neither ours nor the other's to whom we speak. We may, in principle, remember that such holes exist, but in order to act we must forget where they are. Without action, we may attain a kind of contemplative union, may see--in the dark--how configural *surfaces fit, but action necessarily disrupts* union, as the mystics of every tradition have always known. This, in Lacanian terms, is to forget that we are marked by the Real. And it is also to forget that the Real marks us not in random but in providential ways, in lawful ways, in ways that go on everywhere in the configurational machines that reticulate the body of the world. In civilization as we know it, this function of the law appears as what Lacan calls the "paternal metaphor." It is the metaphor of the One, the invisible--and I suspect truly Platonic, in the sense Plato had in mind--King of all, the idea of the Good. It is also the figure for Death, who divides, leaving only those traces which we sometimes see as corpses. And it is the figure for the dialectician's knife, which finds the joints in things, which makes joints so that we can see how things fit. We need not continue the idolatrous practice of believing that the One masquerades as a penis; it masquerades everywhere, not just because the unconscious loves

displacement, but because everything cuts into everything else, sometimes lovingly, sometimes catastrophically. But the crisis--the cutting which is judgment--will always come, as the tragedians knew; and therefore it is not wise to try to live without Father, without a constant awareness of the father function, and a will to use and be used by it, be we female or male.[15]

In fact, it is only by acknowledging the father function that we can understand what the *inside says. Of course* we can never know anything about the inside except in a (con)figural way: it throws up a dream, a parable, a garment of style; we step into some discipline that hunts the phallus, that looks for the play of the signifier, and try to see what kind of a plot is going on that needs this recurring letter, at these joints. Though infinite arabesques seem possible, I would urge that only two kinds of plots exist, ones that renew the integrity of systematic boundaries and ones that store up error. In actual fact, every real-world process involves both plots, which is why we can calculate such things as rate of decay or stochastic deterioration. But in literary fables, we can separate them into comedy and tragedy, the plot of systematic conservation and renewal, the plot of cosmic catastrophe.[16] And in the institutionalized deployment of knowledge, we can separate these into the domestic plot of technē and the regal plot of science: the discipline of civil/social/psychological engineering, of housekeeping, together with a discipline of detecting systematic errors. This is the same discipline, at a "higher" level: it subjects the world to judgment. It uses patient negativity to find the wounds which dirt betrays (the wounds of original sin, of representational gaps only half

sutured by internal discipline) within the systems of doing and the models of knowing. Science thus thrives on catastrophe, which it must provoke either in its models or in some other's surface should error not erupt of its own accord.

Literary criticism--like psychoanalysis--has to be the self-aware practice of both engineering and science or else it will be (like most psychoanalysis) just an amusement for those whose idleness serves the purposes of some other disciplinary domain, and whose quasi-religious activities keep up the symbolic house for the reigning Fathers. Insofar as our own guild has profited from good housekeeping, we must value and continue to practice the routines of our craft. Nor should we be too quick to demystify our honorific as "humanists": though since the Renaissance and Vico the idea of the humanities has acquired unfortunate (but real) configurational implications, we who mask in that vizard are the only ones in the palace of learning who pretend to speak for the interests of a whole humanity, and we must not lightly give up that claim. But to press that claim in an effective way, we must begin to build a science (as Northrup Frye well understood, now longer ago than does us credit). We must build a science that studies catastrophe in the order of the symbolic; which is what we have been staring at all along as we read the canon. For in terms of the model I have been evoking, what is art if not a certain kind of controlled catastrophe, an erotic, compelling, disruptive invasion into the order of the everyday? At the fluid juncture of "normal" configurational boundaries, something balloons into a new space, introducing a wound in the world that compels our attention, focusses our desires, as the play of

the Other focusses desire in our individual physical beings. And what that catastrophe forces us to see, in one way or another, is the vulnerability of our "internal" plots, how they are subject to error, to crippling méconnaissance. Which is to say, in the terms with which I began, that we hear the voice of mortality speaking from inside, couched in the voice of the other. The voice of the other which is literature is female--as the muses are female--and it speaks in riddles (many true things and many false, as Hesiod said). And this voice always, finally, says just one thing--what the body of a woman has always said to a man--that we are vulnerable. For it is not the text which is vulnerable to us. A great text--indeed any text whatever--knows its own wounds better than we do ours. So our job as philologists--as scientists who admit that we love what we can never know as it really is "in" itself--is not to seek mastery. It is to accept mastery: not to be the Father, nor to seek his approval, but to acknowledge that we inevitably, always, cut with and are cut by what Jacques Lacan calls the father function, the Real. We are cut by the Real precisely because what we love--the Word--has no inside; it has sacrificed its inside in order to make something new, and in order to let us hear our own: the inside by which we are joined together in the world's body.

So much for the oracular voice. It has nothing to say except something we have always known, that science takes reality for its subject, that science explores the gaps in the current order of things, that science seeks the anomalous--the catastrophic--so as better to understand the laws of reality. As we begin to think about the different forms which these catastrophes may take,

the different genres, the different forms of speech, the different institutional "homes," there begins to be a field in which pattern-seeking can take place. It is an historical and cross-cultural field, as it must be if we are ever to know something, and it is just the field where we have always been. In order to see that we have been practicing a science here all along, we need only readjust our vision. There will be as many readjustments as there are searchers in the field, but it may be useful to list a few that I am in the process of making, as theses I would be willing to defend.

1. Literary study has always been genealogical, neither "historical" nor "critical" but both. It is genealogical just in the way that the study of any evolution is: we study the unfolding of a system which appears to be a sequence of objects (texts, plants, stars) but which can only be understood as modeled in an appropriate language.

2. The real object of literary study is neither "works of art" nor "textuality": it is the opening and closing of a representational space (a species, a genre) in configural relation with other representational spaces (also species and genres, but more familiarly named "kinship systems," "continents, islands, and seas," "status groups," "economic classes," "forces of production," and so on.

3. In order to model these configural relationships in time, one must use several different languages, some with greater "texture" than others. At root, however, all such

languages--and the systems modeled in them--behave in standard, logical ways. But because of a linguistic principle enunciated by both Jakobson and Heisenberg, it is not possible to formalize both analog and digital relationships at the <u>same</u> level of abstraction. Current semiotics--which seems to try squaring this circle--is thus probably on the wrong track.

4. Kenneth Burke and Northrup Frye are the figures to be reckoned with in trying to see how our field works: they are the ones who have tried to be scientific, to see how different <u>mythoi</u> drive different subsystems in the human world, and to realize that distinctions between high culture and low, or literature and religion, or poetry and history must be both observed and violated if we are to learn anything.

5. Marxism--that recurrent <u>mythos</u> of a self-destructing process--has a special, but dangerously seductive usefulness in trying to be scientific about literature. Marx--the furiously active, exiled Marx who is the absent "subject" in every Marxism--speaks for the outsider who cannot get at power and the hidden insider who sees himself/herself being sacrificed for some larger system's profit. From this viewpoint, all the bulwarks of political and economic domination seem joined as a seamless, möbius-like surface. Were there a God to see us, he would see this surface dividing mankind from itself, and though he would know that human beings caused their own wounds--by trying to know and accumulate the Good and the Real--he would also understand

that only magic (or that total self-knowledge which would be the union of the Word and the flesh) could heal a divided humanity. Even then, he would know that wholeness exacts a priceless price, the price of everything, God-murder, apocalypse, destroying the village to save it. As the spokesman for inevitable revolution, Marx rebukes us every time we think we are safe, every time we think that something in one part of the world can dare to be indifferent to something somewhere else. But Marxism is not a science except in the sense that poetry (or psychoanalysis) is a science: the science that shows how every self-reproducing system, every genealogy, inevitably rests upon an irresolvable tension, an unclosable gap between an axis of contiguity and an axis of exchange, between forces and relations of production. To try to get up a positive science from Marxism is as impossible as to get up one from psychoanalysis or poetry. All these are vehicles of wisdom or they are nothing.

6. The mistake which Marxism makes is of a piece with its usefulness. Marx shows us that we are not the rational, loving subjects we take ourselves to be; that our apparent self-determination is a fraud. But then it pretends to tell us that we are wholly--and in principle, knowably--determined by the invisible, allegorical beasts of the wood in which the Enlightenment ego forgets it must live: modes of production, underclasses, etc. This is as foolish (as pseudo-scientific, as sophistical) as the sort of psychoanalysis that would have us believe we can know--and adjust--ourselves. And Marxism

is much more dangerous, if it leads intellectuals on the inside of the current system of world-dominance to theorize a necessity for others to suffer. That is to want to make an art form out of someone-else's death. Intellectuals on the outside of the current system are not so comfortable as we professors: they can use Marxism as the political equivalent of the little book St. John ate; it is bitter, but those who swallow it know their own powerlessness, and use what the book speaks to warn us, the empire, which has its redoubts inside their colonialized nations, and to give weapons of self-analysis to their own people. Then if revolutions are made, it will be as the convulsive, inspired performance of those who suffer, who are the repressed that must inevitably make itself known inside the whole system; not as the knowing, reformist project which we traditional intellectuals would impose upon our suffering servants. But if subjected to the same sort of self-analysis to which Freud subjected himself, the knowing Marx in Marxism could become--in the hands of its best practitioners, does become--an indispensable, negative demon who refuses to be fooled by the ideological sleights of both dominating and dominated groups. And by its own will to power.

7. The self-sufficient ego of Enlightenment rationalism (if any such ever existed, except in our retrospect) will no longer serve a good purpose: we cannot seek there for intentions or for reader-responses. But we do not have to give up reason for all that, nor abandon the notion that the point of

studying literature is to become saner, more rational persons. We must just remember that reason always involves two: one inevitably later than the other, however face to face the conversation. Between them moves textuality, that delicate (one wants to say female) tissue which connects things, which reveals between every pair some third thing that is Real beyond knowing, but not beyond loving performance. We need reason--which works by means of the regal, corrective, invisible One--to keep us from mangling that tissue, to help us listen clearly when the inside between us speaks. We need--and we have always known this, even when Oedipally, necessarily killing the father in his most recent name--to be rational actors of the texts which speak in and in between us. For we need to put off catastrophe as long as possible, not for ourselves but for our texts, for the Reality in them that measures us and that will eventually be deaf to our subtlest irrational ploys. In the face of that Reality we have no defense, we are neither male nor female, nor can we (fully) stop our loving it.

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Notes

1. Richard Ohmann makes this point at length, though not quite in these terms, in English in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

2. Christian Rite and Christian Drama (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 34.

3. Kuhn's pre-paradigmatic stage of scientific inquiry, as I mean this rhetorical twist to imply, seems reminiscent of Marxist analyses of the development of capitalism, and thus of the story told by Albert Sohn-Rethel, Intellectual and Manual Labor (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978). Sohn-Rethel departs at a crucial point from the Althusserian position that Capital appears only at the level of theory and not in material reality; for him, the organization of production and exchange is material and mental, at the same "level" (passim, esp. p. 20). This position need not be Marxist, except in its sensitivity to the forcible and potentially explosive separation of the intellectual and the manual; Max Weber makes much the same kind of point when he speaks of bureaucratic organization as an embodiment of mind in the world.

4. Michel de Certeau makes a similar point--also in order to discuss its fallaciousness: "Literature as such is now transformed into the repertory of practices which lack scientific copyright...." "On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life," Social Text 3 (Fall, 1980), 29.

5. For the notion of the Platonic chora, a receptacle anterior to naming, see Julia Kristeva, "From One Identity to Another," in Desire in Language, trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 133. For an analysis of the interior space where symbolic capital is stored, the place of the habitus, see Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977), and the essay by de Certeau cited above.

6. The History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 157.

7. For a striking analysis (though not quite in these terms) of this and allied phenomena, see the remarkable Reed College B.A. thesis by Wendell Scott, "Sex-Symbols: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Transvestism, Drag, and Homosexual Style," Reed College (Anthropology), 1981.

8. For a conventionally epistemological analysis of the consequences for knowledge of this belief, see Allan Megill, "Foucault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History," Journal of Modern History, 51 (September, 1979),451-503. I think Megill is wrong in his epistemology but right to argue that Foucault gives us myth rather than knowledge. I think that Foucault and Megill both err in separating myth (or genealogy) from science, not because science is myth but because myth is how science knows things. The position that I subsequently sketch in this essay draws (perhaps in a fashion that both authors would find illicit) upon the non-representational theory of truth offered by George Bealer, Quality and Concept (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) and the behaviorist (also non-representational) "epistemology" put forward by Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

9. Said tries to strike this distance in the next-to-last chapter of Beginnings, (New York: Basic Books, 1975), and in his essay, "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," in Critical Inquiry, (Summer, 1978), 673-714.

10. Personal communication.

11. I have in mind such a novel as Ngugi's Petals of Blood.

12. In this regard, see the rather loving, filial rejoinder which Perry Anderson makes to E.P. Thompson's plea for the rights of experience as against the "Stalinist" constraints of the Althusserian orrery. Arguments Within English Marxism, (London: New Left Books, 1980).

13. Legitimation of Belief, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), esp. pp. 63-65.

14. When it comes to reproducing something, on a phonograph, in a body, with mimesis of any sort, an interesting paradox results. Reproduction by means of waves (analog reproduction/computation) displays itself in parallel, hierarchic levels; reproduction by means of particles (digital reproduction/computation) displays itself in units, as a broken series of smaller and smaller contiguous displacements, each logically plotted to the other. Thus reproduction by means of Jakobson's horizontal, temporal, displacing axis yields a vertical stack of substitutions; reproduction by means of his vertical, atemporal, substitutive axis yields a row of points, of displacements. Perhaps reality and poetry both map one axis onto the other, all

the time, in the course of mimetic play.

15. I have taken my entrance into Lacan from an extraordinary essay by Stephen J. Melville, "Psychoanalysis Demands a Mind," Aesthetics Today, rev. ed., ed. Morris Philipson and Paul J. Gudel (New York: New American Library, 1980), 434-455. For my purposes, the most pertinent Lacanian texts are The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), esp. pp. 187-276 and "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in Écrits, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), pp. 292-325.

16. For the notion of catastrophe I draw in an uninformed but I suspect correct way upon René Thom's mathematical theory of catastrophe, especially as applied to humor by John Allen Paulos, Mathematics and Humor, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980). I owe my awareness of this book to a remarkably humanistic colleague in physics at Reed, Nicholas Wheeler. This is perhaps also the place to acknowledge a general indebtedness to Douglas Hofstadter, Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid, (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

THE ORDER OF COMMENTARY: FOUCAULT, HISTORY AND LITERATURE

Georges Van Den Abbeele

Can one take what Michel Foucault says about his work seriously? The question is a thorny one, and one which summarily states the risks for the would-be commentator of Foucault, risks which extend beyond those generally encountered in dealing with writers' comments on their work. First of all, Foucault presents us with a thought which is diverse, often contradictory, and ceaselessly changing, to the point of imperiling any generalization about that work--whether it comes from his mouth or another's. Furthermore, one of the main thrusts of Foucault's writings has been to make us critically aware not only of the workings of authority in general but also of that specific oppression of discursive possibilities implied in the understanding of a text in terms of its "author."[1] One has also to confront the problems posed by a historical discourse which not only makes conspicuous reference to works of literature but also itself often borders on fiction. Finally, given Foucault's indebtedness to Nietzsche, we are also invited to suspect a Nietzschean play of dissimulation at work in his discourse. How then can we not extend such dissimulation to Foucault's own comments about himself?

But there is another, more immediately formidable obstacle placed before the commentator in his or her efforts to determine what can be said about Foucault. This obstacle is that encountered in Foucault's own critique of commentary, which, as I hope to demonstrate, calls into question not merely the traditional procedures of scholarly

exegesis but the very possibility of any kind of interpretation. It seems pertinent therefore to take Foucault's comments on commentary into account before deciding on how his work is to be approached. In other words, how can one begin to say anything about Michel Foucault when his own work critically analyzes, among other issues, the way we speak about things in general and about discourses in particular?

In fact, one need go no further than his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France to find a direct and detailed discussion of the problem.[2] There, Foucault inventories the ways in which discourses are systematically controlled and limited in society. These procedures include both "external limitations" (which exclude discourses based on taboo subjects, madness, or falsity) and "internal" restrictions (among which we find both commentary and the author-function) whose task it is to master the "element of chance" in language. Foucault's argument on commentary runs as follows. Discourse as commentary posits a difference between a primary text which is commented on and a secondary text which comments on the primary text.[3] This relationship between primary and secondary texts is further complicated, according to Foucault, in two ways. The first concerns the "top-heaviness" of the primary text or the attribution of a certain "wealth of meaning" to it so that there are endless things to say about it. The second (which seems to contradict the first) is that "whatever the techniques employed, commentary's only role is to say finally, what has silently been articulated deep down" (Foucault's emphasis). "The novelty," states Foucault, "lies no longer in what is said, but in its reappearance." The "ever-changing and inescapable" paradox of commentary is that it must "say, for the first time, what has already

been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said." The desire to explicate this last formulation is irresistible. Its obscurity and near meaninglessness beg for the commentary it so humorously denounces. Yet if we still wish to pursue a reading of Foucault, we cannot afford not to fall into the trap of elaborating a commentary on this statement. To say "for the first time, what has already been said" is the aim of every good commentator who wants to make a discovery about a text. That new discovery can only be legitimized, however, if that something new has somehow already been said in the primary text. Whatever is discovered can only be discovered because, for some inexplicable reason, no one has ever noticed it before. The second part of Foucault's statement is harder to understand. Does it merely rephrase the first half? Is to "repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said" to say something new about a text as if it were something already in the text but which the text has somehow not managed to say, at least explicitly? Or does this expression mean that the commentary faithfully repeats what a text has left unsaid precisely by not saying it, by maintaining unsaid that unsaid? In either case, a claim of fidelity to the primary text is made by the secondary text. As Foucault puts it, the "infinite rippling of commentary is agitated from within by the dream of masked repetition." The language the commentary adds to the primary text is supposed to bring us closer to it, the end point of this movement undoubtedly being the convergence of the two texts into an identity, or the fusion of two minds into one: the co-mens of an ideal commentary.

Thus, the interpretive practice of commentary,

under the guise of granting the primary text an insuperable richness of meaning to be recuperated, acts instead to impoverish and limit discursive possibilities: "Commentary averts the chance element of discourse by giving it its due: it gives the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text itself which is uttered and, in some ways, finalised." The difference between primary and secondary text is only allowed if the latter is contained both by and within the former. Commentary only departs from its object to stay within it. Nothing could be less critical, it would seem, than commentary.

Furthermore, Foucault seems to be using the term, commentary, to designate a whole range of reading practices: interpretation, exegesis, explication, annotation. According to the Trésor de la langue française, a commentaire is the "critical examination of the content and form of a documentary or literary text, in view of a more penetrating reading of that text" (my translation). By extension, it can also mean either an "explication" or a "judgment or interpretation." Thus, virtually anything one can imagine saying about a text could be subsumed under the category of commentary. And perhaps it is the very generality of the term which motivated Foucault's choice of it to the extent that it allows him to dismiss with summary indifference the entire field of interpretive possibilities.

In contradistinction then to the practice of commentary would be that project, elaborated most extensively in the Archaeology of Knowledge, which would seek not to uncover the "wealth" of a text but to discover the "law of its poverty,"[4] that is, not to provide an interpretation but to

elaborate a description. No longer would it be a question of discovering new layers of profundity in a text but of analyzing discourses according to their "exterior" dimensions, of formalizing the rules of their organization as "surface" phenomena. This opposition, however, between interpretive commentary and archaeological description seems difficult to maintain. On the one hand, traditional commentary, insofar as it strives to paraphrase the primary text, thinks of itself as only a faithful description. On the other hand any description, even if it is archaeological, implies already a certain, minimal interpretation because a choice has been made as to what is "worth" talking about and how. Nobody should know this better--and nobody,[5] I think, does know it better--than Foucault.

In fact, one could even argue that nowhere does Foucault state more tellingly what his archaeologies do than in that paradoxical phrase in which he derisively describes commentary as what must "say, for the first time, what has already been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said." The description and analysis of discursive practices does tell for the first time what has already been <u>said</u> since it makes of the field of utterances itself the unprecedented object of historical investigation. At the same time, such analysis tells again or repeats what was never said: what was excluded from or by discursive practices, or the unspoken presuppositions of historically defined fields of knowledge. One can ask indeed whether the stunning, revelatory force of Foucault's writing from the study of madness (as the "archaeology of a silence"[6]) to his remarkable work on sexuality[7] (as something which <u>must</u> be spoken of) should not be attributed to his staying within a certain order

of commentary. In other words, because of the archaeological focus on discourse, Foucaldian historiography is inevitably constituted as a secondary text whose task it is to "re-state what has never been said"[8] in a primary text (namely the field of historical documentation) which it comments on.

My point here in intimating that Foucault is a commentator <u>malgré lui</u> is not simply to obtain a clever reversal of his position through what can be construed as an aggressive misreading of the statement in question. Rather, I wish to suggest that the conditions of possibility not only of Foucaldian history but also of history writing in general lie in the structure of commentary. What Foucault is criticizing in his critique of commentary is historiography. And yet, if his books can still be called histories (which they can be, even if we are not supposed to call them that), it is because he remains <u>within</u> a certain tradition of history writing. Indeed, one suspects that it is because he remains within this tradition that he can all the more effectively call into question the writing of history.

In its simplest, most mundane sense, history can be defined as the narrative of past events. When it is considered that these past events can only be grasped on the basis of documentary evidence, the inevitable conclusion is that the status of the document is that of a text to comment on or interpret. But if history cannot avoid the issue of commentary, what can commentary tell us about history? Whence arises commentary? As Foucault explains in his inaugural lecture, commentary springs from a differentiation of discourses according to what should be remembered and what deserves to be forgotten:

> I suspect one could find a kind of gradation between different types of discourse within most societies: discourse 'uttered' in the course of the day and in casual meetings, and which disappears with the very act which gave rise to it; and those forms of discourse that lie at the origins of a certain number of new verbal acts, which are reiterated, transformed or discussed; in short, discourse which is spoken and remains spoken, indefinitely, beyond its formulation, and which remains to be spoken.

Certain texts are discussed and commented on, that is repeated; others are not. In its elemental form, commentary would be merely the repetition of a primary text, but a repetition which consecrates it somehow as worthy of being conserved. This is to say, however, that that repetition is already a commentary on the status of the primary text, which is not "primary" until it is repeated. It is hard then not to see in this partage between repeated and unrepeated utterances the institutional foundation or possibility of historical memory, or of an archive.[9]

At the same time, history writing becomes one form of commentary among others, a particular way of telling again (or for the first time) what has never (or already) been said. The specificity of historical commentary as opposed to other types of commentary would then lie in its claim to a certain authoritativeness based upon the "objectivity" with which it narrates past events. This objectivity is assured through the intervention of factual references. In other words, history claims to tell the truth about the past through an appeal to the documentary evidence which it recounts and comments upon. Thus, it is only

because there is commentary that there can be history even though historical writing claims a certain prestige among commentaries. Curiously then, if historical writing can only take place as what retells a preceding discourse, it also legitimizes its authority to retell that discourse precisely by the very retelling of it (in the form of citations from "primary" sources). Hence, the desire on the part of historians to shore up their arguments through the discovery of new and supposedly conclusive documentary evidence, which will tell for the first time what has already been said. But if there can be something like a document available for commentary, is it not because a document, any document, is already a commentary invested by the power that decides which utterances shall or shall not become "documents," texts which can be repeated and commented upon? Evidently, the level at which such decisions are made remains inaccessible to historical commentary.

But if historical discourse can only found itself in the citing of what has already been cited, we are faced with the consequences of a theory of history writing as recitation, as repetition. Through this repetition, historical discourse only reinforces the constitutive opposition between the repeated and the unrepeated. History is second-degree commentary. Like commentary, history, far from being critical, would be an institutionalized technique of power. The very discourses which we think allow us to call into question institutions of power are themselves in the service of those institutions: "[Commentary] gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text itself which is uttered and, in some ways, finalised."

But if Foucault's conclusions seem resolutely pessimistic about the possibilities of critical discourse, it seems to me that contained within those statements lies another possibility. For historical commentary to be constituted as repetition there must be a difference in that repetition, a rupture in that continuity, an otherness in what is thought to be the same. As Foucault puts it in the statement just quoted, "something other than the text itself" is said in its commentary. That "something other" is the secondary text itself insofar as it is different from the primary text. This difference, however, also opens up the possibility of there being different secondary texts, that is of there being different repetitions. Foucault himself readily concedes the point: "The Odyssey as a primary text, is repeated in the same epoch, in Bérard's translation, in infinite textual explications and in Joyce's Ulysses" (translation modified). But if there can be different repetitions, does this not reaffirm the possibility of a critical function in commentary and thus in historical discourse? Could not the writing of history be a (critical) rewriting of it? The question can only be answered if we reconsider the law of commentary as formulated by Foucault: "something other" than the text can be said only "on the condition that it is the text itself which is uttered." Thus, if commentary can function as an internal limitation of discursive possibilities, it is only because it obeys a logic of identity whereby the secondary text is subsumed into the primary one. Interestingly, on the previous page, Foucault sees such a denial of the difference between commenting and commented text not only as misguided but as possible only in the mode of "play, utopia, or anguish": "who can fail to see that this would be to annul one of

the terms of the relationship each time, and not to suppress the relationship itself?"

Another possibility is left unmentioned by Foucault, namely that of asserting the difference between the commentary and the object of commentary, that is of asserting the difference constitutive of commentary itself but which traditional commentary would nonetheless have the task of effacing. Instead of an ideal commentary which seeks to annul itself in the primary text, one could envision perpetual commentary in the guise of different repetitions of the "primary" text, which, as we remember, was only constituted as "primary" because it was repeated. This is not to advocate a simple pluralist notion of the multiplicity of interpretations, all of which would be equally well-founded as well as derived from the same primary text. Instead, it is a question of thinking commentary as constitutive of what it comments on and constitutive of it precisely to the degree to which it differs from it. The possibility of different commentaries then confronts us with the possibility of a re-production or different production of what is commented on. Commentary would then become radicalized and aggressive in its transformations of what seemed to have been selfsame and originary of the commentary. So if, on the one hand, the identity of what is commented on is constituted by its essential non-identity with the commentary, on the other, the non-identity of the *different commentaries points to the non-identity* of the object commented upon with itself.

While such a radicalized notion of commentary is not explicitly formulated by Foucault, it does help to explain some of the disquieting yet appealing force of his writing of history. For if Foucault's histories are impressively able to

tell or retell history otherwise, their merit undoubtedly lies in their ability to do it in a way which opens up that history to being read still otherwise. It should come as no surprise then that his various histories do not combine to form a coherent and global history but are instead marked by their essential non-coincidence with each other. History, that formerly unproblematized field of facts and documents, is suddenly made available to an indefinite and critical rewriting of it in the mode of a commentary understood aggressively. History is no longer the simple legacy of the past to the present; it is the past the present gives to itself.

Such an interpretation does not mean, however, a simple denial of the document as the basis of historical writing; on the contrary, it is precisely the discursive status of the document that Foucault has taught us to consider. The mystification implied in the traditional understanding of the document is that it thinks it is dealing with the document as a self-evident fact rather than an an object of commentary in a discourse that constitutes the document as document. The commentary it nevertheless provides is one that is less willing to acknowledge its interpretive dimension than to claim an authoritative "truth" about its subject matter through the presumed coincidence of its discourse with that which it comments on. Against such positivism, Foucault argues in The Archaeology of Knowledge for a "positivity of discourse" (p. 125 and passim). But again, such a discursive positivism can only turn the entire field of historical documentation into a text to be interpreted and re-interpreted. In other words, the pursuit of this extreme positivism raises the question of history's status as an interpretive construct, as a

fiction. Foucault can say not only that he is a "happy positivist"[10] but also that he has "never written anything but fictions."[11] What is jeopardized by multiple commentaries of what should have been self-evident is the historical narrative's claim to objectivity and authority: histoire (as history) edges close to histoire (as story, as fiction).[12]

Following a similar argument, Vincent Descombes reads in Foucault's writing an unresolved tension or contradiction between a "positivistic" Foucault ("with a formidable critical apparatus") and a "nihilistic" or Nietzschean Foucault, for whom all facts are already interpretations and whose histories are in fact "novels."[13] At one point, Descombes seems to feel it impossible to decide between these two possibilities: "Nobody can pinpoint the truth or falsehood of these narratives" (p. 116). His final judgment, however, favors the Nietzschean Foucault, last seen dissimulating the fictiveness of his discourse beneath "a seductive construct whose play of erudite cross-reference lends it an air of verisimilitude" (p. 117). An external positivism hides a nihilistic interior. This spatial relationship is further complicated by the temporal one implied in the progression of Descombes' discourse, which portrays an initially positivistic Foucault, the development of whose work leads him to the nihilism revealed at last as his determining orientation. Interestingly, this characterization of Foucault's work also eloquently replicates the organization of Descombes' own implicitly fictive history of contemporary French thought. Temporally, the book follows the historical development from the positivism and neo-Kantian rationalism of the early twentieth century to the Nietzschean nihilism of Deleuze, Lyotard, and Klossowski. And while the book on

the exterior looks like a historical account of modern French philosophy, the subject of the study is in fact "that which was spoken about, in a given territory and during a given period" (p. 2, Descombes' emphasis). This "clamorous approach" (p. 2) to the history of philosophy begins to sound very much like Foucault's "positivity of discourse." Descombes implies that he is less interested in whether something like the French interpretation of Hegel is valid or not than in the relationship of that interpretation to the field of discourse within which it operates (pp. 1-8, 27-28).

What Descombes offers then is a commentary on a commentary, a second-degree commentary which is also an aggressive commentary destined to take its place in and against the field of pre-existing interpretations. The nihilism obtained through the positing of a positivity of discourse is then less an epistemological nihilism per se than the taking of a certain attitude towards interpretation, namely that of an agonistics of interpretation. The aim therefore of that specific type of commentary which is historical discourse is less the recovery of lost origins than the strategic contestation of other histories, of other commentaries. Insofar as it comments on the other commentaries, this contestatory commentary or anti-commentary must nevertheless take the form of commentary, and it can be seen therefore as a meta-commentary (hence the claim to a "surface description" of discourses). Traditional historiography is all the more effectively called into question by a mode of historical commentary which remains within that tradition and looks like it but which is also aware of its own interpretive status.

If what is here called nihilism "looks like" traditional history, it is then not merely because it provides a clever and seductive masquerading of fiction as fact but because a rigorous understanding of the problem of historical commentary can only lead to the discovery of the fictive basis of history. Nevertheless, this realization does not authorize us to install that discourse comfortably on one side or the other of the opposition between fact and fiction. To be sure, the temptation to decide on the question motivates even as subtle and as sophisticated a critic as Descombes, who, at the very moment he concludes that the force of Foucault's work lies in its ability to disrupt the good conscience of the positivist historian, decides to place Foucault firmly on the side of fiction: "His histories are novels" which pretend to be histories through the seductive "play of erudite cross-reference" (p. 117). If what is threatening to the historian is the possibility revealed in Foucaldian historiography that all histories are inherently fictive, then the force of the threat comes not because Foucault carries out a clever mystification of fiction as fact but because he is himself more of a positivist than the positivists. His nihilism, in other words, is not a simple rejection of positivism. Rather it is a positivism followed out to its extreme consequences as a positivism of the document in its discursive dimension. The document's existence as discourse then points to its entrapment in an agonistics of interpretation which aggressively determines it according to its possibilities of repetition. What Descombes calls Foucault's nihilism is thus the consequence of a radicalized notion of commentary obtained through an attention to the positivity of discourse. But if the difference between fictional discourse and

factual documentation, between histoire as story and histoire as history, can somehow be seen to turn around the question of commentary, what can Foucault's comments on commentary tell us about this difference?

To return to the "Discourse on Language," we remember that the question of different commentaries, of different repetitions of the commented text, was evoked by the example of a literary text, the Odyssey, whose different repetitions included translations of the text, literary analyses of it, and a derived literary text, Joyce's Ulysses. As Foucault's text would have it, the problem of different repetitions or of a commentary which no longer obeys a logic of identity is a problem posed specifically by the literary text: a "single work of literature can give rise, simultaneously, to several distinct types of discourse." But if the literary work seems to be that kind of discourse which plays against the logic of identity implied in the law of commentary, it is perhaps because it plays that game too well insofar as literature is a discourse that begs for commentary, indeed that cannot be sufficiently commented upon. The conclusion is not Foucault's although perhaps it should have been, given the "curious" prominence of the literary text in his canon of commented texts: "I suppose, though I am not altogether sure, there is barely a society without its major narratives, told, retold and varied; formulae, texts, ritualised texts to be spoken in well-defined circumstances [...]. We know them in our own cultural system: religious or juridical texts, as well as some curious texts, from the point of view of their status, which we term 'literary'" (my emphasis). What is "curious" about the literary text is that it is at once

eminently available for commentary and yet somehow different in status from other commentaries. The latter, such as religious or juridical texts, exercise a clear coercive function in society and lose their prestige and power the moment their commentaries are no longer seen as mere repetitions of their original truth. The curiosity of the literary text is not only that it is repeated and repeated in different ways but also that that repetition points to a difference rather than to an identity between primary and secondary texts. This difference, which allows for an infinity of commentaries, precisely for that reason also makes literary discourse that about which there is nothing to say but its repetition. At the limit, we would encounter the Borgesian fantasy of the word-for-word repetition of a text. Now, this very example, a literary one, is used by Foucault in the very same passage to demonstrate a form of the denial of commentary, specifically the one which can aspire to nothing more than play. The curiosity of the literary text as opposed to sacred or legal texts seems to be that there is no reason to repeat it or not repeat it, to repeat it according to the logic of identity or to repeat it according to a logic of difference. Even more curiously, the literary text seems to have placed itself on all sides of the structure of commentary: it can just as well take the place of the commenting text as the commented one, the discourse that repeats as well as the discourse that is to be repeated; it allows infinite commentary and none but its mere recitation and thereby both affirms and denies commentary. Literature, it would seem, both opens up and closes the possibility of commentary, defines its limits and exhausts its field.

But before the literary critic swells with pride

and self-satisfaction at the expense of the historian, the reasons for ascribing such pre-eminence to literary discourse should be considered. After all, in the last passage we cited from Foucault, the word, literary, appeared between quotation marks. For what can "literature" be if it can always be found to subtend commentary if not itself an elemental or limit case of commentary? Now, if it is agreed that the minimal condition for commentary is a redoubling of language upon itself, we find that this is in fact how Foucault has defined literature on a number of occasions.[14] In his early article, "Language to Infinity," he even goes so far as to propose an "ontology of literature" based upon the notion that "the reduplication of language, even if it is concealed, constitutes [the] being [of the literary text] as a work."[15] Literature is language different from itself in itself, its own commentary by dint of its being its own repetition. If "literature" finds itself among the canon of commented texts and finds itself there for no apparent reason, it is because literature is the possibility within language of commentary as the turning back of language upon itself. This possibility is also what brings language itself to its limits, what annuls it. Literature, writes Foucault, is a language which "appropriates and consumes all other languages in its lightning flash."[16]

Literature constitutes itself then as an originary commentary by its taking in of other languages into itself, by its repeating them in itself or as itself. This commentary is no longer bound, however, by the logic of identity at work in the kind of commentary Foucault justifiably attacks. Rather the literary redoubling of language constitutes itself as the aggressive commentary or "transgression"[17] of a language

from which it differs by its very appropriation of it. In other words, the non-coincidental movement of its paraphrase marks its own disruptive potential. The "chance element" of discourse resurfaces in what earlier appeared in another form to be an internal limitation on discourse. One could speak then of an order of commentary (or disorder of commentary) which bespeaks the disorder of discourse, that is, its disruption or differentiation into discourses. Commentary thus understood would lie both inside and outside of discourse as what inaugurates the possibility of different discourses (to say nothing of discursive practices) through the division it institutes between what is to be commented upon and what not, what is to be repeated and what not. Commentary is thus as much of an external as it is an internal limitation of discourse and as much of a disorderly proliferation of it as it is a restraint upon it.

As the paraphrase redoubles and disrupts the language alongside of which it moves, so the literary text slides along the edges of the discourse it transgressively repeats. In the literary text, there is then, for the archaeologist pursuing the study of discursive practices, already to be found a commentary on the language or discursive formations in which that text is operating. Thus, in Madness and Civilization, we are told, for example, that what "the archaeology of knowledge has been able to teach us bit by bit was already offered to us in a simple tragic fulguration, in the last words of Andromaque" (pp. 111-112). That a text, be it literary or not, can comment on that in which it is entrapped suggests that the text is both inside and outside of its episteme, and therefore as disruptive of it as it is exemplary in

its submission to it. Moreover, it is to mark exemplary ruptures in the episteme that Foucault most consistently refers to literary texts. The Classical Age, for instance, is inaugurated by Don Quixote and brought to a close by the novels of Sade.

Yet this manifest use of the literary text as a document should not blind us to its corollary in the becoming literary of the document, whose language becomes redoubled to the extent to which it too comments on the discursive practice in which it is produced. What Foucault has done then is to level the hierarchical differences between the various kinds of documents or discourses. Any discourse, including literature, can attain the documentary status once reserved for birth registers and letters of state at the same time as the latter cease to mere "facts" and take on a critical force through their implicit disclosure and denunciation of the institutional practices that produce them. This aggressive reformulation of the documentary field itself operates as a commentary which allows the document to speak differently. If revealed then in the difference of that discourse is the historicity of what was thought to be timeless and self-evident, that historical knowledge (which is produced as an effect of the commentary) is less new knowledge which reaffirms the progress and continuity of our traditions than what calls into question the very principles of our knowledge and traditions. Historical commentary of the kind practiced by Foucault does not bring us closer to the past; it forcefully demonstrates the remoteness of the past and, consequently, the precariousness of the present. In other words, if historical commentary can be defined as what undertakes the transgressive redoubling of the (discursive) past, then history (and

commentary) must be at least as critical as it is institutionalized. By the same token, though, it must be at least as fictive as it is factual, as literary as it is historical.

The disquieting matrix of commentary, history, and literature which Foucault's work thus challenges us to rethink renders us incapable of knowing which sense of the word, histoire, to apply to his work. In response then to Descombes' remark about Foucault that "ses histoires sont des romans" (p. 139), I feel compelled to offer the much less satisfying proposition, "ses histoires sont des histoires." Far from being a flaw, though, I see this rigorously determined indeterminacy as precisely the merit of Foucault's histories and the reason for his stunning impact on the French theoretical scene. I suspect, however, that Foucault himself might well object to the commentary or reformulation of his thought I have carried out here. My response would then be to ask whether, on the basis of what he himself has said about commentary, we can do anything more (or less) than say, for the first time, what he has already said and repeat tirelessly what he has nevertheless never said.

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Notes

[1]Foucault's most extended critique of the "author-function" is to be found in "What is an Author?" in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, ed. and tr. D. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113-138.

[2]"The Discourse of Language," tr. R. Swyer, included as an appendix to The Archaeology of Knowledge (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). Since Foucault's remarks on the subject of commentary are rather brief (pp. 220-221), page numbers will not be indicated. A similar discussion of commentary can be found in the preface to The Birth of the Clinic, tr. A.M.S. Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), pp. xv-xix.

[3]At several points in this essay, I have found it necessary to distinguish more clearly between the text that receives commentary and the one that performs the commentary. Rather than refer awkwardly to the text that is commented upon and the text that comments upon, I have decided to speak simply of commented and commenting texts, as if to revert to the archaic, transitive form of the verb, to comment.

[4]Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 120.

[5]"Interpretation and formalization have become the two great forms of analysis of our time--in fact, we know no others. But do we know what the relations of exegesis and formalization are? Are we capable of controlling and mastering them? For if exegesis leads us not so much towards a primal discourse as towards the naked existence of something like a language, will it not be obliged to express only the pure forms of language even before it has taken on a meaning? And

in order to formalize what we suppose to be a language, it is not necessary to have practised some minimum of exegesis, and at least interpreted all those mute forms as having the intention of meaning something?" The Order of Things, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 299. Among Foucault's works, The Birth of the Clinic in particular lets itself be read as a study of the institutional consequences of the play between formal description and interpretation.

[6]Madness and Civilization, tr. R. Howard (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), p. xi.

[7]The History of Sexuality, vol. I, tr. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[8]Birth of the Clinic, p. xvi.

[9]A similar argument can be found in Roland Barthes, "Le discours de l'histoire," Social Science Information, 6, No. 4 (1967), pp. 65-75.

[10]Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 125.

[11]"The History of Sexuality," Interview with Lucette Finas, in Power/Knowledge, ed. C. Gordon, tr. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, et al (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 193.

[12]Interestingly, the fictive possibilities of commentary are already inscribed in the etymology of the word: commentary from Latin comminiscor, comminisci, which, according to the Oxford Latin Dictionary, can mean to contrive, to invent, or to fabricate a falsehood.

[13]Modern French Philosophy, tr. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 110-117.

[14] See especially the articles collected under the rubric, "Language and the Birth of 'Literature,'" in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, pp. 29-109, and Raymond Roussel (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

[15] "Language to Infinity," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, p. 57.

[16] Ibid., p. 66.

[17] Cf. "Preface to Transgression," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, pp. 29-52.

THE ANATOMO-POLITICS OF POSITIVE PRESCRIPTION: MATERIALS FROM THE HISTORY OF MASTURBATION

Arthur W. Frank, III.

For Foucault watchers, hardly the least interest of The History of Sexuality, Volume I, An Introduction is the apparent shift from an emphasis on the discontinuity of history to an emphasis on continuity (cf. White, 1979:108). Contrast the opening of Discipline and Punish with that of Sexuality. In the former, Foucault grounds the work in two disparate scenes: the public festival of Damiens' torture and execution, and, eighty years later, the private routinization of daily life in a penal institution. This discontinuity is not, in itself, something to be explained for Foucault; it simply is history. The opening of Sexuality takes what common sense holds to be a discontinuity--the contemporary liberation from Victorian sexual repression—and suggests that there never was an age of repression. To posit such an age, and thus by contrast to posit our present "liberation" from it, is to misapprehend the operations of power which permeate sexuality.

Of course practices change. But this discontinuity of practices is the ruse of power; the operation of power is the fundamental

continuity of history. This gloss is what I want to explore below. Such an exploration can take two forms. One can explicate Foucault's texts themselves as the reflexive embodiments of his practice, and certainly the stylistics of Sexuality provide ample basis for analysis. I choose another route. Foucault's work also directs the reader out of the text, which then serves as a point of departure (and perhaps of return) for empirical investigations of the materials to which the text makes reference. Particularly the History of Sexuality, since it is "only" an introduction, points the reader outward towards materials in which the programmatic implications of Foucault's epigrammatic pronouncements can be located, concretized, and evaluated. This paper suggests such an empirical specification of Foucault's ideas. The materials chosen derive from the history of masturbation and the current construction of masturbation in the sexuality therapies.

The masturbating child is suggested by Foucault (1978:105) as one of the four figures emerging from the 19th century preoccupation with sex. But although Foucault makes frequent reference to the "war against onanism" (1978:104), he says little about its specifics, perhaps intending to devote more attention to these in a later volume. Readers not otherwise concerned with the history of sexuality may not realize from Foucault's general references the vehemence with which this war--"crusade" might be a better term--against masturbation was fought. A few titles can serve as suggestions of this vehemence: from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, 1842, an article titled "Insanity and Death from

Masturbation"; from the American Journal of Obstetrics, 1876, "On Masturbation and Hysteria in Young Children"; and from the Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases, 1879, "Masturbation as a Cause of Insanity." The mood of these works is perhaps best summarized in the title of a book published in 1900, Manhood Wrecked and Ruined (all the above cited in Bullough, 1976:560-1).

In its most extreme forms medical intervention against masturbation included castration of boys and surgical removal of the clitoris for girls. The latter practice continued to be recommended in a medical textbook published as recently as 1936 (see Bullough and Bullough, 1977:69). Perhaps most suggestive for present purposes is the story of a young girl in Ohio who, in response to her masturbatory practices, had her clitoris cauterized. When she continued to masturbate, it was bound in wire sutures, and when she ripped these out, the clitoris was surgically removed. The final line of the description of this case (Bullough and Bullough, 1977:69) summarizes one interpretation of this crusade: "Later the patient reported that there was nothing left for her to touch."

But what does this line summarize? Was the objective to leave nothing to touch? Was the medical crusade against masturbation a crusade against sexuality itself? or against childhood expressions of sexuality? or against the eroticism of sexuality? or against non-reproductive sexuality? Or are we simply looking back on an exercise of power, and what counts in this exercise of power is the historical particularity of a certain micro-technique. And

while the particularities of this micro-technique are, Foucault tells us, very important, it seems we must not let these particularities distract us into believing that what took place was about those particularities. Instead the particularities should lead us to the display of power as a system, for the particularities are nothing but a means of displaying power. But before becoming programmatic about the materials, let me present some more of them. By way of a Foucaultian shift to a later period, I want to suggest the attitudes which now surround the "secret sin" which, within the working lifetime of physicians still practicing, was believed to cause ills from homosexuality to hereditary insanity.

The book most responsible for the contemporary sexuality therapies is undoubtedly Masters and Johnson's Human Sexual Inadequacy (1980; original edition, 1970). The treatment of masturbation here is perhaps most remarkable in its lack of prefatory remarks. The myth of any harm deriving from masturbation is dismissed by the authors' silence; apparently the reader is expected to be beyond such prejudices. Masturbation is discussed either in terms of the diagnostic value of the history of an individual's practices (e.g., can a male who is impotent when attempting coitus achieve a full erection when masturbating? thus, are physiological causes of impotence excluded?), or as a source of the patient in therapy learning about pleasure preparatory to coitus. In the latter context Masters and Johnson write: "Anything that husband or wife might have learned from prior masturbatory experience that would tend to

increase the levels of sensate pleasure should be shared freely with the marital partner" (1980: 196). The presuppositions of this statement represent an extraordinary reversal of 19th century attitudes: masturbation is not only taken for granted as something "natural," but its history has a potentially positive value for dyadic sexual involvement.

Although Masters and Johnson are quite explicit in discussing mutual masturbation as a treatment technique (e.g., for impotence), and although they are willing to utilize prior self-masturbatory experience for therapeutic purposes, they seem to stop short of a full prescription of self-masturbation. This prescription is made explicit in Kaplan (1974), which is probably the standard text read by sexuality therapists and counsellors. While Masters and Johnson, at least at the time of Human Sexual Inadequacy, would only admit marital dyads to treatment, Kaplan is explicit in discussing sexuality therapy for patients without partners. In such programs, "Heavy emphasis is placed on masturbation" (1974:238).

What is more remarkable about Kaplan's work--and what she is perhaps most cited for therapeutically--is the innovation of techniques for incorporating self-masturbation into heterosexual intercourse (see Kaplan, 1974:407-408; cf. DeLora and Warren, 1977:485). Kaplan is also explicit about her prescriptions of solitary masturbation, often using a vibrator, as a means of--in the language of sexuality therapy--achieving orgasmic competence (Kaplan, 1974:393), although in some cases additional

therapeutic work may be required to make the transition from solitary masturbatory orgasm to orgasm with a partner present (1974:397).

The works of Masters and Johnson and of Kaplan represent the "classic" sources of sexuality therapy and are thus the essential references in the documentation of new medical attitudes toward masturbation. But other voices bear equal consideration. As in Foucault's use of materials, the importance of these voices is not how representative they are, not the extent to which the attitudes they present could be generalized, but rather that these voices represent historical possibilities of discourse.

One provocative voice is found in a book review published in the newsletter of the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN). A psychologist is reviewing a text for college students on sexuality and expresses the following criticism:

> The surface attitude of the book is benign and humanistically accepting. However, the writing style, the information selected from research, and the treatment of subject matter, often permit biases in a "conservative" direction to go unquestioned. . . . Masturbation is discussed. . . . After a few paragraphs on frequency and the role of masturbation in childhood, the authors devote most of their space on the subject to pointing out the majority attitude on this behavior--that is "degrading and immoral" or "at best immature." They don't advocate negative attitudes. They simply

> allow the impression to stand that positive attitudes are nonexistent. (Jordan, 1981: 26)

The reviewer concludes that the book fails insofar as it "allows students to leave their value systems unquestioned." The interest of the passage for present purposes is that the 19th century attitude on masturbation is not only reversed, it is reversed with a self-seriousness which at least suggests the intensity of the 19th century anti-onanists.

True pro-masturbatory fervor is perhaps most explicit in the work of the radical psychiatrist David Cooper:

> . . . one can never love another person until one can love oneself enough, on every level, including the level of proper (i.e., full, orgasmic) masturbation--that is, masturbating at least once with joy. . . . Without a secure enough base in self-love, one inevitably and repetitively acts out the whole mass of implanted guilt in one's relations with others. (1970:36)

Not the least interest of this quotation is the linkage of masturbation with a kind of liberation (from guilt and personal history, in this case), an idea to which we will return. What matters at present is Cooper's unequivocal enunciation of the positive need to be able to masturbate, at least once. Although masturbation is still presented as preparatory to dyadic sexuality, it is now <u>essential</u> preparation. Again, the point is not how widely Cooper's views are shared, but

only that a discourse exists in which they can be expressed.

The materials displayed above should be sufficient to suggest the shift from the proscription of masturbation to its prescription; the Foucaultian question is whether what takes place is a "shift" at all (what, exactly, shifts? what doesn't?), and in what terms it might be described. The writers of the SIECCAN newsletter would probably argue that of course there has been a change in attitude; we have learned better, our attitudes have become more "humane" and "humanistically accepting." What the history of attitudes toward masturbation displays is, to use a term sex therapists would not employ but which would summarize their accounts, a triumph of the teleology of reason, and a triumph which is all the more important since reason in this instance is the warm reason of physical pleasure (no mind/body dichotomy here). This interpretation is, of course, one which Foucault would either reject out of hand or regard with extreme caution. Let me develop a case for this caution from the materials themselves, rather than on Foucault's textual authority.

First, we observe that the concern with masturbation has remained a constant. Of all the topics on which a reviewer might choose to comment, masturbation is chosen; somehow an author's attitude on this topic is taken to be indicative of what that author knows and believes about sexuality in general. It could be argued that present day concern with masturbation reflects a continuing need to counteract remnants of the 19th century taboos, but this

argument seems only partially convincing.

Second, the 19th century attitudes, in retrospect, concretize relations of power; thus we can only wonder how present attitudes could be functioning otherwise. The 19th century attitudes not only authorized but required what we can call a system of double surveillance. On one level, parents were enlisted to keep surveillance on the sexuality of their children, and on another level, these parents were accountable to physicians who might question the adequacy of their surveillance. Thus there existed a double surveillance of children by parents and of parents by physicians. This arrangement represents a sort of penultimate panopticism, in which state social control, the control of observability, is exercised by the subjects of this control, physicians and parents, in what they believe to be their own best interests. Note that I am not suggesting the system invested power in physicians; rather it would be more accurate to say that power operated through physicians. The physicians who carried out the anti-onanist crusade did not, as Szasz argues (1970:205-6) take power, rather they were themselves a modality of power.

This distinction rests upon understanding the 19th century crusade against masturbation as representing a Foucaultian nexus of power and knowledge: the power of surveillance, intervention, and mutilation, and the knowledge of medical reason which defines this surveillance and mutilation as being for the good of those on whom it is imposed. The crucial distinction is this: although the knowledge was that of

physicians, and the power was affected by physicians, Foucault's work restrains us from going on to believe that what was involved was the power of medicine. To invoke the physician as the current embodiment of the Prince, as Szasz tends to do, is to do precisely what Foucault cautions against (1978:97). Instead we must attempt to maintain a conception of power without a subject.

The importance of this subjectless version of power is not Foucault's textual authority, but rather that in analyzing the workings of power in current attitudes, we must inquire beyond the easy attribution of power to some group, e.g., medical sex therapy, commercial interests. Instead we must seek to explain the existence of these groups themselves as effects of power. Not only the discontinuity of practices, but the obviousness of explanation by agency is the ruse of power.

The third point then is to attempt to suggest how power is operating through the contemporary attitudes toward masturbation. If we can understand the 19th century attitude as part of a micro-technique of power, in what sense is the present attitude also a micro-technique? Again, there is the problem of thinking of power in economic terms, an argument which is so seductively available that it requires a further digression. In the midst of a 19th century discourse which sounds to the modern ear like endless moralizing and pseudo-science, one statement is clear. A sex manual--properly, an anti-sex manual--by a Mrs. Elizabeth Osgood Goodrich Willard tells us that "A sexual orgasm is much

more debilitating to the system than a whole day's work"(quoted in Bullough and Bullough, 1977:64). The economic argument follows logically: industrial power in the 19th century was interested in workers avoiding the dissipation of their labor power in masturbation; in the present period of surplus labor, this concern loses its intensity. The contemporary problem may be to create a milieu in which workers will find it easy to be diverted in hours off the job. The problem of social control is no longer that addressed by Tailorism, which Foucault would call the creation of bodies made docile for factory labor; instead it is the problem of keeping bodies docile in time spent away from work.

The first problem with the economic theory is that attitudes toward masturbation seem to have been class biased in the 19th century and to remain so today, although differently. This class bias is not in the direction which the economic argument would predict. Foucault writes of the 19th century: "As for the adolescent wasting his future substance in secret pleasures . . . this was not the child of the people, the future worker who had to be taught the disciplines of the body, but rather the schoolboy . . . ." (1978: 121). If Foucault is correct, the economic argument would have difficulty explaining why. The present attitudes, which are apparently anomalous with what Foucault says used to occur, create further problems. Contemporary writers rely on Kinsey's findings that attitudes toward masturbation become more positive the higher the social class of the individual involved. The percentage differences are not overwhelming, but the effect is consistent. Without trying to

reconcile Foucault and Kinsey (i.e., is what exists today a reaction to the 19th century, or did differences in class attitudes then require a different emphasis of repression?), let me simply suggest that those most restrained by sexual attitudes are those who are becoming the surplus of the labor market, and thus those most in need of sexual distraction. Those who seem free to enjoy sexual distraction are those who remain most viable economically. So much for one kind of economic argument.

A more profound response to the economic argument is found in the following statement by Foucault:

> It appears to me that the essential thing is not this economic factor, but rather the existence in our era of a discourse in which sex, the revelation of truth, the overturning of global laws, the proclamation of a new day to come, and the promise of a certain felicity are linked together. (1978:7)

Traditional analyses of power, particularly Marxist ones, have taught us to look for economic explanations. Foucault--not unlike Weber in his time--is not contradicting these explanations so much as he is suggesting more fundamental ones. The availability of this discourse in which sex becomes linked to felicity by way of truth and overturning of law has already been displayed in the materials above. When the SIECCAN reviewer criticizes a text on sexuality for allowing students "to leave their value systems unquestioned," and goes on to suggest that the

book is "probably well designed for the South Florida political climate where the authors teach" (Jordan: 1981:26), this sex/felicity discourse is evident: sex for the reviewer is a means of questioning values and changing political climates, and the text's authors have "failed" to use it as such.

This linkage of sex and general felicity, with the intermediate step of overturning global law, is better exemplified in a review which appeared in The Last Whole Earth Catalog (1971). The Catalog quotes a section from Women and Their Bodies, a book published by the Boston Women's Health Collective in 1970. The section is a detailed description of female masturbatory technique, e.g., "Some women masturbate by moistening their finger (with either saliva or juice from the vagina) and rubbing it around and over the clitoris. . . ." (quoted in Brand, 1971: 221). The description itself is not uninteresting in terms of its possible lack of complementarity to what Masters and Johnson recommend on masturbatory technique (cf. Masters and Johnson, 1980:292-293), but what concerns us more at present is the reviewer's comment on the description, and on the book in general (note, again, the decision to quote that section of the book which concerns masturbation). She writes:

> The subject is our [i.e., women's] bodies--our relationship to them, to ourselves, to men, to each other, and to our society. It makes me feel very special but in no way unique--a warm and wonderful feeling. It's a political book in the best sense of bringing it all back home and making it

> clear how we got here and where we need to go. . . . if you're looking for a stronger, clearer sense of yourself as a woman, you'll be satisfied. What it reminds me of most is a woman's body--intelligent, warm, soft, inviting. (Brand, 1971:221)

The syntagmatic chain which emerges from the choice of passage and the terms of the review could be suggested as: masturbation, satisfaction, body, self, relationships to others, relationship to society, politics, "where we need to go." These associations more than approximate the linkage of which Foucault writes: sex, truth, overturning law, a new day, a certain felicity.

The question of the "shift" in attitudes toward masturbation is thus very much a question of the emergence of this discursive linkage of sex and felicity; the analytical issue is how this linkage represents a micro-technique of power. I wish to propose that this sex/felicity discourse is, in its historical context vis the 19th century, a discourse of legitimation. The significance of this legitimation is that it has brought with it a new panopticism of the sexuality therapies. The double surveillance of the 19th century has not been overthrown, but rather has found its ultimate form. The argument for this panopticism depends on the efficacy of paradox, so let me begin by returning to Foucault's paradoxical opening of the History of Sexuality.

Foucault argues that there never has been an age of repression, since repression paradoxically brings about incitation. The attempt to repress sex only made sex a noisier preoccupation.

Foucault's statement of this paradox rests upon his making a particular presupposition about the logic of proscription: to proscribe something is to inscribe that which the proscription opposes, to give that which is proscribed an oppositional force and a reality; to proscribe is to name that which is proscribed, and thus to incite activity in that name. Thus the proscription of sexual practices such as masturbation amounted to the inscription of these practices in the imagination of a resistance which thereby found its name. In order to address the contemporary situation, it is necessary to apply this logic of proscription to the practice of prescription. From this application we can derive at least a hypothesis concerning the present situation of sex in society.

Although Foucault leads us to the issue of the paradox of prescription, we need not rely on his work as a resource on this topic. The creation of "therapeutic paradox" by means of prescribing the presenting symptom has been a topic within the therapeutic literature for almost thirty years (for a recent review of this work, see Hoffman, 1981: Chapters 15 and 16). For purposes of the present argument, the following simplification of the therapeutic model will suffice. The client in therapy presents a symptom. Rather than tell the client how to get rid of that symptom, the therapist in part of his intervention actually prescribes the symptomatic behavior, e.g., telling the client to continue his drinking. The basis of the paradoxical situation thus created is this: if the client continues the behavior, he now does so at the instruction of the therapist, whose control is thus acknowledged. If he ceases the symptomatic behavior, so much

the better. In the example, the client has the choice of either drinking at the instruction of the therapist, or ceasing to drink. The important issue is control: once the control of the therapist has been established, it can be extended. Specific restrictions can be placed on the behavior, e.g., now only drink three nights a week. These restrictions are, of course, the problematic part of the intervention, but by establishing the context of the initial paradox, the therapist gives himself much greater control in the situation.

The therapist would claim that he will eventually teach the client that he, the client, has control over his own behavior, and the paradox is a means toward this end. Foucault might argue that the paradox creates a control by the therapist which transcends resistance. At present I want only to argue that paradoxical prescription can stop at being a micro-technique of power. The efficacy of this technique is in the impossibility of resistance. That which is proscribed can be practiced as a form of resistance; the proscription which names it also makes it a practical possibility of action. That which is prescribed has as its complementary resistance nothing; there is no resistance except non-action. In resistance to those who watch in order to prevent, it is possible to do that which they would prevent. In response to those who watch in order to be certain you do it correctly, it is possible only to do nothing. Far from becoming a noisy preoccupation, that which is prescribed becomes a bore.

If sex is becoming a matter of prescription,

where is this leading? As sexuality therapy moves into its second decade, some therapists are beginning to report a shift in their case loads, away from the "dysfunctions" (e.g., impotence, orgasmic dysfunction) and toward what is called "loss of interest" and "disorders of desire" (for a recent review, see Kaplan, 1981). Setting aside the obvious question of the normative stance from which "desire" can be labeled "disordered," the questions of present relevance are two. First, is loss of interest the expected, iatrogenic response to the prescription of sex? And second, is the medical labeling of this condition the ultimate extension of therapeutic panopticism? These questions, however, raise issues beyond the scope of the present exploration, which only requires that some empirical case be suggested in support of the idea of prescription as a micro-technique of power.

Returning then to the issues of historical continuity and the ruses of power, the following conclusion can be offered.

The materials on masturbation illustrate a shift in practices from proscription to prescription. The problem is what this shift represents: a liberation, as most sexuality professionals would understand it, a continuity, as the History of Sexuality seems to suggest, or perhaps a change in the form of a discontinuity toward repression. The materials certainly suggest that Foucault is correct in refuting the traditional version of the "repressive hypothesis" by presenting sex as constantly at the nexus of power and knowledge. Sex has remained something to be controlled, with prescription being a more

potent technique of control than proscription, and therein is the question: is prescription so much more potent a control technique than proscription that a qualitative change has taken place?

Added to this question is the issue of Foucault's linkage of sex and broader social and political issues. What is at stake is not simply the pleasures of the body (although such pleasures have obviously never been simple in their social construction), but "the overturning of global laws, the proclamation of a new day to come." The introduction of this sex/felicity discourse, which the materials also display clearly, raises a further question, which is whether this discourse itself--ostensibly the discourse of liberation--is not a micro-technique of power.

At a time when a more powerful technique of control--prescription--is available, it is in the interest of power to raise the stakes, and the availability of the sex/felicity discourse is that raise. Only at a time when sex can be subjected to power is it linked to social and political felicity, this linkage thus providing for the extension of what we can call the proscriptive prescription.

When we read the case of the 19th century girl ripping out the sutures around her clitoris, we hear not only the will to sexual experience, but also the possibility of resistance. Who is this girl's contemporary? I am proposing the young woman who in 1970 learned to appropriate the idle pleasures of her body to the techniques and politics of the Boston Women's Health

Collective (and all the others like it) and today is "suffering" from "loss of interest." And to what does this loss of interest extend? Not just to sexual orgasms, but to those other verities to which the orgasm has become linked: body, self, society, politics, "where we need to go." When anything is touchable, then "nothing left to touch" becomes "nothing worth touching." When the scope of this "nothing" has been vastly expanded, with the forces of "liberation" the ostensible agents of this extension, then the micro-technique of sexual proscriptive prescription is more clearly a relay in a larger system of power relationships.

This "larger system" involves the anatomo-politics of the present. The paradoxical problem of anatomo-politics seems always to have been that bodies capable of disciplined performance were also capable of disciplined resistance, e.g., the Spartacus myth and reality. But when power no longer requires such performance, then "liberation" from earlier disciplines amounts to little more than undercutting the possibility of resistance. When Foucault writes of past practices of making bodies docile for performance (e.g., factory labor, military drill), he should add that these same bodies were simultaneously toughened by resistance to proscriptive discipline. The anatomo-politics of prescription involves a docility which can extend even to indifference to the promise of pleasure. The ultimate linkage in the contemporary micro-technique of power is that this docility is officially thematized as a "problem," and the possibility of its "cure" is appropriated by the power which brought it into being.

If the "loss of interest" phenomenon continues, that will be the final repression. If it does not continue, then the sexuality therapies will claim its "cure" and thereby extend the legitimacy of their panopticism. Either way, power never loses. The apparent discontinuity of attitudes toward masturbation is a ruse of power; if there is any historical discontinuity, it is whether the micro-techniques of power have achieved a sophistication and efficacy which is qualitatively different in its panoptic potential for social control. To address this issue, it would be necessary to consider the bio-politics to which the anatomo-politics described above are doubtless complementary.

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THE OBSCURING CLARITY OF REASON

Larysa Mykyta

In La Volonté de savoir (The Will to Knowledge), the first volume of a projected series of studies on the history of sexuality, Foucault makes audaciously vast claims that seem to herald the overturning of traditionally available systems of thought not only about sexuality but about the functioning of power and the pursuit of knowledge in all fields of inquiry. In that slim volume he redefines both the nature of power and of sexuality, offering a hypothesis about their relation to knowledge that renders all three virtually inseparable thereby upsetting the accepted assumptions about the historical and political function of "sexuality." Moreover his text is convincing and extremely, almost excessively, rational. Foucault seems to saturate his field of investigation by taking everything into account, by scrutinizing and illuminating even seemingly contradictory events and developments to make them function according to the dynamics of a coherent and comprehensive whole within the confines of his hypothesis. However, in revealing that the "repressive theory of sexuality" is a politico-historical ruse that operates in the framework of a generalized will to knowledge about sexuality, with a proliferation of discourses, Foucault allows his discourse, as one more discourse on sexuality, to be suspected of operating its own ruses and strategies of deception. The clarity of his inquiry is so brilliant as to become blinding, that is, it conceals a blind spot, an aspect of the problem left in obscurity and excluded from consideration. This shadowy area is all the better concealed since it is positioned behind the veil of another obvious but reasonably justified exclusion.

I am alluding to the neglect of sexual difference as an important factor within the historical deployment of sexuality as well as to the absence of reference to feminist discourses in Foucault's text. Which is not to say that Foucault does not take the history of female sexuality into account. The hysterization of women's bodies and all the comcomitant effects of such a development are duly presented as one of the four great strategic unities which "beginning in the eighteenth century formed specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex."[1] However, this analysis of the specific way in which women (as opposed to children and men) became the "targets and anchorage points for the ventures of knowledge" (HS 105) functions in a discourse that has already, in the very articulation of its goals, deliberately excluded sexual difference as pertinent.

Foucault announces that his aim is "to transcribe into history the fable of Les bijoux indiscrets," (HS 77) a fable written by Diderot where a bored Prince is given a magic ring by Cucufa, the kingdom's good genie. When turned and focused on sexual organs, the stone of this ring obliges sex to speak the truth about itself. In Foucault's terms the problem is "to know what marvelous ring confers a similar power on us, and on which master's finger it has been placed; what game of power it makes possible or presupposes and how is it that each one of us has become a sort of attentive and imprudent sultan with respect to his own sex and that of others. It is this magical ring, this jewel which is so indiscreet when it comes to making others speak but so ineloquent concerning its own mechanism that we need to render loquacious in its turn; it is what we have to talk about. We must write the history of this will to truth, this petition to know that for many centuries has kept us enthralled by sex . . . (HS 79). In short, Foucault likens Cucufa's magic ring, which made others speak, to the

deployment of sexuality and wishes to make eloquent the mechanism of that ring, of that deployment. He wants to demonstrate why it becomes so important to speak about sexuality; wants to find a historical origin for the phenomenon that made sexuality constitutive of the origins of the self. But in trying to twist the ring upon itself he also twists the fable --for the magic ring of Prince Mongogul was used to force only the female sex to speak the truth about itself. The desire for sexual truth was not a desire to master the mysteries of sex but of the female sex.

What, however, are the consequences of such a double exclusion? Paradoxically, it is in demonstrating the unquestionable legitimacy and value of the exclusion of feminist discourses within a certain context that the significance of the former exclusion can be disclosed. As a result it becomes clear in what way Foucault's discourse perpetuates a ruse, which although going through shifts and transformations, has remained within the parameters and limits of available systems of thought, has remained the same through the ruse of the same. In spite of its disavowals, that discourse has remained to a certain degree both "economically and politically conservative" (HS 37) even if it does indeed force power to recompose itself according to different strategies. Finally Foucault's discourse has short-circuited its own innovative potential precisely to the degree that it can maintain its arguments only if sexual difference is not allowed to operate within them. I shall begin by briefly reconstructing the major premises of Foucault's hypothesis.

According to Foucault the theory of repression (which claims that the twentieth century is witnessing a slow decline of the prohibition, censorship and denial of sexuality operative since the classical age) is a distortion of historical reality. It is part of

a strategy used to render power less threatening and more acceptable; in other words to conceal the extent of its domain by presenting itself as a limit on desire that would leave some measure of freedom intact (HS 10, 86). It was the strategy of a bourgeoise that by late or mid-eighteenth century, an emerging "capitalist or industrial" society, made its own body and its precious sexuality function as the principles of class specificity in much the same way and against the "blood" of the nobility (HS 126-27). And it did this not through a denial of sexuality but by putting into play "an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it" (HS 69). The theory of repression was born as an "instrument of social control and political subjugation" (HS 123) when, at the end of the nineteenth century, this class redefined its sexuality in relation to other classes by explaining the deployment of sexuality in terms of a generalized taboo. It was postulated not only that sexuality must be subject to the law but that "you will have no sexuality except by subjecting yourself to the law" (HS 128). It is within such a frame that Foucault situates psychoanalysis as "both a theory of the essential interrelatedness of law and desire, and a technique for relieving the effects of the taboo where its rigor makes it pathogenic" (HS 129).

If power in the repressive hypothesis was traditionally thought (or taught) to have only an exterior hold on desire, this relation of exteriority offered the possibility of liberation from power through revolt or resistance. Psychoanalysis, by demonstrating that power as law, "is what constitutes desire and the lack on which it is predicated" (HS 81), and seems also to point to the illusory nature of the promise of liberation by revealing that in the relation between power and desire there is no such thing as "a repression exerted after the event" (HS 81). It would

seem then that psychoanalytic theory has already revealed the ruses of power; revealed that to some extent one is always already trapped in power. However, in Foucault's view the psychoanalytic position on relations between power and sexuality still falls short of exposing the deceptions of power since, although it conceives "the nature and dynamics of drives" (HS 83) differently from the repressive hypothesis, it nonetheless retains the accepted notion of power as law--as juridico-discursive. Moreover, since the task that psychoanalysis sets itself as a discourse of truth is the task of lifting (although not completely effacing) psychical repression, it enables the production of a slightly modified version of the repressive hypothesis. Inasmuch as its techniques enabled psychoanalysis to work against repression it was possible to link this repression "to general mechanisms of domination and exploitation and to join together the processes that enable one to be free of all three" (HS 131). Such binding made possible the birth of what Foucault calls the historico-political critiques of repression.

At this juncture the reasons for Foucault's failure to deal with feminist discourses become clear since those discourses are, or can certainly be understood as, historico-political critiques of sexual repression. Thus most of what Foucault says about Reich's critique of repression could be applied as well to feminist discourses:

> The importance of this critique and its impact on reality were substantial. But the very possibility of its success was tied to the fact that it always unfolded within the deployment of sexuality, and not outside or against it. The fact that so many things were able to change in the sexual behavior of Western societies without any of the promises or political conditions

> predicted by Reich being realized is sufficient proof that this whole sexual 'revolution,' this whole 'anti-repressive' struggle, represented nothing more, but nothing less—and its importance is undeniable--than a tactical shift and reversal in the great deployment of sexuality. But it is also apparent why one could not expect this critique to be the grid for a history of that very deployment. Nor the basis for a movement to dismantle it (HS 131).

In other words Foucault ignores feminist discourses on sexuality because they insert themselves so comfortably into the strategies of the deployment of sexuality that has created the very thing about which it seemed to be producing knowledge and true discourses--"The imaginary element that is 'sex' . . . the desire for sex . . . 'sex' itself as something desirable" (HS 156). One could not expect feminist discourses to dismantle this deployment, caught as they are within it, since they say "yes" to sex, they make an effort "to make us love sex, to make knowledge of it desirable and everything said about it precious" (HS 169) as well as focusing on the body as a value. In doing so they follow the line, "laid out by the general deployment of sexuality" (HS 157), whereby sex, "an imaginary point" determined by the deployment of sexuality, functions as that through which "each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility . . . to the whole of his body . . . and to his identity" (HS 155-56).

However, the question that Foucault does not address himself to is the question of the gender of the whole body that is constitutive of the identity to which he refers. The delineation of the importance that gender has in such a constitution further vindicates Foucault's exclusion of feminist discourses from his text but it also simultaneously unveils the

consequences of that exclusion for his project. An elucidation of that importance is found in Jean Baudrillard's study of seduction[2] in which he describes how theories of the feminine or theories of feminine sexuality directly align themselves with the historically current role assigned to the body. He points out that those theories, while resisting or revolting against Freud's phallic theory of anatomical destiny nonetheless continue to immerse themselves in our "culture of the body." In opposition to an organ other organs or the body as a whole is "transfigured by desire."[3] However, this "transfigured body" remains a functional body, a body subjugated to production. Thus the use of the very terms employed to promote the specificity of a female jouissance can place it within the movement of a capitalist economy of expenditure that circulates endlessly to produce value:

> This contraint to fluidity, to flux, to the accelerated circulation of the psychic, of the sexual and of bodies is the exact replica of the constraint that governs market value: Capital must circulate, must not have any gravity or fixed point; the chain of investment must be incessant; value must radiate without obstacles and in all directions—and that is the very form of the actual realization of value. That is the form of capital and sexuality, the sexual password, the sexual model is its mode of appearance on the level of bodies.[4]

It is important to note that it is not female jouissance, female sexuality that is being "criticized."[5] What Baudrillard censures is a search for the specificity of female sexuality that tries to define it in terms of male sexuality, male orgasm. For if female jouissance (bliss, orgasm, enjoyment)

is different from a man's, it is precisely, as Lacan notes in Encore,[6] as ecstasy, as that which is out of place, which is useless, that is, it has no use value. As soon as it is directed toward and evaluated in terms of the production of orgasm it begins to function according to male models and male economies. The kind of specificity and equality that it thereby establishes annuls its difference; it becomes subject to another law--the injunction: "Tu as un corps et il faut en jouir;" (You have a body and you must take pleasure from it).[7]

Thus it seems that not only does Foucault make sense by excluding feminist discourses from consideration but that he produces a sense that cannot be ignored. By means of its silences, Foucault's text demonstrates that, as Serge Leclaire notes elsewhere, "there is something contradictory in the feminist movement. Women fall into the same trap they denounce; and in doing so they produce a man's superdiscourse."[8] Which is not to say that Foucault would question the limited political efficacy of feminist positions nor the fact that their discourses change reality any more than he questioned the effects of Reich's theories. He does, however, make clear that this efficacy is possible only as a result of forming apart of prevailing structures of power, a part of the deployment of sexuality. Feminist discourses may produce a shift in power tactics but they achieve nothing more and nothing less than that. And indeed they may end up reproducing phallocentric structures by replacing them with what Baudrillard calls a "phallocentric feminine."

At this point, however, it also becomes clear that what is at stake in Foucault's silence concerning feminist discourses is not so much their possible complicity with existing power structures but his own complicity. For if sex is a complex idea formed inside the discursive deployment of sexuality;

if it is a "shadow," a historico-discursive bourgeois construct, the power structures within which these discourses are situated are not sexually neutral nor do they produce sexually neutral constructs. In other words, Foucault's theory of power, where power is seen as a movement of local but omni-present "unbalanced, heterogenous, unstable and tense force relationships" (HS 93) based on inequalities and disequilibriums, actually operates according to a model of homogeneity. Under the guise of anonymous heterogeneities it conceals a power that is masculine in nature while putatively unmasking the ruses of power.

Putting a different sexuality into play, addressing oneself to the nature of sexual difference, the difference of female sexuality, would render fragile this (male) structure of power since it would threaten the concepts of wholistic identity which the discourses inscribed within power structures seek to produce. For a woman's jouissance is not the opposite (equal or unequal) counterpart of phallic jouissance. Rather, as Lacan points out, it is supplementary to it. It is an extra, an addition, a more that proceeds from the less, the not-all (anatomically) of women. Within the logic of supplementarity, however, the not-all of female jouissance, makes up for, somehow compensates for an original deficiency in the all, the wholeness of the male, therefore putting into question that wholeness and its concomitant effects. In avoiding the problem of sexual difference Foucault repeats the mechanisms of the deployment of sexuality which by saying everything about it tries not so much to efface differences but to comprehend them, that is, envelop them in a comprehensive system, in a system of comprehension so that it would seem that they cannot and do not make any difference. And in demonstrating that objective discourse is a male discourse his text becomes an emblem for the logic of all discourses

whose truth is sustained by sexual indifference.

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[1]Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 103, hereafter cited in parentheses with page number as HS.

[2]I am referring to Jean Baudrillard's De la séduction (Paris: Editions Galilee, 1979). It should be noted that I use Baudrillard's work with reservation and only for the limited purposes I mention.

[3]Baudrillard speaks specifically of Luce Irigaray's work but his comments would apply to any feminist discourse that promulgates a certain concept of equality that effaces difference.

[4]Jean Baudrillard, Oublier Foucault (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977), pp. 32-33; my translation.

[5]Nor what is sometimes defined as female speech in opposition to male or female discourse.

[6]Jacques Lacan, Le Seminaire Livre XX, Encore (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 10.

[7]Baudrillard. Oublier Foucault, p. 32.

[8]Serge Leclaire, "Sexuality: A fact of Discourse," trans. Helene Klibbe in Homosexualities and French Literature, George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), p. 53.

[9]Lacan, p. 68.

EATING WORDS

Cynthia Chase

In "Perverse Scenes of Writing," [SCE Reports 10 (Fall, 1981) pp. 57-7], Felicity Baker superimposes psychoanalytic categories on the rhetorical terms of de Man's analysis of the purloined ribbon episode in Book ii of the Confessions [in Allegories of Reading, ch. 12], with impressive success. What is the effect of this gesture? What does it mean to characterize a text through a description of the act of writing drawing on a psychological discourse? That question looms behind the appropriation of the post-Freudian term "incorporation" in my own paper ("Reading as Writing," SCE Reports 10, pp. 33-56) and no doubt behind Michel Pierssens's "few simple questions" in reaction (SCE Reports 10, pp. 74-6).

The conception of an unconscious structured like a language is always susceptible of giving way to the explanation of linguistic structures as unconscious defensive functions. Felicity Baker proposes to "juxtapose what de Man puts us under: What in psychoanalytic writing is called unconscious structure, and what de Man, correcting an error, calls linguistic structure." The question is whether this error remains--or can remain--corrected. Thus there emerges in "Perverse Scenes of Writing" a tension between two conceptions of the act of writing. On the one hand, the essay evokes "an eruption which breaks across the perverse structure of the writing at the point where that structure itself intolerably represents the return" of what the perverse structure exists to deny. Here we glimpse a writing that in its very operation disintegrates psychic structures. On the other hand, the essay concludes by describing writing as a last-ditch psychic defense, a radical but localized

abandonment of meaning and emotion for the sake of preventing a still more drastic loss of meaning or incursion of emotion. Felicity Baker stresses that this must not be construed as the defense of an individual subject: "The perverse structure . . . cannot be said to arise from the psychic structure of the narrator or the young hero (for it is spread across many textual elements, persons, and so on); or from that of Rousseau. That perverse structure is a rhetorical structure of the language of the text" (p. 70). What happens, though, when the text gets identified wholly with a rhetorical structure equated with a perverse structure which is essentially, if impersonally, defensive? Felicity Baker goes on to quote Freud and finally Wilfred Bion. "Freud says that 'the inconsistencies, eccentricities and follies of men [. . .] appear in a similar light to their sexual perversions, through the acceptance of whichthey spare themselves repressions.' [. . .] A literary text is an eccentricity, a distortion of this this sort. It is a form, a representation that is an abandonment of an emotion--which the subject accepts, but does not wholly create or compose, and which divides the subject. Writing is a form of splitting, a form of what Wilfred Bion calls miniature psychotic function in the service of sanity" (p. 71). With this last characterization we revert to a conception of writing as one action among others carried out by a psychological subject, and to a conception of writing as defense.

I would like to try to mark a difference between the concluding movement of "Perverse Scenes of Writing" and my own proposal (in "Reading as Writing") that writing can be conceived as incorporation--a problematic matter, certainly, for "miniature psychotic function" would seem to describe "incorporation" very well. For incorporation is defined (starting from Freud's description of melancholia

and Abraham and Torok's distinction of incorporation from introjection in L'Ecorce et le Noyau) as a drastic defensive alternative to the normal process of internationalization, a literalizing of an imaginative function. It would seem then that in appealing to the concept of incorporation one reverts altogether emphatically to what I hold to be the unwarranted assumption of a psychological perspective on writing: the interpretation of writing as an activity taking place in the service of the integrity of a subject. This assumption may go along with overlooking how writing, since it consists in signs that are at once material and conventional (or arbitrary), involves another operation than the imaginative functions modeled on perception. Calling writing "incorporation" would seem to succumb to just this assumption and oversight, by referring, misleadingly, to a fantasy of actually taking an object into the body.

But "incorporation" also (and this my account in "Reading and Writing" stressed) designates a rhetorical difference: the dis-figuration of introjection and of the oral metaphor that marks our conception of language as primarily spoken language, as voice. It is in introjection that a metaphorical process of internalization and assimilation takes place; and the fundamental physical process of taking nourishment must take place metaphorically to take place literally (Melanie Klein's work suggests that ingestion must be accompanied by the conception of nourishment, by an idea of what is good). With incorporation, this harmony of metaphorical and bodily processes is disrupted. The notion of incorporation focuses attention on the conflict between a certain operation and its phenomenological model. The notion of eating words brings into conflict the idea of internalization and that of inscription. Cryptonomie: le Verbier de l'homme aux loups, Abraham and Torok's first book, explores incorporation's effects as an

operation of encoding, a mutation of writable signifiers. Thus what first seems to designate the imaginary imitation of a bodily process comes to describe the encrypting of material signs. This is what encourages me to suspect that the notion of incorporation can serve to put in question not only the supposition that writing is an activity serving the integrity of a subject, but also a more fundamental assumption: the phenomenality of texts and the continuity and solidarity of reading with perception.

But the initial replies I would make to Michel Pierssens continue to make the second, if not the first, of the above assumptions. For I would recapitulate by saying that my paper described an aspect of the activity of writing that functions neither as knowing, nor as its antithesis, neither as defending against knowing nor as sublimation; I suggest a conception of writing as a kind of forgetting or memorization rather than recreation or remembrance.

In addition my paper is in fact concerned with an actual reading of Rousseau by Baudelaire. Baudelaire read Rousseau's Rêveries and, in "Le Gâteau," "Le Joujou du pauvre," and "Morale du joujou" (the essay from which he extracted "Le Joujou du pauvre"), reworked Rousseau's motif of the edible toy. Baudelaire's texts, like Rousseau's, associate gift-giving and play, with discomfitting conditions and consequences. Michel Pierssens's remarks valorizing games and gift-giving in contrast to the toy or the commodity—"A game exists outside the circuit of exchange and money, which is why it is so beautiful" (p. 76); "What can be less mercantile than a game? Who can be less venal than children?" (p. 79)--reformulate the truisms that these texts expose and ironize. Thus in a passage ostensibly reaffirming the distinction between creative and

mechanical activity, here between playing without toys and playing with dolls, Baudelaire chooses the word "diligence" to designate the spontaneous game he praises--a pun which subverts the distinction in the very moment of making it; the passage both summons up and refuses the distinction between diligence and creativity at the basis of our notion of the aesthetic and our "economics of the imagination," in Kurt Hzinzelman's phrase (The Economics of the Imagination, Amherst, 1980).

But my paper is concerned less with a "reading" of Baudelaire's or Rousseau's essays than with investigating how Baudelaire's reading comes out in writing. Thus I suggest that in addition to understanding and remembering elements of the ninth Rêverie, Baudelaire also incorporated elements of Rousseau's essay. For Baudelaire's homonym "diligence" can be analyzed as a cryptonym (Abraham and Torok's term for the linguistic product of an incorporation) of a homonym in Rousseau's essay: oubli(es)--precisely in accordance with the rule worked out in Cryptonomie: the cryptonym is a translation or synonym for a homophone of the incorporated word. "Seeing" diligence as such a cryptonym of course depends on "reading" Rousseau's text--on reading the oubli which appears as a verb later in the same paragraph as a forgetting or forgoing of forgetting, a forgetting of the forgetting of purpose requisite for aesthetic activity, which Rousseau's sentence alludes to in inverted form ("la gentillesse . . . me faisait oublier leur laideur").

The problem with this account is not (as Pierssens's remarks appear to suggest) the dubiousness of the significant connections between "oublies" and "diligence," which are intricate but demonstrable, and consistent with an interpretation of the relation between Rousseau's and Baudelaire's writings and

Kant's that draws on other kinds of evidence. The problem is rather the very plausibility of the activity of reading and writing thereby ascribed to Baudelaire--its plausibility as experience. Now the notion of experience, in its most complex manifestations--phenomenological and psychoanalytic theory--was essential to Abraham's and Torok's elaboration of the concept of incorporation. What initially grounded their notion of incorporated signs or cryptonyms was their clinical experience of the intensity with which children invest infantile experience. My paper suggests that in some instance writers invest their reading of earlier writers with a comparable intensity, with corresponding effects. Thus Baudelaire incorporated, and encrypted in his essay "Morale du joujou," Rousseau's dual sign "oubli(e)," because it was invested with an insistence on the disparity between writing and aesthetic experience that a poet must find insufferable, inassimilable by any more usual means. It is the invocation of experience that is problematic in this account --the way the investigation of a text gets subsumed beneath the project of describing a certain albeit unusual experience of the phenomenal world in one of its dimensions, language. But if that is where Abraham and Torok begin, it is not where Cryptonomie takes us. "Fors" (Derrida's preface to Cryptonomie) takes the form of reflections on a site of incorporation which while it occasions exact linguistic analysis resists description in phenomenological terms: a "crypt" which is the site of an encrypting--of inscription. The role of "crypt" in Derrida's text recalls the role of "pyramid" in Hegel's, in the Encyclopedia, where the very term associated with the symbol in the Aesthetics (where it belongs to the symbolic art of Egypt) reappears as the emblem for the sign. These passages in the Encyclopedia define thinking--as distinct from understanding--as the manipulation of signs, and specifically, as the operation exemplified

by memorization. This is described, by Hegel, as requiring the forgetting of the meaning of the signs to be repeated. And not only is their meaning forgotten. Memorization entails the loss not only of the meaning of the words uttered but also--remarkably --of their substantiality: it will take place effectively, according to Hegel, only if the words are only minimally articulated. Such words approach the condition of written signs. For if spoken words suggest the phenomenality of signs, by implying their perception on the part of a speaker (if not of a listener), written words, which imply no necessary perception, do not automatically require phenomenal existence, as distinct from the material existence which they do indubitably possess. The erosion of a articulation together with the forgetting of meaning restores to words the merely material existence of signs on a piece of paper--writing.

The bizarre descriptions of thinking and unthinking in the Encyclopedia and Cryptonomie display the eruption of the facts of writing into what is ostensibly an account of spoken language. The fact of the materiality of inscription cannot be made serviceable in a conception of language as phenomenal--as apprehensible and meaningful, informed by an intentionality realized in the actualizations of hearing or seeing and understanding, or of a reading continuous with and analogous to modes of perception. And yet that fact constitutes the "return of the text" in a sense that might have to be acknowledge in some way when we are dealing with literary texts, with language which we approach at once as art and as writing. The possibility of approaching significant forms as art has very high stakes. Kant's critical philosophy identifies with aesthetic judgment the possibility of judgment as such, the link between the rational faculties and the capacity for action. Yet it is just this crucial mediation which Rousseau puts in doubt, in

insisting on the disparity between writing or reading and aesthetic experience. In the light of Hegel's description of signification or "thinking," that disparity can be construed as the inadequacy of the concept of experience in general (including the notions of "response" and "reception") for designating relations among texts, collections of written signs constituted as signs by the "forgetting" of their symbolic and phenomenal dimension.

Such a conception of a text does not harmonize, to put it mildly, with an account of intertextual relations that invokes Charles Baudelaire's experience of reading the Rêverie. In trying to share the explanatory power of the view of writing as an action, an alternative, the description of writing as incorporation, has to overlook what it ought to stress, what the subversion of the oral metaphor can suggest, --the conception of a material textuality. The dissonant registers of my account of Baudelaire's "reading as writing" show up in Cryptonomie too; it appears as both a sort of translation textbook and as a revised case history. Michel Pierssens interrogates—"Are we talking about texts or about subjects?" It might be the virtue of the notion of incorporation--always supposing this is worth the trouble—to display the impossibility of integrity on such a point. For it does not just reveal that doing both together is inevitable, something which, in a wider sense, almost everyone would concede. It also reveals that doing so does violence to the subject and the text—effacing the phenomenality of the one or the materiality of the other, if not the specificity of both--in a way that one had not quite bargained for.

Paradoxically, then, the concept of incorporation exposes the pitfalls of psychoanalytic conceptions of literature. For the dis-figuration of the oral metaphor leaves the way open to a conception of the "text"

as inscription which is incompatible, if not with the Freudian text that appears in Derrida's "Freud et la Scène de l'Ecriture," at least with its usual psychoanalytic usage--including, certainly, Felicity Baker's engagingly exact explanatory term, "the depressive text." In that term I recognize what I would call a text in which the oral metaphor has been subverted. But that subversion implies the insufficiencies of any such description of a text. It implies the insufficiency of descriptions which overlook the text's nonfunctional and material character.

Describing relationships between texts gets very difficult in these circumstances, once one cannot resort to the habitual idea of an experience of reading. Thus I would have to renounce what I take to be the best account one can give of the singular connection between "Morale du joujou" and the ninth Rêverie, which runs like this:

Baudelaire does not understand a certain passage in Rousseau's text. For the forgoing of aesthetic experience that it evokes implies no less than the ruin of poetry and the loss of the phenomenal world. Moreover to understand this passage would be to misread, to misconstrue it, since it concerns this disparity between the reading of signs and the act of apprehension and understanding. Instead of comprehending and reworking this passage, as he does other features of the ninth Rêverie, Baudelaire blindly reinscribes it in his own essay—and this rewriting is the sole right reading of such an essay. This reinscription is also a forgetting--but neither a sublimation of nor a defense against--the terror of the loss of world.

"Forgetting" in this usage begins to lose contact with the possible experience of a subject, and here perhaps such an account would start to be

rigorous even as it became incommunicative. But although it moves away from the imagination of reading as an experience it nowhere forgoes another misleading simplification. For it cannot dispense with describing the relationship between the two texts as a necessary rather than a random one. The conception of the text as inscription, however, implies that the questions as to whether an intertextual relationship is aleatory or overdetermined is an undecideable one.

If the very explanatory character of the above account makes it misleading, then, I lose very little in replacing it with a more lapidary formula: Baudelaire eats Rousseau's words. That too, of course, course, is a story. But the phrase has the virtue of drawing a connection between the notion of incorporation and the rhetorical and performative powers of language. To say that someone eats his words is to say that he takes them back, and not just because they prove regrettable: because they cannot be made simply true, referring to things in the world, nor culminate in the fulfillment of their promise. To eat someone else's words--that implies that this action is not restricted to the subject who speaks, but that the words quite apart from a speaker or a subject are there for the taking; so Romanticism and post-Romanticism together begin with the death of ("pre-Romantic") "Rousseau": Rousseau's writing makes commitments that cannot be kept, yet that lay down the outlines of the situation in which subsequent writing will have to take place. Rousseau promises to pay for oubli(es), and Baudelaire eats Rousseau's words. Filling out this remark with an analysis of the speech-acts in Rousseau's texts and an account of their impact is more than I can do here. One might just briefly recall two promises. There is the commitment of his life to the truth with the adoption of his devise, "Vitam impendere vero," that Rousseau

examines in the fourth Rêverie. And there is the promise implied by Kant as well--in the continuity maintained from the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason to the Critique of Judgment--to maintain the connection between man's ethical capacities and his capacities for pleasure: the claim to feel good feeling good which appears in the ninth Rêverie. These commitments cannot be lived up to in writing, but it takes all the energies of Romantic and post-Romantic literature to live them down. We can take the measure of those energies in Baudelaire's "Morale du joujou;" and seem to find there the passive force of reading as writing--as inscription.

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ON CONVENTIONS: A REVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE ON THEORIES OF READING

Richard A. Barney

Just as any critic's interpretation of a literary text implies a general theory of literature, any individual conference also implies a general "theory" of conferences held by its sponsors. That was one of the things, at least, that became clear to me while participating in the Conference on Theories of Reading, which was held at Indiana University September 28-30, 1981, and was sponsored by several departments of that university and the Society for Critical Exchange. It was difficult to attend this conference without taking an active part in the intense exchanges between members of the panels and the audience, or in the groups which met to formulate questions for general discussion, because that was how the conference was designed to work. It seems to me that the organizers of this SCE conference--including David Bleich, John Eakin, James Sosnoski, and Patricia Harkin /Sosnoski/--not only succeeded in preparing a challenging, informative meeting, but also realized the most coherent design in SCE history to promote its goal of encouraging open exchange among literary scholars and theorists. I want to explain this claim first by summarizing briefly the events of the conference, and then by considering why a theory of conferences might be important.

I

The conference consisted of three phases, each of which included a panel and smaller group discussions. Phase One, entitled "Current Theories and Actual Reading Situations," had four parts: 1) a

panel discussion on the nature of a theory of reading; 2) a set of small group discussions on topics related to the panel; 3) a series of interpretive readings; and 4) a second panel which evaluated the relation between the theories proposed and readings given. The first panel revealed a number of disagreements that would spark discussions throughout the conference, especially between Peter Brooks, who advocated a general theory of readers, and David Bleich, who supported a theory grounded on concrete, individual readers. The interpretive readings proved varied and entertaining, ranging in approach from Jane Gallop's deconstructuve analysis of a review by Paul de Man, to Judith Fetterley's feminist thesis about Hemingway's "Indian Camp," to Alfred David's concern with pedagogical integrity and Lewis Carroll's Adventures in Wonderland.

Phase Two, called "Critiques, Alternatives, Challenges," presented the most innovative part of the conference. First, all participants met in caucus groups to formulate questions and challenges for any of the previous panelists, choosing a representative to present their views. The caucus topics included theories not mentioned, the politics of reading and reading theory, nonliterary material, and open topics. After hearing questions, the panelists had the opportunity to respond. This session was then followed by small group discussions of specific challenges or issues.

The exchange between panelists and caucus members proved to be the most lively and fruitful of the conference, and significantly, the discussion was sparked to its greatest intensity by questions from the caucus on politics. The issues raised by that group revealed some of the most important problems and differences behind the positions taken earlier by the panelists--the underlying pedagogic

motivations, the institutional orientations, and hidden goals. One of the questions is example enough: "Why weren't the political implications of reader-response theory--for instance, the freedom of the reader, the formation of interpretive communities and their selective inclusion and exclusion of readings, etc.--explored? What are the implications of this evasion?" These kinds of questions confronted everyone with the importance of reading theory to teaching, students, and social contexts, and while contributing significantly to them, prevented mere elaborations of some theoretical detail or problem area. The underlying political nature of the discussion, especially as it bore on the economics of the profession, also became particularly clear when Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Peter Brooks, representatives of the nation's more prominent institutions--the University of Pennsylvania and Yale--were repeatedly singled out by heated criticism for their view that studying students was not necessarily important for developing a theory of reading. (One political caucus question to them read: "Does a disinterest in student 'readings' of literature imply a political unwillingness to share power with the young?")

The third phase, "Research Proposals," included a panel discussion of the priorities for future research in reading, small group presentations of various projects, and a concluding evaluation of the conference as a whole. Partly because they had appeared together on a previous panel, the panelists this time tended to restate their earlier positions. The small groups, in contrast to the intensity of the caucusing, were a welcome relief because they involved little discussion, and participants could sit back and enjoy the presentations. The "evaluation session," held on the morning of the last day, provided all the participants with the

opportunity to appraise, self-reflexively, the conference as a whole: its program, format, and general success. The discussion produced a number of insights and suggestions that I want to consider in the rest of this essay.

II

The way we organize and conduct our conferences reflects our ideas about literature, the profession of being teachers and scholars, and its goals. Theories of literature--whether hermeneutic, structuralist, or reader-response oriented--influence not only how critics interpret texts, but also how they view their roles as professionals. Critics of a hermeneutic persuasion consider their task to be the elucidation of writers' intentions and teaching students to locate them in authors' works. In contrast, structuralists such as Jonathan Culler urge that we should preoccupy ourselves not with interpreting individual texts but with developing concepts of intertextuality. And critics using reader-response theories argue that our focus, in research and the classroom, should be on the process of reading.

These professional differences, warranted by theories of literature, also tend to produce conferences or sessions with very different emphases. We can study those differences by considering literature and conferences as acts of communication, using a model of communication in its simplest form:

speaker ——→ message ——→ listener

As M. H. Abrams has observed, literary criticism or theory tends to emphasize one of these elements--authorial intention, the text, or the role of the

reader--often to the detriment of the others. Those critical emphases, in turn, promote conferences that emphasize speakers, their delivered papers, or audience participation. The Conference on Theories of Reading, as an example, reflected both its subject matter and theoretical approach, that is, its focus on the importance of the reader. It was a conference where the audience (as readers) participated actively, reconstructed the messages it received, and was able, with an advantage unavailable in the reading of written texts, to question the authors about their intentions. For the most part, however, professional gatherings of scholars, teachers, and critics, especially the most prominent ones, place their emphasis on the speakers, those who perform and attract the largest audiences. In that sense, despite the way teaching and professional writing has recently been affected by a variety of critical approaches, our conferences remain tied to the oldest of critical emphases--the author's intent--and that attention produces conventional conventions.

But conferences also reflect goals and values that go beyond schools of literary theory or criticism. I can hardly imagine a conference that would focus on Jacques Derrida and be genuinely "deconstructive"--each session playing with irreducible differences between speakers, their texts, or audiences, weaving endless interconnections, and even turning on their head the hierarchical oppositions that privilege speakers over listeners or orderliness over pandemonium. Meetings that might have potential for such unruly conduct are constrained by the larger political, economic, or social contexts of the profession, constraints that form the unspoken assumptions about how the profession (and in turn conferences) should operate. One of those assumptions in the United States, influenced

in part by political ideology, bases the profession's procedures on scholarly competition, a system that champions a kind of academic individualism by requiring that scholars must outwit or at least perform better than their colleagues in order to gain reputation and an audience. As a result, our conferences tend to be meetings where critics must stress their disagreements with everyone else at all costs. But given the uncertainties in which the profession now finds itself--the competing theories of literature, the lack of a coherent description of the purpose of teaching literature, and especially the recent economic pressures that have revealed our unclear sense of what relation the discipline of being critics has to the profession as a social, economic, or political enterprise--given these uncertainties, we need to reconsider the role conferences can play in beginning to resolve them. We need conferences to serve as more than a forum for debate, to become occasions where disagreements are only the starting point for genuine exchange among professionals.

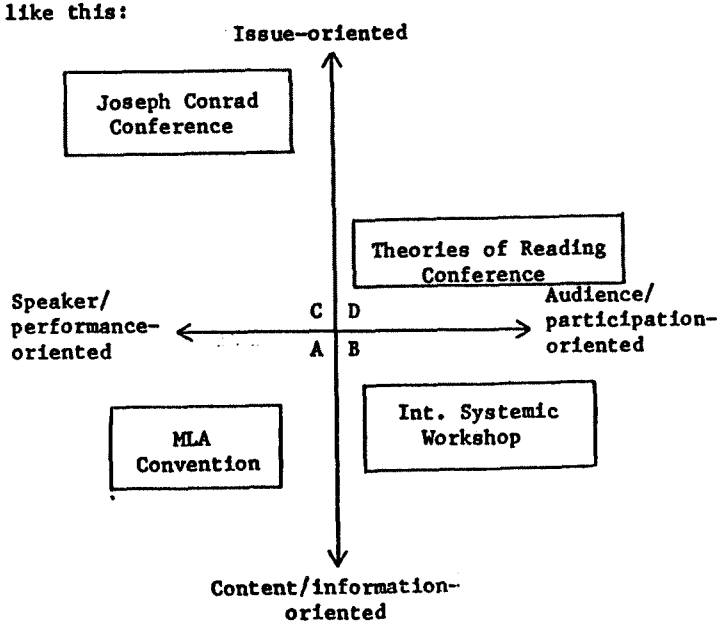
We need, therefore, a theory of conferences just as much as we need one of literature. Such a theory may not need to be as complex as one for literature, but I want to challenge convention-planners (and goers) in a similar way that some of the first literary theorists challenged critics to look beyond the individual text: any single conference needs to be planned and conducted by reference to and testing of a theory of conferences which attempts to account for goals, effectiveness, and productivity. Such a theory would not attempt to elevate conferences to a neutral position from which various theories or approaches to literature could be impartially examined; it would instead provide ways for conferences to borrow useful ideas from literary theories for their own procedures

(as the Conference on Theories of Reading did), placing conferences themselves within the context of exchange between various literary theoretical positions or ideas. Conferences would not be construed as encouraging disagreements for their own sake, nor as attempting to eliminate them, but as the ground on which participants could play out those differences in exchanges aimed at open discussion, mutual concession, and compromise.

I cannot offer here a complete theory of conferences, but would like to suggest some guidelines and a general model toward that end, using them to discuss the Conference on Theories of Reading. By extending the original communication model that I presented above, we can distinguish not only between conference emphases on the horizontal axis of speaker and listener, but also between the kinds of emphasis on the message, talk, or lecture, on a vertical axis (see below). In doing this we move from a focus on communication as a temporal act to consider a static grid on which we can pinpoint kinds of conference orientations. These axes constitute polar tensions between extremes toward which any conference can gravitate, but never reach as a pure case. Practically any conference can have sessions that alternately stress the speakers' and listeners' roles; our concern is with overall orientation. Those conferences which emphasize speakers are performance oriented, often having large sessions and a collection of star panelists. Those emphasizing listeners tend to be workshop environments, encouraging discussion and interaction.

The distinction in message I want to make is between conventions that are content/information oriented and those that are issue oriented. Although this distinction may be hard to make, it can be useful. A content-oriented conference is nearly

pedagogic in style, emphasizing the knowledge provided by experts, their explanations of systems, or the "basics" of their argument. Although speakers at content-oriented conferences may use disagreement with other critics to make their own point, their emphasis is on the information communicated. Issue-oriented conferences also communicate information, of course, but by a different procedure. These meetings develop issues and problems in the course of their sessions while assuming full knowledge of needed background. Instead of conveying the basics of theorists' systems, for example, such conferences presuppose familiarity with them and move to explore the more vexing complications. Given these points of extreme cases, our model would look something like this:



We can find examples of conferences that belong to each of these orientations, and in doing so remember that the majority of our meetings tend toward the left-hand side of the model. The MLA Convention is clearly both performance and content oriented (quadrant A) with its gala of reknowned poets, critics, and novelists, and a resulting emphasis on their individual readings or lectures. A number of sessions, it is true, are devoted to specialized areas, but they do not have the greatest prominence, and often, even with a central topic chosen, the papers never directly address each other or explore similar problems or issues. In quadrant B I would place the International Systemic Workshop, which is intended as a forum for exchange, for all who attend, about linguistic topics. The Joseph Conrad Conference is most appropriate for C, because it will host a number of prominent scholars, and in assuming a solid familiarity with Conrad's works and his critics, will move quickly to special issues. The Conference on Theories of Reading, while attended by a number of well-known theorists, emphasized strongly both audience participation and discussion of theoretical issues, and I would place it in the lower left-hand corner of quadrant D.

I do not want to suggest that certain orientations are inherently inferior, but that they are useful in understanding conference goals. A conference stressing speakers and issues has advantages over one that stresses listeners and information, and vice versa. The first can offer in-depth exploration of specialized areas by reputable experts, while the second can promote audience participation in disseminating information. But in order to serve the most diverse group of people--including listeners with little background as well as recognized experts--a conference needs to balance these extremes as much as possible. Such a balance is even more important

for conferences on literary theory because their sessions can become so quickly abstract and esoteric, tending to include only an elite group of well-informed participants. In order for as many people as possible to debate theoretical issues, in order for literary theorists of different specialities to be able to engage each other, or theorists to engage less theoretically-informed critics, the requisite background information must be provided. The thrust of the Conference on Theories of Reading was toward this balance, although at times it was not entirely successful, as we were all reminded on one occasion by a participant who pointed out that the panelists were arguing about an issue related to Umberto Eco's theory of reading without thoroughly explaining its basic points.

Appropriately, then, most of the suggestions that were offered during the evaluation session were ones that could either help balance the conference (or ones in the future) by moving it toward an emphasis on speakers and information, or could improve the mechanism for alternating the focus between speakers and audience or theoretical "basics" and specialized problems. I include my own suggestions with those proferred during the discussion.

Louise Rosenblatt was one of the chief advocates of shifting emphasis toward speakers, especially for the first panel. She suggested giving the panel a clearer focus and the panelists more time, up to 30 minutes, for their presentations. For her, this shift would also allow the panelists to "summarize their systems" more effectively, a shift which could also make the conference more content oriented and establish the groundwork more clearly for the following discussions. From a similar point of view, a number of people said that it would help to eliminate the focus on "challenges" to panelists,

which tend to accentuate disagreements (issues), and instead leave discussion open to less polemical questions. In order that participants might be better informed about background material for a conference, John P. Riquelme proposed sending to each prospective participant a list of suggested readings. For similar purposes, James Sosnoski suggested publishing an issue of SCE Reports before the next conference which would include essays and a bibliography on the topic at hand.

Many of the other suggestions offered ways to streamline audience participation and discussion of issues. Most participants agreed that the last panel on research had consisted of too much restatement of panelists' positions, and that it had been too formal, allowing little engagement by the audience. Robert Crosman was a spokesman for more carefully defining the issues on which the conference would focus, and proposed that all the panelists conduct a short meeting before the conference began to locate specific issues and disagreements between them for further discussion. For the caucusing, suggestions included giving group representatives more time to present their questions and the reasoning behind them, reducing the number of questions for each group from four to one or two, and finding a way to avoid cutting discussion short for the sake of the following small groups. I think that the best way to solve the difficulties with the last panel and to make the caucusing more productive would be to eliminate the panel and replace it by caucus regrouping and a second exchange with panelists. First, this could avoid panelist reiteration; second, it would allow caucus members to reevaluate their position; and third, it would help make clearer the first exchange between panelists and caucus representatives.

These suggestions would only be ways of improving what was already a highly successful conference. More than any other SCE-sponsored project, even the previous Conference on Theories of Narrative, this one best accomplished one of SCE's most important goals: promoting open exchange among scholars of all types, whether linguists, literary theorists, textual critics, or scholars of philosophy. This project succeeded in becoming more than a convention, a term that suggests people converging on one spot who share similar interests, and presented a way to make our professional meetings true conferences, where individuals committed to scholarly cooperation meet to confer with each other about problems and new ideas.

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University of Virginia

--My thanks to James Sosnoski and Patricia Harkin, whose comments and suggestions helped clarify my ideas for this review.

SCE NEWS

Next October 20-22, SCE will again co-sponsor a conference with various departments at Indiana University. The topic is "theories of representation" and some of the panelists are Gerald Graff, Barbara Johnson, Seigfried Schmidt, Svetlana Alpers, James Olney, Robin Lakoff, John Eskin and James Creech. Any SCE members interested in participating in small group sessions on various aspects of this topic should contact James Creech (French, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056) or David Bleich (English, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401).

Next October, Bruce Henricksen will chair a session on Theory and Criticism at the SCMLA meeting in San Antonio entitled "The 'Literary' in Literary History." For information write to Bruce Henricksen, Department of English, Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118, (504/865-2295).

On November 4 SCE will sponsor a symposium on Fredric Jameson in Oxford, Ohio. Jameson will speak on "The Ideology of Space" and there will be a series of intensive conversations with him. On the 5th and 6th of November SCE will sponsor a lecture by Jameson and two SCE sessions on his work at the MMLA meeting in Cincinnati. For additional information write James J. Sosnoski, English, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056 (513/529-2328).

Matt Marino (University of Alabama) will chair an SCE session at the SAMLA meeting on "Excentric Criticism: A Focus on the Effect of Critical Models on Literary Study." For additional information write to Matt Marino, English, Drawer AL, University of Alabama, University, Alabama 34586.

Next December at MLA Susan Elliott will chair a session on "Literary Change/Critical Change" featuring Ralph Cohen with commentaries by Michael Riffaterre, Hayden White and Murray Schwartz.

An SCE Project of Interest

Five members of SCE, James Fanto (French), David Shumway (American Studies), Steve Nimis (Classics), Larysa Mykyta (French) and James Sosnoski (English) on the basis of common concerns formed a Research Group on the Institutionalization and Professionalization of literary studies (GRIP). The group is studying four different but parallel forms of "authorization" in their four areas of literary study. The GRIP project takes as its point of departure the critiques of professional institutions developed in recent years by Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Burton Bledstein, and Steven Toulmin. It focuses upon the interrelationships among authority, power, discipline, training, critical discourse and their forums/arenas in specific historical developments that have resulted in particular modes of the institutionalization and professionalization of literary study.

David Shumway is chairing an SCE MLA session on "Authority in the Profession of Literary Study." The papers in this session will appear in SCE Reports #14. Inquiries should be addressed to David Shumway, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056 (513/529-4698).

Plans are also underway for a conference on "Theories of Institutionalization and Professionalization" to be held at Indiana University in the Fall of 1983. Write James Sosnoski, English, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056 (513/529-2328).

A CONFERENCE on THEORIES OF REFERENCE AND REPRESENTATION

20-22 October 1982
Indiana University

sponsored by

The Departments of English, Comparative Literature, German, Philosophy, Religious Studies, the College of Arts and Science and the School of Education at Indiana University

and by

The Society for Critical Exchange

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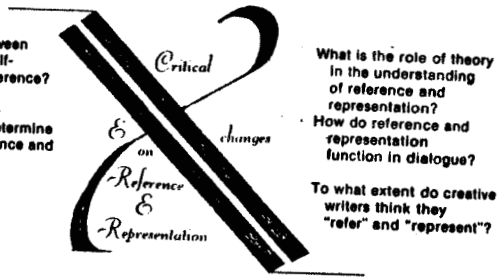

This conference aims for a wide ranging exchange of opinion regarding the status and use of theories of reference and representation. Panelists will develop their perspectives in the course of four dialogues focused upon the issues listed above. No formal papers will be presented at this conference. Instead, we plan a structured sequence of exchanges among the invited panelists and the conference participants. The most important feature of this structure is that the audience will have an opportunity in the sequence of events. Conference participants will be invited to caucus during the proceedings in order to formulate challenges to the views presented by the panelists.

Those interested in attending are urged to contact David Bleich or John Eakin (Dept. of English, Indiana Univ., Bloomington, Ind. 47401) for a full description of the conference and a room reservation card in the Indiana Memorial Union.